Subjectivity at Work

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for my mother
Acknowledgements

In emphasising a relational account of subjectivity, and resisting any claims to autonomy, individuality or originality, I acknowledge those many others, near and far, past and present, through and with whom the materialisation of this text has been accomplished. Claire Hiller recognised and nurtured capacities for thinking and writing previously unknown and unimaginable. Carolyn Williams, more than anyone else, engages me in the reflexive project of bringing my biographical experience alive in and as my intellectual life. Valerie Walkerdine taught me to recognise the ways in which my lived experience intersects with the practice of researching the lived experiences of others. Bronwyn Davies has provided a sustaining context for academic life and, with Sheridan Linnell, has mentored me as researcher, thinker and writer in the production of this thesis. My colleagues in the Narrative Discourse and Pedagogy research group, both past and present, have sharpened my thinking and enriched my life. My fellow students in the Friday Research Group have provided a space in which we defined and refined our projects. My partner, Murray, has been patient with me in times of despondency, frustration and despair. To all of these people, to those I have interviewed, to those who have shown any interest in my research, and to those others who remain unacknowledged, perhaps forgotten, but whose influence insinuates itself into the text, I give thanks. They have, each and all, supported me in the production of the thesis as something other than it began, less than it might have been, but more than I imagined. I also acknowledge the Australian Research Council for funding my position as a researcher on the project from which this thesis has emerged, and the University of Western Sydney for funding the scholarship that allowed me to finish the thesis as a full-time student.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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Abstract

In this thesis I contemplate the work that subjects perform when giving accounts of themselves, and the work that researchers might perform when working with those accounts. It is composed of a series of philosophical contemplations emergent from reflections upon my experience of conducting life-history narrative interviews with forty people aged between eighteen and sixty-five. It is motivated by questions about the practices through which subjects, their experiences and their accounts of that experience are constituted and articulated. It is motivated, too, by ethical questions related to the practices through which researchers engage with the accounts that subjects of research give of themselves. It is a reflexive project in which my presence as researcher and author is figured as an intellectual resource. This is accomplished through the inclusion of a self-conscious textual ‘I’ who gives an account of himself.

I ask how we might understand biographical accounts of experience to have been constituted and performed as accounts, and their narrators to have been constituted and performed as narrating and narratable subjects. In pursuing these questions I trace and articulate those temporalised and spatialised practices and relations through which subjects are constituted, and constituted as intelligible to themselves and each other. I work to give an account of subjects as the play of possibilities within, and differences among, intersecting repertoires of regulatory and regularising technologies of subjectification. I resist, however, giving accounts of subjects that suggest that they are reducible to these technologies. I am, then, concerned with articulating a subject who is simultaneously, paradoxically, regulated and irreducible, knowable and not. These
concerns are articulated and performed through contemplation of philosophical and ethical questions related to working with transcriptions of life-history narrative interviews.

Rather than suppose the transcribed interview to be a patient text awaiting interpretation, I perform the act of approaching the text with patience. I work with transcriptions of narrative interviews as resources for the reflexive development of my theorising, and for the articulation and performance of patient theorising through deferral of close attention to one narrative until the final chapter. I work with theory in this way, not as if there is a hypothesis to be tested through research, but with research as a space through which questions of theory might be developed. I open the text to philosophical questions, propositions and concepts motivated more towards further openings rather than closures. It is an assemblage of thoughts, knowledges, relations, memories and forgettings which instantiate multiple trajectories that are in multiple directions without necessarily meeting or arriving. It is a text of bits and fragments, absences and presences, inclusions and omissions, locutions and lacunae.
The earth is round and flat at the same time. This is obvious. That it is round appears indisputable; that it is flat is our common experience, also indisputable. The globe does not supersede the map; the map does not distort the globe.

Maps are magic. In the bottom corner are whales; at the top, cormorants carrying pop-eyed fish. In between is a subjective account of the lie of the land. Rough shapes of countries that may or may not exist, broken red lines marking paths that are at best hazardous, at worst already gone. Maps are constantly being remade as knowledge appears to increase. But is knowledge increasing or is detail accumulating?

A map can tell me how to find a place I have not seen but have often imagined. When I get there, following the map faithfully the place is not the place of my imagination. Maps, growing ever more real, are much less true.

And now, swarming over the earth with our tiny insect bodies and putting up flags and building houses, it seems that all the journeys are done.

Not so. Fold up the maps and put away the globes. If someone else had charted it, let them. Start another drawing with whales at the bottom and cormorants at the top, and in between identify, if you can, the places you have not found yet on those other maps, the connections obvious only to you. Round and flat, only a very little has been discovered.

Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry (1990: 81)
Beginning

What we take to be true or obvious, what we take for granted, what we believe to be a credible account of ourselves and our experience, is riven with contradiction and paradox. Similarly, those others, both human and not, with whom we are co-constituted in temporalised and spatialised relations are inaugurated in, through and by these contradictions and paradoxes. Accounts of these contradictory and paradoxical relations are not simply maps of the relative positions of multiple spatialised others, but also maps of the spaces between them: spaces that may be worn with overuse, or perhaps uncharted, opaque, inaccessible. This map of relations and between-spaces is a cartography of presences and absences, legibilities and silences, of things yet to be or to come. Sketchy broken lines etch, mark and trace pathways and networks that are hazardous, perhaps already gone, perhaps yet to emerge. Maps and territories both, are constantly being made and remade according to knowledges that accumulate, mutate, dissipate. These maps might direct us to familiar spaces, spaces not yet seen but already imagined, or spaces as yet unimaginable. Others before me have diagrammed and mapped some of these spaces, but I am interested in starting again, identifying, if I can, the spaces and relations I have yet to find on those other maps. So, I begin by mapping what I find in these spaces between, these in-between-spaces; headed who knows where and with who knows what consequences.

This is a text of multiple beginnings, one that has begun and halted many times, then started over again. What began as a project entitled ‘Neoliberalism at work’ has become, in this present iteration, ‘Subjectivity at work’. This change in title captures something
of the changes that the project has undergone between its commencement and its realisation in the form that you are now reading. In its first iteration I was concerned with the impact of neoliberalism on work and worker subjectivities and with how neoliberalism, as a mode of government, worked on, in and through subjects to realise its ambitions (Barry, Osborne and Rose, 1996; Dean, 1999; Foucault, 1976, 1978, 1978-1979; Rose, 1999, 1999a). This present iteration reflects my growing preoccupation with questions about the work that subjects undertake when constituting and performing themselves as the singular, named and embodied subjects of their life-histories or narrative accounts of experience.

I have, since beginning, become more interested in theorising the very act of narration itself (and with the narrated and narratable subject) than I am with analysing, interpreting or deconstructing the contents of narratives. And so, in this present iteration of the thesis, I contemplate the work that subjects perform when giving accounts of themselves, and the work that researchers might perform when working with those accounts. I give an account of temporalised, spatialised, embodied and relational subjects and the constitutive practices and performances through which they are made intelligible to themselves and each other (and to me as the one who gives an account of them). This is a reflexive project in which my presence as researcher and author is figured as an intellectual resource. This is accomplished through the inclusion of a self-conscious textual ‘I’ who gives an account of himself. So, I begin by giving an account of the writer and the written, the researcher and the research.
The writer and the research

This thesis emerged from my experience as a researcher at the University of Western Sydney. It is simultaneously an extension of, and experiment with, the knowledges developed in two related projects. In 2002 I worked with Valerie Walkerdine on a pilot study *Subjectivity in the changing Australian labour market*. That study addressed a set of questions about the discursive constitution of subjectivity for women and men in different kinds of work at ages 18-23, 28-33 and 50-55. In 2004-6 this study was extended, in a larger Australian Research Council (ARC) funded project undertaken with Valerie Walkerdine and Bronwyn Davies, to include subjects aged 38-43 and 60-65.

Both projects were informed by an interest in understanding how changing forms of governance, specifically neoliberalism, had impacted on labour markets and the experiences of workers over the last thirty years. In taking this historical perspective we theorised that subjectivities might be differently constituted across time through changing modes of government. The project attempted to capture both the historical arc and biographical complexity of the changes involved, consider how these changes framed the life and work experiences of Australian workers of different ages, and explore the memories, ambitions, desires, pleasures and frustrations that have arisen from these changes. We addressed, among other things, the continuities, variances, ruptures or gaps between the narratives and discourses used by participants across the age groups, and the cross-generational implications for the take up of narratives and discourses about work that endured from the post World War 2 era, and those that emerged from the era of globalisation and economic reform of the last thirty years. We
theorised the impacts of changing patterns of work and the ways in which they might be differently inflected for different workers according to taxonomies of age, gender, ethnicity, education and type of employment, and research participants were selected so as to reflect these differences. I recruited and interviewed forty participants; four female and four male in each of the five age groups (18-23, 28-33, 38-43 50-55, 60-65), drawn from the inner-city and an outer western suburb of Sydney. I engaged each of the participants in one interview lasting between one and two hours duration, and it is these interviews and the transcriptions of them that inform the work I undertake in this thesis.

In both projects we worked with psychosocial, narrative and discursive methodologies in order to explore the ways in which people talked about and made sense of their lived experiences and life histories (Andrews et al, 2000; Byrne, 2002; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Walkerdine, Lucey & Melody, 2001). Working with narrative or discursive approaches to subjectivity, we attended to the culturally and historically specific ways in which people talked about experience. Working with Foucault’s (1976, 1978, 1978-1979) theorisation of governmentality, these variable and specific ways of talking were located both in the apparatuses through which everyday lives are governed, and the discourses through which lives are constituted and regulated. Since discourses are subject to historical changes it was hypothesised that workers of different ages would draw on different discursive repertoires that reflected larger patterns of historical, social and economic change. Their contemporaneous discursively produced narrative accounts of experience were situated within neoliberalism as the prevailing mode of government in Western capitalist democracies.
From among my reflections on the ARC project a number of questions and doubts emerged, and these shaped my divergent research interests. But what is it I am diverging from? I am diverging from, but not disavowing, the conceptualisations, theorisations and analyses that informed the ARC project. That project conceptualised the historical formation of the worker/subject within the normative practices and matrices of intelligibility of neoliberal government. Publications emergent from the project thus far have emphasised the discursive constitution of the subject of neoliberal government in relation to worker health (Davies and Bansel, 2005), education and life-long learning (Bansel, 2007; Davies and Bansel, 2007), technologies of audit and surveillance (Davies and Bansel, 2007a), and academic workplaces and workers (Bansel and Davies, 2007; Davies, Gottsche and Bansel, 2006). These accounts emphasised practices of government as normative technologies and traced some of their impacts on work and worker subjects. This thesis is an account of my departure from those accounts.

Departures and divergences
There are a number of points of departure in this thesis from the ARC project. That is not to say that there are only points of departure from the ARC project, for there are multiple points of departure from this beginning, and from other moments and movements across the chapters that follow. These multiple points of departure are not always followed by arrivals, but further departures; further beginnings without endings. This open-ended, multidirectional movement is made possible by the freedom made available to me in the space of the thesis, a space less accessible within the strictures of a government funded research project. These points of departure, or lines of flight, take
the form of philosophical contemplations emergent from myriad interests and anxieties. Where the ARC project addressed the labour market and work as a site for subjectification, I became more interested in addressing the work that subjects performed when constituting themselves as the subjects of their narrated accounts of themselves. I wanted to visibilise the subject of research, and of the narrative interview, by attending to the work that those subjects performed when asked to give accounts of themselves. I became, then, more interested in the work of producing narrative accounts of experience than I was in analysing them. And so, in what follows, I work to give an account of the narrating and narratable subject before I begin to work with the narrative accounts they give of themselves. In short, I am attempting to articulate an approach to working with life history narrative interviews that is cognisant of the conditions of narratability and of the work that subjects perform in constituting themselves as the narrators of their biographies.

How, I ask, might we understand biographical accounts of experience to have been constituted and performed as accounts, and their narrators to have been constituted and performed as narrating and narratable subjects? Whilst I recognise that governmentality theory and discourse analysis might clearly articulate the regulatory and normative technologies through which subjects are constituted, I am interested in theorising and articulating a subject who is not reducible to these technologies. I contemplate the possibility that normative practices of government are also productive of irreducible, incommensurable and idiosyncratic subjects, who are an excess of the technologies through which they have been inaugurated. Whilst this incommensurability has been theorised through psychoanalytic theory, I am anxious too, about the reduction
of the subject to a set of psy discourses, practices, inscriptions or descriptions such as those that assume, *apriori*, a defended subject (see Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). In the place of psychology or psychoanalysis then, I insert philosophy, not to disavow the constitutive salience of psy discourses and practices, but to explore what might emerge in the spaces vacated by them and occupied by philosophy. In working with philosophical contemplations I am also working to insert philosophy into the space of empirical research; that is, I work with philosophical questions in order to address the life-history accounts of experience collected in narrative interviews.

These divergences emerged whilst conducting, and later working with, the interviews collected for the ARC project. Following the assumption that there would be historically variable patterns of discursive similarity and difference across the age groups, I engaged with the interviews with these patterns in mind, searching for those temporalised ‘matrices of intelligibility’ through which the different age groups might have been differently constituted (Butler, 1993: 22). As I searched across the age categories I became alerted to the interpretive contingencies and limits of an inter-generational approach, becoming aware that there were intra-generational similarities and differences just as there were inter-generational differences and similarities. Since I wanted to address the complexity of these similarities and differences in ways that did not reduce them to stable taxonomies, inscriptions or points of reference, I attempted to resist both a reading of the interviews, and a rendering of possible patterns, in terms of coherent similarities and differences that located subjects as more like some than others according to stable taxonomies or inscriptions of age and gender. I wanted to unsettle any assumption that research subjects, data, (and, for that matter, researchers) ‘are stable
enough to be thematically labelled, sorted, categorized, captured and fixed’ (Gonick, 2003: 55). I recognised that any such assumption would inevitably generate a problematically reductive and constrained account of what can be ‘known’ about the different interviewees. I did not want to reduce the complex operations and negotiations of discourses and positions by particular subjects to a stable axis of recognition or typological framework. In resisting the ‘too easy assimilation’ of the accounts of others into given analytic categories or ‘ready-made concepts’ (Gonick, 2003: 56), I became more interested in articulating relations among the re/iterative production of positions in discourse, the ongoing constitution of the subject within shifting forms of governance, and the performances implicated in the take up of these discourses and positions within the project of fabricating a coherent and enduring ‘self’ (the ‘one’ who constitutes the subject of one’s ‘own’ biography). I wanted also to address this spectral concept of ‘taking up’ a position in discourse as more than a trope or signifying movement, and address not so much what is taken up, but how this taking up might be accomplished.

So, although we had theorised that each generation would be differently shaped by the practices through which they were governed, I became less convinced that such homogenous shifts were as clear or as stable as we had anticipated. I felt that the discourses were more diffuse across the categories and that it was necessary to think about historically changing practices of subjectification in some other way – one that emphasised dispersal and heterogeneity rather than concentration and homogeneity. My thinking was that if subjects are constituted through shifting discourses and practices of government, then those shifting discourses would be incorporated into the biographies of all the interviewees, young and old alike, but inflected by the specificity of their
historicity. Further, understanding that newly emergent practices and discourses are emergent from prior practices and discourses, those prior discourses were understood to endure in some form rather than disappear altogether. I therefore anticipated the taking up of newer discourses by the older participants and the persistence of older discourses in the narratives of the younger participants who could not be thought of as ‘more’ or ‘fully’ neoliberal (see Nairn and Higgins, 2007). On this basis I began to look for different sorts of differences, rather than homogenous ascriptions on the basis of variables such as age and gender.

I began to think about the interviews in ways that did not assume stable, linear patterns that described subjects as situated along a historical trajectory arced across a spectrum of differences, but rather as contingent, contradictory and complex assemblages of multiple practices, bodies and relations. Rather than think of neoliberalism as a discrete and stable moment in history, with its own set of discrete and stable practices of regulation that produced ‘neoliberal subjects’, I began to think of it as imbricated in a history of becoming, as having a genealogy that tied it to other times and spaces, to other histories. As Rose reminds us ‘we do not stand at some unprecedented moment in the unfolding of a single history. Rather we live in the middle of multiple histories’ (2007: 5). It is something of these multiple constitutive histories that I hoped to articulate, and articulate as constitutive relations, or becomings, imbricated in multiple times, spaces, practices and bodies. Therefore, in working with the interview transcripts, it became clear to me that it was inappropriate to be looking for stable shifts or patterns in the ways I had initially undertaken. And so, instead of searching for differences according to
inscriptions of age, gender, ethnicity, education and employment, I became engaged in this project of thinking differently about difference.

Further, in shifting my attention from the analysis of narratives to the work that narrators performed when constituting themselves as the subjects of their biographical narratives, I worked to think differently about the constitution of a narratable subject and the ways in which this might inform my rethinking of the subject. Having been invested in working with poststructuralist accounts of a discursive subject, and having eschewed humanist accounts of individuals and individuality, I had slipped into yet another form of determinism that on the one hand, disavowed the specificity of any particular human subject, and on the other, barely concealed an insipid romance of difference. So, what I am attempting here is a series of philosophical contemplations or movements that address the paradox between constitutive regulatory practices and a subject irreducible to them. I want to rethink the human in ways that does not entail a return to humanism (Butler, 2004: 13) and give an account of the specificity of a human subject who is, in her or his irreducibility, both more and less than human.

To this end I worked with concepts drawn from Actor Network Theory (Callon, 1986; Callon and Latour, 1981; Latour, 1987, 1988, 1992, 1993, 2004; Law, 1992). I make no claim to having used the theory comprehensively or consistently, but as far as I have used it, my objective was to:

- resist the dichotomies subject-object, nature-human, animal-human, machine-human by emphasising their co-constitutive materiality
- articulate co-constitutive relations between the human and the non-human
- ascribe agency to human and non-human actors so as to de-centre the human subject whilst simultaneously accounting for the specificity of the human subject as a particular actor in a network of relations
- emphasise the co-constitutive relationality of actors, human and not, as located in networks of actors and relations
- resist the reduction of actors and relations among them into stable homogeneous analytical domains
- and to work with the concept of a constitutive relational network of actors in order to spatialise and temporalise the practices and relations through which human subjects are inaugurated as embodied performative subjects.

In working with concepts of temporality and spatiality I found Ricoeur’s (1988) work with narrative and refiguration invaluable. Those concepts allowed me to think differently about history and change, and about the endurance of the subject in and over time. Refiguration, in one of its possible iterations and applications, refers to a mimetic relation between the order of narrative, the order of action and the order of life. It refers specifically to this last moment of mimesis, where narrative and action are refigured as *life*; as the life of the subject. In working with the concept of refiguration I was keen to speculate about how the subject might be historically constituted and reconstituted through practices of narration and refiguration. Further, refiguration emphasises the temporality of narrative practice, and the refiguration of memory and experience as
presence, as constituting the present moment of the narrating subject. Refiguration, as an ongoing act of mimesis, is also the figuration of a futurity; of a time yet to come. This suggested a way of thinking about historical shifts and the ways in which they might be theorised as present in the subject – alongside other historically specific narratives, discourses and lived experiences, as well as those experiences yet to come. It incorporated, too, an address to the place of narrative and memory in the constitution of subjectivity (Kuhn, 1995; Ricoeur, 1988; Phoenix, 2008).

Further, I recognised that independent of the spoken presence of specific discourses in the narratives, these discourses would none the less be constitutive of subjects. So, the absence of a particular discourse in a particular narrative was not taken to imply that the subject was not shaped in particular or significant ways by that discourse. Further this theorisation of presence as absence, or absence as presence, addressed my concern with approaches to discourse analysis preoccupied with the mapping of patterns of occurrence, intensity or distribution across interviews. Accordingly, I did not assume that what was not said was absent or beyond the purview of analysis, but rather present in muted form; present in the bodily practices of the subject with variable intensities and effects. This address to the visible and invisible, the audible and the silent, the known and the unknown, the remembered and the forgotten, assumed that the invisible, silent, unknown and forgotten were simultaneously, paradoxically, present and at work in the performance of giving an account of oneself.

I wanted, then, to address the re/iterative unfolding of a messy and dispersed constellation of discourses, narratives, networks, relations, actors, times, places,
relations and practices and their assemblage as embodied subjects: subjects whose bodies were understood as sites of political operations, of processes of materialisation in which the regulatory norms through which they were constituted as intelligible appeared to stabilise over time, without ever being entirely uniform or stable. Yet, as Butler recognises, ‘life histories are histories of becoming, and categories can sometimes act to freeze that process of becoming’ (2004a: 80). This signals the tension that characterises my approach to the interviews – a desire to address the messy, contingent irreducibility of the subject whilst recognising the constitutive power and performative force of those technologies, discursive practices and categories through which we are made narratable and intelligible to ourselves and each other, and made recognisable as neither fully identical nor fully different.

**The written and the researcher**

I am preoccupied in this thesis with the practice of giving an account of oneself; of the practices through which we are constituted as speaking biographical subjects capable of giving accounts of our experience, and of the practices through which I give an account of myself as a doctoral candidate in the textual space of the thesis. This text, comprised of contemplations, conundrums and speculations, is both more and less than intended, both more and less that it appears to be. It is a text composed of loose ends and missing links, a compilation of bits and fragments (de Certeau, 1988). It is emergent from the spaces opened out in the tension between my desire for multiplicity and disorder on one hand, and complexity and coherence on the other. I compose and decompose trajectories that simultaneously propel me in multiple directions and loop back into each other, that
variously coalesce and coagulate, narrow and broaden out, settle and slip away. The text is a multiplicity of gestures and openings that perpetually de-territorialise and re-territorialise the questions, propositions and concepts through which I construct my account of the research.

I work with these questions, propositions and concepts in order to address: subjectivity and historicity expressed as biography; the constitution and appearance of a biographical subject who speaks; the irreducibility of the subject to a stable set of constitutive practices; and the ethical practice of working with biographical accounts of experience. I emphasise an account of subjectivity as relational, and one that proposes multiplicity and movement; a subject who is never singular or stable, but always in motion within networks of possibilities, practices and bodies, both human and not. This assumes an embodied subject not bounded by an apparently stable location in the spatial frame of a body. Rather, the human body, or embodied human, is conceptualised as inaugurated by co-constitutive relations with other bodies that are assembled-together in ways that define, blur and exceed their boundaries. In this way I think beyond the boundary of an autonomous agentic subject and articulate the subject as multiplicity and relationality. This implies a particular iteration of the relation between the one and the many, contests the ways in which the one is understood as an example of the many, and foregrounds instead, the ways in which the many might be understood from an engagement with the one. The relation between the one and the many is understood here as rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). That is, the relation is not signified by predictable stability, sameness and repetition, but by eruptive movement, refiguration and difference. What the one says is not accorded significance as an exemplar of what the
many say. Rather what the one says is taken to stand in the place of (at least) what it might be possible to say within a repertoire of possibilities, what might be said by others, and what might remain unsaid but be present anyway. Here ideas of dispersal and diffusion propose a saturated social body that seeps, trickles, gushes, erupts and flows into the embodied subject such that any/body is understood as an iteration of a whole field of possibility. I suggest that it is possible to articulate, or gesture towards, the whole field from a single (but never singular) iteration.

This is a self-consciously poststructuralist text that works with partiality, irreducibility, multiplicity and fragmentation within and against textual practices that demand coherence for their intelligibility. So, I’m working against linear coherence whilst trying to retain intelligibility. I work with and against narrative by resisting the reduction of the text to a single, linear narrativised account, whilst simultaneously recognising the necessary function of narrative as a condition of intelligibility. This is accomplished, in part, through the use of textual devices that include the conceit of multiple voices, of divergence, repetition and accumulation. I work to fabricate a sense of continuity through the practice of accumulation that includes repetition; where repetition is simultaneously a continuity and a difference that ‘creates the final irony, that the very location and possibility of repetition, by repeating itself, does not remain identical to itself’ (Foucault, 2004: 149-150). I also work with a concept of repetition that includes the use of quotations from other theorists and other texts. This is an act of ventriloquism through which I mobilise the words of others to say something I wish to be said. This relocates, re-spatialises and re-temporalises their words in different contexts in ways that inflect them with different purposes, meanings and possibilities.
I locate tensions, contradictions and open spaces into which I insert myself rather than stabilise a territory as ground. I assemble, in that open space, thoughts, questions, concepts and propositions that instantiate movements towards other spaces of tension, or tense spaces. ‘There is no privileged point around which the landscape will be organised and with distance vanish little by little; rather there’s a whole series of small spatial cells of similar dimensions placed right next to each other … Their position is never defined in relation to the whole but according to a system of directions of proximity passing from one to another as if following the links in a chain’ (Foucault, 2004: 109). These metaphors of links and chains gesture towards the relationality I am trying to accomplish in my thinking about subjectivity and in the performance of that thinking as a textual practice.

**Performing a self-conscious, reflexive ‘I’**

This is a text of relations, proximities, links and variously continuous and broken chains, composed and co-ordinated thorough the fabrication of a self-conscious ‘I’ who conducts and writes the research. This ‘I’ is also the one who might make claims such as ‘I am interested in the messiness of experience and resist the pull to produce coherent rational accounts of research produced by a coherent rational researcher’. Accordingly, I evidence the messiness of my own processes as researcher, foreground the way theorising intersects with my own experience, and produce a text that disrupts linearity, coherence, singularity and rational truth accounts of a spectral author. I emphasise that my position as researcher (like that of the researched) is not unitary, but composed of
multiple positions, possibilities and relations (Gonick, 2003). I resist seamlessness and coherence by incorporating textual fragments, interruptions and trajectories that arc, loop, implode and peter out. I also deploy, in the production of this multiple, fragmented text, the rhetorical device of the ‘black box’ (Callon and Latour, 1981: 285). A black box ‘contains that which no longer needs to be considered, those things whose contents have become a matter of indifference’ (Callon and Latour, 1981: 285). It contains a sealed network of people, things, concepts, practices and relations that have become so familiar that they are taken for granted, are no longer visible and not thought to be of any importance. The box seals all these elements, however arbitrary they might be, into a fixed and stable relationship that cannot be easily questioned. This elides the contingent, the messy and the unplanned from authorised accounts of practices and events, and constructs an artifice of intentionality, rationality, coherence and stability. There are, inevitably, things that remain black-boxed, even in this account of my research that works to open some of them up.

In thinking about the practices through which subjects are constituted, and constituted as narrators of the accounts they give of themselves, I resist any pretension to rationality, coherence and stability. I perform this through the inclusion of a self-conscious ‘I’, located both as the ‘I’ who refers to myself throughout the text and as the ‘I’ who in the black boxes reveals what might otherwise be elided in the accounts I give of my research and of myself as researcher. The boxes and the text that surrounds them are a series of openings, for even the text that is not boxed is an opening out of what was previously taken for granted but never-quite-explicit in my thinking. Simultaneously present and absent, transparent and blackened, absent and present, open and closed, sealed and
revealed in the black boxes, are accounts of the thinking through which the thesis has been developed and articulated. You will find in the boxes biographical accounts of the processes through which the more formal account of the research parades itself as an affectation of authority and coherence. This is signalled by the visual boxing of particular pieces of text both within the chapters and between them. The black boxes between the chapters are composed in a different temporality than those within the chapters. That is those between the chapters, positioned as inter/sections, are retrospective reflections or medi(t)ations within and upon the completed thesis that recognise the omissions in the chapters; not things that I forgot to say, but things that informed my thinking but were unsayable at the time of writing. This is partially a trick of retrospective coherence (Gonick, 2003) imposed on an emergent text, and partially a desire to signal the multiple temporalities through which that emergent text was written.

Given my preoccupation with the work that subjects perform when giving accounts of themselves, and the work that researchers might perform when working with those accounts, I recognise that in any account of the accounts that we give of ourselves and each other there will be elements that remain black boxed and unavailable for consideration. This is partly a question of the limits to knowledge and the irreducibility of the subject to a set of stable technologies, practices or taxonomies. This irreducibility is in tension with the recognition that subjects are constituted and regulated through normative practices of government. I work, then, to articulate a subject who is simultaneously constituted through normative, regulatory technologies and irreducible to them. I explore this paradox through the organisation of the text into a series of philosophical contemplations that simultaneously move between questions of
subjectification and temporalisations and spatialisations of them within the present time and space of neoliberal government. I work with concepts of paradox and simultaneity to contemplate the ways in which neither practices of government nor the subjectivities they constitute are stable, rational or coherent, or entirely knowable, describable or predictable.

I work with an iteration of neoliberalism articulated by Rose (1996, 1999, 1999a) as a mode of government through which subjects are constituted as autonomous and rational agents of democracy. It is a mode of government that emphasises responsibility, rationality, autonomy and the ability of ‘individuals’ to determine the course of their lives and their identities through the choices they make. This is described by Rose as a fiction: a fiction of an autonomous self. This fictive autonomous self is constituted as a reflexive subject, aware of and responsible for their own thoughts and actions, and, as such, required to understand themselves and their experience in terms of the rational, autonomous, free choices they make. This ongoing construction of the self is described by Rose (1999a) as a biographical project of self realization. I work with this idea of a biographical project of the self and emphasise that this project, and the self it produces, is relational rather than autonomous. I am also interested in the extent to which it might be understood as fictive. I think of this in two ways. First, I argue that the rationality and autonomy of the biographical self is itself a fiction. Second, I take up the trope of ‘fiction’ and recuperate it from its other, ‘fact’. This is particularly salient to my thinking on temporality, the historicity of the subject, and the production of a life-history narrative account of oneself. I work with life-history narratives in such a way as to disturb any final distinction between what is fiction and what is not.
I emphasise that the ‘I’ who speaks is not a ‘one’, but rather a ‘Fictive-I’ who is constituted relationally through engagement with multiple others. The fictive-autonomy of this ‘I’ is accomplished in part through a disavowed dependence on the other (Butler, 1997a). I want to dislodge the singularity of this ‘Fictive-I’ and reiterate it as the many. This is strategic for at least two reasons: one, a preoccupation with a political and ethical relation of the self to the other; and two, as disruptive of iterations of discourse analysis that articulate the one as simply an exemplar of the many, rather than understanding the one to also be the many, such that the many might be read in and from the ‘one’. The inclusion of biographical accounts or fictions of myself signals the ways in which I, too, am a relationally constituted ‘Fictive-I’. As embodied relational subjects who remember and articulate accounts of an ‘I’, we are constituted within those normative matrices of intelligibility through which we and our accounts of ourselves might be made intelligible. And yet, despite the constitutive and normative power of these regulatory matrices of intelligibility, we are none of us reducible ‘to socially legible causes’ (Butler, 2004a: 45). It is this very irreducibility that informs my preoccupation with theorising a relationship between those normative practices through which subjects are constituted and regulated and the emergence of an ‘idiosyncratic’ subject irreducible to those practices. I use the term ‘idiosyncrasy’ as a synonym for incommensurability, unsubstitutability and irreducibility, as well as to capture something of the specificity of any incommensurable, unsubstitutable and irreducible subject.

I reiterate my concern with and for a spatialised, temporalised relational, non-substitutable subject, made recognisable through normative regulatory matrices of
intelligibility but not reducible to them. I’m trying to capture some sense of a subject who is never a ‘one’ but understands her or himself, and is understood by others, as an ‘I’ who is the named subject of one’s own biographical accounts of experience. ‘My’ name, the ways in which I am named, is a sign for the ‘I’ who lives, speaks and is recognised as self-same across time and space. This recognition is constituted and conferred relationally: there is no ‘I’ without a ‘you’. Neither this ‘I’ nor ‘you’ are singular. Rather, they are collective, multiple and co-constituted through their very relationality - without being identical. This address to relationality, simultaneously philosophical, political and ethical, forms the heart of this text. My preoccupation with relationality is directed towards working with a life history narrative as more than simply an account of oneself, but rather, as an account of the times, places and practices through which the ‘I’ is a co-constitutive and relational assemblage of actors, human and not. Rather than think of the one as an example of the many I seek to articulate the simultaneity of the one in the many and the many in the one. I am theorising a relational and idiosyncratic subject understood as a play of differences among intersecting repertoires of regulatory and regularising technologies of subjectification. It is, then, this constitutive relationship between the one and the many, the ‘I’ and the ‘you’, between practices of regulation and difference, relationality and idiosyncrasy that informs my inquiry.

Contemplating my act of inquiry
This inquiry is an assemblage of philosophical contemplations about how we might understand the accounts we give of ourselves to have been constituted and performed as
accounts; how we might understand the narrators of these accounts to have been constituted and performed as narrating and narratable subjects; and how we might work with and respond to these accounts in ways that are cognisant of the multiple practices through which narrators, acts of narration, narratives and narratability are constituted and performed in the accounts we give of ourselves and each other. The inquiry is an emergent self-reflexive practice shaped as much through false starts, blind alleys and missing links as it is by continuous chains of coherent ideas. The text is shaped through the articulation of questions, propositions and concepts that constitute the contours of my inquiry; its territories and borders, surfaces and densities, transparencies and opacities. These questions, propositions and concepts open out to further questions, propositions and concepts in ways that resist linearity and closure. It is a not a text of beginnings, middles and ends but simultaneously a reflexive re-mapping of familiar territories and a mapping of territories previously unknown to me. The text is conceived as a series of contemplations that call for a contemplative reading. The chapter titles thinking, knowing, speaking, relating, remembering, forgetting and assembling are nouns turned to verbs so as to suggest the movements performed within them. These headings are moments of contemplation that instantiate movements and points of departure rather than act as descriptors of the contents of the chapters.

These chapters constitute a trajectory that moves me from a contemplation of possibilities for working with narrative accounts of experience, to a close reading of one narrative in the final chapter. This trajectory, or narrative arc, from reflection to application is more curve than straight line, accomplished through a folding (Deleuze, 2006) of concepts as multiplicities and relationalities rather than as a linear collection of
discrete components that move inexorably towards closure. I do not work with interview data in ways that are more usual or expected in a doctoral thesis. That is, rather than analysing excerpts from the interview transcripts in the service of the development of theory, or applying theory to the analysis of transcripts, I work to develop an approach to working with interviews that resists the reduction of the interviewee and interview transcript to exemplars of theoretical points or as grist to the mill of theorisation. Rather than suppose the transcribed interview to be a patient text awaiting interpretation, I perform the act of approaching the text with patience. I work with transcriptions of narrative interviews as resources for the reflexive development of my theorising, and for the articulation and performance of patient theorising through deferral of close attention to one narrative until the final chapter. I work with theory in this way not as if there is a hypothesis to be tested through research, but with research as a space through which questions of theory might be developed.

In attempting to work out, through and with an ethical approach to transcripts of narrative interviews, I am self-consciously mapping an approach to working with transcripts rather than analysing data. Further, in avoiding the positioning of narrators and their narratives as exemplars of taxonomies or repertoires of discourses and regulatory constitutive practices, I expressly avoid the use of the interviews as exemplars which demonstrate or apply what I am exploring or proposing. There is however ‘data’ of a different sort. That is, there are moments of contemplation which address and work with:

- biographical accounts of experience
- reflexive accounts of my emergent thinking
and contemplations on fragments of interviews along with the extended exploration of one interview in the final chapter.

Further, I work at different times with human and non-human actors who inhabit the places otherwise occupied by ‘data’. These actors include a dream, a cigarette, a line of speech, a willow frond, and a bottle of beer. I incorporate these multiple forms of ‘data’ in order to fracture the stability and predictability of the text.

This move to instability and unpredictability is in accord with my desire for a rhizomatic and messy text on one hand, and in tension with my desire for a coherent and lucidly argued text on the other. In producing such a text I work with the tension between resisting the ordering of messiness and multiplicity into coherent accounts, descriptions or analyses, whilst simultaneously composing an orderliness that makes the text intelligible without it being overly ‘neat’ or ‘linear’ (Gonick, 2003: 15). I work in and through this text to give an account of my re/thinking of possibilities for engaging with narrated biographical accounts of experience. This re/thinking is accomplished through the articulation of relations, juxtapositions and ‘constellations of ideas … (that) … come from somewhere and are always fluid and on their way somewhere else’ (Speedy, 2008: 8).

In Chapter One, Thinking is a point of departure that begins with a contemplation of my emergent thinking about the concepts through which I address biographical narrative accounts of experience. I articulate both my thinking about these concepts and my purposes for working with them. I labour on them in the hope of opening them up to further, future elaboration, rather than presenting a definitive account of their meaning.
and possible application. I instantiate a trajectory that moves me from what I think I might already know, to what I am coming to know in the present - in the hope of knowing otherwise in the future. In so doing I offer no account of familiar territory by way of a literature review, nor do I compare and adjudicate among theories, search for contradictions, or construct straw figures to blow over or burn. Rather, I draw a sketchy map of the conceptual territory that I am entering, without knowing exactly what it is I am looking for or what I might find, but looking and finding anyway.

In Chapter Two, Knowing is a point of departure that begins with a contemplation of the concepts articulated in Chapter One. I work at the edges of what I might claim to know, and claim to know of others from the accounts they give of themselves. What, I ask, might it be possible to make of these accounts, and through what knowledges might this making be accomplished? What might it be assumed that any subject knows of her- or him-self, myself included? These are questions about the limits to knowledge, to knowing both oneself and another. This question of knowledge (and knowing) is also a question of memory, of the duration of knowledge (including knowledge of oneself and one’s experience) across time and space such that one might recognise her- or him-self, and be recognisable and recognised, as ‘one’ who endures as self-same over time. This is the ‘I’ who constitutes the subject of a narrated biography; the one who might say ‘I remember’, ‘I did’, I feel’, ‘I think’, ‘I know’.

In Chapter Three, Speaking is a point of departure that begins with a contemplation of a fragment from an interview: 'You are who you say you are'. I read this fragmented moment as suggesting that there is a 'who' that speaks and that this speech has a
performative force. I write, in this chapter, about talking, and in so doing recognise a slippage between speech and writing; the audible and the silent. I recognise that acts of transcription, which discursively convert the oral into the written, are productive of a bodily opacity; that is they render the body of the narrator opaque in the body of the text. I foreground not so much what subjects ‘actually say’, but rather how it might be possible for them to say anything at all. I resist an analysis of transcribed speech that might treat the text as a ‘surface of translation for mute objects’ (Foucault, 1991: 63). I contemplate possibilities for working with interview transcripts that might restore the materiality of the narrator, and the co-constitutive relations through which they are assembled, to the text. In so doing I position the transcribed interview as a textual effect of an embodied narrator and contemplate the analytic practices through which the materiality of the narrator might be articulated. I work with the concept of performativity to foreground not simply the narrated but the act of narration itself.

In Chapter Four, Relating is a point of departure that begins with a contemplation of the proposition that an irreducible and unsubstitutable subject might be articulated as an ‘idiosyncratic’ co-constitutive relation between bodies, human and not. I ask how a relational and idiosyncratic subject might emerge from practices of regulation, yet not be reducible to them. I work to give an account of the subject as a co-extensive relation among bodies, human and not, and of relations among subjects as mutually constitutive but not mutually commensurable. It is in this constitutive relational incommensurability that I locate the idiosyncrasy of a subject. I specifically address this mutually constitutive incommensurability as emergent from relations among actants (human and
not) in the particular domains (times, places, networks, practices and relations) of their appearance.

In Chapter Five, *Remembering* is a point of departure that begins with a contemplation of the work that subjects undertake when giving biographical accounts of themselves as singular, coherent and self-same over time. This experience of continuity is located in those temporalised acts through which the past, and embodied experiences of it, persist as memory, and through which continuity as futurity is anticipated. I foreground the ways in which relations between and among multiple and incommensurable actors, events and experiences might be brought together through narrativity in an illusion of coherence, stability and continuity made possible by acts of memory. I foreground a constitutive relation between bodies and memories: between bodies of memories and memories of bodies. This relation is temporalised and spatialised through narrativity and those practices of narration through which discontinuity and incommensurability are organised as if stable, coherent and continuous.

In Chapter Six, *Forgetting* is a point of departure that begins with a contemplation of possibilities for articulating the co-presence of memory and forgetting, the present and the absent, in the accounts we give of ourselves and each other. I ask too, how we might give an account of the presence of that which is absent when working with narrated biographical accounts of experience. Having worked in the previous chapter to unmoor memory from content and the verisimilitude of its recollection, I work in this chapter to unmoor that which is forgotten from content and the possible verisimilitude of its recovery. We might, I propose, address that which has been forgotten not through the
recovery of its content, but through a re/collection of the co-constitutive relations among actants through which any subject is assembled as both a multiplicity and an apparently singular ‘I’. I work with concepts of forgetting and assemblage in order to trace some of those constitutive relations that might otherwise be elided, disavowed or forgotten in the performance of oneself as an autonomous ‘I’. I articulate some of the practices through which subjects are assembled (and assemble themselves) as the subjects of their own biographies, as well as an approach to working with those narrated biographical accounts of experience.

In Chapter Seven, Assembling is a point of departure that begins with a contemplation of possibilities for assembling and working with a narrated life-history account of one subject: ‘Steve’. I give an account of Steve in and as an assemblage of bits and fragments and situate him as simultaneously an assemblage of co-constitutive relations among bodies, an idiosyncratic named and corporeal subject, a mark or trace of multiple temporalised and spatialised practices of regulation, and as a performative subject inflected by neoliberal technologies such as freedom, choice, lifestyle, consumption, responsibility and autonomy. In giving an account of Steve as an assemblage of co-constitutive relations among bodies I simultaneously resist the reconstitution of him as either an individual or an exemplar of a taxonomy, category, pattern or social phenomenon. I attend to Steve’s narrative not as an exemplar of the many, but as an assemblage of the many, and as an assemblage of bodies both present and absent, both near and far, both here and not, both past and present, both now and yet-to-come.
I have, in this discussion of what is to follow, announced that which I intend to perform and, in what follows, hope to perform that which I have here announced. Both announcement and performance are located in a terrain marked by contingency and uncertainty, a terrain formalised into a territory that has, simultaneously and paradoxically, both permeable boundaries and limits (Gonick, 2003: 8). I traverse this territory in order to engage with epistemological questions about possibilities for working with the accounts that we give of ourselves and each other, and that others give to us as researchers. Any intimation that the mapping of this territory actually begins here involves some degree of disingenuousness. It began elsewhere and otherwise, and any articulation of chapter content that implies a coherent trajectory through a series of propositions, questions and concepts, ‘involves a trick of retrospection that lends coherence to contingency when, in fact, like many works … this one started and finished as quite different projects’ (Brown, 1995: ix). It is in the spirit of this ‘trick of retrospection’ that I locate myself, my research and this text, and orient you, my reader, to the account I give of subjectivity and narrative accounts of experience.

I work, in the next chapter, with the concepts governmentality, subjectivity, narrative and assemblage in order to frame my address to both the constitution and regulation of subjects and their narrated accounts of experience, and to possibilities for working with those accounts.
Inter/section #1: a medi(t)ation on beginning

‘I realize that my progress is halting: trying to explain these first attempts in terms of what the form would become in the future’ (Foucault: 2004: 31). These thoughts are written in a different temporal location, after both that which has preceded it and that which follows. What I thought or knew, or thought I knew, or didn’t know, when I began, what I have come to think and know now, and what I have yet to think or know, cannot be captured by a singular coherent account of myself as thinker. In articulating these multiple and indeterminate lines of thought I produce multiple accounts of the research that temporalise and spatialise them as processes of becoming rather than accomplishments of finalities. The thoughts that appear here constitute a meta-narrative that informs you, my reader, of that which has been a present absence in the text, an absence made here more explicit as a presence, but only understood as an absence retrospectively, after the act of coming to think and know differently.

This thesis has emerged from suspicions, among them: suspicion of overly determined accounts of subjectification and subjects in empirical research in the Social Sciences - especially those drawing on governmentality theory and discourse analysis (of the type I had already myself performed); suspicion of post-structuralist accounts of the subject that promise multiplicity and irreducibility but deliver coherent accounts of subjects and the practices through which those subjects have been constituted;
suspicion of the poststructuralist trope of the subject that deconstructs ‘individuality’
but makes no account of ‘specificity’; suspicion of accounts of specificity that rely on
normative regulatory psy-discourses and practices; suspicion of accounts of agency
that assume a subject capable of acting alone and of their own volition; and suspicion
of accounts of difference that rely on comparisons and variations between stable
concepts, categories, assumptions or inscriptions. These suspicions bring with them a
number of resistances and capitulations. Whilst I might be suspicious of over-
determined accounts of subjectification I recognise the operation of normative
technologies through which subjects are constituted and regulated, and through which
I as author of this text am constituted and regulated. This signals an underlying
tension in this thesis; a tension that is played out in each of the chapters and across the
text. There are tensions between normativity and idiosyncrasy; coherence and a
messy, irreducible multiplicity; a simultaneous conformity and resistance to the
regulatory technology of the thesis as the signifier and point of entry to the academy
and academic knowledges; a tension between the embrace of uncertainty and the
performance of competence, and between ignorance and a performance of knowing.

So, the thesis is framed in and by these tensions, and particularly the constitutive
tensions that emerge from and in the act of giving an account of oneself. I particularly
work with the tension emergent from recognition that such accounts are rendered
intelligible through their imbrication in normative regulatory practices - but not
reducible to them. How, I ask, might it be possible to theorise this irreducibility? This
project has its own tensions and stages its own dilemmas; for any engagement with a
messy, multiple, irreducibility demands a certain coherence as a condition of its very intelligibility. Further, the intelligibility of any account of a project such as this necessarily relies upon discursive and narrative practices that have already been opened to suspicion. I am particularly anxious about the tension between the production of the text as a performance that does something rather than says what it is doing, and a performative text that relies on a meta-narrative for its coherence and intelligibility. This is a tension between a linear coherence and a messy multiplicity. I have managed these suspicions, resistances and tensions through a number of textual practices, which I outline below.

The text is a philosophical contemplation of a series of dilemmas emergent from my thinking about the practice of giving an account of oneself.

The text is an assemblage of bits and fragments connected by relations through which the ideas are played out and with, and given a degree of coherence emergent from the articulation of those relations.

The text is a space for the self-conscious production of knowledge rather than for reportage of what I have ‘found’ or come to ‘know’. I signal the act of producing knowledge and attempt to capture two specific phases or movements within the text that keep a dialectical relation between the fragmented conditions and processes of its production and some account of the aggregation of these fragments into a coherent and intelligible account of the research and the researcher. I do this through: the
mobilisation of a voice that signifies the act of thinking rather than one that repro-
produces thought as a finality; the interruption of the text through biographical
accounts that narrativise my emergent thinking; and through the use of repetition as a
refrain that signals a self-conscious and contrived continuity and assertion of
authority.

The text is a resistance to the idea of a transcription of a narrative interview as a text
awaiting interpretation. Rather, the thesis is a space in which I problematise the
patient interview text and perform an act of patiently approaching the work that
narrators do in producing such a text, and that researchers might do in engaging with
it. I work with transcribed interviews in order to think about narrative rather than
move too quickly to giving a narrativised account of what those narratives and their
narrators might mean or what they might demonstrate. In the first six chapters I
construct my thinking about narrative and the work of giving an account of oneself,
and work with one narrative interview in the final chapter.

The text is constructed in such a way that in each of the chapters I bring together, or
articulate relations between things, things that might not otherwise be brought or
thought together. I do not position these as new relations or original insights, but as
different points of entry to familiar questions. Although the chapters are explorations
or experiments emergent from theoretical tensions, they are not sites for the resolution
of those tensions. Rather they generate further tensions which frame the chapters that
follow. Each chapter is inaugurated and animated through a concept or problem space
emergent from the previous chapter and the chapter headings are provocations and points of departure for contemplation and the mapping of different relations.

The text is assembled in such a way that the inter-texts between the chapters, such as this one, give an account of the research emergent in and from a different temporality. These are retrospective accounts understood as emergent from the haecceity of the aggregated, completed chapters and reflections on the act of having completed them.
Chapter 1: Thinking

I believe … that it would be a mistake to subscribe to a progressive notion of history in which various frameworks are understood to succeed and supplant one another. There is no story to be told about how one moves from [one framework to another]. The reason that there is no story to be told is that none of these stories are the past; these stories are continuing to happen in simultaneous and overlapping ways as we tell them. (Butler, 2004a:4)

Thinking about the thesis
This thesis is an assemblage of simultaneous and overlapping accounts of my thinking about life-history accounts of experience. I am simultaneously concerned with giving an account of the overlapping temporalities through which the act of narrating life histories in the present is accomplished, and with the articulation of the thesis as if written in a stable, continuous and unfolding present whilst simultaneously signalling the impossibility of this. The thesis is as much an experiment in thinking as it is a regulated performance of candidature. It is comprised of multiple and divergent thoughts and accounts that continue to overlap, coalesce and fall apart. This text is a risky performance and a performance of risk. It involves both thinking differently than I have done before and the giving of a reflexive account of that thinking. I work with poststructuralist principles of multiplicity, fragmentation, partiality, contradiction, discontinuity, incoherence and irreducibility to give an account of a multiple, fragmented, partial, contradictory, discontinuous, incoherent and irreducible subject. I
produce a text that is similarly multiple, fragmented, partial, contradictory, discontinuous, incoherent and irreducible, but (hopefully) still recognisable as a PhD thesis. I work to map relations between concepts and theories not usually brought and thought together. I work to simultaneously territorialise and deterritorialise them; enunciate and undo them. The text, as an experiment in thinking, is a reflexive account tolerant of the tensions, contradictions and collisions between these concepts and theories, doings and undoings, without attempting to reconcile them. Rather, I am interested in what might emerge in this space of uncertainty. I recognise the ever present danger of slippage between theories and positions and, in recognising the slipperiness of the terrain I am mapping, recognise that perhaps a certain slipping is inevitable. But this slipperiness might also create a visceral fluidity that moves my thinking in different directions in order to make different connections, map different flows and relations, and take my thinking who knows where and with who knows what consequences.

In thinking about possibilities for working with narrated biographical accounts of experience, those accounts and experiences, and my accounts of them, are positioned as multiple, mobile and discontinuous. I work against positioning, articulating or representing experience as seamless (Gonick, 2003), and instead, emphasise rupture and contradiction. In contemplating ‘the appearance of being a subject and of experiencing oneself as such’ (Rose, 1999: 268), I attend to the temporal spaces in which subjects and their experiences are constituted and lived. I understand experience to be ‘the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture’ (Foucault, 1992: 4). I work with this account of experience in order to give an account of subjects who are simultaneously: regulated, that is, constituted
through normative practices of government (Burchell, 1996; Dean, 1999; Foucault, 1976, 1978, 1978-1979; Rose, 1996, 1999); *idiosyncratic*, that is, irreducible to technologies of regulation; *unsubstitutable*, that is, incommensurable in their specificities (Cavarero, 2000); and *relational*, that is, constituted in networks of relations between and among human and non-human actors (Callon, 1986; Callon and Latour, 1981; Latour, 1987, 1988, 1993, 2004; Law, 1992). In pursuing this inquiry, I am self-consciously selective and partial in my reading and in the ways I make use of that which I have read. I think of this as a scene of improvisation (Barthes, 1994) or a line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004).

I am, in this thesis, theorising a ‘self’ who can give an account of oneself; of her or his history of becoming. This ‘self’ is understood as constituted by, and emergent from, a relation between historically specific practices of government (through which regulatory, regularising and normalising practices are instantiated) and the specificity of an irreducible subject (emergent as a difference within that field of normativity). Whilst I recognise that the discursive practices through which normative practices of subjection are mobilised have material effects, I also recognise that subjects are more than an ‘effect’ of these discourses. Rather, they are subjects ‘whose conditions of emergence can never be fully accounted for’ (Butler, 2005). Further, these subjects, who can never be fully accounted for, are understood as opaque, ‘even to themselves’ (Butler, 2005: 19). There are, then, limits to what might be known about oneself or another, and this thesis is a project excited by, and performed within, those limits.
I work, in this chapter to articulate my somewhat messy, fragmented and sketchy thinking about a spatialised and temporalised, corporeal and narratable subject, and the biographical accounts of experience such subjects might give of themselves. I work with the concepts *governmentality*, *subjectivity*, *narrative* and *assemblage* in order to articulate a simultaneously regulated and irreducible subject emergent from ‘the play between difference and similitude’ (Gonick, 2003:14). I trace those movements and flows, diffusions and dispersals that permeate the apparent boundaries between the one and the many, the ‘some’body, the ‘any’body and the ‘every’body. I work with these concepts in the hope of opening them up to further, future, elaboration, rather than presenting a definitive account of their meaning and possible resolution and application. I instantiate a trajectory that moves me from what I think I might already know, to what I am coming to know in the present, in the hope of knowing otherwise in the future. This trajectory is set in motion by an address to the ways in which experience, and any account we give of it, is relationally constituted through technologies of government and yet lived *as if* one’s own.

**Thinking about governmentality**

Foucault’s (1976, 1978, 1978-1979) account of governmentality articulates a genealogical shift from sovereignty (rule by sovereign) to governmentality (rule by government). This shift describes the technologies of power through which the modern, liberal subject is constituted and disciplined and populations regularised and regulated. I am specifically interested in an account of governmentality as an account of the relation between the one and the many, between discipline and regulation. Discipline, as
techniques of power, attempts to rule a multiplicity of subjects to the extent that ‘their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and if need be, punished’ (Foucault, 1976: 242). This is a technology of power centred on the visibility of the individual body, ‘their spatial distribution … separation, their alignment, their serialization and their surveillance’ (1976: 242). After this ‘first seizure of power of the body in an individualizing mode’, comes a second seizure of power, one that is not individualising but massifying, one ‘that is directed not at man-as-a-body but man-as-species’ (1976: 243). These are two technologies of power, established at different times and ‘superimposed’ upon each other (1976: 249), and since they are not mutually exclusive ‘can be articulated with each other’ (1976: 250). The articulation of these two technologies of power traces movements from and between the ‘anatomo-politics’ of the human body, to a “biopolitics” of the human race and control over relations between them (1976: 243). What emerges in this relation is neither strictly an individual body nor a social body, ‘but a new body, a multiple body’ (1976: 245). It is something of this constitutive multiplicity, of the co-constitutive relationality between bodies and the practices through which they are inaugurated, disciplined and regulated that I am trying to capture in working with the concept of governmentality.

I work with the concept of governmentality as both a theorisation and critique of modernity and liberalism and as a mode of inquiry into the conduct of conduct. Foucault (1978) specifies the principle of governmentality as the ensemble of power relations that structure and regulate human conduct according to rationalised programmes and objectives or ambitions. These programmatic ambitions and interventions are
materialised and mobilised through technologies of government that constitute the subject and align their conduct with the dominant norms, discursive practices and modernist narratives of liberal society.

Governmentality not only foregrounds the rationalities, ambitions, technologies and mentalities through which subjects are constituted and regulated, but the ways in which subjects constitute and regulate themselves (Dean, 1999; Foucault, 1988). Technologies of the self, or practices of self-formation and regulation, are those techniques ‘which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thought, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality’ (Foucault, 1988: 18). These ‘certain states’ are normatively constituted and regulated according to the programmatic ambitions of a particular mode of government. They define the parameters of what constitutes normalcy, intelligibility and recognition within the contexts of their operation.

However, for Foucault, these ambitions and operations of government have no ‘essential’ or ‘real’ structure that underpins them: ‘origin’ is a discursive myth and not a ‘real’ presence. Instead, the local and the particular ‘are always inserting their differences’ (McHoul & Grace, 1998: 2). Foucault challenges the idea that there is any single, stable, identifiable rationale/reason behind every event. This allows for more subtle and complex analyses of the local and specific effects of power that move beyond a linear paradigm of cause and effect. This movement foregrounds the operations of multiple, competing and contradictory discourses and narratives within any particular
mode of government. Discontinuity is stressed over continuity and multiplicity over steady progression. This foregrounds a conception of subjectification and the assemblage of subjects in, and as, a collection of techniques or flows of power that run through the whole of a particular social body (Foucault, 1980). These flows of power are distributed as discursive formations and practices within the networks through which subjects are ‘materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc.’ (Foucault, 1980: 97).

In working with the concept of governmentality I am interested in the ways in which subjectivities are constituted, regulated and regularised by technologies of government and of self. I recognise, however, that these technologies do not produce identical, self-same subjects. I am as much interested in accounting for their constitutive differences as I am their similarities, and in articulating an irreducible, idiosyncratic subject emergent from them as a play of differences (Deleuze, 2004). I resist a reading and application of governmentality theory in empirical work with human subjects that assumes stable causal relations between technologies of government, technologies of self and the subject of research. I’m interested in articulating ‘new possibilities or imaginaries’ (Scheurich and McKenzie, 2005: 22) that are sensitive to Foucault’s emphasis that the practices through which we are governed are not totalising, stable or intractable. I simultaneously work with governmentality theory and resist any tendency towards totalising or deterministic accounts of the constitution and regulation of subjects. I emphasise that despite practices of regulation we are far from homogenous, and are instead heterogeneous, irreducible and idiosyncratic. Heterogeneity, irreducibility and
idiosyncrasy are understood as proliferations of relations, multiplicities, contradictions, incommensurabilities and irreducibilities.

In giving an account of the heterogeneity and temporalised and spatialised materiality of practices of subjectification and of the subject, I emphasise that constitutive practices of government do not operate in any stable way as capacities of particular institutions, groups or persons. Rather, the exercise of power and possibilities for action are located in the temporalised and spatialised, relational networks in which subjects are constituted. These possibilities emerge from ‘procedures or processes that multiply across a social field as part of a complex set or collection of reasons or causes that are not entirely intentional or rational’ (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005: 16).

Levi-Faur and Jordana (2005) characterise the multiplicity and mobility of practices across a social field through concepts of diffusion and dispersal. They recognise that technologies of government are mobile rather than stable: that is, they move from country to country, sector to sector, institution to institution and, I add, from subject to subject, in ways that are inflected by the specificity of their context. In the process they may acquire new meanings and applications which may have unpredictable consequences and constitute possibilities for resistance, diversity or alterity, as much as compliance. This recognises possibilities for mobility, adaptability and variation across and within sites, as well as across and within subjects. It is precisely this dispersed and diffuse mobility across networks of sites and actants that informs the relational approach to subjectification and subjectivity that I am articulating. These mobile relations coagulate and dissolve in different moments and in different spaces, producing
variations within normative practices of regulation. They are subject to, and constitutive of, different flows and intensities across the network, and reanimated within the practices specific to those sites and the actants in it. I am trying to capture some sense of movement and variation that recognises intersections and relations between practices of regulation, and differences that arise from the specificity of a site and the actants in it.

Whilst I have emphasised that practices of government and the production of knowledge are ‘full of inconsistencies, failures, new beginnings, changes in direction and unpredictable outcomes’ (Henriques et al., 1998: 109), it is possible to establish constitutive dependencies, regularities or relations among discursive practices. Foucault’s (2002) focus on discursive conditions of possibility indicates the limits to what is sayable and doable in any given time and space. And yet discourses, though regulated and systematic, are not monolithic, stable or coherent, but rather, mobile and to some extent indeterminate. Further, as located and aggregated within, and separated from, other discourses, they circulate with variable flows and intensities across and within sites, knowledges and subjects. Since discourses are relational and variable rather than stable, the discursive practices, formations, knowledges, effects and subject positions that emerge from them are similarly variable and unstable.

I work with Foucault’s articulation of discourse (elaborated in Chapter Three) to emphasise the multiple and complex intersections of multiple discourses and discursive practices, formations and positions through which actors are constituted. These multiple intersecting discourses are not mere accumulations of single discourses that might be examined in isolation, but rather necessarily understood in terms of the constitutive
networks and relations through which they are mobilised into repertoires that adhere to each other in the formation of a constellation of meanings, possibilities for action, or matrices of intelligibility (Butler, 1990). These constellations are, I suggest, made possible and actionable because of their narrativisation into temporal frames through which they might be held together in some meaningful way. Discourses, I suggest, have no content, function or meaning that is not already narrativised; that is, they are located in networks of relations and framing contexts in which they might adhere, cohere, dissolve and endure. Just as Butler (1990) argues that sex was always already gender, I suggest that discourse was always already narrative, and governmentality simultaneously a narrativisation and critique of liberalism.

**Thinking about governmentality as narratives of liberalism**
Papadopoulos refers to liberalism as the ‘binding meta-narrative of contemporary time’ (2003: 80). Situated in this way, liberalism, as a mode of governmentality, is understood as not only constitutive of the subject and the social, but constitutive of the discursive and narrative resources through which that constitutive force is lived. As a critique of modernity and liberalism, governmentality assumes that disparate discursive practices are already constituted within liberal narratives of autonomy and freedom and modern teleological narratives of progress and of an unfolding history and subject. As the ‘binding meta-narrative of contemporary time’ I temporalise the present iteration of liberal government as ‘neoliberalism’. Neoliberalism is characterised as an intensification of liberalism expressed as advanced liberalism or neoliberalism.

Much debate has emerged regarding the causes, reach and impacts of neoliberalism. Some find an oppressive regime that signals the erosion of democracy, the disappearance of civil society and other deleterious effects (Baudrillard, 1998; Bourdieu, 1998, 2003; Brown, 2003; Sennett, 1998, 2006). Others are enthusiastic about the emergence of a new politics beyond the limits of modernism, in which a new relation of the self to the state, and of the self to the self, has been made possible (Giddens, 1991; Beck, Giddens & Lasch, 1994). For Papadopoulos (2003) and Luhmann (1987), neoliberalism has resulted in a society which ‘has more positive and negative qualities than before. Today is at the same time better and worse’ (Luhmann, 1987: 139). Rose, on the other hand, expressly avoids such adjudication: ‘I think we would be wise to avoid substantializing either the present or its past. Rather than conceiving of our present as an epoch or a state of affairs, it is more useful, in my own view, to view the present as an array of problems and questions, an actuality to be acted upon’ (Rose: 1999a: 11). I am not so much concerned here with articulating what neoliberalism is or does, but rather, problematising my earlier thinking about governmentality in relation to it.

That neoliberalism is a significant global capitalist enterprise is not disputed, and I recognise that it has discernable features as a historically specific mode of liberal government (Burchell, 1996; Rose, 1996). Though understood as a regulatory regime, neoliberalism is not positioned as hegemonic or deterministic, but rather as located in networks of emergent and intersecting practices and conditions of possibility. I
emphasise that there is no singular, stable iteration of ‘liberalism’ or ‘neoliberalism’ as a specific iteration of it, but rather a set of dispersed discourses, positions and practices inflected by the specificity of the different temporal and spatial contexts in which it emerges (Levi-Faur & Jordana, 2005).

My concern in the ARC project from which this thesis emerged was with mapping a relation between historically changing modes of government (specifically neoliberalism) and historically changing modes of subjectivity. This preoccupation has given way to articulating governmentality as an actor in a network of multiple practices, relations and actors, rather than as constitutive of that network and all the actors in it. In taking a position that does not assume neoliberal hegemony, and in taking up Levi-Faur and Jordana’s (2005) emphasis on practices of diffusion and dispersal through networks of geographically dispersed sites (and actors), I’m trying to think in a more nuanced way about constitutive relations between governmentality, neoliberalism and subjectivity. This address to diffusion and dispersal across time and space, across continents, cities, communities and subjects recognises that ‘while neoliberalism may well be the dominant discourse, it is not the only discourse available’ (Levi-Faur & Jordana, 2005: 14). What I am signalling here is the endurance of other discourses and practices, and positions within them, that exceed, defy, resist and intersect with neoliberal discourses and practices in ways that cannot be reduced to a deterministic hegemonic rationality. Historical changes in governance, subjectification and subjectivity are understood as constituted within, and by, the networks of actors involved in the processes and practices through which these changes acquire meanings and are mobilised in practice. Again, principles of difference and idiosyncrasy are used to understand the ways in which
discourses and practices of government are differently inflected at different times, in
different sites, and in different subjects.

Given that I am resisting an account of the operation of a stable, coherent and monolithic
mode of government, I resist an account of a stable, coherent subject with a set of fixed
and stable inscriptions constituted by, and emergent from, it. Rather, I focus on how
particular kinds of subjects are produced in and as effects of co-constitutive relational
networks of actors. In so doing, I foreground the narrative and discursive conditions and
practices that make certain kinds of subjects possible, and recognise that within and
beside dominant discourses and practices there exist other intersecting discourses and
practices situated within different temporalised and spatialised networks of actors and
relations among them. These relations are constitutive of multiple subject positions and
practices that are always both more and less than what dominant discourses prescribe
and proscribe.

Since Foucault emphasises that practices of government do not have their own
formalised, rational trajectory of emergence, I give an account of neoliberalism that
emphasises instability and contradiction. Similarly, I situate the subject within a
complex, contradictory and unstable assemblage of temporalities, spatialities, relations,
practices and actors. I contest the master narratives of modernist reason and universal
rationality by resisting iterations of neoliberalism as meta-narrative, and of the
modern/liberal subject as autonomous and rational. In giving an account of a relational
rather than autonomous subject, I attend to those co-constitutive relations among actors
that proliferate and multiply across networks in ways that are simultaneously intentional
and not, rational and not, coordinated and unpredictable. In this way, neoliberal policies
and practices of government are not understood as simply the consequences of
legislation or as indicators of social structures, but as techniques possessing their own
specificity in the more general field of other ways of exercising power (Foucault, 1976,
1978, 1978-1979, 1991a). It is something of this specificity expressed as co-constitutive
relations among actants, that I am attempting to articulate. I am also attempting to give
an account of the specificity of a particular human subject as constituted in and through
these dispersed and diffuse networks.

Thinking about subjectivity
In addressing subjectivity I am working to disturb any distinction between the one and
the many by articulating them as co-constitutive relations. Against liberal or modernist
accounts of an autonomous subject and a universal rationality (Burchell, 1996; Dean,
1999; Rose, 1996, 1999, 1999a), I emphasise situated, temporalised and spatialised
relationalities; that is, co-constitutive relations among actors, both human and not. These
networks of actors, and relations between and among them, are located in specific and
multiple temporal and spatial locations. These temporalised and spatialised relations
between actors might, I propose, be traced in and through those biographical life-history
narratives through which accounts of experience, and their narrators, are articulated.

My interest in a temporalised and spatialised subject is framed through an address to
history and biography; specifically history as biography. Foucault (2002) contests the
idea that both history, and the human subject who creates it, can be described in a
logical, rational and continuous manner. This is, he suggests, the central fantasy of modernity: that the ‘real’ can be understood and represented in this way, and that the rational human subject is the main actor through which this real is formed and lived. In place of this rationality, Foucault articulates history as neither wholly logical nor rational, and as having no agentic subject at its centre. He critiques the foundational assumptions of Western modernity, specifically the teleology through which history (or the biographical history of the subject) can be traced from, or back to, its origins. In the place of logic and rationality Foucault substitutes randomness, disparity, dissension, contradiction and all ‘the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations’ (1994: 374).

In resisting accounts of an autonomous and agentic human subject I work with concepts drawn from Actor Network Theory in order to articulate the agency of both human and non-human actors (Callon, 1986; Callon and Latour, 1981; Latour, 1987, 1988, 1993, 2004; Law, 1992). Actor Network Theory maps co-constitutive relations between human and non-human actants in a network. It resists a subject/object binary by extending the concept of agency from the human to the non-human. For Latour an actor is ‘anything that modifies a state of affairs by making a difference. ... Thus, the question to ask about any agent is simply the following: does it make a difference in the course of some other agent’s action or not?’ (2004: 226).

Actors, both human and not, are agents or ‘entities that do things’ (Latour, 1992: 241). This aspect of action, of doing things, emphasises that any distinction between humans
and non-humans is ‘less interesting than the complete chain along which competences and actions are distributed’ (Latour, 1992: 243). That which constitutes an actor is defined through those acts that shift action, and in this sense, human and non-human actors are agents alike. This iteration of action as agency disturbs and de-centres any articulation of the human subject as an autonomous agent. For Latour, spatialisations of agents within a text are ‘actors’, and outside the text are ‘actants’. An ‘actor’ is, then, the textual representation of an ‘actant’: ‘an actor is an actant endowed with a character’ (Akrich and Latour, 1992: 259). Since I am working to capture something of the simultaneous and overlapping practices through which subjects, their experience and accounts of it are constituted as spoken narratives or texts, I am not so much interested in this distinction between what is spatialised in the text or outside it. Rather, I am more interested in the multiple flows and relations through which human and non-human actants are co-constituted in multiple temporalised and spatialised networks of relations and practices of narration. And so I strategically resist the distinction between ‘actor’ and ‘actant’ and signal my preferred use of the term ‘actant’, especially as it is the one that provides greatest distance from any lingering assumption that ‘actor’ might recall and privilege the human subject over non-human subjects.

Although Actor Network Theory does not itself engage with questions of human subjectivity, I extend its conceptualisation of co-constitutive relations between human and non-human actants in order to understand something of the particular temporal and spatial contexts in which assemblages of actants constitute possibilities for both the elaboration of forms of human action, and for ways of experiencing and narrating
oneself. In this sense the human subject is a specific and differentiated actant co-constituted through relations with other actants. I emphasise these co-constitutive relations between human and non-human actants in order to signal my interest in a relational subjectivity that is more than intersubjectivity. I articulate a relational subjectivity emergent from co-constitutive relations between and among human subjects, technologies, artefacts, memories, desires, knowledges, times, places, discourses, narratives, practices and so on. Further, in emphasising co-constitutive relations between the human and the non-human, I move at times between the terms ‘actant’ and ‘body’ in order to signal an iteration of the human subject as an embodiment of these relations among actants (which might also be articulated as bodies).

I am primarily concerned with understanding something of how the subject is made, and made possible, through constitutive networks of relations, and I attend to those processes, practices, multiple positions, possibilities and becomings through which a subject (as a human actant and a named embodied person) is assembled. I am also concerned with ‘who’ this named and embodied subject might be understood, and understand themselves, to be (Cavarero, 2000). This concern with a ‘who’, made possible through an address to ‘how’, is simultaneously understood as a constitutive relation and a constituted ‘person’. This unsubstitutable ‘who’ is understood as emergent in, at, or as an intersection in a network of relations: as a particular embodied aggregation of practices and actants in a particular network through which multiple constitutive relations among multiple co-constitutive actants are assembled.
I’m proposing a relational subjectivity that is co-constitutive, collective and participatory. I’m proposing a constitutive reciprocity and mutuality among actants comprised within (and who themselves comprise) the networks of relations through which they are constituted, assembled and regulated. Nissen articulates a concept of collective subjectivity as situated activities or practices that are constituted through ‘particular instances of the dynamic reciprocal constitution of participants and collectives’ (2005: 154). Within these co-constitutive relations both specific embodied subjects and the social body are understood ‘as particular subjects’ (Nissen, 2005: 154, original emphasis). For Nissen, this is ‘a crucial determination since it establishes the collective as a positive singular object for … study’ (2005: 154). In this way Nissen articulates the collective as a particular subject, and such a subject is understood in terms of relations of participation. In Nissen’s account, particular collectives are understood as singular subjects who participate in larger practices, and themselves perform reflexivity ‘not only in the explicit shape of a we’, but also in the ongoing regulation of activity (Nissen, 2005: 156). I am interested in this movement between the one and the many, where the ‘one’ is understood as collective and the collective understood as ‘one’. The subject of research might then be understood as simultaneously collective and singular; the many a reading of the one, the one a reading of the many. I am gesturing toward a constitutive relation between the collective as a single subject and the particular subject as the collective.

Following the position I have articulated in relation to governmentality, the subject and experience are not located within an ‘overdetermining architecture of historical reality’, but ‘connected to an always differently structured social constellation’ or network of
relations (Papadopoulos, 2003: 79). In giving a relational account of subjectivity I am articulating a simultaneously regulated and idiosyncratic subject. Foucault’s emphasis on the ways in which organised systems of meaning derive their significance from power-knowledge relations, signals the normative and regulatory constitution of subjects and their experience within the social. And yet, I also recognise that subjectivity is not exhausted in its social dimension. Since I am concerned with the ethics of working with the accounts that others give of themselves, I work to simultaneously recognise the social constitution and regulation of the subject and their unsubstitutability, irreducibility and idiosyncrasy.

Within post-positivist frameworks, accounts of subjectivity are understood and articulated through concepts of relationality, partiality, fragmentation, situatedness and contradiction, and as enactments of different positions in discursive power/knowledge relations (Davies, 1989, 1993, 1994; Davies & Harré, 1990; Henriques et al., 1998; Lather, 1991; Weedon, 1991). Subjects are understood as fragmentary, multiple and mobile, assembled, positioned and repositioned in a succession of temporalised and spatialised moments, movements, networks and corporeal relations. I locate this corporeality in both the spatial frame of the body of the human actant as subject, and as made possible through the interaction of this spatialised body with other spatialised bodies or actants. Post-positivist accounts of subjectivity foreground the constitutive force of language/discourse in the fabrication of the subject. Subjectivity, understood as positioning within discursive practices, is constituted and regulated through the discursive practices that characterise the historical specificity of the temporal and spatial location of the subject. And yet, like Henriques et al. (1998) I recognise the dangers of
discourse determinism, which implies that people are mechanically and unilaterally positioned in similar and stable discourses with similar and stable effects. And so, I’m working to give an account of an irreducible subject; one constituted through the regulatory practices of government, but not totally accounted for, reducible to, or fully described by them.

Further, though subjectivity is understood as discursively produced, the subject is not understood as endlessly open to revision through changing discursive practices. Paradoxically, that the subject is not formed anew in every conversational encounter does not imply that the subject is the same each time she or he speaks. There are, however, preferred, privileged or habituated modes in which each subject will be articulated and articulate themselves. These are shaped by the temporality and spatiality of the subject, the social, historical, geographical and political domains of their appearance, and from their history of experience within those domains. ‘The important point here is that this personal history is a signifying history, having to do with the way the subject has been talked about and addressed by his/her important others and the way this is reproduced, defied, struggled over in the subject’s current relationships’ (Georgaca, 2005: 84). I emphasise that these relationships incorporate more than the intersubjective relations between human actants implied here, and extend to and include relations among co-constitutive human and non-human actants in particular temporalised and spatialised networks.

I am attempting, then, to give an account of subjectivity that avoids regulatory determinism, or mediates it through an account of an agentic and potentially resistant
subject. I want, also, to recupereate the speaker and the act of speech from approaches to discourse analysis that privilege the spoken as disembodied text. I position the interview transcript as the textual effect of an embodied narrator. My emphasis on an embodied narrating subject emerges from the foregrounding of relational subjects as relational bodies among other bodies, including bodies of knowledge. It is this relational interaction and intermingling with other bodies that performatively constitutes ways of being and doing (Butler, 1990; Grosz, 1994). I emphasise the performative dimension of subjectivity as a way of signalling a subject who acts; a ‘thinking, feeling, acting, situated and embodied’ (Henriques et al., 1998: xvi) subject for whom the possibilities of being and doing are constituted in relation to other actants, bodies, possibilities and performances.

For Foucault the body is ‘the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas, the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration’ (1984: 375). I read this construction of the body as a ‘volume’ in terms of its capacity to enfold, hold, contain and sustain the constitutive relations, narratives, discourses and practices through which the subject might appear to be itself a capacity; that is, capacitated to be, and to act. It is a volume too, in the sense that it is a text, a library, a catalogue of multiple narratives, discourses and practices that are assembled, dissolved and reassembled over time and space; never a unity, always a disintegration, but paradoxically a source of self-reference for a subject who endures, and believes that endurance to be a sign of ‘the one’, the ‘I’, who persists in time and space.
The subject of this dissolution is understood as a difference, where the possibility of endurance is paradoxically the impossibility of coherence. The subject of history, the biographical subject, is always a difference, never a unity. Coherence and unity are fictions of a subject who endures and narrates the constitutive moments through which an account of that endurance is fabricated. Our history, our very temporality, ‘confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference’ (Foucault, 1984: 381). That which is lost or forgotten in the process of dissolution accounts in part for our difference, and not simply our difference from each other, but our difference from ourselves; from our past, from that which we recall we once were, or might have been. We are not ‘what we were’ in any stable sense, and our endurance is made, simultaneously and paradoxically, from what is remembered and forgotten, what is absent and present, what endures and differs.

A subject is not merely, only, pressed by a codified set of technologies of government to be a particular sort of subject. Certainly, they are constituted as recognisable within the normative matrices of intelligibility through which such technologies operate. But they are also constituted through other lived relations that precede and exceed the technologies of government through which they are shaped as particular sorts of subjects. They are shaped too, by specific times and spaces, and the relationships that emerge in them and accrue idiosyncratic attachments, desires and intensities; with idiosyncratic flows of meaning between and among them. These produce multiplicities that can never be fully known or accounted for. There is always, in this fluid multiplicity, spillage, seepage and evaporation. I am articulating an account of the subject as simultaneously, paradoxically, a similarity and a difference, regularised and
indeterminate, regulated and idiosyncratic. In tracing possible relationships between practices of regulation and regularisation, and the specificity of a temporalised and spatialised relational subject as an actant in a network, I emphasise the specificity of an unsubstitutable, irreducible and idiosyncratic subject.

In my preoccupation with idiosyncratic subjects irreducible to practices of government and my avoidance of discourse determinism, I recognise that this space of irreducibility and incommensurability has been extensively theorised within psychoanalytic theory. Whilst I recognise that the technologies of psy discourses and disciplines are constitutive of subjects and the accounts they give of themselves, as well as of the accounts that are given of them, I do not so much disavow those technologies as empty out a space for philosophy as a conduit to ways of thinking differently about irreducibility, incommensurability, and idiosyncrasy. Further, I work with philosophy in order to bring it into a relation with my empirical work with narrated accounts of experience.

Given that I have emphasised that subject positions are produced within historically and geographically variable power-knowledge relations, I assume no necessary coherence within or between the multiple sites in which those positions are produced. This signals the extent to which subject positions themselves are multiple and contradictory. So too are the accounts subjects might give of themselves. Subjects (and the accounts they give of themselves) are composed of, and endure as, an assemblage of multiple and contradictory narratives, discourses, practices and positionings in them. ‘But how’, Henriques et al. ask, ‘are such fragments held together?’ (1998: 204). I propose that these fragments are held together through narrative and acts of narration. I do not
assume a simple account of narrative as a story, as a unifying or coherent practice, but as an account of the temporality of a subject who persists in time as simultaneously self-same and different.

Thinking about narrative

As Speedy recognises, “‘narrative’ is suddenly everywhere’ (2008: xiv), and I am everywhere with it. I am located in this time and space of the ‘narrative turn’, or the turn to narrative, and find myself turning to and with it. I work with an articulation of narrative and narrative inquiry that emphasises the ways in which the accounts we give of ourselves are subject to change over time according to the spaces and contexts in which we find ourselves (Speedy, 2003: 22/46). I foreground the spatial and temporal contingencies of the one who gives an account of her- or him-self as both subject of, and subject to, change; a subject who is changeable rather than fixed, multiple rather than singular, and relational rather than autonomous. I work with an iteration of narrative as an apparatus through which relations among actants are constituted and assembled. I suggest that a consideration of what narrative makes possible might inform a theorisation of practices of subjectification and the assemblage of subjects within them.

I have already suggested that the actants assembled within relational networks are historically constituted within and through temporalised and spatialised practices of government. These are discursive practices, shaped by particular rationalities and motivated towards particular policy ambitions. I have suggested that discourses and practices are not completely random, and that discourse was always already narrative:
that is, discourses are made intelligible as a result of their imbrication in multiple other
discourses and narrativisations of them. Discourses, and the subject positions within
them, are drawn into regularised repertoires and given shape through narratives that
fabricate an illusion of coherence. They also constitute the limits of what a subject might
be and do in any given time and space. These assumptions are strategic to my address to
subjectivity and the narrative interview as a tool for empirical inquiry into those
practices through which subjectivities are constituted, assembled, regulated and
performed.

Having undertaken life-history narrative interviews I am attempting to articulate a way
of working with them that accounts for intersections between co-constitutive relational
actants, practices of regulation, the specificity of an idiosyncratic subject, and the
assemblage of the subject in, and as, narrative. In so doing, I foreground the practices
through which subjects are constituted and assembled as particular kinds of subjects, in
particular times and spaces and through particular networks of relations. My address to
narrative emphasises both the ways in which subjects are assembled and the ways in
which this assemblage might be theorised through attention to practices of narration. I
am attempting then, to say something about subjectification and subjectivity through the
life-history narrative as itself an actant in a constitutive network of relational actants.
This foregrounds the work that the narrating subject performs in assembling ‘the self’, or
the ‘I’, within multiple and intersecting constitutive practices of regulation and relations
among actants.
I emphasise an iteration of narrative that is more than simply a story, or story lines, through which accounts of subjectivity and experience are fabricated, made meaningful and retold (Andrews et al., 2000; Byrne, 2002). I foreground the multiple ways in which subjectivity is constituted, assembled, managed, modified and transformed in and as acts of narration. I emphasise a concept of narrativity as incorporating and coordinating narrators, narrations, narratives and narratability. I emphasise that a narrative, as an assemblage of relations, actants, practices, effects and affects, is both an act of speech (or writing) and more than what is said (or written); as well as more than what is remembered and narrated. I signal the simultaneous presence of the forgotten, the silent, the elided, the remaindered and the unsayable.

I am as much concerned with the constitution of the narrated and narratable subject as I am with the content, meaning and interpretation of talk. Much empirical post-positivist discourse analytic work focuses on the analysis of talk, often in the form of recorded and transcribed interviews. In thinking about the particularity of the narrative interview as a scene of address, and the co-construction of that which emerges in it, I foreground not only what is said, but how it might be possible to say anything at all. I attend to the work of producing a narrative as much as to what is said, and this work of narration is understood as an assemblage of multiple actants and practices; both past and present, present and absent. In this way I am speculating about the assemblage of a spatio-temporal subject who emerges in and through talk, as well as through that which might not be said, but be anyway present in the network of relations through which the narrating subject is co-constituted.
In working with life-history narratives I emphasise co-constitutive relations among actants and normative practices of regulation in order to address the ‘complex of apparatuses, practices, machinations, and assemblages within which human being has been fabricated’ (Rose, 1996: 10). I locate my inquiry at the intersection between the apparatuses and practices of government and the specificity of the experience of a relational subject imbricated in co-constitutive networks of actants and practices. In resisting over-determined accounts of governmentality and approaches to narrative and discourse analysis that assume the subject to be little more than ‘a product of positions in a multiplicity of discourses’ (Henriques et al., 1998: xiii), I am concerned with the methodological challenge of articulating a simultaneously regularised, disciplined, regulated, irreducible and idiosyncratic subject.

Since I do not want to reduce the subject to a series of passive positions in discourse or practices of subjectification, nor read narrative as simply a story of experience, I do not assume any linear causal relation between governmentality and subjectivity. Rather, I am concerned with the ways in which multiple constitutive narratives and discourses, and positions within them, are imbricated in normative regulatory practices of government. I am also concerned with the extent to which the instabilities, incoherencies and incommensurabilities of those practices of government are embodied in and by subjects who are themselves similarly unstable, incoherent and incommensurable. It is, I suggest, in this regulation/instability nexus that subjects emerge as both recognisable and idiosyncratic. Both practices of regulation and the idiosyncrasies emergent from them are assembled in and as narrative, and it is through attending to these narrated
accounts of experience that I am attempting to articulate something of this simultaneous, paradoxical, regularisation and idiosyncrasy.

My address to narrative (specifically the narrated biography), foregrounds a reading of the narrating subject as assembled within relational networks of co-constitutive actants. I emphasise that an interview assumes a call to speak, and that the interview is a scene of address in which the other is asked to give an account of her- or him-self (Butler, 2005). The conceptual work I am undertaking focuses both on acts of narration and questions of theory and methodology in relation to the analysis of those narratives. My address to narrative interviews and their analyses attends to the specificity of the work of producing an account of oneself in narrative form. It involves more than attention to what is said, how it is said, or why it is said. Rather, I’m attempting to map constitutive relations between actants that emerge in and through talk, but are an excess of it. I hope to avoid slippage into giving accounts of research subjects that position them, or their narratives, as either exemplars of regulatory practices, or as ‘true’ and ‘authentic’ accounts of the ‘real’ experience of ‘individuals’.

Rather, I address narrativity as a technology or apparatus in and through which subjects are assembled, and through which subjects assemble themselves in the accounts they give of their experience. In articulating a simultaneously regulated and idiosyncratic subject, I emphasise an iteration of idiosyncrasy that is more than a synonym for ‘individuality’. I emphasise that idiosyncrasy is relational: that is, emergent from the specific assemblage of actants and practices through which a specific subject is constituted. In emphasising the relationality of an idiosyncratic subject I understand that
the ‘one’ who speaks is never a ‘one’, but a performance of a ‘one’ who is, in part, ‘the enigmatic traces of others’ (Butler, 2004: 46), of other actants in networks of co-constitutive relations.

I proceed on the understanding that a narrative is a scene of confluence, and not a linear thing closed in on itself. It is enigmatic, opaque, multiple and contradictory at the same time as it might affect coherence and transparency. It is both more and less than what is said – since that which is not said, but felt, that which is both remembered and forgotten, resonate still within that which it is possible to feel, remember, forget or say. It is through the apparatus of narrativity that multiplicities, incommensurabilities and contradictions might be held together in a moment, in an illusion of coherence that allows meaning to be made, however tentatively, contingently or arbitrarily. A narrative of experience, a narrated biography, is the history of the one who speaks made present, yet present in a way that is different from any other moment in which that speaker has been, or will be, present. Further, those other actants, human or not, in relation to whom the narrator has been constituted, may or may not be physically present, but anyway implied in the constitutive presence, in the scene of address, in which they are narrated. This scene exceeds the apparent facticity and temporality of the address; other times, places, actants, persons, events, thoughts, feelings, embodied affects and memories, endure, resonate, erupt and slip away as we speak. The narrating (narrativised, narrated and narratable) subject is both more and less than they already were, or ever might be, and it is in the act of narration that the subject is assembled, in any moment, as the one who might anyway give an account of oneself.
Thinking about assemblage

I have given an account of a subject assembled through multiple co-constitutive relations among actants, practices of government and acts of narration. This subject is multiple and variable rather than singular and stable. Deleuze’s (2004) and Deleuze & Guattari’s (2004) emphasis on ‘difference’ and ‘becoming’ (rather than ‘being’ and ‘identity’) captures something of the movement that I am trying to articulate in the thesis more generally, and in my account of subjectivity in particular. I am attempting to articulate something of the constitutive relations through which actants, knowledges, memories, practices, and so on, are inaugurated and sustained in and across time and space as simultaneously static and mobile; stable and changing. In A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) develop conceptual tools that instantiate a movement away from accounts of essences and internal truths toward multiplicities and becomings. These multiplicities, and their coordination in and as constant movements and re/combinations, are expressed, in part, through the concept of ‘assemblage’. This concept shifts attention from the substantive meanings of practices and actants (both human and not) to the specific effects and affects enabled through their assemblage in particular and variable aggregations, formations or relations.

I work with the concept of assemblage in order to articulate a relationality that ‘establishes connections between certain multiplicities’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 25). Deleuze and Guattari map these connections diagrammatically along two axes; one horizontal (content and expression) and one vertical (territorialising sides and deterritorialising sides). These intersecting axes form a diagram of movements and relations through which things simultaneously come into being, stabilise, dissolve, re-
assemble, and are ‘carried away’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 98). Stabilities and regularities are constantly transforming as differences and becomings. In this way, an assemblage is the simultaneous and continuous play of contingency, structure, organisation and change. It is not a collection of predetermined parts that are put together in an already conceived structure, nor a random collection of things. It is always an assemblage of changing relations among actants, actions, practices, effects, and affects, and this assemblage is a constitutive relationality rather than a relation of causation. This thesis is itself an assemblage of changing concepts and propositions, and relations between them. I work with these concepts and propositions in ways that territorialise them on one side and deterritorialise them on another. I work with and against them in order that I might think differently and articulate new relations and possibilities.

In addressing the accounts that we give of ourselves and each other, I am specifically interested in thinking of narrator and narrative, speaker and listener, writer and reader, human and non-human actant, as relational assemblages. I am working towards giving an account of the accounts others give of themselves as more than interpretations of those accounts: as more than an articulation of already established patterns of meaning (for example, stable categories or taxonomies of gender, class, ethnicity and age as constituted or inflected through specific practices of government) and instead articulate the multiple relations through which subjects are constituted, and constituted as multiplicities, differences and becomings.
Given my concern with temporality and spatiality I am specifically interested in Deleuze and Guattari’s spatialisation of bodies (human and not) within territories (deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation), spaces (smooth and striated) and lines (of flight and becoming): ‘All we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentaries, lines of flight and intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types … it has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 5). These territories, spaces and lines are assemblages that emphasise movements between and among them in ways that generate possibilities for becoming: for becoming different; for difference. As assemblages of both moments and movements, these spatialised assemblages are temporalised in past, present and future conditions of possibility. Possibilities for difference are immanent in any temporalised and spatialised constitutive conditions, events or practices, and becoming is the movement emergent from changes between them.

An assemblage is always an aggregate: it is the play of multiple elements, and any assemblage is only one possibility among many different types of assemblages. Assemblages, as combinations and coordinations of heterogeneous actants in heterogeneous networks, are emergent from, and constitutive of, conditions of possibility, with their own variable and often unpredictable effects and affects. The relationship between an assemblage and its components, and other assemblages, is complex and non-linear. These multiple assemblages are productive of limits, constraints, adaptations and possibilities for becoming other. The body, understood as an assemblage, becomes a body that is multiple. Its functions or meanings are not dependent on an interior truth or identity, but on the particular assemblages it forms with
other bodies (human and not). Embodied human subjects are assemblages of multiplicities that form new assemblages in relation to other actants. Whilst cognisant of the complexity of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of assemblage, I work with an account of it particular to my purpose; that is, to capture something of the relationality and movement that I am trying to articulate in this thesis, and especially a movement between practices of regulation and the appearance of an idiosyncratic, unsubstitutable subject as a specific actant in a network of relational actants.

Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari do not differentiate human subjects from other actants, or human bodies from other bodies: ‘there is no subject, only collective assemblages of enunciation’ (2004: 144), which ‘cease to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air a life’ (2004: 289). The haecceity, the ‘thisness’ or specificity, of an assemblage is understood as the entirety of the relations of which it is composed. There are only ‘relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements … There are only haecccities, affects, subjectless individuations that constitute collective assemblages’ (2004: 294). The ‘self’ that we give an account of is understood as a constantly changing assemblage of forces, relations, confluences, coagulations and divergences of languages, organisms, societies, practices of government, bodies and so on. There is a movement I’m emphasising here, between subjects and practices of subjectification as relations between human and non-human actants in a network. I am working with the idea of an embodied subject as an actant who is relationally constituted by all other actants in a network, human and not; and of a specific embodied person as a particular actant or assemblage.
within this network. I work with the concept of an assemblage as a dynamic interconnection of relationalities and specificities.

Deleuze and Guattari use the term ‘singularity’ or ‘haecceity’ to signal the specificity of a particular component or assemblage. This specificity is expressed as both a distinctive quality of a component or assemblage, as well as its infinite potential. It is simultaneously specificity and multiplicity: ‘each individual is an infinite multiplicity, and the whole of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 280). This specificity or singularity is expressed in ‘the elements in play’ which ‘find their individuation in the assemblage of which they are part’ (2004: 291). I am appropriating this notion of singularity, specificity or haecceity to think of the embodied subject as simultaneously, paradoxically: multiple, relational, regulated and idiosyncratic; a movement and moment understood as a shaky coagulation of possibilities; and as a regulated yet idiosyncratic assemblage of becomings.

‘Becoming’ is a process of change, flight, or movement within an assemblage. Since the co-constitutive actants within an assemblage do not compose an organic whole, (within which they are held in place by the organization of a unity), the process of becoming emphasises and accounts for relationships between the actants of the assemblage. ‘Each multiplicity is symbiotic; its becoming ties together animals, plants, microorganisms, mad particles, a whole galaxy’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 275). In becoming, one piece of an assemblage (or actant) is drawn into the territory of another piece (or actant), changing it in the process. This process is one of deterritorialisation in which the properties of the constituent elements or actants disappear and are replaced by the new
properties of the assemblage. This process of ‘becoming’, of becoming other, is
generative of a new way of being that is a function of multiplicities and influences rather
than resemblances. The process is one of removing an element or actant from one time,
space or function within an assemblage, and bringing about new ones. It is not a case of
repetitions and similarities, but of becomings and differences.

I work with the concept of assemblage to express the multiplicity, relationality and
variability of particular spatialised and temporalised configurations and coordinations of
actants and practices, one iteration of which is materialised as an embodied human
subject. This subject is simultaneously understood as an assemblage of heterogeneous
elements, as relationality, as singularity, as specificity or idiosyncrasy. This is an
embodied speaking subject who might give an account of her- or him-self; of her or his
experience. Given that I am specifically working with the narrated biographical accounts
subjects give of themselves, I am particularly interested in Deleuze and Guattari’s
(2004) concept of collective assemblages of enunciation. The idea of a collective
assemblage accounts for the social character of utterances. It also incorporates the
pluralized voices of others, the many voices within a single voice: ‘the I as subject of the
statement, indicating a state for which a She or a He could always be substituted …
Subjectification is simply one such assemblage and designates a formalization of
expression or a regime of signs’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 144). An assemblage, and a
narrated account of oneself as a particular sort of assemblage, is an accumulation of
multiplicities that renders a notion of individual enunciation redundant. An assemblage
is a combination or coordination of discrete parts that produce multiple possible effects,
rather than a hermetically organized, stable and coherent whole which produces one
dominant meaning or reading. An assemblage draws into itself any number of disparate elements, changing itself in the process and becoming other.

This chapter has been an assemblage of those concepts that inform the work to come. I have given an account of, and articulated constitutive relations between and among, concepts of governmentality, subjectivity, narrative and assemblage. I have suggested that subjects are assembled as subjects though practices of government, and that practices of government, as articulated through the concept of governmentality, are figurations of liberal narratives. I have assembled a concept of narrativity as the simultaneous co-constitution of narrators, acts of narration, narratives and the parameters of narratability. I have given an account of narrativity as an apparatus that coordinates those conditions, technologies, practices, relations and assemblages through which subjects and their accounts of experience are constituted and regulated; made recognisable and intelligible. In the chapter that follows, I extend the proposition that governmentality might be refigured as narrativity, and work with this proposition through the concept of knowing in order to ask what it might be possible to know about ourselves or each other; and how this knowledge might be figured as a resource for working with biographical narrative accounts of experience.
Inter/section #2: a medi(t)ation on thinking

This is not a text of beginnings, middles and endings. Rather, I work in a space of multiple beginnings, of multiple trajectories and destinations. I am interested not simply in the ideas I explore but in the textual possibilities for expressing them. I am as much interested in the form of the PhD as a writing project as I am in the project of research that the PhD performs. I resist the production of a linear coherent narrative and confront the dilemmas of writings that move in multiple directions without quite knowing what directions they might take or where they might arrive. I paradoxically, simultaneously, work with narrative and resist the too-speedy move to narrativisations that lay things out and tie them up. I am interested in trajectories that turn, loop, dissolve, over-reach themselves, come to dead ends, anticipate future possibilities and, on occasion, re-appear as a trace or memory of something past but not forgotten. I am encouraged in this by Foucault’s observation that ‘words always refer away from and lead back to themselves; they are lost and found again; they fix a vanishing point on the horizon by repeated division, and then return to the starting point in a perfect curve’ (2004: 16-17). This ‘perfect curve’ is a vector in a multiplicity of curves that aggregate as circles of possibility that allow for chance, coincidence, unpredictability, contradictions and paradoxes, and generate movements and moments that forestall the complete dissolution of the text. This text is not simply an experiment with writing, but an experiment with thinking, with thinking that loops and turns, that looks for or carves out new spaces for thought, for thinking differently. I am anxious about this
claim to thinking differently, for in articulating irreducible and co-constitutive
relations among actants I resist concepts of origin and originality. Whilst I have coyly
claimed to be doing something different from what I have done before, there is an
irresistible urge or pull towards the idea that I am also trying to articulate relations
between things which might not have been thought or brought together in quite the
way that I am doing. This is not so much a project of invention of the new, but an
in(ter)vention in the already that might make it possible to see, say or think otherwise.
This is a conceit and an ambition that I have been reluctant to disclose, but find I am
able to express through those acts of ventriloquism in which the voices of others
articulate the space that I am attempting to locate, move into and through.

‘Tropological space’, says Foucault, is that space in which language turns and detours,
in which it does not simply duplicate reality, but rather, might ‘discover an
unexpected space’ and ‘cover it with things never said before’ (2004: 18, original
emphasis). This is not a claim to invention or originality, but more simply a desire to
‘say the same thing but in other ways’ (2004: 18). This tropological space in language
is, says Foucault, empty and labyrinthine ‘because it loses itself there’, and ‘when it
rejoins itself, it is shown that the same things are not the same, not here, but other and
elsewhere’. This tropological space, as a space of turns, is a space in which repetitions
re/turn as differences. I work with these turns and repetitions in order to instantiate a
trajectory that simultaneously, paradoxically, continues and changes, diverges and
coheres, moves in multiple directions, falls away, and returns only to disappear again.
In order for ‘this machinery’ of the text to become intelligible, I simultaneously
mobilise and resist canons, codes and conventions and perform ‘a stepping back’ which ‘opens the field of vision’, removes these ‘mute figures’ to a horizon, and presents them in an opened-out space (Foucault, 2004: 67). It is not necessary says Foucault, ‘to have something additional in order to understand’ these mute figures, but rather, for something ‘to be subtracted’ in order to open a space ‘through which their presence could swing back and forth and reappear on the other side’ (Foucault, 2004: 67, original emphasis). The space emergent in and from this opening is an interval, a pause, a hesitation, a doubt, a suspicion, an interruption that holds open the possibility of an open future. This is to anticipate, if not inaugurate, a forward motion that works with concepts in order that ‘little by little’ different and perhaps surprising configurations might emerge. This act of anticipation takes the form of ‘a writing that is both within and striving to escape the inherited infrastructure of the imagination’ (Massey: 2005: 53-54) and of the already known. This is ‘an imagination of a textuality at which one looks, towards recognising one’s place within continuous and multiple processes of emergence’ (Massey, 2005: 54, original emphasis). This text is a continuous and multiple process of emergence.
Chapter 2: Knowing

At the centre of my inquiry is the act of producing a life-history biographical narrative account of oneself. I understand the accounts we might give of ourselves to be more than situated extemporaneous speech acts. By this I mean that these accounts are temporalised and spatialised in dimensions, directions and durations that are in excess (an excess) of the present moment of utterance. In approaching biographical life-history narratives in this way, I am trying to capture both a moment and a movement: a moment in, and a movement across, time and space, through and across multiple relations among actants, and through and across multiple acts of recollection. These acts of re-collection are acts of remembering, and of reordering that which is remembered into various and mobile formations, flows and coagulations. These formations, flows and coagulations are organised in and as narrative accounts of experience; as accounts of what we might claim to remember and know about ourselves.

I ask, in this chapter, what it might be possible to know about ourselves or each other from the accounts we give of ourselves; and how this knowledge might be figured as a resource for working with narrative accounts of experience. I work at the edges of what I might claim to know, and claim to know of others from the accounts they give of themselves.

I work to give an account of biographical narratives of experience that recognises that narrators and their narratives are simultaneously regularised, regulated,
incommensurable and relational. It is through this aggregation of regularisations, regulations, incommensurabilites and relationalities that I give an account of an irreducible and idiosyncratic subject, and of their accounts of experience. Experience, narrated as a biographical life history narrative, is an accumulation of multiplicities, including multiple actants (including knowledges, practices, positions, relations, discourses, narratives and memories) that are assembled in different, changeable and changing formations. These multiplicities coagulate, for a moment, in the illusion that the present, and the subject in and of it, are stable. This assemblage, in all of its multiple moments, movements and coagulations, is narrativised as a ‘self’ or ‘I’ who endures as self-same across time and space. In this way the spatial and temporal subject is simultaneously an assemblage, and a spatialised and temporalised narrative of that assemblage. This assemblage and its narrativisations are neither completely random, nor entirely determined. Subjects, their experiences, and their narratives of experience, are constituted, assembled and regulated in and by those technologies of government through which any subject is made visible as a particular ‘I’. In this sense we are as much ‘had by experience’ (Davies & Davies, 2007) as we might think of ourselves as having it.

Given that my address to subjectivity is coordinated through the trope of experience, I am concerned with understanding a relation between technologies of government and technologies of self as a performative relation through which certain modes of ‘doing’, and ‘doing oneself’, are constituted and regulated. I am concerned with the practices through which we are made (and make ourselves) recognisable within those normative matrices of intelligibility through which we (and our experiences) are constituted and
regulated. Experience, and accounts of it, are re/articulated through regulatory matrices of intelligibility, and mobilised through citational practices of speech as narration (Butler, 1997). In giving an account of oneself, or another, subjects simultaneously work with, through and against these citational practices. Further, these practices are re-iterated, re-articulated and re-animated as embodied performances; as performative narrativised and narrated accounts of experience.

Narrative, in the sense that I am using it here, is both noun and verb. It is simultaneously act and product of that act: narration and narrative. This simultaneity is captured in the concept of ‘narrativity’, which incorporates the narrator, the act of narration, the narrated and the narratable. I foreground this concept of narrativity as the performative apparatus through which subjects are assembled (and assemble themselves) and through which multiplicities and contradictions are articulated as if singularities and coherences. Articulation, in the sense I use it here, has the doubled meaning of a mode of speech and a mode of jointing disparate elements of an assemblage or network of relations. These assembled relations are simultaneously constituted, regularised, coordinated and regulated through normative practices of government and irreducible to them.

**Government as regulation**

Foucault’s (1976, 1978, 1978-1979) theory of governmentality describes the ways in which the state’s power is upheld through the repetition of practices that structure, order and discipline populations and individuals. Power is exercised through an ensemble of rationalised programmes, strategies and practices that direct and regulate ‘the conduct of conduct’ through a series of interventions and regulatory controls. This government of
conduct is shaped by two intersecting rationalities; one political, the other social. Political rationalities define the rules of formation and the limits of what might, or might not, legitimately be said about the objects formed. Social rationalities devise and deploy techniques which act on the lives and conduct of subjects. These two rationalities constitute the terms and conditions of possibility for who or what a subject might be or become, as well as what might be said about them; or indeed what they might say about themselves. This articulation of constitutive conditions of possibility informs my contemplations on the narrative practice of giving an account of oneself. Such an account is understood as both prefigured by what it is already anyway possible to be, do, or say, and refigured in successive moments of presence as performances of those possibilities.

As Butler (2004) points out, tactics of government operate diffusely; they are exercised at the level of everyday practices which establish and regulate what constitutes ‘the normal’. These norms not only contribute to the regulatory practices that order subjects, they also produce the very subjects they govern. This is no matter of force: ‘(g)overnment concerns the shaping of human conduct and acts on the governed as a locus of action and freedom’ (Dean, 1999: 15). Constituted by the technologies through which they are governed as free, subjects work with these constitutive technologies in order to constitute themselves as free to be ‘themselves’, where these selves are circumscribed by the very technologies through which they are constituted, regulated and self-regulated as ‘free’. In this way work of developing oneself, of performing work on oneself for oneself, is bound to the limits of intelligibility that circumscribe who we might or might not be/come within normative accounts of the subject.
These practices of regulation are not disinterested. They have performative force in at least two directions: the programmatic ambitions of government and the viability of the life of the subject. There is then, a formative relation between technologies of government and the desire of the subject to ‘be’, and to ‘be’ one who is recognised as human. Normalisation works through a tactic and a taxonomy in which individuals are hierarchically constituted in relation to both norms and to each other, which endorse certain positions and ‘if necessary, disqualify and invalidate’ others (Foucault, 1991a: 223). Normalised and visibilised in this way, human subjects subject themselves, their bodies, their gestures, their behaviour, aptitudes and achievements, to the normalising powers of the mode of government through which they are made subjects.

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault, 1991a: 203)

The parameters of normalcy and intelligibility are established and regulated through diffuse technologies and tactics that govern and order bodies and lives. For Butler, this ‘grid of human intelligibility’, is not only established by ‘laws that govern our intelligibility, but by ways of knowing, modes of truth, that forcibly define intelligibility’ (2004a: 57). The various institutionalised and regularised practices that order our daily interactions constitute ways of knowing and modes of truth that constitute normalcy. These normative knowledges and truths inform the citational
practices through which the accounts we give of ourselves and our experience (and of ourselves as ones who might know, and know the truth) are inaugurated.

**Governing experience**

‘Our very experience of ourselves as certain sorts of persons’ is, says Rose, ‘the outcome of a range of human technologies, technologies that take modes of being human as their object’ (1996: 26). These technologies are ‘hybrid assemblages’ of knowledges, instruments, persons and spaces, and are ‘underpinned at the programmatic level by certain presuppositions and assumptions about human beings’ (Rose, 1996: 26).

I propose that these hybrid assemblages cohere in intelligible and actionable formations as a function of their articulation in and as narrative; including narratives of government and self. Both subjects and their narrated accounts of experience are assembled in, and assemblages of, those constitutive ensembles of practices emergent in specific networks of actants. They are located in specific times and specific places, and imbricated in specific regulatory technologies of government. Foucault’s concept of governmentality is emergent from analyses of power and the art of government as political interventions, or disciplines, over the human body (Foucault, 1978, 1988, 1991a, 1992) and draws attention to the technical, strategic and tactical practices through which political power is exercised in modern western societies (Gordon, 1980). I am interested in the relation between governmentality, subjectivity and narrative not simply as a genealogy of technologies of subjectification, but as an inquiry turned to contemplation of the experience of a specific embodied biographical subject. Attention is directed to both local and idiosyncratic events and the formation of relational actants in the constitutive
networks through which they are connected to, and enmeshed in, the regulatory and productive effects of power (Gordon, 1980).

For Rose (1999a) the very act or art of government is to ‘cut experience in certain ways, to distribute attractions and repulsions, passions and fears across it, to bring new facets and forces, new intensities and relations into being’ (Rose, 1999a: 31). This is, he suggests, partly a matter of time and space and of the constitution of governable spaces (populations, nations, societies, economies, classes, families, factories, individuals and so on) in which subjectivities are constituted and governed. These located practices of government constitute ‘modalities in which a real and material governable world is composed, terraformed and populated’ (Rose, 1999a: 32). Practices of government are, in this way, implicated and imbricated in the material, in the materialisation of the world as we know it. This material world, the world of matter, the world that matters, is a spatialisation of those constitutive and regulatory practices of government through which we come to recognise ourselves and others as belonging to this world (or not). This materiality includes the body: the embodied subject and the social body.

This materiality as governable space ‘make(s) new kinds of experience possible, produce(s) new modes of perception, invest(s) percepts with affects, with dangers and opportunities, with saliencies and attractions’ (Rose, 1999a: 32). It is this relation between practices of government and the lived experience of an embodied subject that I am attempting to articulate and elaborate, especially as spatialised in networks and assemblages of actants, and temporalised in acts of narration. I have proposed that the subject is simultaneously mimetic to, and a refiguration of, practices of government.
These practices, and the subjects constituted by them, are historically variable but apparently stable; or rather fabricate an appearance of stability. I am particularly interested in the ways in which this multiplicity is figured as singularity, and variability figured as stability (both at the site of government and the embodied subject). I locate this apparent homogeneity and stability within a coordinated, but not necessarily coherent, matrix of apparatuses or networks comprised of complex and heterogeneous relations among disparate elements (Barry et al., 1996). What we experience, what we remember, what we know, and the accounts we might give of our experience, memory and knowledge, are constituted, coordinated and regulated through spatialised and normative matrices of intelligibility and practices of government. These practices are coordinated through: rationalities (a logic or science of government); technologies (regulatory techniques or practices); programmatic ambitions (specific policy/material ends); and mentalities (specific naturalised, invisibilised knowledges and truth accounts). The rationalities, ambitions, technologies and mentalities of any particular mode of government are mobilised toward the regulation of the conduct of a population and, as Dean points out, to a utopian idea of what a government and its citizens can be and achieve: every mode of government presupposes ‘a type of person, community, organisation, society or even world which is to be achieved’ (Dean, 1999: 33).

Yet no ensemble of rationalities, technologies, ambitions and mentalities is stable, nor any mode or regime of government reducible to them. Further, those subjects constituted through this unstable and irreducible ensemble are similarly unstable, and not reducible to the technologies through which they have been constituted and regulated. Practices of government cannot, then, be reduced to a single or unified mode or force with a single or
unified effect. Nor can they be reduced to a simple, stable, or uniform set of practices and technologies tied to a single intention or cause. As a complex, contradictory and historically variable ensemble of movements they are shaped by, and constitutive of, a variety of forces which act in a number of irregular dimensions. As dispersed and diffuse practices with localised iterations of differing intensities, they constitute a field of normativity differently inflected according to time and space. Practices of government, and the subjectivities that are constituted within them, are not only differently inflected in different spaces, but also in different bodies. These differences emerge from the variable assemblages of actants and practices in any one particular moment, in any one particular place, and in any one particular body.

Just as governmentality is not understood in terms of singular and stable universal forces, the processes through which we are made and make ourselves into subjects are understood as ongoing and unstable processes of becoming (Deleuze, 1992). I emphasise the contingent and precarious materiality of practices of government and their implication for a similarly contingent and precarious subject (Butler, 2004). It is in and through this reciprocal precariousness that I understand the subject as simultaneously, paradoxically, regulated and idiosyncratic, coherent and not, intelligible and not, knowable and not. In this way, subjects and their experiences might be constituted within regulatory practices of government, but not reducible to them. There is always an excess, a slippage, a lacuna, in which the subject pulses and persists, coagulates and erupts as a difference.
Lost and found

The progress of this thesis has been interrupted by a death, and I find that I cannot leave unremarked the impact this has had. I feel simultaneously compelled to give an account of myself and anxious about doing so. This anxiety has at least two dimensions: I am anxious about what I might write and that what I write will be read by another; I am anxious about the possibility that self-disclosure slides inexorably into self-indulgence. But I persist anyway. I don’t know how much to tell you, or how much I can bear to tell you. I feel moderately embarrassed in anticipation of you reading it, especially as there has been no direct call from you (or any other) to give this account. Already I see that my desire to tell is mediated by an ambivalence that means I will tell only some things and not others. This too, I remind myself, is possibly how those whom I have addressed might feel about the accounts they have made for me. And yet, some of those I have addressed, sat face-to-face with, have revealed surprisingly personal details about their health, intimate relationships, traumatic experiences, and so on. This seems especially surprising given that all I had invited them to do was ‘tell me about your working life’.

Perhaps this movement towards self-disclosure is less remarkable than I imagine. If I take seriously Butler’s idea that we are exposed to each other, to our vulnerability, and made vulnerable by this exposure, I should not be surprised by the fact that exposure and vulnerability often find each other in the accounts we give of ourselves.

So. Anyway. My stepfather died recently and I was overcome and undone by a grief I could not have predicted; did not predict. I find I cannot give an account of it in a way
that does justice to its many dimensions and intensities. And yet I can give, am giving, an account of it; a partial account anyway. I can tell you that I slipped off the edge of the known world, and my PhD with me. This chapter, the one that I am now writing, and that you are now reading (knowing of course that these two ‘now’s are not concurrent) is shaped around that moment of rupture and my attempts to make sense of it in a way that might move me, and move me to continue this thesis.

Let me begin again. (How many times does a narrated account begin and end?) The death of my stepfather evinced a grief that brought with it other griefs from other times and other places. This grieving was simultaneously past and present, lived and remembered. I did not know where one memory, one moment, one grief ended and another began. Something I did know, or assumed to know, was that there was a particular memory of trauma that preceded this moment, one that had unravelled me fifteen years before. (This next bit is difficult, because this very act of remembering is caught within a simultaneous desire to forget). Fifteen years ago my life – and ironically the progress of my Masters dissertation (does this constitute a pattern?) - was disrupted by the recovery of memories of sexual abuse. It was this discursive proximity between the concepts ‘recovery’ and ‘memory’ that proved so problematic. ‘Did it really happen, or did I indeed remember something that had never happened?’ I asked that question then, and the question remains, and remains unanswered, unanswerable; unknown, unknowable. This indeterminacy was, and still is, compounded by the fact that the memories erupted as bodily performances, as a terrible and terrifying re-living of the moment, ‘that moment’ around which my biography coagulates; an apparently originary moment that may or may not have happened. How, I asked then, ask still, might my
Questions of truth seemed paramount, and hence the desire to know, once and for all, if the memories were true. In the face of indeterminability and the impossibility of asking, I resolved to believe that the remembered moment may or may not have happened; that there was no way of finally knowing; no final knowing. I used the production of my Masters dissertation as a space in which to explore, and attempt to explain (as much to myself as anyone else), how experience and subjectivity were constituted within available repertoires of discursive practices and matrices of intelligibility. I resolved that some of many possible childhood traumas, known and not, had been narrativised as sexual abuse through discourses available to me at the time – discourses with a performative force, a force that could produce the very thing they described. I understood the eruption of memory in my own body as contiguous with the eruption of memory in the social body. I remembered experiences that may or may not have been mine, and remembered them in particular ways, gave them particular content, form and narrative expression because the discursive resources available enabled me to do so.

That is, I found citational resources in discursive and narrative practices that enabled me to give a particular account of an inchoate experience. The account that I made and gave satisfied the need to re/tell, know and understand that experience in a way that was intelligible to myself and others (though not necessarily true). I understood that the resources through which this was accomplished were not mine, not mine alone, that they came from elsewhere and did their work for (and on) me. I gestured, then, towards the
possibility that I had remembered the experiences of others *as if* my own, as if their experiences could be named and given expression through my own body of memory, my own body/memory, through the constitutive possibilities of the social body and its memory.

So, to the present; or at least the present in which I sit, think, write and give this sketchy account of myself. I am making this account in order to reorient myself (and you my reader) to a set of questions about: the limits of knowledge; the act of remembering; the relationship between a specific body and the social body; and the practices through which subjects are constituted and regulated, and through which their experiences and the accounts they might give of themselves are made possible and intelligible. I have returned to those earlier questions of truth and knowledge (to the question ‘Did it really happen?’) and resolved, now, that I actually *had the experience of remembering*; of re-living something that may or may not have happened. What is uncontrovertibly knowable is that I had the experience of remembering *something*. There is content, affect and consequence associated with the memory in a way that makes it feel real and present, as if it did happen *in the remembering if not before*. I know I had a traumatic experience: an act of trauma in the experience of remembering.

*Trauma is itself a shattering experience that disrupts or even threatens to destroy experience in the sense of an integrated or at least viably articulated life. There is a sense in which trauma is an out-of-context experience that upsets expectations and unsettles one’s very understanding of existing contexts … But when the past is uncontrollably relived, it is as if there were no difference between the past and the*
present. Whether or not the past is reenacted or repeated in its precise literality ... one experientially feels as if one were back there reliving the event, and distance between here and there, then and now collapses. (LaCapra, 2004: 117-23)

This amounts, says Caruth, to an ‘affront to understanding’ (1995: 154), and I am inclined to agree.

I work with this affront to understanding to ask questions about the limits to knowledge. Working with Butler’s conception of an opaque subject I am mindful of the limits to what I might know about myself, or another. My preoccupations with temporality and spatiality, with knowledge and memory, with the now and the then, the here and the there of experience, and the accounts we might give of ourselves, are informed by my desire to press against the limits of my own knowledge; against the limits of what it is possible to know about myself or another. In recognising the complexity of the accounts I might give of myself, I want to be mindful of, responsive and faithful to, the complexities of the accounts that others might give to me. I labour then, to articulate a mode of engagement with biographical accounts of experience that does justice to their complexity, partiality, uncertainty and fragility, to what is inaugurated in the social and lived as one’s own. Having decided thus, having narrativised my moment of disruption in this particular way, I find I am able to continue.

I reproduce this account of experience in order to signal the ways in which both narrator and narrative are imbricated in temporalised (present and past) and spatialised (proximate and distant) networks of discourses, relations and memories. These networks
circumscribe the repertoire of possibilities through which I might be constituted, or constitute myself, and through which I might give an account of myself. This is a case of knowing what to say, and how to say it, ‘exactly adjusted’ to the context of its articulation (de Certeau, 1988: 78). This adjustment is at once precise and complex; simultaneously commensurable and not with the regulatory practices and normative matrices of intelligibility through which subjects and their accounts of themselves are constituted. It is simultaneously a memory of experience and a memory of those constitutive practices through which the subject of experience is constituted as intelligible and narratable.

**Remembering oneself**

Memory, the remembered, stands in the place of the practices through which it was always already constituted. A narrated account is constructed from memory, from the memories of a subject, and is made up and out of the constitutive social practices and relations it organizes when an account of oneself is given. The manner in which memories are recalled corresponds to the manner in which they were inscribed. The practices through which an account of oneself is made correspond to the practices through which those accounts, and the subjects who make them, are made possible.

Understanding memory as a trace of practices of subjectification and regulation, I work with biographical life history accounts not simply as narrative or textual objects but as memories of those constitutive practices. This foregrounds the act of narration as involving a movement that aggregates practices, experiences and memories in certain ways and not others, where these certain ways are constituted relationally among actants.
and technologies of government and self. Memory, as both moment and movement, is an endurance of the past in particular moments of presence. This endurance produces temporal and spatial modifications of both the present-time of the memory and of the space from which it has emerged. Knowledge and memory are always spatial and temporal, and a narrated account of oneself is always a re-collection of the times and places through, and in which, the subject and their experiences have been, and continue to be, constituted. A narrated account assembles multiple, incommensurable and different times, spaces, knowledges, experiences and memories, in the present, as if present, and as if coherent. There is a constitutive movement then, between the past and the present; a movement in which one might read the past from the present, the past of a particular subject and the co-constitutive relations among actants through which that subject has emerged as recognisable and intelligible in the present.

‘To put it bluntly’, says Ricoeur, ‘we have nothing better than memory to signify that something has taken place, has happened before we claim to remember it’ (2006: 21). Memory, as a representation of something from the past, signifies the presence of something now absent. In this regard, that which is absent or forgotten (that which escapes recollection) is also part of memory. The forgotten, the not known, the no longer known, the unknowable, are present still in a memory that might not remember. Since for Ricoeur, identity and memory (individual or collective) are inseparable, an identity based on memory and forgetfulness is fragile and unstable. Memory is not an object, but an action or practice which has ‘an objectal trait’, for one does not simply remember; one remembers something (Ricoeur, 2006). In this sense memory is simultaneously an event and the recollection of past events, and as such constitutes a form of knowledge. It
is at once a form of knowledge about a subject and her or his location in a network of constitutive relations and practices that exceed any one subject.

(W)e are governed – though not determined - in normative ways, and the body is given and received on the basis of certain kinds of norms… So though I realize that some people might want to know how I am expressed in my language or what self is expressed there, I am myself, as it were, much more interested in the question of how the language I use dispossesses me in the direction of the other or in the direction of the sociality that is not of my own making. (Butler, 2008: 16)

What I am myself (as it were) interested in, is the emergence of ‘improvisational possibility within a field of constraints’ (Butler, 2004a: 15). Being subjected, becoming a subject, and giving an account of that becoming, is not simply a project or practice that each subject makes up for her- or him-self. Yet nor is it completely determined. Further, what is remembered is framed by a collective memory, by the memories of ‘a group delimited in space and time’ (Halbwachs, 2007: 143). What a collective remembers about itself is framed by the constitutive possibilities emergent in its historical, political, social and geographical context. Thus, what one might remember is located in an extended network of practices, memories and meanings that bring together the personal and the social: ‘Clearly, if in a way my memories belong to me, I am certainly not their sole owner. All memories … constantly call to mind the collective nature of the activity of remembering’ (Kuhn, 1999: 55). Further, these memories, these things that we remember, are narrativised within those normative frameworks that inaugurate both a community and its members.
My memories are, in this way, continuous with the memories of the community in which the terms of my belonging have been fabricated and regulated, but not identical to them. In emphasising a relational subject I foreground a constitutive movement between technologies of government and of self; between a specific subject and the collective. I am trying to capture something of a constitutive reciprocity between and among actants in a network of relations. In thinking of the subject in this way I aim to capture something of the regulatory norms through which subjects are made, and made intelligible to one another, and the specificity of a subject who cannot be fully or finally reduced to, or conflated with, those norms.

In foregrounding a subject understood as multiple, situated, changeable and contradictory, I am confronted by a variability that calls into question ‘the existence of a permanent me that fits the criteria for sameness’ (Ricoeur, 2007: 78). In spite of this variability we understand ourselves and others as being ‘the same ones that did something yesterday and who must today account for them and, tomorrow, bear their consequences’ (2007: 78). We assume a self constancy despite change and this is in part what Ricoeur calls narrative identity – a conception of oneself that endures in time – which is also ‘a term for impotence through the admission of all the signs of vulnerability that threaten any such narrative identity’ (2007: 78). This impotence and vulnerability ‘implies becoming part of a process which no one subject can surely predict’ (Butler, 2004a: 39) and through which ‘one must enter into a collective work in which one’s own status as a subject must, for democratic reasons, become disoriented, exposed to what one does not know’ (2004a: 36). Hence subjects are implicated in
epistemological practices that are simultaneously comprised of knowing and not knowing (Lather, 1991), and as such, may only be contingently and partially known (or knowable) from the accounts they might give of themselves.

**Knowing oneself**

Those memories and relations, and memories of relations, through which biographical accounts of ourselves are narrated and made narratable, constitute the possibilities and limits to what we might know about ourselves and what might be known about us. I work here to articulate the co-constitutive relations through which these knowledges might be constituted, articulated and interrogated. In thinking about the subject of experience and knowledge as simultaneously regulated and irreducible, I work to capture something of the multiplicity, complexity, ambiguity, instability and opacity of practices of subjectification and regulation, at the same time as I recognise their normative power. In order to accomplish this I work with the concepts regulation and idiosyncrasy, time and space, knowledge and memory, and with relations between and among them.

I address concepts of regulation and idiosyncrasy through a relationship between technologies of government and technologies of self in order to foreground the normative practices of government and matrices of intelligibility through which subjects are constituted, and through which they constitute themselves. I also foreground the ways in which these practices are dispersed and diffused across networks of actants in ways that are variable and unstable, and hence productive of variation, specificity and idiosyncrasy.
I am concerned with giving an account of subjectivity and the subject, and of possibilities for working with the accounts subjects give of themselves, in ways that understand that they are neither wholly determined by regulatory practices of government, nor entirely different from them. I account for, and give an account of, the differentiation of a subject from normative regulatory practices not as individuality, but as an irreducibility expressed as idiosyncrasy. This idiosyncrasy is articulated as the specific location of a subject within constitutive relational networks of actants and conditions of possibility. Further, I propose that the idiosyncrasy of any subject is precisely a function of this relationality, and of the haecceity of these assembled relations, and that this relationality is made coherent and liveable as narrative. It is through this relationality that the subject emerges as a specific embodied subject; a subject of history and with a history of experience lived as biography. I propose that idiosyncrasy is also emergent from successive refigurations of normative practices of government, as well as from the particular temporal and spatial relations among actants through which the experiences of corporeal subjects are constituted and narrated.

I address concepts of time and space through a relationship between embodied subjects and their location in, and constitutive relation to, particular times and spaces – historical, political, social and geographical. This address to temporality and spatiality foregrounds the historically variable material practices through which subjects emerge and endure in time and space.
These material practices are inflected by the specificity of a temporal, geographical location and its political and social conditions of possibility. What it is possible to think, know and say, in and from these locations, is situated in language practices as discourses, speech acts and acts of narration. These are constitutive grammars of intelligibility framed by the practices of subjectification particular to a time and place. Subjects, and the accounts they give of themselves, are particularised in and through their multiple temporal and spatial locations. They are spatialised as embodied co-constitutive relational actants (both human and not) and temporalised by their location in time (with its historical, social and political specificities) as well as narrative practices of ordering, sequencing and duration (including past, present and future tenses).

It is through narrative that subjects are constituted as present, as having a past, and anticipating a future. Given the dependence of acts of narration on temporal grammars of intelligibility, and the figuration of these temporalised grammars through narrative, I situate acts of narration as practices inaugurated, regulated and coordinated through the apparatus of narrativity. Narrativity incorporates the range of practices through which embodied subjects are constituted, and through which they locate themselves and their experiences, their memories and biographical accounts, in time and space. All lived experience and accounts of it are, in this sense, understood as narrative: as constituted and coordinated through the apparatus of narrativity.

I address the concepts of knowledge and memory through a relationship between what subjects know and remember, and the ways in which these knowings and memories are mobilised in the accounts subjects give of themselves. This address to knowledge and
memory foregrounds what it might be possible for a subject to know, and what it might be possible to know about a subject, from relations between the operation of constitutive practices of government and the practices of memory through which experience over time is refigured according to shifting temporal, spatial and relational contexts.

The practice of narration involves the mediation and articulation of a constitutive body of knowledge, and that body can be read from the embodied accounts that subjects give of themselves. This body of knowledge, contiguous with the body of the subject, is composed of many moments and heterogeneous elements given coherence and duration through acts of narration. The endurance of these knowledges in, and as, acts of narration is accomplished through acts of remembering; through memory as the duration of knowledge lived as experience, and experience lived as knowledge, especially of oneself. Memories are, says de Certeau, ‘indissociable from the time of their acquisition and bear the marks of its particularities’ (1988: 82). They are simultaneously a remembrance of the experience of a subject and a re-collection of the practices through which that experience was always already constituted. Such acts of remembering are ‘encyclopedic’ (de Certeau, 1988: 83) in that they are drawn from an inventory of multiple possibilities through which past experiences were constituted and may be remembered in the present. This inventory is constituted relationally and, as such, is a relation among those subjects for and by whom it was instantiated. There is a sense then, in which any act of memory, drawn from this inventory, is itself an inventory of those constitutive relations; a memory of the collective rather than merely individual or singular. ‘Perhaps memory is no more than this “recall” or call on the part of the other,
leaving its mark like a kind of overlay on a body that has always already been altered without knowing it … Memory is a sense of the other’ (de Certeau, 1988: 87). The accounts that we give of ourselves are, then, more than accounts of ourselves: they are also accounts of the co-constitutive relations through which any ‘I’ might give an account of her- or him-self.

**Narrating oneself**

To be asked to give an account of oneself is an injunction to remember and narrate. I am interested in the practices through which memory and narrative are implicated in the act of enduring ‘as oneself’ across time. I am interested in biography, in the practice of giving an account of oneself, as a work of memory through which the subject gathers her- or him-self together ‘and attempts to construct a life story that is both intelligible and acceptable, one that is both intellectually readable and emotionally supportable’ (Ricoeur, 2007: 195). Memory is in part a recollection (re-collection) of those constitutive technologies that shape the boundaries of what it might be possible to think, say, do or know in any particular time and place. In asking how such technologies might be implicated in the constitution not only of subjects, but of the accounts they give of themselves, I foreground the constitutive and regulatory technologies of government through which subjects, and the accounts they give of themselves, are made possible and intelligible.

I am as much interested in the production of a subject who might give an account of oneself as I am in the accounts that subject might give. Practices of government, as concerned with ‘the conduct of conduct’, specify domains of possibility for action and
subjectivity. They are also concerned with delineating the parameters of the ‘thinkable’ (Gordon, 1991). As ensembles of regulatory practices they constitute possibilities for, and limits to, who we might be or become; what we might do (or not), what we might say (or not), what we might think (or not), what we might remember (or not) and what we might know (or not) - all of which are implicated and present (even if forgotten) when we give accounts of ourselves.

In giving accounts of ourselves we take for granted that we are someone about whom an account might be given. Such accounts are narrativisations made from among the constitutive ensembles of practices through which that someone emerges as recognisable and intelligible. They are assertions of an ‘I’ made possible through constitutive and regulatory practices of government. Further, the historicity of the embodied subject, lived as biography, is contiguous with the historicity of the practices of government through which that subject is made intelligible as a particular someone. That someone is paradoxically constituted by and through those regulatory technologies of government and an excess of them: that is, they are at once submissive to, and an excess of, ‘the fatality of the established order’ (de Certeau, 1988: 17). These submissions and excesses account for the paradoxical simultaneity of the regularities and idiosyncrasies through which one is both made recognisable, and recognisable as oneself and not another. These idiosyncratic differences emerge from the many intersections between the lived experiences of embodied subjects and the practices of government through which they and their experience are anyway made possible. It is in and through these intersections that the subject emerges from heterogeneous ensembles of practices and possibilities as a particular, and unsubstitutable, corporeal subject.
In articulating a subject assembled through co-constitutive relations among actants, one who is simultaneously single and multiple, regulated and idiosyncratic, knowable and not, I’m working to give an account of possibilities for engaging with narrated accounts of experience that does not detach them from their narrators; does not ‘silence’ or ‘orphan’ their authors (Ricoeur, 2004). Rather, I am concerned with articulating the materiality of the narrating subject; a subject whose materiality is a co-constitutive relation with other actants, both human and not. The narrated accounts of narrating subjects are therefore understood as living traces and conduits among multiple material actants and relations through which both subjects and their accounts of experience are constituted. Both that which is remembered, and the one who remembers, are actants in a network of relations among multiple actants, times, spaces, memories, practices, knowledges and so on. The accounts we give of ourselves are, in this sense, understood as polyvocal, or rhizovocal (Youngblood Jackson, 2003), as the eruption and articulation of many voices in ‘one’. Attention to these many voices emphasises the constitutive technologies of government and self through which the appearance and intelligibility of subjects, and of their narratives and narratability, are coordinated through the apparatus of narrativity. It is, I propose, through attention to this relation between governmentality and narrativity that we might understand any particular subject as simultaneously an iteration of the many, and the many as an iteration of any particular subject. We might also come to know something of the one and the many, and relations between them, as a movement between regulation and idiosyncrasy.
There is a tension here (in such an account of subjectivity and experience) that I am working with: a tension between a normative subject, that is one who is regulated and regularised, and an idiosyncratic subject, that is one who is unsubstitutable as one for another (Cavarero, 2000). I think of the unsubstitutability of a subject as emergent from their specific location in temporal, spatial and relational networks of actants, and from their assemblage as multiplicities and becomings. As a specific assemblage of multiple actants, the subject is a particularised ensemble of possibilities constituted in and by those networks of relations through which they appear as subjects. In this way they are relationally constituted as idiosyncratic and unsubstitutable assemblages within that network. The subject, as a relational assemblage, is constituted within that network but not identical to any other actant in it. Every other actant is comprised of, and comprises, different co-constitutive relational assemblages of actants. It is from among these co-constitutive relations that we might similarly recognize something of the constitutive regularities between subjects, as well as the specificity or unsubstitutability of a particular subject.

I work with this tension between regulation and idiosyncrasy through the concept of narrativity; through the concept of narrativity as an assemblage of those multiple and complex practices and relations through which the subject appears as if a singularity. This appearance of singularity is understood as a narrative accomplishment made possible through those normative regulatory matrices of intelligibility through which one is made recognisable within certain temporal and spatial locations (Butler, 1990). Such locations are simultaneously historical, political, geographical and social, and it is in such locations that specific embodied subjects are constituted as intelligible and
recognisable. I am not only preoccupied with the practices through which such subjects emerge as regulated idiosyncrasies, but also with those practices through which they might be addressed and understood when asked to give accounts of themselves.

**Governmentality as narrativity**

Government, as articulated by Foucault (1976, 1978, 1978-1979), is a practice, or ensemble of practices, rather than an institution. Governmentality, as the implementation and operation of these practices, foregrounds ‘the ways in which the world is made intelligible and practicable’ (Rose, 1993: 289). In this way, practices of government constitute possibilities for action. In thinking about these constitutive possibilities I foreground the ways in which practices of government have a performative force that is structured through the temporality of narrative and practices of narration. It is, I suggest, through these narrative acts that practices of government assume any appearance of stability, coherence and endurance. Similarly, I argue that the apparent stability, coherence and endurance of an embodied performative subject are also made possible through this relation between governmentality and narrativity.

Regulatory discourses and citational practices mediate experience ‘not just retrospectively but prospectively in the planning and execution of action’ (Carter, 2003: 1). In foregrounding the present moment of experience as caught in this movement between the past and future, I am attempting to give an account of governmentality and subjectivity that recognises the ways in which the temporal organisation of experience and action is coordinated within, by and through their temporal organisation in and as narrative. I think of narrative in this context in terms of the simultaneous re-presentation
and refiguration of the technologies through which subjects are constituted and constitute themselves as a ‘particular one’ who lives and acts. This ‘one’ who lives, is recognisable to themselves and others through the normative matrices of intelligibility through which they are constituted and regulated. I am attempting to articulate the extent to which these normative matrices, as technologies of government, are always already narrativised; that is, organised into regulatory accounts through which these technologies are both constituted and mobilised as commonsense, everyday narratives of being and living, knowing and doing. This relationship between governmentality and narrativity is shaped by three intersecting claims.

One: theoretical accounts of governmentality, and their application to specific contexts or objects of inquiry, are themselves narratives or narrativisations that variously define, describe, analyse or critique at the same time as they discursively construct their object of inquiry.

Two: governmentality, as an account of the historical emergence of systems of rule, necessarily fabricates temporalised accounts that constitute the emergence of the object of study over time. The temporality of these accounts, and their attempts at cohering as the object of study, are achieved through narrativity as a coordination of multiple, but not necessarily coherent, discourses and practices through which that object is constituted and articulated as if coherent and stable.

Three: the technologies of government through which normalised and regulated, recognisable and intelligible human subjects are constituted, have a performative force.
These technologies are neither monolithic nor stable, but multiple, mobile, diffuse, contradictory and historically variable. These multiplicities are held together in an appearance of coherence and endurance through their narrativisation as descriptive and explanatory accounts of the subject, ‘the real’, and of experience. The temporality of these accounts is figured through the apparatus of narrativity which locates narrating subjects and their accounts of experience in the present. Any moment of presence is understood as a particular movement and moment within a temporal narrative trajectory that extends from the past and into the future.

In working with Ricoeur’s (1988) concept of refiguration I propose that if refiguration is that movement and moment of mimesis in which the order of narrative becomes the order of life (the life of the subject), and if the regulatory technologies of government are understood as narrative, then the subject is understood as a refiguration of those regulatory technologies of government. The corporeal subject is, then, the materialisation of practices of government brought to life in and as the subject. Further, as temporalised and spatialised refigurations of those practices, subjects are also variations of those practices, and irreducible to them.

**What might I claim to know?**

I have proposed, in this chapter, that narrated biographical accounts of experience are performances of memories and knowledges, and of memories and knowledges of co-constitutive practices and relations. I have also proposed that one cannot know, remember or narrate everything: indeed, Ricoeur emphasises that the idea of an exhaustive narrative is a performatively impossible idea (Ricoeur, 2006). That one
cannot know, remember and narrate everything signals a too-muchness - too much knowledge, too much memory, too much experience - that cannot be contained or articulated all at the same time. The accounts we give of ourselves are, then, necessarily partial, selective and unfinished, but still intelligible as accounts; as accounts of recognisable subjects. I have also proposed that the accounts we give of ourselves are temporalised and spatialised in dimensions, directions and durations that are in excess (an excess) of the present moment of articulation. So, if the accounts we give of ourselves are un-finished narratives of becoming, how might we engage with those accounts in the present; and in a present that incorporates the past and anticipates a time yet to come? How might an address to the practices through which we are constituted as speaking subjects inform the work that we perform with narrated accounts of experience? I contemplate these questions in the next chapter through an address to a fragment of speech from an interview in order to explore questions of the performative force of acts of speech and narration.
Inter/section #3: a medi(t)ation on knowing

Representations of knowledge through which one articulates what one has come to know, is a narrative of arrival that feigns coherence and finality through the elision of the temporalised and spatialised practices and processes through which that knowledge has been fabricated. It is these temporalised and spatialised practices and processes that I am at pains to make explicit in my representation of the PhD as a knowledge project. It is of course nonsense to talk, as I have, and continue to do, of time and space as if separate co-ordinates through which materiality might be described or represented. To think of them together as time-space more accurately captures some sense of their simultaneous co-constitutive relation. But this is difficult to accomplish, so I work with them as a paradoxically separated simultaneity: when I speak of one it is illuminated in such a way as to render the other a shadow; still there but not similarly visible. This is as much as anything, a dilemma of representation; of describing, diagramming or mapping flows, densities, transparencies, opacities, visibilities, elisions and possibilities on the flat surface of the page through the technology of print; a technology that can only ever be a gesture toward the complexity it might seek to articulate.

So, in working with the representation of time-space, and of a relational performative subject as constituted and moving through and across it, I am undertaking a mapping of these temporalised and spatialised relations through the figure of the map as
representation. And yet the map, as representation of spatialised relations, is no more those relations than ‘a painting of a pipe is a pipe’ (Massey, 2005: 106). I am gesturing here towards representation not of the real but of other representations, which are in turn representations of something else. These representations are more than re-presentations, for they bring into the present both that which is prior and that which is becoming, or yet to come. This is the point I want to make about time and space as coeval simultaneities and as simultaneously moments and movements, locations and becomings, presences and absences, historicity and futurity. In this way, space, articulated as time-space, presents us with (rather than simply re-presents) a heterogeneity of practices and processes. Conceived in this way space, and maps of it, is not ‘an already-interconnected whole but an ongoing product of interconnections and not’ (Massey, 2005: 107). It is neither firm ground on which to stand nor a flat surface, but always unfinished and open. This text, as a map of my research, is similarly an experiment in working on, with and from the surface of the page into a conceptual space that is unfinished and open, a space of loose ends and missing links.

‘This space is the sphere of a dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore undetermined) by the construction of new relations’ (Massey, 2005: 107). Since it is always in the process of being made it is always an unfinished continuity of deferred arrivals, of connections yet to be made, of ‘tentative half-formed first encounters’ (2005: 107). So the mapping I undertake of this project resists coherence and totality. It is a cartography of multiple orders, ‘a mimesis of incoherence’ that disorients at the same
time as it orients, defamiliarises at the same time as it familiarises, that provokes ‘a
view from an unaccustomed angle’ (2005: 109). It is a map that leaves openings for
something new or yet to come. In such a map it is possible to lose your way, to be
surprised by an encounter with the unexpected, to face the unknown: ‘On the road
map you won’t drive off the edge of your known world. In space as I want to imagine
it, you just might’ (Massey, 2005: 111).
Chapter 3: Speaking

‘You are who you say you are’ (Chris)

I work, in this chapter, with this fragment, this moment, this momentary fragment of speech, excised from Chris’ narrated account of himself. I read this fragmented moment as suggesting that there is a ‘who’ that speaks, and that this speech has a performative force: that you are who you say you are. But ‘who’ might this ‘you’ be? I contemplate the possibility that the ‘you’ in Chris’ account is simultaneously a reference to himself and another, a movement between the specific and the general, between the one and the many. I am interested, in working with this fragment, in the constitutive power of speech, and in those grammars through which a ‘me’ and a ‘you’, an ‘I’ and a ‘we’ are relationally constituted as simultaneously similar and different, continuous and not. I am interested in the speaking subject as a grammatical ‘I’ who is not reducible to a figure of speech.

I also work, in this chapter, to articulate movements and relations between the pronouns ‘what’ and ‘who’. I have thus far worked to give an account of ‘what’ a subject is, or might become, by articulating the subject as an assemblage of co-constitutive relations among human and non-human actants. I have proposed a reading of governmentality as narrativity that gives an account of the apparatuses through which practices and relations of subjectification are constitutive of, and materialised in and as, a corporeal human subject. I have emphasised that the corporeal human subject, simultaneously an assemblage and actant inaugurated within networks of practices and relations, is both
more and less than human. I have emphasised that in attempting to account for the irreducibility of a subject I am also exploring possibilities for giving an account of the specificity of a particular corporeal and named subject: not as essence or stability, but as presence and relationality. The human subject I am articulating is the one who understands her- or him-self to be the one who gives an account of oneself. This is an account of a narrator who articulates oneself as a specific grammatical ‘I’ or ‘who’ that speaks. Against this experience of singularity, I am giving an account of an ‘I’ or ‘who’ that is multiple, mobile and relational, and never fully-identical nor different from itself, or any other of the co-constitutive actants through which it is assembled.

The fragment of speech that appears here as attributed to Chris is a translation of the spoken into the written: it is an audio-text transcribed into a print-text. This transcription of Chris’ account, or rather, this fragment from it, has become the object of study, or the actant through which my address to Chris is co-ordinated. In temporalising and spatialising the narrative-interview as a space and a technology for eliciting speech, and the act of transcription as one that temporalises and spatialises the spoken as the written, I contemplate what might have become of the corporeal Chris in these acts of transcription and translation. How, I ask, might we work with narrated accounts of experience in ways that give an account of the materiality, regulation, specificity, irreducibility and relationality of a named corporeal subject? How might we engage with the paradoxical simultaneity or contradiction between irreducibility and specificity on one side, and, on the other, the normative regulatory practices through which this specificity is made intelligible and narratable? In so asking, I am not proposing a movement from question to answer, from problem to solution, but a movement that
opens up the paradoxes, contradictions, tensions and conundrums that suffuse this inquiry. So, I work with Chris’s fragment of speech not so much to analyse what he might have meant, but as a provocative point of departure for contemplating the work through which this assumption and articulation of a ‘who’ might be accomplished. I also work to give an account of what I read in Chris’s assertion ‘you are who you say you are’ as an intimation of the performative force of speech, and of those practices of narration through which narrators constitute themselves as the subjects of their own biographies.

There is some slippage here between speaker and text, narrator and narrative, interviewee and interview transcript, researched and researcher. I recognise that I am complicit in this slippage, and am working to give an account of an interview transcript that does not privilege the transcribed text over the spoken, nor the disembodied account over the embodied narrator. Rather, I work to recover something of an embodied narrator without recourse to the ‘truth’ of a ‘real’ subject with an ‘authentic’ voice. I resist the idea that there is any simple or stable correspondence between speech and the real. What I am attempting, in working with this fragment of speech, is to ask questions about the constitution of an embodied speaking subject. I do so in order to engage with narrated accounts of experience in ways that are cognisant of the performative force of speech, and of speech as a performative force of practices of government and narration; of governmentality and narrativity.
Speaking for and about oneself

Foucault (1998) gives an account of the practices through which human subjects are individualised, and authenticated in their individuality, by rendering into speech truth accounts of who they are. This ‘truthful confession’ is inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power (Foucault, 1998). Through these confessional acts of speech one is simultaneously subjectified through the forms that the telling takes, and constitutes oneself to and for oneself and others. In this way the confessional, as an account of the ‘truth’ of oneself, is a ‘ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement’ (Foucault, 1998: 61). The confession, as articulation of the truth through the act of speech, is, says Rose ‘a diagram of a certain form of subjectification that binds us to others at the very same time we affirm our identity’ (1999: 244). This act of individualising is, then, at the same time an act of relating, where relating has the doubled meaning of telling and connecting. This telling is shaped by those technologies through which subjects are ‘incited to become ethical beings, beings who define and regulate themselves according to a moral code, (and) establish precepts for conducting and judging their lives’ (Rose, 1999: 245). Such an address to the constitution of an ethical subject, traces a movement through Foucault’s theorisations of practices of disciplinary power that individualise and normalise, practices of bio-power that collectivise and regulate and practices of ethico-political power as techniques of self through which responsible citizens govern themselves, and through which relations of obligation to oneself and others are established.

There is a movement here I am tracing between the ethical formation of the self and the ethical relation to the other through acts of speech and disclosure. This movement opens
out a space for contemplation of the ethical relations and practices through which we
give accounts of ourselves and each other, as well as of the accounts we give of the
accounts that others give to us. This is a relational space and a space of relations. I give
an account of this space as territorialised on the side of constitutive regulatory practices
of governmentality and narrativity, and work to deterritorialise it in order to contemplate
questions about possibilities for ethical engagement with another as an unsubstitutable
and irreducible subject.

In addressing the act of giving an account of oneself, I work with a Foucauldian (1998,
2002) address to discourse not as language, but as a system of representation, as a series
of statements that contributes to particular practices of knowledge formation and
subjectification. This system of representation describes the rules and practices through
which meaningful statements are produced and provides ways of simultaneously talking
about and constituting a particular object. Discourse, for Foucault, is ‘a group of
statements’ that ‘belong to the same discursive formation’ (2002: 131). This formation is
not a unity or continuity, but rather a temporalised and spatialised multiplicity and
discontinuity. Discourse, says Foucault, never consists of one statement or text – rather
it is a multiple and mobile formation that accrues different meanings and practices in
different times, spaces, practices and relations of power. Discourse, as I am articulating
it here, is also positioned as a co-constitutive actant in a network of co-constitutive
relational actants. It is, I propose, through the apparatuses of governmentality and
narrativity that these multiple and mobile discursive formations, as actants, are
constituted and coordinated. Further, it is through practices of narration that narratives
and narrativity are constituted and performed as accounts of oneself. I work with an
iteration of narrative as an element of the apparatus of narrativity through which the
ordering, coordination, temporalisation and spatialisation of discourse is accomplished.
In this sense I work with concepts of discourse and narrative as a co-constitutive relation
rather than a difference, and as a relation expressed through the concept of
performativity.

I work with the concept of performativity in order to give an account of narrators, and of
the discursive practices through which their narratives are articulated, as actants in the
constitution and performance of life-history accounts of oneself as recognisable and
intelligible. In articulating a relation between discursive practices and performativity, I
work with Foucault’s account of discursive practices as ‘a body of anonymous, historical
rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for
a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of
the enunciative function’ (Foucault, 2002: 131). It is this articulation of the temporalised
and spatialised regulation of the enunciative function that informs my address to the
practice of giving an account of oneself and to the apparatus of narrativity as the
constitution of the narrator, the act of narration, the narrative and of narratability.

I work with the concept of performativity in order to give an account of speech as
constituted through regulatory discursive practices, and of a speaking subject irreducible
to those practices. This irreducibility is in part constituted by, and a performance of, the
instabilities, ruptures, discontinuities, fractures, irruptions and irregularities of those
practices. As Speedy suggests, the very act of performing narratives reveals something
of the constitutive relationship between different discourses, and ‘exposes the cracks’
and fissures between and among them (2008: 47). Further, since ‘both the “speaking subject” and the language being used are constantly in “process”’ (Speedy, 2008: 92), neither the speaker nor the spoken are indices of recoverable stabilities or certainties, but rather, intimations of possibilities. How, then, might we be constituted as speaking subjects; how might we come to speak for ourselves and what might we say? I suggested in the previous chapter that it is impossible to narrate everything; to fully know or remember all that there is to know or remember. So, if we cannot fully narrate, know or remember everything, we are, I propose, both more and less than we say; both more and less than what we say we are; both more and less than who we say we are. If we are simultaneously more and less than we say we are, what might we make of the accounts we give of ourselves, of the accounts that we give of each other, and that others give of themselves?

In assembling these propositions and questions I am contemplating possibilities for ethical engagement with others and with their narrated accounts of experience. Strategic to this is a resistance to overly determined or reductive accounts of the operation of technologies of government or discursive practices. In giving an account of an irreducible subject I am also performing a counter movement that gives an account of the materiality and specificity of the narrator, and restores something of this materiality and specificity to the textual account made of them. I have proposed that those acts of transcription that convert the oral into the written are productive of a bodily opacity; that is they render the body of the narrator opaque in the body of the text. Having positioned the transcribed interview as a textual effect of an embodied narrator, I ask now, through what acts of translation or interpretation might the materiality of the narrator be
remembered and possibly restored to the text? This is not a move in which I romance the return of the humanist subject, but a move in which I am attempting to restore the materiality of a flesh-and-blood narrator as both more and less than human. This is, I propose, partly accomplished through the articulation of those co-constitutive relations among human and non-human actants through which a human actant appears as a subject. This text, including all those technologies through which it is materialised, is itself an actant or agent in the materialisation of those subjects it gives accounts of – but not reducible to, or substitutable for, them.

**Writing about speaking**

In addressing narrated accounts of experience I foreground not simply the narrated, and transcriptions of it, but the act of narration itself; the act of speaking. I foreground not so much what subjects ‘actually’ say, but rather how it might be possible for them to say anything at all. I resist an analysis of transcribed speech that might treat the text as a ‘surface of translation for mute objects’ (Foucault, 1991: 63) preferring instead to give an account of a corporeal subject who speaks as much as they are spoken, and by a language that is not theirs alone (Butler, 2001).

I am concerned with ‘what makes the subject possible, the conditions of possibility and its formative occasion’, as well as with ‘what is taken up and reiterated in the subjects “own” acting’ (Butler, 1997a: 14). Having claimed that a subject remembers, knows, narrates *something*, I trace the contours of that something, and of that something as articulated in and by performative acts of speech. By trace I mean: to mark out, delineate
or follow the constitutive chains that link, shackle or anchor the multiplicities through which a subject appears to endure as singular and coherent; to make an artefact of these things by drawing over their lines and contours, and in some sense mapping the constitutive terrain; to recognise that whatever I address as this *something* can never be more than a fragment, a residual amount, a trace; and finally to articulate the analytic possibility that those voices through whom this ventriloquist text speaks might insinuate themselves ‘into the text as a mark or trace, an effect of metonymy of the body’ (de Certeau, 1988: 155).

I am working, in this chapter, towards the articulation of a mode of address through which interview transcripts might be reanimated as texts produced by embodied subjects, without recourse to the reconstitution of a ‘real’, fleshed individual. I’m attempting to articulate a way of thinking about and working with the spoken that recognises that what is said, as well as that which is not said (might even be unsayable), has a performative force that animates the narrating subject. I am attempting to recover something of that corporeal narrator, not as a true account of a real person, but as a vivid and visceral account of a material body relationally constituted with other bodies, including the social body. I am attempting to locate and articulate possibilities for working with narrated accounts in ways that recognise the simultaneity of the specific embodied ‘who’ that emerges and speaks and the relations and practices through which that someone is normatively constituted and regulated as a ‘what’. I’m attempting to articulate the conditions of possibility through which we might claim to be ‘someone’, anyone; and to recognise and know ourselves and each other.
What has Chris said?

CHRIS: I’m just thinking, now how do these people who obviously rot the system and are dishonest, you know, I’m just stunned, how do they continue to be successful? How do they talk themselves into these higher paying jobs. The positions of power, how do they do it, you know, the good die young. That is basically the same sort of philosophy. Well it is exactly that. It is you are who you say you are, and you are sitting in an interview, and the difference between someone who earns $50,000 and someone who earns $100,000, and I’m sorry, the guy who earns $50,000 goes to work and we just talk on an even basis, works 8 or 9 hours, has to produce a bottom line of you know, of results, he is responsible for those results and those results, you know, he gets in there, he works all day, he clocks off. The guy who earns $100,000 has to work the same amount of hours, has to still put in the same amount of brain thought, has the same amount of responsibility or you know, although probably a bit more, but you are responsible for your own job and at the end of the day the only difference between that person who earns $50,000 and that person who earns $100,000, the guy who earns 100 has the confidence that he can do his job and he has the confidence to be able to sit there and convince someone that they are someone they can trust. It’s that inner confidence and being able to sell that inner confidence is the difference between those two people and I think that’s where it comes to me now, is that since I have all my mates that are all earning really good money um. Quite a few of them into the 6 figures now, like and it is quite reasonable. … I’m far from it, but, I’ve got even better qualifications than them. … seriously I can do anything. There’s been nothing in life that has been too
hard and also I don’t believe there is anything out there that other people are capable of
doing that I’m not.

PETER: So how do you convince an employer of that at an interview?

CHRIS: You’ve got to convince yourself before you can convince an employer. It’s like
you’ve got to love yourself before you can love another person, it’s the same. And that’s
why sometimes I think it comes down to these people who cheat the system, you know,
like my ex boss who continues in these jobs but have crook histories. I think how they
convince themselves is because they are in denial because they actually haven’t, they
don’t have a conscience so they don’t fail. So they sit in the job and whatever way they,
I know that one of my ex flatmates he said, well he is constantly in and out of jobs and
he gets fired. But he then walks into his next job interview and they say well why did
you leave your last position and the way he explains it, you just sit there and you know
what’s going on and you think, well that’s really impressive. Well, I feel sorry for you
mate, you’ve been hard done by. It is the way that they tell the story. And that’s, yeah,
back to it, you’ve just got to now believe in yourself. When you can do that then it is
easy to tell people that. It’s coming from the heart, it is coming honestly. And that’s the
problem it doesn’t come from, the other side of the branch, is that it doesn’t come from
the heart. They are such good liars, they lie to themselves, they lie to anyone around
them, you know, they believe their own lies. In interviews I’ve mentioned you know,
honesty hasn’t always been my best policy. But I’m, yeah, once you start believing in
yourself and you are telling the honest truth so it can only come across sincerely and
people can often pick up on that.
In this extract Chris is working through a question about how and why some people earn more than he does. He has elsewhere established that he has a target income of $100,000 and is currently earning $50,000. He speculates that although people on different salaries do similar work, and are apparently worth the same amount of money, that some people earn more and others less, despite their (dis)honesty and their qualifications. This is, he suggests, a function of inner confidence. There is a relation here between an interior (confidence), a moral character (honesty) and the value of one’s labour (salary) to be sold to an employer. I am not so much interested in making interpretations about the ways in which Chris might have assembled these actants in his biographical narrative, but working with the imputation that speech has a performative force, that ‘you are who you say you are’; that the power of what one might say depends on ‘the way that they tell the story’. I read this statement as signalling a complex ethical relationship between speech and subjectivity in which what one says, and the way it is framed in, through and as a narrative, might be variously understood as: a falsehood - I’m not really who I say I am but if I’m confident about how I say it then you will believe me; a truth - I am who I say I am because I’m telling you the truth (whether you believe me or not); a reflection of inner confidence – I am who I say I am because I believe in myself; located in a metaphorical and metaphysical body –the heart as a signifier of honesty, sincerity and integrity; and as the sign of a philosophical and moral subject – one who knows her- or him-self, loves oneself, does not lie to oneself or another, and is recognised as such by another. The movements in this extract between oneself and another, between those other actants through which this account is assembled (including, money, work, responsibility, honesty, inner confidence, the crook boss, the frequently sacked mate) are grammatically diagrammed as a generalisation
through the use of the pronoun ‘you’. Chris is simultaneously saying ‘I am who I say I am’ and ‘you are who you say you are’. He is simultaneously, paradoxically, claiming an authentic position for himself and an inauthentic position for the other. Whilst there is some doubt about the veracity of the claims of the other (they might lie or be in denial), there is no doubt about the claims that the ‘I’, as Chris, makes. This paradoxical movement between named and grammatical others, signals something of the narrative and discursive work through which subjects give an account of themselves and others as simultaneously recognisable and intelligible as human (‘we’, ‘they’ or ‘you’) and as oneself (‘I’, ‘my’ or ‘me’). These grammars of intelligibility constitute the limits to what we might say we are, and the ways in which we might tell the story of our experience as a particular ‘who’ rather than a generic ‘what’. I’m emphasising here the performative force of speech as constitutive of a subject and her or his experience and of an ‘I’ who might give an account of that experience as simultaneously generalisable to another and particular to oneself.

**What have I said?**

In my earlier account of an experience of remembering something that might not have happened, I recalled that the memory came through a bodily performance understood in psychological discourse as an abreaction: ‘the free expression and consequent release of a previously repressed emotion’. I literally re-lived, bodily performed (if not re-enacted), the experience of an event that I may or may not have experienced. I signalled in the previous chapter the extent to which I made meaning of that experience, made that experience meaningful, through recourse to the discourses, discursive formations,
Discursive practices (and positions within them) and narratives available to me there and then, in the formative scene of my remembering. Discourses of ‘sexual abuse’, ‘repressed memory’ and ‘abreaction’, newly available through therapy, became attached to, found ready compatibility with, theoretical discourses of ‘patriarchy’, ‘masculinity’, ‘power’, ‘violence’ (and the constitutive relations between them) newly available through academic study. What circulated in the public domain as psy and theoretical discourses, and narratives of the childhood experiences of others, was available to my articulations of a private domain, and in this way the public became private, the private became public, and the personal became political. I am interested in understanding something more of these constitutive movements between the embodied subject and the body politic, between the grammatical ‘I’ and ‘you’, between oneself and another, and of the movement across the membrane of relationality that simultaneously separates and joins us.

**What might I say I am doing?**

I suggested, in the previous chapter, that biographical accounts of experience bear traces of the constitutive conditions of their emergence in and across time. I situated them as moments and movements, as assemblages of actants, as acts of recollection, and as citational practices. This assemblage is formed, given form, through those normative constitutive practices of government, or ‘grids of specification’ (Foucault, 2002: 46), through which the subject appears as recognisable and intelligible within the domains of their appearance. And yet, I have resisted any stable or overly determined account of a causal relationship between the appearance of a subject and the technologies of government through which she or he is constituted and regulated. I have worked instead,
with the idea of a simultaneously normatively constituted and incommensurable, irreducible or idiosyncratic subject: that is, an embodied subject co-constituted and assembled within the social body and normative practices of regulation, but not identical or reducible to them.

I work, in this chapter, to extend my account of this simultaneously regulated and irreducible subject. I work also to extend my framing of governmentality as narrativity, and as both a ‘framework for the scene of recognition’ (Butler, 2007: 30) and as the coordination of multiple intersecting matrices of intelligibility (Butler, 1990). I am interested in the performative force of these frames and matrices, and approach performativity as a spatialisation, a geography of the subject (Pile and Thrift, 1995). ‘Give me your body’, says de Certeau, ‘and I will give you meaning, I will make you a name and a word in my discourse’ (1988: 149).

I am interested in the ways in which these normative frames and matrices might be assembled in and as biographical accounts of experience; and assembled in such a way as to accomplish the simultaneous recognition of oneself as a correspondence with those normative matrices, and as a differentiation from them (as ‘me’ and not ‘you’). Such an accomplishment instantiates a movement between oneself and another, between remembering and forgetting; that is, a capacity to simultaneously remember enough of those constitutive practices and relations so as to secure recognition, and a capacity to forget them in order to create the fiction of a place of one’s own within them (de Certeau, 1988). When giving an account of oneself, this fictive ‘I’ fabricates an illusion of ‘authorship’ that attempts to cover over the traces of belonging, of dependency on
others. This is an act of camouflage through which ‘the conditions of production of discourse and its object’ are rendered invisible (de Certeau, 1988: 44). The subject might then appear to stand alone, speak for her or himself alone, and assert ‘I am who I say I am’.

‘The verbal relics’ of which such assertions are composed are ‘tied to lost stories and opaque acts’; are ‘juxtaposed in a collage where their relations are not thought, and for this reason they form a symbolic whole. They are articulated by lacunae’ (de Certeau, 1988: 107). What interests me here are the organising practices through which the not thought, the not necessarily thought, the remembered and the forgotten, are organised in, and a coordination of, a whole field of practices through which this organisation is made possible, and though which the unspoken might still inform that which is. I labour here, to articulate a way of working with biographical narratives that might recognise the presence and operation of that which is not actually spoken alongside that which is; that which may have been forgotten or silenced, but is nonetheless present, animating speech.

Who might we say we are?
The accounts we give of ourselves are citational practices that animate languages and lexicons that come from somewhere else and are never our own. These accounts are composed of the remembered and the forgotten, the known and not, the audible and the silent, of intersections and interstices. That which is spoken is also an account of that which has not been said, is yet to be said, may never be said; as well as that which might even be unsayable. Acts of speech are citational practices constituted in, by and through
what it is possible to say, know or remember in any given time and space. Speaking not only ‘establishes a present relative to a time and a place’, but ‘posits a contract with the other … in a network of places and relations’ (de Certeau: 1988: xiii). What it is possible to say in any moment is embedded in, and emergent from, a succession of other, prior moments, contents, contexts and discursive possibilities. As imbricated in this network of relations, speech secures its efficacy ‘not through the single utterance of a lone speaker but through repeated citations by a chorus of speakers’ (Secomb, 2007: 152).

These chorused citations are performances that animate those discourses, discursive practices and discursive formations through which subjects are constituted and regulated. Discourses, as ‘limited practical domains’, have ‘their boundaries, their rules of formation, their conditions of existence’ (Foucault, 1991: 61). Foucault emphasises that objects of inquiry and knowledge, and claims to truth, be both understood and interrogated as discursive formations. This involves mapping the practices and ‘types of enunciations’ through which particular objects and truth accounts are formed (Foucault, 2002). Discourse, as described by Foucault, is the vehicle for disciplinary power; it acts on the mind in order to effect the submission of bodies through the control of ideas. It acts, ‘by means of a theory of interests, representations and signs’, on the mind, ‘as a surface inscription of power’ (Foucault, 1991a: 102). I’m interested in this account of the discursive operation of technologies of government as an apparatus, or ‘machine for altering minds’, that operates in, on and through bodies (Foucault, 1991a: 125). The body, then, bears the traces, is itself a trace, of those constitutive practices through which the regulatory apparatus of government makes subjects possible and visible, recognisable and intelligible. This suggests a relation between practices of government
and bodies such that practices of government might be read from bodies and bodies from practices of government. This is a constitutive relation through which the thinking, knowing and speaking subject might appear and give an account of ‘oneself’; a relation that constitutes what it might be possible to think, know or say in any given time or space.

Given my focus on the narrated biographical life-history accounts we might give of ourselves, I am preoccupied with the rules of formation which in any given moment define the forms of, and limits to, the sayable. These limits are spatial in that they are located in physical space (a country, an institution, a workplace, a house, a street, a room, a chair) as well as in the embodied subject and the social body. They are temporal in that they have a history of emergence and duration that is constitutive of, and remembered by, those bodies. These practices of duration and emergence, of ending and slipping away, of appearing, disappearing and reappearing, are constitutive of a discursive field in which multiple discourses are simultaneously audible and not, visible and not, remembered and not, knowable and not. These mobile, always moving, discourses, and the citational practices through which they are mobilised as speech, are held in any moment (if only for a moment) as if stable truth accounts of the one who says ‘I am’; an ‘I’ who assumes (if only for a moment) that they are who they say they are.

This ‘I’, and her or his accounts of experience, is constituted by and through the normative discourses, practices and matrices of intelligibility that are characteristic of a specific mode of government in a specific time and space. Rabinow and Rose suggest
that this discursive relationship between governmentality and subjectivity allows us to
‘recognise that the precepts, norms and values disseminated in these practices of
government have made us the kinds of persons we take ourselves to be’ (2003: 5). But
‘who do we take ourselves to be’, and how might we have come to do so?

If I try to give an account of myself, if I try to make myself recognizable and
understandable, then I might begin with a narrative account of my life, but this
narrative will be disoriented by what is not mine, or what is not mine alone. And I
will, to some degree, have to make myself substitutable in order to make myself
recognizable. The narrative authority of the “I” must give way to the perspective
and temporality of a set of norms that contest the singularity of my story. (Butler,
2001: 25)

Having proposed a constitutive movement between the ‘I’ and the ‘we’, the ‘me’ and the
‘you’, I am interested in Butler’s articulation of the degree of substitutability necessary
for the accomplishment of recognition. I am interested, too, in the paradoxical
movement through which any subject might be understood as simultaneously emergent
from this relation of substitutability between oneself and another, and irreducible to it.
This irreducibility is articulated by Cavarero (2000) through the recognition that any
subject is unsubstitutable as one for the other. I propose that this unsubstitutable subject
is emergent from her or his irreducibility to practices of regulation and is, in this sense,
an excess or remainder of them. That is, the subject is simultaneously less and more than
the constitutive relations through which they are inaugurated. I propose that this
irreducibility, as excess and remainder, is constitutive of the unsubstitutability or
idiosyncrasy of any subject. Further, I think of this unsubstitutable subject as an assemblage of multiple incommensurabilities rather than a set of stable differences. Excesses persist as much as the normative endures, and the specificity of an unsubstitutable ‘who’ is located in the intersections and interstices between recognition and its remainders, between regulation and its excesses. This is a space and a movement, a precarious movement, between technologies of government and their constitutive instability, and it is in this constitutive instability that I locate the simultaneity of a normatively regulated and irreducible subject.

Regulation as instability

Governmentality, as the regulation of conduct, involves, among other technologies, the ‘gridding’ of space in such a way as to make its occupants visible and available for observation (Foucault, 1991a). This gridding involves the production of taxonomies or matrices of intelligibility through which subjects are materialised and spatialised as visible and governable. These matrices become indexes or indices of the apparatuses through which a society and its subjects are organised. A society and its subjects are, in this way, composed of those constitutive practices through which normative institutions and subjects are materialised.

And yet these practices and institutions are neither monolithic nor coherent, but derive an appearance of such through their imbrication in spatialised relations of power. There is a constitutive relation I am trying to trace here, between what is visible and what is not, what is foregrounded and what is excluded, what is remembered and what is not,
what is known and what is not, and what is sayable and what is not. I propose that the spoken is more than simply a trace of a visible and audible ensemble of normative regulatory practices. It is also a trace of that which might be less visible or audible, perhaps unseen and unheard, but paradoxically there to be seen and heard as the performative force of these multiple and diffuse practices as materialised on, in and as a body. Although normative technologies and practices are constitutive of a specified repertoire of possibilities, those practices and possibilities are not an adequate description of the diversity and multiplicity that it might be possible to find. I am gesturing here toward an ‘excess’ that might be invisible and silent, but present anyway. I’m signaling the simultaneous presence of that which might be seen and heard, along with the spectral; those phantoms ‘that still move about, concealed in gestures and in bodies in motion’ (de Certeau, 1988: 105). These are ghosts in the machine of government.

Government, as machine or apparatus, is the technical means through which the ambitions and ideals of political rationalities might be put into practice in the production of subjects (Barry et al., 1996; Dean, 1999; Miller and Rose, 1990). As Butler reminds us, ‘subjection is, literally, the making of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which a subject is formulated or produced’ (1997a: 87). Though subjection is a ‘power exerted on a subject’, it is nonetheless a power assumed by the subject and an assumption that constitutes ‘the instrument of that subject’s becoming’ (Butler, 1997a: 11, original emphasis). Power, then, not only acts on a subject but enacts the subject into being. It acts on the subject in at least two ways: first, as what makes the subject possible (the condition of its possibility and its formative occasion), and second, as that which is
taken up and reiterated ‘as the subjects “own” acting’ (Butler, 1997a: 14). This reiteration of power not only temporalises the conditions of subordination but shows them to be both active and productive, and mobile and variable as a function of their ongoing temporalisations in different moments, movements and formative occasions. The subject who is produced through subjection is not produced ‘at an instant and in its totality’ (Butler, 1997a: 93), but rather, in citational and performative practices through which a succession of moments and movements are re/articulated across time and space.

In the process of being produced the subject is repeatedly produced over and again, and yet, not reproduced as identical over time. The subject is, rather, an unstable re/production; a difference rather than a repetition (Deleuze, 2004); a refiguration (Ricoeur, 1988) rather than a reiteration. My inquiry is not then located in a moment in the unfolding of a single history (a mode of government, a subject, a biographical narrative) but rather situated in the midst of multiple intersecting histories that have multiple lines of endurance and variation, continuity and change. In this sense any ‘moment in time’, or ‘object’ of inquiry (human or not), is at the outset understood as mobile and multiple, and as located in co-constitutive networks of actants and practices. This multiplicity and mobility is given, in any one moment, an appearance of singularity and intelligibility through those citational practices and explanatory accounts through which they are narrativised. I am, in this thesis, specifically interested in the ways in which they are narrativised as biographical accounts of experience. As de Certeau reminds us, ‘normative discourse “operates” only if it has already become a story, a text articulated on something real and speaking in its name, i.e., a law made into a story and historicized … recounted by bodies’ (1988: 149, original emphasis). And yet, I
emphasise that what is recounted is as unstable as the operational practices through which the ‘who’ that speaks is performatively constituted.

The performative force of technologies of government

I work with Chris’s assertion that ‘you are who you say you are’ to give an account of the emergence and endurance of a subject from within the constitutive regulatory apparatus of government as performative. That is, I’m emphasising an account of the practices through which any subject is constituted as ‘the identity it is purported to be’, a subject whose ‘identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results’ (Butler, 1990: 25). The subject who gives an account of ‘oneself’ is an embodied performative possibility of those constitutive regulatory matrices and practices through which their intelligibly and recognition as a named embodied subject is accomplished. The body of this subject ‘is not a ready surface awaiting signification’, but rather, ‘a set of boundaries, individual and social, politically signified and maintained’ (Butler, 1990: 33). The boundaries of who or what a subject might be/come, and of the accounts they might give of themselves, are discursive and performatively instantiated ‘through the locutionary acts of speaking subjects’ (Butler, 1997: 115): as Chris says, ‘you are who you say you are’. This naming of the self, this act of giving an account of oneself, is understood as an institutionalised performative that constitutes and regulates the bodily reality or appearance of the subject according to the technologies of government through which it is made, and made intelligible to oneself and another.
I am interested, in Butler’s account of subjectification, in ‘the action that speech performs’ (Butler, 1997: 72) when one gives an account of oneself. In working with Foucault’s concept of power as diffused and dispersed through disparate and competing domains and practices, I think of the power of the performative as similarly diffuse, emanating from a number of sites which are brought into meaning and action through narrativised relations among these disparate elements. These relations, and the subjects who perform them, are temporalised and given coherence through narrative, and in this way I situate performativity within the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity.

I understand speech, specifically a narrated account of oneself, to be both act and performance; active and performative. It is an act and performance that is temporal, that is constituted in a moment of presence, in an historical present, and in a present moment located in a past/future continuum. It is also a form of conduct, and as such is circumscribed by technologies of government and of self as the shaping, or styling, of the conduct of conduct, specifically the conduct of oneself. This conduct, and the performative force of all that constitutes and regulates it, fabricates its endurance and coherence, as well as the endurance and coherence of the one who speaks and acts, through its location and locution in what is sayable and doable within any specific context. The limits of the sayable and doable are codified within certain matrices of intelligibility or possibilities for action. The temporality and coherence of these matrices are, I propose, constituted, sustained and performed through narrative and acts of narration. These acts are both regulated performances of, and improvisations upon, ‘the stylistics of existence’ (Foucault, 1992) through which conduct is shaped and reanimated through the locutionary acts of subjects so constituted.
I am proposing a constitutive relation between subjectivity, governmentality, narrativity and performativity in order to give an account of a set of constitutive practices that enacts ‘that which it names’ (Butler, 1993: 13). Reiterative citations of the conventions though which we are brought into social life have a performative force in that they enact that reality. In the act of performing these conventions of reality, they assume the appearance of being natural and necessary, and define the terms in which our performances are intelligible within the domains in which they are constituted. What comes to matter (what is mattered) is embodied, and the embodied subject (as matter) is ‘clearly defined by a certain power of creation and rationality’ so that to know the significance of something is ‘to know how and why it matters, where “to matter” means at once “to materialise” and “to mean”’ (Butler, 1993: 32). The embodied subject’s intelligibility is not a given, but produced at the site of performativity or ‘specific modality of power as discourse’ (Butler, 1993: 32). The performative body is simultaneously understood as material, as matter, as the site of the materialisation of technologies of government, and as materialisations of what matters, of the resources through which any of us might give meaning to, or make meaning from, our experience.

I am giving an account of performativity that signals the ways in which discourses, as linguistic constructions and articulations, create a material subject and social reality through everyday speech acts. Performativity is not a single instance or act, but a repetition of a norm, or set of norms, that have assumed their status as such through their repetition. And yet, I emphasise that performativity is also the embodied enactment of the excesses, ruptures, discontinuities, incommensurabilities and contradictions that
emerge within normative regulatory practices. It is these very ruptures, performed as one’s own, that constitute the simultaneity of conformity with normative regulatory practices of government, and variation from, and from within, them. Repetitions then, are not simply stable reproductions of the same, but discontinuous repetitions of the ruptures and instabilities of the normative conditions through which an illusion of stability and similarity are constituted.

There is a question here about fixity and stability, about the limits, discursive or otherwise, to technologies of government and their performative enactment. I emphasise a precarious relationship between normativity and performativity, a relationship shaped as much by discontinuity as continuity. Given that practices of government are constitutive networks of complex and heterogeneous relations among disparate elements, I emphasise the ways in which heterogeneous and even contrary elements insert themselves into the apparently homogenous normative ensembles of practices through which subjects are constituted and regulated, and through which they might give accounts of themselves.

**Unstable Foundations**

I have emphasised that the normative regulatory practices of government through which subjects are constituted are both coherent and not, rational and not, stable and not. I have given an account of a contradictory and heterogeneous disorder that lies beneath any appearance of stability and homogeneity. This account foregrounds a theoretical and methodological paradox at the heart of this thesis: the emergence of idiosyncrasy from
constitutive practices of regulation, and the emergence of difference from practices of regularisation. How, I ask, might it be possible to give an account of a normatively regulated but irreducible, unsubstitutable and idiosyncratic subject; a subject constituted through regularised but dispersed, diffused and unstable regulatory and regularised practices of government; and a subject who is an assemblage of co-constitutive actants and relations among them? How, I ask, is a performance of presence, coherence and stability assembled in the act of speaking; of giving an account of oneself?

In contemplating these questions, I make a number of intersecting propositions: that it is only possible to say something, anything, within the constitutive terrain of discourse as multiplicity and flow; that what is said is constituted through, and comprised of, the discontinuities and multiple trajectories through which it is articulated; that discourses are not totalising or fully determining; and that the subject is more than simply a series of positions in discourse. I am as much interested in discontinuity as I am continuity. This means that rather than attempting to describe a linear continuum and steady progression from one thing to another, I’m attempting to trace the ways in which multiple discursive formations, actants, memories, experiences and knowledges are assembled in discontinuous ways - as if continuous. The surface of order is, says de Certeau, ‘everywhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve order’ (1988: 107). And, as Foucault emphasises, discourse itself is constituted by the difference between ‘what one could say correctly at one period (under the rules of grammar and logic) and what is actually said’ (1991: 63). The discursive field is, in any specific moment, ‘the law of this difference’ (Foucault, 1991: 63).
I am then, in my address to the accounts embodied performative subjects give of themselves, emphasising heterogeneity over homogeneity, rupture over stability, and excesses, variations, gaps, omissions and discontinuities as much as regularities and continuities. This subject, the one who gives an account of her- or him-self, does not in any sense precede the performative act of narration, for subjectivity, as a performative enactment, is a doing behind which ‘there is no doer’ (Butler, 1990: 142). If matrices of intelligibility and practices of subjectification are unpredictable and unstable in advance of any performance of them, then the subject constituted in, through and by them is a similarly unstable performative embodiment and enactment of them.

Technologies of government and self are, I propose, assemblages of unstable constitutive practices, spatialised in and as unstable bodies of knowledges, memories, and embodied performative subjects. These assemblages of bodies are narrativised, and accounted for in the present moment of articulation, in ‘the form of time we call an occasion’ (de Certeau, 1988: 43). Embodied performative subjects are, then, temporalised, spatialised and assembled in particular bodies, in particular moments and in particular spaces. This particularity is performative; shaped and animated by the constitutive relations between ongoing and changing technologies of government and self and the specificity of any moment of presence in which the subject speaks, thinks and acts. The accounts subjects give of themselves are both moments and movements. They are not limited to the moment of articulation, nor do they merely express practices, memories or experiences; rather, they make them.
The accounts we give of ourselves are both reiterative citational practices and excesses of them. Indeed, ‘(c)ertain reiterative chains of discursive production are barely legible as reiterations, for the effects they have materialized are those without which no bearing in discourse can be taken’ (Butler, 1993: 187). If, in the act of reiteration, both the narrating subject and the narrated lose their discursive bearing, then the subject is left standing, apparently alone, as if in some sense originary, individual and autonomous.

There is a movement I’m signalling here: between regulation, reiteration and refiguration; between repetition and difference; between a regulated subject and an irreducible, unsubstitutable and idiosyncratic subject (or performance of subjectivity); between a relational body of subjects and a particular embodied subject. Given that domains of intelligibility are constituted both through the historicity of discourse and the norms that constitute the power of discourse to enact what it names, performativity, like the subject it produces, is neither fully fixed or free floating, nor fully intentional or arbitrary. There is a contradiction and tension here that I am working to capture, a contradiction and tension that produces, that is re/produced in, the embodied performative subject. For, although performativity works through the normative force of those practices of reiteration through which previous doings become naturalised, these naturalised practices, or performative constitutions of being, are unstable, open to contradiction, variation and difference.

Performativity signals the experience of tensions between possibilities and limits, of the constitutive limits found in particular practices of government, in particular times, places and bodies. Not everything is determined and predictable, nor is anything or everything possible, and it is, I suggest, in this gap between possibilities and performances of them,
that a specific, unsubstitutable subject emerges. The subject, as an idiosyncratic assembly of unstable practices and performances, is a similarly idiosyncratic and unstable performance of the ‘who’ that gives an account of her or himself; of a ‘who’ that might speak, be spoken to, and spoken about. These multiple acts of speech by multiple speakers, about multiple bodies, constituted through multiple practices, are unstable enunciative acts with an unstable performative force. So, if ‘you are who you say you are’, that ‘who’ is an unstable multiplicity rather than a stable singularity, and it is in and from this unstable multiplicity that an unsubstitutable, irreducible and idiosyncratic subject emerges.

And yet, successive accumulations of multiple practices, positions, memories, experiences and enunciations, as performative narrativisations of an embodied ‘who’ that speaks, fabricate an experience and impression of stability and endurance – that the ‘I’ who gives an account of her- or him-self is the self-same over time. I think of this embodied ‘who’ as a body of coagulations, a coagulated body that staunches the flow of multiplicity in the desire to be, if only for a moment, a some-one. The possibilities of performativity, the performances that are possible in any given time and place, are temporalised and spatialised in networks of relations that constitute a space that can be occupied, a space from and in which narrating subjects might give accounts of themselves. And yet neither these embodied subjects, times, spaces, or relations, nor the embodied performative subjects who inhabit them, are stable.

And yet we persist in the belief that we are a stable, named ‘who’ that remains self-same across time; an ‘I’ who endures. This belief, indeed belief itself, is, says de Certeau, ‘the
subject’s investment in a proposition, the *act* of saying it and considering it as true – in other words, a “modality” of the assertion and not its content’ (1988: 178, original emphasis). Chris’s assertion ‘you are who you say you are’, is then, a matter of assertion over content, meaning that the content might matter less than the assertion itself. This turn toward the performative force of the assertion, and recognition of its tenuous mooring in content, signals the subject’s tolerance of, and for, excess, rupture, discontinuity, contradiction, incommensurability and opacity. ‘If we are formed in the context of relations that become partially irrecoverable to us, then it would seem that opacity is built into our formation and follows from our status as beings who are formed in relations of dependency’ (Butler, 2007: 29). This opacity is also constitutive of the instability, unpredictability and insubstitutability of the ‘who’ we take ourselves to be; the ‘who’ we can never fully know or describe; be known or described as being.

**What have I said?**

I have attempted to trace and articulate a movement between possibility and constraint, continuity and discontinuity, embodied subjects and the social body. I have suggested that the giving of an account of oneself is performatively accomplished through the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity. I signalled, in the previous chapter, the too-muchness of memory, of the impossibility of narrating everything. Clearly there is much in any of the accounts we might give of ourselves that is not-narrated, non-narratable, but is there anyway, perhaps unrecoverable, but persistent, insistent even in the performative body of the subject. I do not read the interview transcript as a moment of arrest, a moment arrested, a slice through time in which all the practices through
which any subject has been constituted might be read as if sedimented geological strata. So, just as a biographical account cannot be read as an entirely personal experience it can neither be read as an exemplar of an historical moment or episteme, or set of stable practices of government. It is simultaneously both more and less than this, and it is this more and less that I have been more or less attempting to articulate.

How then, might we address the materiality of the narrator of a transcribed interview, of the narrating subject whose oral text has been translated into a written text? In emphasising the constitutive moments and movements, the spatiality and temporality of an embodied subject, I have attempted to recover the materiality of an embodied subject not as singularity but as relationality: that is, as constituted in relational networks of bodies. I turn, in the next chapter, to a consideration of this multiplicity as relationality, and give an account of subjects as constituted in and as relations to, and with, other bodies, both human and not. The question of ‘who I am’, implied in Chris’s assertion that ‘you are who you say you are’, becomes then, a question of who we are becoming, where this collective pronoun signals both our multiplicity and our constitutive relationality.
Inter/section #4: medi(t)ation on speaking

You might have noticed that I am using the words, incommensurable, irreducible, unsubstitutable and idiosyncratic interchangeably. I variously conflate, dissolve, resist and disrupt any distinction between them. This is not sloppiness, but a self-conscious slipperiness in so far as I am attempting to signal the slippery intangibility of the subject who gives an account of oneself as a ‘who’ rather than a ‘what’. Indeed, as I sit writing this, I experience myself as myself and not as someone-else. When I speak I act as if I am giving an account of myself and not another. When others speak I understand that they are giving an account of themselves and not of me. We each persist in the fantasy that there is a particular ‘I’ or one who speaks. This particularity is performative, and I am attempting to articulate something of this performative particularity, this fabrication and articulation of a self experienced as similarly human, yet separate and different. I am, at the same time, contesting this separateness through an address to co-constitutive relations among actants, human and not. I’m also giving an account of a subject who is paradoxically regulated, unsubstitutable and irreducible. It is this incommensurable, unsubstitutable irreducibility that I am attempting to signal through the use of the term idiosyncrasy. By conflating idiosyncrasy with incommensurability, irreducibility and unsubstitutability I’m working to articulate something of an unknowable and opaque subject, one who, as an excess of practices of regulation cannot be reduced to them; a subject who is, in their irreducibility and unsubstitutability, a specificity. This specificity is, I propose,
paradoxically emergent from the co-constitutive relations among actants through which any subject makes an appearance and performs an account of her- or him-self. Idiosyncrasy does not, then, signify a singularity, for it is always a co-constitutive and unsubstitutable relation among actants. And yet, paradoxically, this relationality might, as Nissen suggests, itself constitute a singularity, or as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, the singularity or haecceity of an assemblage. I self-consciously use the term idiosyncratic as paradox, irony and parody in order to give an account of an idiosyncratic human subject who is more than human, more than a subject and more than singular.
Chapter 4: Relating

This is a chapter of movements between theoretical propositions and philosophical questions, between incommensurability and contradictions, between oneself and another, between myself and an other, and between the human and the non-human. These movements are constitutive of a ‘tropological space’ (Foucault, 2004: 18); that is, a space in which language turns and detours, in which it might ‘discover’ (that is locate and lodge itself in) unexpected spaces, and ‘cover’ them with ‘things never said before’ (2004: 18). This is an act of speaking into a space opened up and out through turns and detours, a space in which multiple points of departure move simultaneously in multiple directions. This is an act of relating as telling or narrating, and of establishing connections and associations.

The opening out of such a space is accomplished through engagement with a (perhaps unresolvable) tension between two movements: one a territorialising move, the other a deterritorialising move. On the territorialising side I work to give an account of a material body constituted through practices of subjectification as a human subject. I theorise these practices of subjectification as a constitutive violence that carves, inscribes and burns normative, regulatory practices and matrices of intelligibility onto and into the body of the subject it inaugurates. On the deterritorialising side I work to give an account of the materiality of the human subject as both a specificity and as both more and less than human, that is, as an assemblage of bodies both human and not.
I work in this space to extend the movement instantiated in the previous chapter between the ‘what’ and the ‘who’, the ‘I’ and the ‘you’, between ‘oneself’ and another. In theorising practices of subjectification as a constitutive wounding, I work with personalised accounts of wounds and simultaneously depersonalise them. I do so in order to speculate about the constitution of a material body as both a human subject and as a space or horizon of possibility. I extend my account of an irreducible, unsubstitutable and idiosyncratic embodied subject by articulating such a subject as a specificity: as a specific body materialised in specific ways, in specific times and places, through specific practices, and in specific assemblages of actants or bodies. I do this through a paradoxical move in which I simultaneously give an account of the specificity of the human subject, and de-centre the human through an account of the subject as simultaneously more and less than human, and as a becoming rather than as a being.

These movements are directed towards the articulation of possibilities for working with narrated accounts of experience; with experience understood as ‘the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture’ (Foucault, 1992: 4). I work to extend the proposition that practices of regulation have ‘clear but not essential relations’ (Halberstam, 2005: 6) to the subjects made possible by and through them. In so doing I extend my account of possible intersections and interstices, continuities and ruptures between and among normative regulatory practices of government, and the appearance of an irreducible and idiosyncratic subject as a specificity.
I work in this chapter to give an account of: a regulated, normalised and regularised subject who is irreducible to those regulatory practices; an irreducible subject who is unsubstitutable as one for another; an irreducible, unsubstitutable, corporeal subject who speaks and gives an account of her or his experience in the form of a life-history narrative; and an idiosyncratic subject expressed as a specific assemblage of actants and relations among them. I work with concepts of relationality, recognition, wounding and folding in order to give an account of the subject as a co-extensive relation among bodies, human and not, and of relations among subjects as mutually constitutive, but not mutually commensurable. It is in this constitutive relational incommensurability that I locate the irreducibility, unsubstitutability and idiosyncrasy of a specific embodied subject. Indeed, as Cavarero (2000) proposes, our insubstitutability is precisely a function of our relationality. For de Certeau (1988) this relational idiosyncrasy, unsubstitutability or incommensurability emerges from practices that organise ‘discontinuities and nodes of heterogeneous operations’, with the result that ‘social and family relationships, and the subject’s experience of space and time’ are ‘not the same in every case’, but rather a ‘complex ensemble … of qualitatively different modes of functioning’ (1988: 53, original emphasis).

I am concerned, then, with mutually constitutive incommensurabilities as emergent from relations among actants, human and not, in the particular domains (times, places, networks, practices and relations) of their appearance. This is a relation and movement between bodies, between embodied subjects and the social body, and between human and non-human bodies. This movement is understood as a temporalised and spatialised relation, with space conceived as more than simply a physical territory in which subjects
are constituted and located, and their subject positions performed. Rather, space is *itself* conceptualised as movement; as a constitutive movement in which subjects are inaugurated through relational flows, pulsing coagulations and foldings. These relational movements between bodies are constitutive of possibilities for recognition; for recognising ourselves and each other; and of possibilities for recognising ourselves as excesses of those normative matrices of intelligibility through which acts of recognition are accomplished. This thesis is itself a performance mobilised toward recognition of both the writer and the written as appropriately ‘academic’. It is also a performance of re-cognition, of re-thinking possibilities for addressing narrating subjects and the accounts they give of their experience.

**Recognising ourselves**

I think of recognition as a reciprocal act, as a mutuality composed and orchestrated within those norms through which the intelligibility of subjects and their experiences are constituted. If, as Butler suggests, we come into contact with these norms ‘mainly through proximate and living exchanges’ (Butler, 2008: 32), I think of recognition as a relational movement between subjects and the sites, practices and actants through which subjects and their experiences are co-constituted. In thinking of embodied subjects as relational, I am working to understand something of the practices through which those co-constitutive relations are fabricated, and of the ways in which the regulatory norms through which those relations operate are productive of possibilities for the recognition of oneself and another as paradoxically similarly and differently human.
For Cavarero (2000) the question of recognition is not directed towards an understanding of ‘what’ it might be possible for us to be/come as a product of regulatory norms. Rather, it is a question of ‘who’ we might understand ourselves and each other to ‘be’; where to ‘be’ is a continuous process of becoming. This ‘who’ is simultaneously constituted in relation to, and differentiated from, the other; that is they are relationally constituted as unsubstitutable. This insubstitutability cannot, Cavarero insists, be captured through identifying the operation of any impersonal regulatory norm. In working with this idea of insubstitutability I am articulating something of a constitutive movement through which a relational and idiosyncratic subject is emergent from practices of regulation and recognition, but not reducible to them.

Cavarero (2000) emphasises that we are, of necessity, exposed and vulnerable to one another. We are not, she says, separate, isolated individuals. Rather, we exist both for the other, and by virtue of the other: without ‘you’, says Cavarero, my own story becomes impossible. I am interested not simply in the idea that the accounts that we give of ourselves depend on a constitutive relation between one and another, but emphasise that these accounts depend on a relation of oneself as another (Ricoeur, 1994). I take the operation of the term ‘as’ here to signify a number of movements. There are, in many of the accounts we give of ourselves, such as the one given by Chris in Chapter Three, grammatical shifts from the ‘I’ who gives a first person account of her or himself to the collective pronoun ‘you’ or ‘we’, which locates the speaker within a normative, universalised or generalised position. Further, it invites those others present to identify with, and confer recognition upon, the one who appears before them. I think of such shifts from the singular to the collective as signalling not only an inter-subjective
relation, but also an intra-subjective relation. By this I mean relations between and among the multiple positions that subjects mobilise in the accounts they give of themselves, and of the ways in which these produce different scenarios, knowledges, memories, experiences and performances that escape coherence, but might nonetheless affect an illusion of it through the grammatical (re)iteration of the ‘I’ who speaks.

For Ricoeur, recognition, as a movement between one and another, between oneself as another, introduces ‘plurality in the very constitution of the self’ (1994: 296). The concept of oneself as another ‘suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other’ (Ricoeur, 1994: 3). In emphasising a relational account of subjectification, subjectivity and the subject, I’m giving an account of a relational embodied subject, one whose body is co-extensive with other bodies, both human and not. Differences or variations among these bodies are not thought of as emergent from autonomy expressed as individuality, but from relationality expressed as specificity. I’m emphasising a co-constituted and co-constitutive subject who is simultaneously continuous with and different from the other actants in the temporalised and spatialised networks and relations in which they are located. Both continuities and differences are emergent from the normative regulatory relations and technologies of power through which subjects are constituted. To speak, then, of oneself as another, is to recognise that these incommensurable continuities are productive of subjects who are imbricated in networks of relations, subjects for whom autonomy is an impossible fiction.
Ricoeur (1994) also emphasises that the relation between oneself *as* another is a relation of care and solicitude. This is an ethical relation emergent from the recognition of our constitutive reciprocity and mutuality, and of the other as potentiality; or as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) suggest, as becoming. This recognition of the other as potentiality informs a mode of address through which judgements based on who the other is assumed to ‘be’, are reflexively mediated by a recognition of the other’s potential for becoming. This is an ethical practice through which we are brought into a relationship with the other, one that recognises and responds to the other’s potentiality and vulnerability, and, says Venn (2002), to their suffering. Suffering, in Venn’s account, includes both the sense of ‘ordinary everyday suffering’, as well as the ‘sense of anguish’ that arises from recognition of those ‘aspects of existence’, emergent from the normative regulatory practices and relations of power through which lives are constituted and lived, ‘that one is powerless to alter’ (2002: 54-55).

In what follows I pursue this constitutive movement between oneself *and* another, *with* another, and *as* another. This movement is located beyond a face-to-face encounter between those who might be present in any particular time and place. Rather, following principles of a rhizomatic plurality, multiplicity and relationality, I emphasise that the accounts we give of ourselves depend on relations ‘to all those who are left outside of the face-to-face encounter of an “I” and a “you”’; some of whom ‘will never be faces’ (Ricoeur, 1994: 195). These others are variously anonymous, memorialised, forgotten, known and not known, and dispersed across time and space in ways that exceed the present moment of articulation. We are, then, relationally constituted and exposed to one another, to other actants, other times, and other places. I emphasise that this relationality
is more than interpersonal. Rather, it signals relations among times and spaces, practices and bodies, the now and the then, the here and the there, the present and the absent, the remembered and the forgotten, and actants, both human and not.

I coordinate these multiple constitutive relations through concepts of recognition and memory, emphasising that recognition is a relation between the present and memories of the normative referents, practices, discourses or powers through which subjects are constituted and regulated. Recognition accomplishes the attribution of presence, of the pertinence in the present of ‘that which is over and gone’ but endures anyway (Ricoeur, 2006:39). I’m interested here in the extent to which recognition might be understood as a simultaneous remembering and forgetting of those constitutive practices through which subjects and their experiences are made possible and recognisable. Recognition of presence, of oneself and another in the present, demands remembrance of that which is past, but paradoxically, also forgotten. I recognise you, the other, because I remember enough of the terms of our normative constitution, but forget the practices through which this recognition has been secured.

**Constitutive relations**

In giving an account of a relational rather than autonomous subject, I emphasise that I am not constructing an unambiguous or romanticised narrative of relationality. Rather, I recognise that relationality can be ‘difficult and intractable, even sometimes unbearable’; where ‘the very unbearability of exposure’ to another is the reminder of ‘a common vulnerability, a common physicality and risk’ (Butler, 2005: 100). Those normative and
regulatory relations of power through which subjects are constituted, through which a corporeal body is constituted as human, are also relations through which recognition may be conferred, secured, withheld, or constituted as abjection. I am interested here in the question of exposure to another, and in the extent to which both recognition and the possibility of non- or mis-recognition are experienced as vulnerability to the other: vulnerability to possible abjection, violence and wounding.

We may think that to be addressed one must first be recognized, but [I suggest] the address constitutes a being within the possible circuit of recognition and, accordingly, outside of it, in abjection … One ‘exists’ not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being recognizable. The terms that facilitate recognition are themselves conventional, the effects and instruments of a social ritual that decide, often through exclusion and violence, the linguistic conditions of survivable subjects. (Butler, 1997: 5)

Lather (2007) reminds us of Derrida’s assertion that there are no normative and regulatory cultural practices that are not framed, defined or enacted from within conflicting networks of power, violence and domination. This amounts, she suggests, to horizons of intelligibility that presuppose an ‘irreducible, and inescapable epistemic and archival violence’ (Lather, 2007: 102). This violence is relational, that is, emergent from constitutive relations of disciplinary power. I emphasise the extent to which the constitution of the subject within these relations is experienced as a violence, as a wounding, as a wound; remembered or otherwise.
I’m working to assemble an account of subjectification as a wounding, where this wounding is a productive act, an act that inaugurates the subject. I recognise that this wounding might persist as an act of violence through the withdrawal of recognition, through abjection, and any performances of violence that might accompany that abjection. I’m giving an account of wounding as a constitutive act that marks and makes the materiality of the human body recognisable as a human subject. The space carved out by this constitutive wounding is occupied by the appearance of the body as a subject; a subject visibilised and individualised by regulatory and productive relations of power (Foucault, 1991a); a subject who appears to stand alone in the place both carved out for it, and on it. Such a subject is separated and stands at a distance from the invisibilised practices through which it has been constituted.

In a sense, the subject is constituted through an exclusion and differentiation … that is subsequently concealed, covered over, by the effect of autonomy. In this sense autonomy is the logical consequence of a disavowed dependency, which is to say the autonomous subject can maintain the illusion of its autonomy insofar as it covers the break out of which it was constituted. This dependency and this break are already social relations, ones which precede and condition the formation of the subject. (Butler, 1995: 45-46)

Although the carving out and marking of embodied subjects from social relations of power might be disavowed or forgotten, power never-the-less leaves its marks, traces or scars in and on us through our very appearance as a subject. An embodied subject is in this sense itself a mark, trace or scar of those practices of subjectification through which
that human body has been constituted as a human subject. ‘A scar’, says Deleuze, is not
the sign of a past wound, ‘but of the present fact of having been wounded: we can say
that it is the contemplation of the wound, that it contracts all the instants which separate
us from it into a living present’ (Deleuze, 2004: 77). This is a constitutive movement in
which the material presence of embodied subjects, and the accounts they give of
themselves in the present, are not signs of past practices of subjectification but of the
present fact of having been embodied as a human subject. A biographical account of
experience is, then, a contraction of embodied moments in and as the present, rather than
a sign of something past. This signals the productive presence of practices of
subjectification in the embodied subject; of the ongoing constitution of the subject in the
present and as a specific presence. I am trying to capture a movement, a simultaneously
painful, productive and pleasurable constitutive movement between one and another,
between the past, the present and a time yet to come.

I am preoccupied with the work of giving an account of oneself as a work of memory; as
memory work. I have gestured in the previous chapter to the ways in which acts of
remembrance may instantiate a painful exposure to a painful constitutive past, and to the
ways in which exposure and vulnerability often find and bind themselves together in the
accounts we give of ourselves. I have conceptualised memory as a reciprocal movement
between an embodied subject, the social body and the constitutive practices through
which their appearances and articulations are made recognisable and intelligible. The
memories of those bodies, what those bodies might remember, are shaped through those
practices of government through which they have been normatively constituted and
regulated.
Ricoeur (1999) foregrounds the extent to which nations, states and regimes of power have been historically constituted through acts of violence, such as revolution, colonisation, independence, civil war, invasion, domination, policing (and so on). These acts of violence, as relations of power, constitute and regulate, discipline and punish those normative subjectivities that are made recognisable and intelligible by and through them. These relations of power are not only performatively productive of subjects, but also performatively (re)produced with, in, through and by subjects. Capillary relations of power extend to the multiple sites, institutions and subjects that are normatively constituted and regulated within the domains in which they are governed (Foucault, 1991a). Institutions (such as schools, prisons, hospitals, churches, workplaces, families and law courts) mobilise these relations of power through disciplinary discourses and practices (pedagogy, medicine, religion, work, parenting and law), through the subjectivities constituted by them (students, patients, sinners, workers, children and criminals), and those subjects charged with responsibility for their operation (teachers, doctors, priests, managers, parents and lawyers). Further, these practices and performative acts become memorialised within normative narratives of the becomings and belongings of a nation, a community, a family, of a specific subject or group of people in their particular time and place. Any particular temporalised and spatialised subject is located within multiple inscriptions and performances of belonging, with different investments and intensities, comforts and dangers, possibilities and risks, certainties and vulnerabilities.
Inscriptions of belonging are imbricated in constitutive narratives and performative accounts of what was variously fought for, struggled over, won, overcome or accomplished, often as a project of freedom, including the freedom to be ‘oneself’ (Rose, 1999a). This accomplishment of freedom is made possible, revoked or sustained through the concordance of the subject with the normative regulatory practices and relations of power through which they are constituted, and constituted as ‘free’, ‘individual’ and ‘autonomous’. This freedom, individuality and autonomy depend on the performance of the subject within normative matrices of intelligibility which variously hold out the promise of, or secure, the possibility of recognition, or threaten or provoke the possibility of abjection. The powers through which subjects are constituted and regulated are also powers that variously normalise and abject those who fall outside the parameters of the normal. These are variously violent effects of power, powerful effects of violence, of the power to determine who and what counts as human (Butler, 2004). And yet, paradoxically, these powers instantiate and sustain the subject, such that the pleasure of being a ‘who’ emerges from the operation of the violence (or threat of violence) that is subjectification (Butler, 1997a).

Power (which works invisibly to visibilise and individualise the subject) operates through, and is expressed in, the mundane practices of everyday life. These mundane practices are traces of capillary power, of a power that operates through dispersed and diffused practices that are the constitutive violence of subjectification. These constitutive violences may have distant origins that endure (no matter how invisibly) in present acts, and this endurance, and its material effects in the present, may be variously remembered, memorialised, forgotten, disavowed, revised, celebrated or taken for granted as business-
as-usual. I am gesturing here to the ways in which historical narratives, narratives of the history of a nation, a community or a subject, are relationally constituted and constitutive of the presence of those who occupy a particular time and place. Historical violences or acts of power that secure the norm are present still, even if apparently silent and invisible. In understanding subjectivity as normatively constituted and regulated through temporalised and spatialised histories of becoming, I’m emphasising a constitutive movement between historical accounts of the birth, origin, formation, emergence and progress of a nation, institution, community or family and the constitutive possibilities for the biographical accounts we might give of ourselves.

In understanding subjectivity as relationally constituted, powers of subjectification are also powers of the subject, and possibilities for recognition within these practices and relations of power are mediated by normative performances of subjectivity, as well as possibilities for misrecognition and abjection. This possible movement from recognition to abjection is a regulatory violence performed on those who fail to be intelligible within particular temporalised and spatialised normative regulatory powers by those who are. The pleasures of recognition are accomplished against the possible danger of abjection, and this danger is constituted by the possible violence to come: the possibility of abjection that comes from reframing the unintelligibility of the subject through technologies of pathology, criminality, deviance, morality and so on. I also constitute as a violence, the reduction of subjects to normative regulatory taxonomies or categories of person that disavow or elide the specificity of a particular embodied subject.
In emphasising the relational constitution of subjects within normative regulatory practices of government and relations of power, I think of subjectification, subjectivity and the subject as imbricated in memories of those constitutive woundings that hold out the promise of intelligibility and recognition and threaten abjection. These constitutive woundings, as movements between the past and the present, the collective body and the embodied subject, are rendered simultaneously present and not, evoked and not, forgotten and not; personalised, enclosed, sealed over and erased, forming a scar that is the present fact of having been wounded (de Certeau, 1988), of having been embodied as a human subject. But these constitutive woundings are never past and done with, but present, if not visible or recognisable, in any moment of presence.

Stories of wounds

A dream

I am upstairs in a dimly lit room, aware only of the space I occupy. Beyond, all is a darkness that falls away from blood and rust. My left foot is elevated on a stool, or similar. I am swathed in dark clothing, medieval, claustrophobic. I lean forward, examining my calf. I peel aside a skin-coloured adhesive covering that moulds to the surface and shape of my lower leg. Beneath is a wound. I don’t know if the wound was before concealed, or if I am now making it. I peel away the surface of my skin. It shreds in white fibrous cottony filaments. I peel and peel, feeling bare and exposed on the
inside, and yet there is no visible wound, only this peeling. I know this is not right. That it is somehow perverse. I am self conscious and afraid. I stop, bundle the shredded fibrous sheets into a ball, like lint collected from the filter of a clothes dryer, and put it in the rubbish bin. I carefully fold the adhesive over the wound and cover it with a long woollen stocking, some elaboration of the medieval costume, and roll down the coarse but soft grey fabric leg of my trousers. I go down stairs, anxious that the others will know that I have been engaged in this activity of self-mutilation. Am I limping? Do I affect some limp to suggest the wound? Do I walk as if all is as it should be? Do I want my wound to be seen and acknowledged, or do I wish it hidden, private, my own?

An interview

It is before the interview and we are talking. My position as researcher, and as someone associated with a school of psychology, seems to position us in a way that makes a conversation about mental health seem appropriate to Frances (the interviewee). Frances talks about her daughter; about her mental health. She tells me how she noticed that her daughter seemed to be constantly wearing a large number of bracelets on her left wrist. She described how investigation revealed that her daughter had been self-mutilating – cutting herself and hiding the wounds/scars beneath the bracelets.

The interview proceeds. She describes her experience of working in an organisation that is undertaking a major restructure. She describes a confusing, erratic and protracted process where the guidelines and timelines constantly shift. She talks about issues of ethics and the ways in which members of staff are treated by management. She cries at
times. She describes a period where she is emotionally distraught, overwhelmed, feeling unable to cope. She says she feels as if she is just expected to lie there and take it. From beneath this speech act memory erupts. She has been raped, she says, a long time ago, and though she thought it put behind her, it is here now, overwhelming and painful. It is a parallel situation she says. What is happening at work is like being raped. Two events become one.

A collapse

I leave the interview at 8pm, return home, prepare some dinner and feel fine. I have done two interviews today and one of the interviewees had a low mumbling voice and I am anxious about how much of it might have been picked up on the tape. I decide to listen to a little before I go to bed. My worst fears are realised. The hum of the air-conditioning dominates and the low mumble of the voice is hard to catch. I rapidly shift from feeling fine to feeling acutely anxious. I am a failure. I can’t conduct a simple interview, and besides I am an extremely stupid person. Why would I think that I am up to the task of being an academic worker, of successfully completing a PhD? My thinking is erratic and undisciplined. I am naïve and ignorant, always ready to be exposed to ridicule and condemnation. I go to bed anxious. I have anxiety dreams and I awake more anxious than when I went to bed. I carry this anxiety with me heavily to work, the site where my inadequacies will be unmasked. The place where I will be exposed.
A conjunction

I understand that the dream of self-mutilation is shaped by the story of self-mutilation given in the interview. I know it has mobilised historical anxieties – yet despite this rational understanding, the irrational has more force - right now my anxieties colonise me; there is nothing else, I am nothing else, I am no-one and nothing. I understand that the interview has done more than mobilise my anxieties. It is itself a space in which my own biography has erupted in response to that of another. I come to remembering and experiencing myself as an effect, as an affect, of the relational space I have occupied with another, and of the narratives of wounding that are wound through it.

A reflection

I am struck by the ways in which exposure to the wounds of another produced an embodied performance of anxiety, a dream, a memory, a story of wounding in oneself; myself. There is a recognition, a passing, an exchange of memory, that calls into the present a past wounding. This vulnerable exposure of one to another, with another, and as another, is a movement, and it is through this movement that the constitutive practices through which both self and another have been fabricated might be recognised (without necessarily being known and understood). This movement is understood as a mutually constitutive performance of a constitutive wounding.

Having placed a constitutive wounding at the heart of my theorising, I ask how it might inform my thinking about, and ways of working with, the accounts we give of ourselves. This leads me to think about the interview, and the accounts produced in it, as a time and
space in which subjects are necessarily exposed to one another, and understand that this exposure might be variously pleasurable and painful. I recognise that among the things said, are those that are not. That they are not said, does not mean that they are not in some way present, since they are constitutive of the subject and their presence. Further, the accounts we give of ourselves, as narratives of subjectification and subjectivity, are accounts of our constitutive relationality, (our constitution through relations of power and relations with others), rather than of our autonomy.

The interview described above contained an eruption of emotion that was made visible through the body (tears), as well as through the spoken narrative. I do not suggest that because it could be seen and heard that it is ‘really there’, and that if it had not been seen or heard that it was ‘not there’. What I am suggesting, is that it was already there, and visibly erupted in this interview. In this same way my own anxieties erupted but cannot be assumed to exist only when they are seen. Rather, they were already there as an experience and resource through which my subjectivity is relationally constituted and performed.

I want to explore the implications of assuming that there is, in any of the accounts we give of ourselves, more than what is said – but not assume that I necessarily know what that more is. This inquiry is informed by the dilemmas explored in the autobiographical account I produced in Chapter Two: there are things that cannot be said, cannot be remembered, cannot be felt, cannot be known, but are said, remembered, felt and known anyway.
In thinking about the interviews in this way I began to rework my understanding of governmentality theory so as to account for an unstable relation between regulatory practices of government and the appearance of an idiosyncratic subject. I labour here to describe why I think the eruption of the rape memory in the biographical narrative of work is so very important. That particular subject constructed her experience of workplace restructuring as parallel to the experience of rape. She described how that experience, the memory of that experience, the eruption of that memory, led to disruptive emotions and behaviours at work. This is important in at least two ways. First, in thinking about the impacts of neoliberalism on worker subjectivity it is crucial to note that it is not only discourses of neoliberalism that are shaping workers’ experience of neoliberal governance. The story of work, given by this interview subject, is not only about her work and practices of management and restructuring. Rather, her account of ‘work’ is inflected by other experiences, prior and separate from her present work. Her experience of work can, then, only be understood in relation to the specificity of her biography. Work, and the spaces in which it is performed, contains more than any activity that might be understood as ‘work’: it is a site among many in which subjectivity is constituted and performed, a space in which relations to other times, places and experiences are brought into the present in ways that exceed any straightforward definition of work and the workplace. In this way the biography of a specific subject intersects with an experience of work that exceeds any account of that work as constituted and regulated by practices of management or government.

Personal biographies intersect with the discourses and discursive practices of government, producing intense idiosyncratic responses/positions that are always too
much to be contained within either accounts of stable and homogenous practices of
government, or of stable, coherent and rational subjects. This eruption suggests a
messiness at the site of the subject, a messiness that a monolithic, top down view of
neoliberalism, of any mode of government, cannot easily accommodate. This account of
a messy subject troubles the apparent coherence and stability of practices of government.

Further this messiness is not simply mobilised at the site of the individual body. The
interviewee described above worked in a particular workplace alongside other workers.
Just as her narrative, including its emotionality, had some impact on me, I speculate that
performances of the positions mobilised in and by that narrative of wounding possibly
had some impact on her co-workers, mobilising particular memories, emotions,
responses and performances for each of them (though of course not necessarily like
mine). Again, their experiences of work, their narratives and their positions are part of
the flow of possible discourses and positions produced everywhere and elsewhere, and
with particular rhizomatic eruptions in particular bodies, in particular ways and in
particular times and places. Further, these particularities are understood as emergent
from the relations of power through which subjects are constituted and regulated; a
power constitutive of bodies understood as ‘the inscribed surface of events’, as ‘totally
imprinted by history’ (Foucault, 1984: 375-6); where ‘history’ refers to both that of the
social body, and to the biography of an embodied subject.

*I find that my very formation implicates the other in me, that my own foreignness to
myself is, paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others. I am not fully
known to myself, because part of what I am is the enigmatic traces of others. In this*
sense, I cannot know myself perfectly or know my ‘difference’ from others in an irreducible way … I am wounded, and I find that the wound testifies to the fact that I am impressionable, given over to the Other in ways that I cannot fully predict or control. (Butler, 2004: 46)

My story of wounds is in part an attempt to signal the enigmatic traces of another in my own account of myself; in my own thinking, dreaming and being. My account of myself was shaped by another’s account of herself. I am given over to her, to her wound, and it resonates with a wound of my own. We are given over to each other in this wounding, and this constitutes our engagement with, and recognition of, each other.

**A constitutive wound(ing)**

The body is also directly involved in the political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs … it is caught up in a system of subjectification (in which need is also a political instrument system meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and subjected body. (Foucault, 1991a: 25-26)

I am interested in Foucault’s suggestion that the body’s submission to the constitutive marks of subjectification simultaneously constitutes its very existence and its capacity to act. The promise of existence, in securing submission, amounts to a willingness to be
subjected, to be made a subject. As Butler (1997a: 84) reminds us, ‘subjectification is, literally, the making of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which a subject is formulated or produced’. Those constitutive practices and relations of power ‘that first appear as external’, as coming from elsewhere, are pressed upon the subject, ‘pressing the subject into subordination’ (Butler, 1997a: 3). This is both pain and pleasure, for ‘there is no formation of the subject without a passionate attachment to subjectification’ (Butler, 1997a: 67). This passionate attachment derives in part from our dependency on technologies, practices and discourses that instantiate and sustain our desire to ‘be’, and to be recognised. Passionate attachment to subjectification produces a subject, and one willing to be subjected; one willing to take up the possibilities (powers and capacities) that being subjected, being a subject, offers. Subjectification, as power exerted on a subject, is nonetheless power assumed by the subject, and this assumption constitutes the subject’s very becoming: ‘Power not only acts on a subject but, in a transitive sense, enacts the subject into being’ (Butler, 1997a: 13, original emphasis). Power simultaneously makes the subject possible, and is taken up and reiterated as the subjects ‘own’ acting.

The subject who is produced through subjectification is not (cannot be) produced ‘at an instant and in its totality’ (Butler, 1997a: 93). Rather in the process of being produced, she or he is repeatedly produced, over and again through ‘the organisation and regulation of the time, space and movements of our daily lives’ (Bordo, 1990: 14). It is through these movements that our bodies are ‘trained, shaped and impressed with the stamp of prevailing historical forms of self hood’ (Bordo, 1990: 14). There is no practice, no law, no relation of power that is not inscribed on bodies: ‘Every power,
including the power of law, is written first of all on the backs of its subjects’ (de Certeau, 1988: 140). The very idea, de Certeau reminds us, of an individual who can be isolated from the group, is a technology of liberal government through which individualised subjects could be trained, disciplined and punished (de Certeau, 1988; Foucault, 1991a).

In order for technologies of government, for normative practices of regulation and relations of power to be written on bodies, an apparatus is required; an apparatus that might tattoo, etch, mark, carve, cut, insert, install, tear out, attach, impress upon the body an identity inscribed in and by the force of the law in order to make that body ‘demonstrate the rule’, ‘produce a “copy” that makes the norm legible’ (de Certeau, 1988: 141). These apparatuses or instruments are distinguished by the actions they perform: ‘cutting, tearing out, extracting, removing, etc., or else inserting, installing, attaching, covering up, assembling sewing together … carried out by reference to a code … within the limits set by a norm’ (de Certeau, 1988: 147). These regulatory apparatuses carve individual bodies out of the normative practices through which they are constituted, and transform them into a body politic. They make a body conform to its definition, its allocated place, the place carved for and on it, in and by normative regulatory practices. The accounts we might give of ourselves, then, represent, in concrete form, ‘the tortuous knowledge’ of the apparatuses and practices through which the body is constituted and regulated (de Certeau, 1988: 145). This amounts to a movement through which bodies are made to conform to their definition in discourse, becoming, in the process, ‘the figures of an experimental knowledge won through the
pain of bodies that change themselves into engravings and maps of these conquests’ (de Certeau, 1988: 145).

The history of a people in their times and places – the constitutive history of a community – is written in, on and through our own bodies, our own histories, our own biographies and experiences. Subjects act out, and act out of, that is, performatively enunciate and enact, the wounding and sufferings of their own constitutive history as well as that of their culture (Ricoeur, 1996: 10). In this way the wound is enfolded, enclosed and personalised; remembered and forgotten, visibilised and erased. And yet the wound persists, and the accounts we make of ourselves simultaneously and paradoxically evoke and elude, remember and forget that constitutive wound(ing). Further, the ever-present and dangerous possibility of abjection reminds us of the possible wound to come, and in so doing secures the operation of the regulatory norms through which the limits of intelligibility are constituted and performed as our own. This norm was always already a relation of power operant through the constitutive woundings through which the norm came to be accepted and remembered as such.

The subject appears, remembers, endures and speaks as a result of the constitutive wound that is subjectification, of the invisibilised practices through which the corporeal subject is made visible, and made to appear as intelligible and recognisable both as an individual (as oneself) and as a member of a community of others. These are material practices literalised in the spatialised presence of an embodied subject. This constitutive wounding is performative; it produces wounds on and in the subject, and these constitutive wounds are lived as one’s own. The constitutive wounding through which
such a subject emerges is simultaneously, then, the possibility of our existence, our passionate attachment to that existence (and perhaps to the wounds that make it possible) and constitutive of our imbrication in those networks of relational practices through which the possibilities for becoming a subject are fabricated. Wounding is thus a constitutive movement and constitutive possibility. It is, paradoxically, simultaneously, wounding and enabling, pain and pleasure, suffering and survival.

As relational subjects, as subjects constituted within a whole set of relations, our intelligibility is no matter of self-identification. Rather, our intelligibility is constituted and conferred through our relations with others who recognise us as intelligible; who recognise us as the persons we take and make ourselves to be; are ourselves taken and made to be. So, I am interested in a relational movement generated from, and directed toward, a relation between one and another, between the social body and the embodied subject, between practices of subjectification and the subject. I think of this movement as a fold, a constitutive folding movement (Deleuze, 1988, 2006); a dangerous and painful movement that folds danger and pain, wounding and violence, passion and pleasure into relationally constituted bodies; between a constitutive outside and its other – an inside.

Outside and inside are both intimate – they are always ready to be reversed, to change their hostility. If there exists a borderline between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides. (Bachelard, 1964: 217-18)
**Relationality as fold**

I am emphasising a constitutive movement between bodies, where both this movement and the subjects it constitutes, remain mobile and in play. This constitutive movement, expressed as a Deleuzean fold (1988, 2006), produces subjects understood as neither subjects of modernity (that is, ascribed essence, origin, surface, depth, exteriority and interiority) nor of the Western philosophical tradition (that is, understood in terms of the unfolding of an essential and independent inner truth, in which the human mind forms an interior of the self which transcends the external world and the body to form a contingent exterior). In place of such an essentialised unfolding subject, Deleuze proposes one formed from pre-subjective parts held together by a network of relations. It is these relations between things, rather than internal structures or meanings, which constitute the subject’s existence.

In the place of the unfolding of an inner truth or nature, Deleuze substitutes a folding. This folding movement, or fold, as constitutive of subjectivity, articulates the interior/inside as nothing more than a fold or doubling up of the outside. However, the outside in Deleuze has no fixed geography. It is not a fixed limit but a ‘moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and foldings’ that make up an inside (Deleuze, 1988: 96): ‘they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside’ (1988: 97). Practices of subjectification and relations of power also involve a movement; a movement which folds, or doubles the outside with its co-extensive inside (Deleuze, 1988: 118). Subjectification involves a continuous process of moving, of folding: we are always folding, unfolding and refolding (Deleuze, 1998, 2006) in a
spatialised relation in which ‘the relation to oneself is homologous to the relation of the outside and the two are in contact’ (Deleuze, 1988: 119).

This folding movement, these folds, are continuous and have various modalities, including the fold of our material selves (our bodies) to the folding of time or memory. Subjectivity is a temporalised and spatialised relation of these different kinds of folds. This folding movement is also constitutive of a relationship to oneself, or the effect of the self on the self: the self-production of one’s subjectivity. In this way the fold, as a self generating activity, as an activity that generates a self, is also a technology of self through which a self is made, and indeed made possible. I work with the concept of folding as a movement through which the regulatory technologies of government and relations of power are constitutive of the subject; with subjectivity constituted through the play between multiple temporal and spatial foldings. I’m trying here to think in terms of multiple foldings that are multidirectional and always relational, a folding of ‘onething’, ‘somethings’, within another, ‘otherthings’, in a process where there is no stable or singular outside marked off as the terrain in which the possibilities of and for the subject are located.

For Deleuze (1988, 2006) subjectivity is a spatialised and temporalised constitutive folding of the outside into the inside; and of the past into the present, ‘for the sake of thinking the future’ (Pile and Thrift, 1995: 38). The subject, spatialised in and as a body, acts, and is acted upon, by multiple lines of force. These lines consist of multiple flows and intensities which are productive and continuous and in which encounters are both exterior and interior. The interior is produced from a general exterior, and this exteriority
is understood as the imminent world of relations. Subjectivity, as produced through multiple constitutive foldings, undergoes changes according to its social milieu, its relations and specific encounters. These changes are constituted, regulated and co-ordinated through historically shifting modes of government, relations of power and relations among bodies. These ceaseless foldings and changes are not only spatialisations or topologies, but temporalities, that is, ceaseless moments that constitute movements in time as well as space. This continual folding movement is given continuity in the accounts subjects make of themselves through temporality expressed as memory. Folding, as ‘the memory of the outside’, sustains an illusion of a stable self who endures over time and space. Folding, ‘is itself a Memory: the “absolute memory” or memory of the outside … Memory is the real name of the relation to oneself, or the affect on self by self’ (Deleuze, 1988: 107).

The relations of the outside, folded back to create a doubling, allow a relation to oneself to emerge and ‘constitute an inside which is hollowed out and develops its own unique dimension’ (Deleuze, 1988: 100). The interiorisation of the outside is not ‘a doubling of the One, but a redoubling of the Other’. I understand that my dream of wounding did not simply emerge from my interior, from my own memorialised past. Rather, as a memory of the outside, the exchanged memory of a wound, it emerged from a folding of an exteriority and a relation, or exposure, to another. In this sense it did not originate in me, nor is it mine alone; it is a constitutive fold of and as the other.

It is never the other who is a double in the doubling process, it is a self that lives in me as the double of the other: I do not encounter myself on the outside, I find the
other in me (‘it is always concerned with showing how the Other, the Distant, is also Near and the Same). It resembles exactly the invagination of a tissue in embryology, or the act of doubling in sewing: twist, fold, stop and so on. (Deleuze, 1988: 98)

These constitutive folds, these folding relations between oneself and another are paradoxically, simultaneously normative, and productive of a regulated, unsubstitutable and irreducible embodied subject; one I have articulated as an idiosyncrasy or specificity. Further, I emphasise the bodies or actants constituted through these foldings are more than human.

**Relationality as idiosyncrasy, regulation as specificity**

In thinking of embodied human subjects as relationally constituted through a continuous folding movement, I emphasise that these multiple temporalised and spatialised movements are contingent, unstable, contradictory and incoherent. These bodies, or actants, are more than human entities: they may also be bodies of thought, bodies of work, bodies of animals, bodies of water, trees, rocks, technology and so on. There is, says Deleuze, no boundary between the organic and the inorganic, as each is continuously folded into the other, such that all matter, ‘whether organic or inorganic’, is one (2006: 8). These bodies undergo modifications or changes when they act, or are acted upon by, other bodies. This is a continuous process of modification, a movement that ‘cannot be stopped’ (Deleuze, 2006: 13). In this sense a subject is, her or himself, a modification (Deleuze, 2004: 79).
Having argued in Chapter Two that constitutive practices of government are themselves unstable, then the folding that creates an inside from a constitutive outside is simultaneously unstable and constituted from excesses, ruptures, and repertoires of remainders. Folding movements do not then produce a stable subject who enfolds, embodies or performs a set of stable inscriptions, practices or positions, but a subject who is a modification of them. There is a paradoxical tension that I am again articulating, between normativity and specificity, between ‘becoming both integrated and different’ (Deleuze, 1988: 122).

The subject constituted through folding and assembling movements is both a fold and an assemblage of heterogeneous elements. Such a subject is not given, but always under construction; always in process of becoming other. This subject in process is an assemblage of multiple ‘larval subjects’ capable of drawing difference from repetition (Deleuze, 2004: 78). I work with this theorisation of difference in order to give an account of the specificity of an embodied subject who exceeds both the regulatory regimes of government and the dominant universalising taxonomies or unifying categories through which ‘persons’ or ‘individuals’ are usually accounted for, made account of, or account for themselves.

Deleuze (2004) contests a concept of difference as grounded in a same/different binary. Within such a binary, difference is usually understood as either difference from the same, or as a variation of the same over time (referring in both cases to a measurable variation between two objects or states). This assumes stable objects or states capable of comparison and that there is a ground of sameness against which difference as variation
can be observed and quantified. Deleuze’s account of difference denies ‘the primacy of original over copy, of model over image’ (Deleuze, 2004: 66) and emphasises a play of differences rather than relations of identity and resemblance. In this way ‘the very idea of a model’ is challenged and overturned (Deleuze, 2004: 69). Difference emphasises the particular against all forms of universalisation or representation. Difference, then, is more process than category: ‘Every object, every thing, must see its own identity swallowed up in difference, each being no more than a difference among differences. Difference must be shown differing’ (Deleuze, 2004: 68).

Differences are not, then, differences of degree, but intimations of ‘difference-in-itself’ (Deleuze, 2004). Difference-in-itself signals the singularity of each individual thing in any given moment. This is not to say that objects, events or subjects might not share attributes, but Deleuze foregrounds and privileges their differences rather than their similarities. Rather than theorising how individuals might be classified and grouped, Deleuze emphasises the specific development or processes of becoming a particular subject. Difference, as ‘difference-in-itself’, signals the uniqueness implicit in the particularity of things, and the particularity of their variation across time and space. Disparity or difference becomes central to understanding bodies as produced from the differences of which they are composed. Difference-in-itself implies ‘a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences’ emergent from ‘a delicate milieu of overlapping perspectives, of communicating distances, divergences and disparities, of heterogeneous potentials and intensities’ (Deleuze, 2004: 61).
By Deleuze’s account, the genealogy of a subject, that is her or his biography or history of becoming, lies not in generality or commonality, but in a process of becoming that is shaped by difference, by different influences, interactions and relations. These differences constitute ‘an internal multiplicity – in other words, a system of multiple, nonlocalisable connections between differential elements which is incarnated in real relations and actual terms’ (Deleuze, 1994: 183). These differences are relationalities, and these relationalities are multiplicities that are folded with the regularities of a mode of government, which are themselves already multiplicities and differences masquerading as singularities and regularities.

This account of difference is motivated towards an understanding of things in their ‘thisness’, which is located in a ‘moment of presence and precision’ (Deleuze, 2004: 28), as a ‘particularity that is’ (2004: 48). ‘To be’, says Williams (2003: 63) in the spirit of Deleuze, ‘is to be what you are and not simply to be’. This iteration of difference is strategic to my desire to move beyond an account of research subjects as exemplars of a category and, instead, account for them in terms of an idiosyncratic intersection between practices of government and the play of differences through which they are assembled in all their variation, specificity and idiosyncrasy. My focus thus becomes not ‘a thing in general’, but ‘this thing’, this thing here and now, this someone, this ‘who’, as Cavarero (2000) would say, rather than this ‘what’.
Relational subjects

I have thus far given an account of idiosyncratic relational subjects who are constituted through practices of regulation and relations of power. These relations are experienced, and performatively embodied, as a wounding. These wounded subjects are formed in a relational folding movement between a constitutive outside and its inside. They are bodies imbricated within other bodies and constitutive relations between oneself and another, specifically oneself as another. These multiple constitutive relations are continuous spatialised and temporalised folding movements. This emphasis on relationality informs my thinking about possible ways of working with the accounts we give of ourselves. In Chapter Two I proposed that, despite the apparent rationality, stability and coherence of discourses and technologies of government, those discourses and technologies are characterised by contradiction, incommensurability and tension. I have suggested that although these complexities might be disavowed, elided or silenced, they are anyway always present. In the folding movements through which the subject is inaugurated, that which is elided, forgotten, silenced, is anyway and also installed in the subject, rendering them less than rational, less than coherent, less than stable; leaving them wounded and shot through with tensions and contradictions. They (we) never were, never could be, never will be, never can be, the stable autonomous subjects of modernist discourse. Further, we always were, will continue to be, of necessity are, relational.

I think of this relationality as the folding of a whole set of discursive relations and practices of government; as the folding of relations among human and non-human bodies; and as the folding of these bodies with other subjects, with other histories and other memories imbricated in multiple networks of social relations (cultural, familial,
sexual and so on). In this way, the histories, memories, performances and practices of a
government, of a culture, of an institution, of a family, of a parent, relative, sibling, 
lover, friend, are folded into the embodied subject. Thought of in this way, as a series of 
foldings in and from all directions, the subject is constituted within a complex network 
of practices, relations and bodies, subjectifications, positions and performances. These 
accumulate intensities and attachments, and are assembled within multiple relations that 
adhire, diverge and coagulate in ways that are dispersed across a network of relations, 
and exceed any one site or subject. This, I suggest, accounts for the unsubstitutability, 
specificity or idiosyncrasy of the subject: a subject understood as a variable assemblage 
of differences within relational networks of bodies, practices and conditions of 
possibility, constituted through a desire for recognition of one for one another, and of 
one self as another. ‘Be yourselves’, says Deleuze, ‘it being understood that this self 
must be that of others’ (Deleuze, 2004: 158).

We are, says Butler, ‘beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own’ (2004a: 22). The relationality of bodily life establishes ‘a field of ethical enmeshment with 
others’ and this produces ‘a sense of disorientation for the first-person’, for a first-person 
account that one might make of oneself. Such accounts, as performative practices, as 
‘improvisation(s) in a scene of constraint’ (Butler, 2004a: 1) are not made for oneself 
alone: ‘One is always ‘doing’ with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary’ 
(2004a: 1). Though that which any subject might refer to as my ‘own’, my own self, 
‘myself’, might appear at times to be something she or he has authored or, indeed, owns, 
the terms that make up one’s ‘ownself’ are, from the start, says Butler, ‘outside oneself,
beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author, and radically contests the notion of authorship itself’ (Butler, 2004a: 1).

**Assembling a relational ‘I’**

Having related an account of subjectivity as multiple incommensurable relationalities understood as differences forged from regularities, I have located possibilities for understanding the subject as simultaneously normatively regulated and idiosyncratic, and for addressing the question of the specificity of any subject who appears before us and gives an account of her- or him-self. I have emphasised the extent to which an autonomous ‘I’ is a fiction, since the constitutive processes through which a subject, an idiosyncratic ‘who’, might emerge are relational; are relations between other bodies, practices, technologies, times, places and so on. The materiality, the material effects, of memories, thoughts, knowledges and performances are relational co-constitutive folds of oneself and another, and of oneself as another. Having told a story of relationality, of the impossibility of an autonomous ‘I’, of giving a singular account of a singular self, I ask how this relationality might be implicated in the accounts we give of ourselves. What, I ask, could this possibly mean for working with the biographical narrative accounts we give of ourselves and each other?

In working with the accounts others give of themselves I am keen to avoid an epistemic violence that knows them merely as exemplars of categories, or of over-determined normative discourses or practices of government. I work to give an account of another as simultaneously normatively constituted and idiosyncratic in such a way as to keep in
play her or his relationality and imbrication in networks of actants, relations, practices, possibilities and power. I work also, to give an account of another as an unsubstitutable 'who', whilst simultaneously recognising our mutual imbrication in normative technologies of government. In this sense both our continuities and idiosyncrasies are relationally constituted in ways that simultaneously connect and differentiate us. In working to capture something of any subject's idiosyncrasy or specificity, I am concerned with an ethical relation between researcher and researched, speaker and listener, narrator and audience, such that we do not assume to know the other through our own ways of knowing alone, or allow them to know us only through their ways of knowing. Our mutual opacity, exposure and vulnerability are the resources of an ethical engagement with each other, an engagement that is cognisant of the possible violence of assuming too much, of a misrecognition that comes from applying theories or analytical categories that efface the specificity of a subject through variously underestimating or overestimating the operation of constitutive and regulatory practices of subjectification. Butler (2004) understands ethical reflexivity as requiring that each of us, in relation to the other: understand the normative and performative operation of discourse; undo the repetitive citational practices through which relations of power and violence are constituted and performed; and work to create the conditions of existence that enable recognition and survival of both oneself and an/other.

So, I am working to articulate an approach to biographical narratives that: traces the spatialised and temporalised relational movements through which subjects, and the accounts they give of themselves, are co-constituted; enunciates possibilities for the
generation of non-totalising, unstable, ambiguous, contradictory, continuous and incommensurable accounts of those constitutive relations and co-constitutive subjects; and that leaves some things stable and intact at the same time as it seeks to unsettle them. I suggest that this might be accomplished through an iteration of the subject as simultaneously relational and idiosyncratic; a subject at once continuous and incommensurable, a continuity and a difference, simultaneously oneself and another. As much as I have emphasised a relational subject in this present chapter, and problematised the assumption of an autonomous 'I' who speaks for themselves in the previous chapter, I recognise that the grammatical constitution of a singular 'I' has a performative force, that the 'I' who speaks understands her- or him-self as singular, stable and recognisable across time and space as self-same.

I turn, in the next chapter, to those practices of memory and narration through which we might give accounts of ourselves; through which we might constitute ourselves as a biographical 'I' who remembers and speaks. I give an account of the constitutive movements through which subjects appear as singularities, and of the ways in which this is accomplished through the coordination of multiplicities and relationalities through the apparatus of narrativity. It is, I propose, through this apparatus that the multiple co-constitutive actants, practices and relations through which embodied subjects appear and give accounts of themselves are co-ordinated; are remembered and narrated; and made narratable and recognisable. It is an apparatus that also enables narrators to constitute themselves as the subjects of their own narratives; give first-person biographical
accounts of their experience; and constitute themselves as self-same across time and space.
Inter/section #5: medi(t)ation on relating

The chapter you have just read (if indeed you are reading them in sequence) had an earlier life as a chapter on desire. But where is desire now? Any reference to it has been excised from the chapter, as much by a process of falling away as new trajectories emerged and took different directions, as by any conscious decision to excise it. I have, admittedly, been anxious about reanimating a psychoanalytic account of desire. However, since I am emphasising an account of an embodied human subject who is more than human I feel the need (desire maybe?) to give an account of desire as more than human and more than personal. Deleuze and Guattari are most helpful in this. They give a depersonalised account of desire that resists any recourse to psy discourses. Their account of desire is of affects or intensities that correspond to a body’s relations with other bodies - where those bodies are both human and not. Desire is a process of continuous modification, experimentation, play and engagement. It is social rather than individual, and this de-individualised conception of desire is understood as a force that forges connections among and between things, both human and not (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004).

So, in what you are about to read (if indeed you are reading in sequence) I give an account of Helen and her relationship to/with a cigarette. Though I had previously constituted the cigarette as an actant in Helen’s narrative, I had not thought to account for it as an agent, and as an actant/agent imbricated in relations of desire (or desiring
relations). So, I revisited, rethought and revised that earlier account in order to articulate the cigarette as an actant in Helen’s desire to smoke. Working with Deleuze and Guattari’s account of desire, and drawing on the concept of actants as agents from Actor Network Theory, I entertain the possibility that the cigarette desires to be smoked as much as Helen desires to smoke the cigarette. (Certainly the tobacco companies who produce cigarettes desire smokers such as Helen to desire their products). So, the cigarette in Helen’s narrative is an actant and agent that forges connections and relations of desire between multiple actants, both human and not. The relation between Helen and the cigarette is one which forges a particular relation between Helen and the cigarette, between Helen and her boss, between Helen and her work, between Helen and her customers, her sister, pregnancy - and who knows what else? Now that I think about it, perhaps the programmatic ambitions of government desire realisation in their performative enactment by the subject as the ambitions of the subject? Certainly we might say that subjects constituted as autonomous and free desire autonomy and freedom, just as autonomy and freedom might desire a subject to perform them.

These musings are both a digression and a circling back: a revolving, turning detouring movement that opens out new spaces and possibilities for thought. I have, in this thesis, been attempting to open-out, articulate and map a time-space of the unexpected. I have also been attempting to assemble a map (and map assemblages) of relations that are the result of a multiplicity of trajectories. ‘In spatial configurations’, says Massey, ‘otherwise unconnected narratives may be brought into contact, or
previously connected ones may be wrenched apart’ (2005: 111). This space of multiplicity, of multiple, incommensurable and irreducible relations is a space of indeterminacy; an open space that recognises ‘the impossibility of closure into a synchronic totality’ (Massey, 2005: 113). This is a space of ‘multiple coeval trajectories’ that are responsive to the heterogeneity within the multitude. Any map of these heterogeneous multitudes is less than stable; and once mapped, these heterogeneous multitudes are less stable than they might otherwise appear to be when sketched as a map. This open unstable map is, says Massey, political precisely because of its insistence on the recognition of the specificity, irreducibility and irretrievability of the territory it describes; a contradictory territory that is simultaneously regulatory and indeterminate. This is, indeed, the subject I am attempting to map, the map I am trying to make of the subject; a subject simultaneously regulated and indeterminate.
Chapter 5: Remembering

*Of what* are there memories? *Whose* memory is it? (Ricoeur, 2006: 3)

An invitation to give an account of oneself is an invitation to remember and render oneself recognisable and intelligible through an act of narration. I have thus far addressed the life-history narrative as a spatialised and temporalised biographical account of experience, and in this chapter emphasise the place of memory in the act of giving such an account. I have elsewhere proposed that experience is constituted in, through and by the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity. These apparatuses are also constitutive of memories, and of those acts of remembering through which a history of experience is narrated in the present. A biographical narrative is more than an act of recall; it is an act of re-collection through which memories are made, and made narratable. It is simultaneously an act of narration and an account of the conditions of narratability that constitute what might be remembered; what might be re-collected and narrated as an account of oneself.

These temporalised and spatialised apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity are also constitutive of the narrator, of the narrating subject, of the biographical subject, and of the subject of biography. This is a subject who performs her- or him-self as the ‘I’ who gives an account of her or his experience. I have emphasized that this ‘I’ is a fiction of autonomy, and that any ‘I’ is an assemblage of co-constitutive relations between actants. A biographical account of experience is, I propose, simultaneously an account of
practices of subjectification and of a specific subject emergent from those relations. I work with an account of biography (and with biographical accounts) as an account of those temporalised and spatialised practices, processes and relations through which a history of experience is constituted, and constituted as narratable and ‘one’s own’. A narrated biography is a re-collection and re-organisation of memory as narrative, and of memories of subjectification as ‘a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement’ (Foucault, 1998: 61). I have, in the preceding chapters, spatialised and temporalised the constitution and ritualised performance of a biographical narrative within the historical present. This is a present in which a history of modernism, humanism and liberalism, inflected by the specificities of neoliberalism, engages subjects in the management of themselves and their experience in and as a biographical project of self-realisation (Rose, 1999a). It is something of the constitutive relations between biography, memory, governmentality and narrativity that I am attempting to articulate in this chapter.

**Remembering the thesis**

In Chapter Two, I emphasised that one does not simply remember, one remembers something (Ricoeur, 2006). But what might this something be? I engaged with the conundrum of memory by wondering if the account that I had given of my childhood was a memory of something I had experienced, or perhaps an experience of remembering something that may not have happened. I suggested that it is impossible to remember, forget or narrate everything, and that any narrated account of experience is composed of remainders and lacunae as much as it is anything else. In Chapter Three I proposed that acts of memory and narration are performative, that acts of assertion might
take precedence over content, and that this turn towards the performative force of the assertion signals its tenuous mooring in content. In Chapter Four I emphasised the collective nature of memory and acts of remembering, and addressed the concept of relationality; of co-constitutive relations among actants and the impossible fiction of an autonomous self. In giving this account of ‘the thesis so far’, I am engaging in an act of remembering that in turn invites you the reader to remember (knowing that what you might remember at this point will be partial and include memories of doubts, irritations, diverging opinions, possible agreements and so on). This chapter is also a call to remember the conditions of possibility through which a narrating and narratable subject might produce and perform a narrative account of her or his experience, including the one I am giving now.

I engage, in this chapter, with the movement of memory between the one who gives an account of oneself and the memories of others; a movement between the one and the many and the many and the one, and a movement between the one as the many and the many as the one. I articulate these movements through contemplation of Ricoeur’s questions: ‘Of what are there memories?’ and ‘Whose memory is it?’ (2006: 3, original emphasis). I work with these questions, and the concepts of memory, narrative, relationality, temporality, difference and refiguration, in order to contemplate the work that subjects undertake when giving biographical accounts of themselves as if singular, coherent and self-same over time. This experience of continuity is located in those temporalised acts through which the past, and embodied experiences of it, persist as memory. I foreground the ways in which relations among multiple and incommensurable actants, events and experiences might be brought together through
narrativity in such a way as to integrate their ‘diversity, variability, discontinuity and instability’ as if coherent, and permanent, in time (Ricoeur, 1994: 140); and as if one’s own. I have suggested that the idea of a wholly rational, autonomous and unitary subject is a fiction; an imagined ideal subjectivity ‘awaiting its always deferred realisation’ (Venn, 2002: 56). Who we are in the present, who we take ourselves to be, and the accounts we give of ourselves as a particular ‘I’ or ‘who’, is, I propose, a narrative accomplishment. The continuity of that ‘I’ as self-same over time is accomplished through those temporalised and spatialised acts of memory that forge coherence from contradiction, and continuity from incommensurability.

I am working to give an account of the constitutive histories or biographical temporalities through which an unsubstitutable subject articulates her- or him-self as a specific ‘who’, rather than a ‘what’. This ‘who’, articulated as an ‘I’, appears at the intersections between the history of a culture and the history of a particular embodied subject. In this way every subject is sutured in history (Venn, 2002: 58) – their own, as well as that of the constitutive exteriority of the times, spaces and relations of which they are a fold. The subject emergent from, within and through this suturing movement is stitched into time and space, and into an illusion of coherence and stability, through the continuity made possible by the embodied experience of enduring in time and space, and by acts of memory. I’m articulating a constitutive relation between bodies and memories (collective and personal), between bodies of memories, and memories of bodies. This relation is temporalised and spatialised through the apparatus of narrativity, and those practices of narration through which discontinuity and incommensurability are organised as if stable, coherent and continuous.
Having proposed that accounts of experience are performances constituted through the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity, I’m emphasising, in this chapter, an iteration of narrativity as an apparatus through which subjects come to understand themselves as enduring in space and time (as having a past, a present and a future). I am specifically interested in narrativity as the apparatus through which memory and anticipation are held together in the performance of an ‘I’, and of an ‘I’ who knows and articulates itself to ‘oneself’ and another as: coherent and continuous; enduring in time and space as self-same; emergent from a constitutive past; living in the present; moving towards a possible future; and as accountable for the accounts they give of themselves. In pursuing these interests I articulate the practices through which narrativity instantiates performances of an autonomous ‘I’, and emphasise the extent to which this apparently autonomous ‘I’ is plural: an ‘I’, who, ‘by itself does not exist’ (Ricoeur, 1992: 18). This is a relational ‘I’ constituted through the ‘composibility and intertwining of self and Other’ (Venn, 2002: 65); ‘a heteronomous, rather than autonomous, I’ (Venn, 2002: 57). This heteronomous ‘I’ is an embodied subject, relationally co-constituted with other bodies, including bodies of memory.

**Bodies of memory**

In articulating an account of the subject as relational rather than autonomous I have emphasised a constitutive folding movement between the living memories of embodied subjects and the memories of the communities to which they belong. On this point Rose recapitulates Nietzsche’s concept of ‘mnemotechnics’, which refers to those practices or technologies through which ‘one “burns” the past into oneself and makes it available
again as a warning, a comfort, a bargaining device, a weapon or a wound’ (1998: 179).

Through this technology of memory as warning, comfort or wound, the past is, I suggest, both burned into, and made available to us, through the redoubling of memory as narrativity, and narrativity as memory.

For Bordieu (1977), the body is a repository of the entirety of its constitutive and performative history: ‘embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product’ (Bordieu, 1977: 56). The body does not simply memorise (memorialise) the past but, rather, like my account of wounding in Chapter Four, in some sense re/enacts it and brings it back to life in the present. The past, then, has a performative force that lives on in the present: as the present, as presence. The present, the present moment, is understood as ‘a condensed historicity’ that ‘exceeds itself in past and future directions’ (Butler, 1997: 3). Further, if ‘speaking itself is a bodily act’ (Butler, 1997: 10, original emphasis) and the speaking subject a body who talks, then the narrating subject is a body who speaks and whose action is, in this sense, a kind of corporeal and incorporated memory. The body does not simply ‘house’ memories of its participation in the practices through which it is constituted and regulated. Rather, ‘its participatory competence is itself dependency on the incorporation of that cultural memory and its knowingness’ (Butler, 1997: 154).

The body is, then, a corporeal site of an incorporated history. This incorporated corporeality is accomplished, in part, through those practices by which matrices of intelligibility are constituted as real, normal and obvious (Butler, 1997). Corporeality and reality merge at the points of intersection between the body of the performative
subject and those narrativisations through which those bodies and memories, and bodies of memories, are constituted and made narratable. Narratability is the performative materialisation of the practices through which intelligibility is constituted and organised within the structure of the narrative form. The structure, coherence and intelligibility of any narrative depend on the narrator’s ability to ‘relay a set of sequential events with plausible transitions’ (Butler, 2005: 12). And yet, as Butler reminds us, when one gives an account of oneself, one is not ‘simply relaying information through an indifferent medium’ (Butler, 2005: 130). Rather, any account of oneself is the performative act of a particular subject, and it is this particularity that I am working to articulate.

Remembering oneself
I’m interested in memory not simply as the content of what one might recall, but also as the operation of what might be simultaneously remembered and forgotten of those constitutive practices through which a performative and embodied subject is inaugurated. I have elsewhere given an account of the subject as inaugurated through, and as a fold of, a constitutive exterior. The ‘inside’ of this subject, as an infolding of the exterior, is simultaneously enabled and constrained by ‘the contours and limits of our corporeality’ (Rose, 1998: 37) and by the conditions of possibility that delimit ‘who’ or ‘what’ a subject might be or become. Those constitutive conditions of possibility are ‘what might be called an enunciative field of memory (statements that are no longer accepted or discussed, and which consequently no longer define either a body of truth or a domain of validity, but in relation to which relations of filiation, genesis, transformation, continuity, and historical discontinuity can be established)’ (Foucault,
This enunciative field of memory is composed of the productive possibilities of that which is simultaneously present and absent, remembered and forgotten.

Corporeality, as an embodiment of conditions of possibility, and as an enunciative field of memory, collects together multiple constitutive practices and relations ‘discontinuously in the form of pleats making surfaces, spaces, flows, and relations’ (Rose, 1998: 37). These non-totalizing, non-unifying, discontinuous foldings are, Rose suggests, stabilized in and by ‘certain “arts of memory”’ (1998: 37). It is through these arts of memory, as simultaneously technologies of government and self, that we come to understand ourselves as the subjects of our own biographies. Those biographies are simultaneously histories of narrating subjects and histories of those practices of government through which those subjects are constituted and regulated, and constituted and regulated as narratable. My concern here is with the work that the narrating subject performs, and I suggest, this work signals something of the simultaneous production of: the narrator and their narrative; the narrated and narratable subject; and of narrativity as the apparatus through which this is accomplished.

This work is not seamless and coherent, but perpetually laboured on and over in order to produce coherence and continuity out of that which is not necessarily coherent or continuous. This work, as productive of both a performative subject and a narratable biography, is accomplished through the coordination of discontinuity as if continuous. This discontinuity includes contradictions, ruptures and breaks, which, I suggest, might be understood as continuity of another kind: as non-linear movements that turn, detour
and fold in multiple directions that accomplish the continuing presence of the corporeal subject as self-same over time. These discontinuities, contradictions, ruptures and breaks are narrative acts through which possibilities for change are coordinated with possibilities for stability. Contradictions, as ruptures or breaks with the past, ‘are themselves legible only in terms of the past’ from which they break (Butler, 1997: 14). Any present moment of articulation which constitutes this break from the past instantiates a new context for articulation of the self: ‘a future context, not yet delineable and, hence, not yet precisely a context’ (Butler, 1997: 14). Any moment in which the subject gives an account of her- or him-self is simultaneously a movement emergent from, and a break with, a constitutive past. This moment of presence is also a moment of futurity, a moment yet to come. Any break is not simply a single break from a stable past, for that past is already a break from something that preceded or exceeded it; it is always already a difference (Deleuze, 2004).

The endurance of a subject who is intelligible and recognisable, and continues to be intelligible and recognisable as self-same over time, is a performative accomplishment. Through this accomplishment, the narrating (and narratable) subject manages the paradoxical simultaneity of similarity and difference, continuity and contradiction, stability and change, remembering and forgetting. These paradoxical accounts are not comprised of a ‘discrete series of speech acts’, but of ritual chains of significations whose ‘origin and end remain unfixed and unfixable’ (Butler, 1997: 14). In this sense acts of speech, or embodied performances of talk, are not momentary happenings but ‘a certain nexus of temporal horizons, the condensation of an iterability that exceeds the moments of its occasions’ (Butler, 1997: 14).
Narrated biographical accounts cannot simply be fixed in the moment; in the time and space of their narration. They are always an excess of that moment, and incorporate times past, present and future in ways that cannot be fully determined, fixed, known, remembered or articulated (by oneself or another). Given the indeterminate history of any moment of presence, and of the discontinuities and excesses present in any present moment, I’m specifically interested in the practices through which contradiction and rupture are staged within a performative framing of the self and the biography as coherent. I read discontinuity and contradiction not simply as rupture or break, but as a reorientation of the narrator and narrative to the demands of the present, including the present moment of articulation. Any present moment is a site of temporal and spatial difference from any other moment in time or space. This difference is emergent from those continual modifications in the relations of which the subject is a fold: ‘The inside condenses the past (a long period of time) in ways that are not at all continuous but instead confront it with a future that comes from outside, exchange it and recreate it’ (Deleuze, 1988: 119).

I’m suggesting a reading of contradiction, discontinuity and difference as emergent from the work of producing accounts of ourselves that are responsive to changing temporalities, spatialities, contexts and relations among actants. These changes, alterations, shifts or revisions are managed by narrators in the present moment of articulation. A narrated biographical account does not necessarily follow a single linear trajectory; rather, it is composed of multiple trajectories that move in multiple temporal and spatial directions. These multi-directional trajectories are threaded by acts of
memory through which multiple relationalities, embodied practices, intransigent differences and incommensurable continuities are coordinated. As Massey reminds us, ethical engagement with the narrated biographical accounts subjects give of themselves requires that we ‘take on board’ their ‘coeval multiplicities’, ‘radical contemporaneity’ and ‘constitutive complexity’ (Massey: 2005: 8). Irreducible subjects cannot, then, be reduced to stable iterations of taxonomies, technologies, knowledges or interests. Rather, an ethical and reflexive approach to narrated biographical accounts of experience calls us to articulate and respond to their multiplicity, complexity, irreducibility and incommensurability.

**Giving an account of herself: Helen**

**Account #1: A toilet break**

**HELEN:** I’m not in a union right now. But um, I don’t know it’s not nice. Hey Kay listen, what am I supposed to say, hey Kay, listen I am only supposed to work 8 hours a day, other than that you are supposed to pay me overtime. Um, I am entitled to a half an hour break, that I am entitled to a tea break which is 15 minutes. I don’t get that. I can’t get a cigarette break. If I need to go to the toilet I’ve got to get the security guard to mind the shop for like one minute. Like I’ve got to run to the toilet and when I come back I’ve got a huge line of people. So I hardly can’t go to the bathroom.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what does she say when you say things like that?
HELEN: Well she tells me if you ever need to go to the toilet just close the shop and go, but that’s impossible, if I close the shop, I am going to come back, I did it once actually. It takes me like three minutes to close the shop, like the stand is so heavy, the doors, you’ve got to move the things, you’ve got to push them, you’ve got to lock it. It is too much of a hassle and the toilets are a pretty big walk and then I come back with a huge, like people, angry customers looking at me in a bad way and it is like, I am by myself, I just wanted to go to the toilet and I hate that, and I hate seeing them like that. And then I open the shop and every customer is like chucking the one dollar here for the Telegraph and chucking the one, you know, they are not nice and they won’t come back and then they look at me like I did, like I’m not good or whatever.

Account #2: A cigarette break

HELEN: Well my sister was pregnant, she didn’t even give up smoking. Yeah you just need a real, like if I get sick one day, maybe that will be a good enough excuse for me to quit [smoking]. Other than that it doesn’t matter how much they go up [in price], it is like a social thing, I like something in my hand. I don’t know. It is stupid, but its fun.

INTERVIEWER: So does it stress you out working and not smoking?

HELEN: Working and not smoking. Well sometimes I close the shop for 5 minutes and go for a cigarette. I mean Kay the boss, she always tells me, Helen if you really need to go to the toilet, what can you do you have to close up the shop and go to the toilet. So sometimes I just close and I go to the toilet and have a cigarette. I just go and have a cigarette, and if she asks me where I’ve been, I went to the toilet. Yeah, but I do that
sometimes, but sometimes my friends come past and just give me a drag here and there. If they watch the cameras, I’m dead. But I don’t really think so, but I’m by myself for 12 hours, what do they expect?

Then and now

Then: When first working with Helen’s narrative I was attempting to understand something of the operation (and application) of Ricoeur’s theory of refiguration. The account of the toilet/cigarette break seemed also to be a narrative break that might be explored as an act of refiguration. My earlier thinking about this was framed within a reading of narrative as telling something of the narrator; that attention to the break in Helen’s narrative might tell something of the specificity or idiosyncrasy of Helen. Such an expectation was framed within a psychosocial account of subjectivity that assumed that any contradiction between or within accounts might be read as narratives of unconscious affect; as idiosyncratic renderings and negotiations of meanings that are brought to, and made from, life histories/experience, where experience is not what happens to you, but how you understand what happens to you. I have since worked to articulate an account of the idiosyncrasy of subjects as figured through relationality, and here, now, as refigured relations between and among actants and practices. I have become less concerned with content, and more interested in the act of narration and the performative force of the spoken. I have also become more interested in multiple co-constitutive relations and temporal refigurations, rather than with the question of why Helen said what she did; or did what she said. In the spirit of Actor Network Theory, I ask not ‘why is it so?’, but rather, ‘how is it possible?’ This movement from ‘why’ to
‘how’ foregrounds the labour that subjects undertake in order to produce narrative accounts of themselves. I labour over Helen’s narrative in order to articulate something of that labour, and revise my thinking on the concept of refuguration.

**Now:** In these two accounts (taken from the same interview) about the possibility for Helen to take a cigarette or toilet break at work, I am interested in rethinking the ways in which I have read the second account as a contradiction or break with the first. I’m no longer so preoccupied with what this break might mean, but interested in the way in which the apparent contradiction or break might tell us something about the practice of narrating temporality as coherence and continuity, and of the ways in which the present is always a difference from, or refuguration of, the past. I’m not suggesting that we routinely seek to describe and explain differences, breaks or contradictions when working with the narrative accounts subjects give of themselves. Rather, I am working towards a way of thinking about refuguration that locates it as a narrative act, or act of narration, that is present in all narratives as a result of their temporality. I am working to understand something of the endurance of the subject in time as a movement through which the past is refugured in and as the present, through which practices of government are refugured as practices of self, and through which regulated normativity is refugured as idiosyncrasy.

In the first account Helen indicates dissatisfaction with her conditions of work and with the expectations of her employer. Helen works long hours alone and asserts that she never gets a break; not even to go to the toilet. In this narrative, when her employer suggests she should have a break, Helen describes an involved and difficult process of
shutting up the shop and claims it’s not worth it. When later describing her smoking habit, Helen reworks the narrative of the difficulty of closing the shop, and describes how she closes up and slips out to the toilet for a cigarette. Clearly, what is described as impossible in one circumstance (a toilet break) is refigured as possible in another (a cigarette break). This signals something of the changed conditions of possibility which constitute Helen’s differing performances of those possibilities.

There are a number of relations (among the many possible) that I want to trace here. In the first account I read Helen as positioning herself within a narrative that might be characterised as ‘I work hard under very difficult circumstances’: she can’t even go to the toilet. However, when the break narrative (the narrative break) is later repositioned as one in which she ascribes herself a position of agency, the narrative produces that position of agency – she closes the shop and goes to the toilet for a cigarette. The impossible becomes possible and the narrative is refigured to manage the different positions and contexts in which Helen is located, and locates herself, at different times. The position of agency and freedom she takes in relation to the cigarette break narrative is different from the position of exploitation and restriction she takes in relation to the toilet break narrative. I’m not attempting here to produce a definitive or stable account of Helen, the break narratives, or the narrative breaks. Rather, I am gesturing towards a reading of this accumulation of differences as an accomplishment of continuity, of Helen articulating herself as the self-same subject within and through differing temporalised and spatialised coordinates of possibility. Further, the difference between these two accounts are located in different times on different occasions, as well as produced in different moments in the narrative with different effects and affects.
Working with Deleuze’s concept of repetition as difference, and with Ricoeur’s concept of refiguration, I understand that each retelling, each new moment of articulation inevitably produces differences. An event, experience, object or memory, a position, habit or performance, accrues different associations, intensities, relations and meanings across time and space. What might reoccur within a network of actants and relations, reoccurs differently, as a difference, because of its changing temporality and relationality. These temporalised and spatialised differences are, in part, constitutive of the unsubstitutability and specificity of any subject. What might be otherwise read as a break or a contradiction is a temporal refiguration of relations among actants. The question is not why they are different, or what this difference means, but rather how this difference captures something of the practices, positions and relations ascribed both to the past and to the present moment of articulation in such a way as to make homogeneity out of heterogeneity, autonomy out of heteronomy, singularity out of multiplicity, and continuity out of incommensurability.

Significantly, these differences between the two accounts extend beyond Helen and the positions she takes up. They also implicate other actants: her boss, a security guard, her customers; cigarettes, the toilet, newsstands, a door, a lock; time, distance and motion. They not only implicate these other actants but also the performative force of her relation to them. In her shifting relationships to these actants Helen refigures them, or produces them as different in each of the accounts. What is too far, takes too long, is too heavy, too cumbersome and impossible about the shop door, the newsstand and the distance to the toilet in the first account, apparently becomes lighter, easier, closer and
quicker in the second account. The presence of a necessary security guard in the first account is apparently unnecessary in the second account. This draws attention to that which is different in the second account, or what is present that was not there in the first account. In the first account the narrative is produced in relation to a ‘toilet break’ and a position of powerlessness. The second narrative is given a new trajectory by the introduction of a cigarette, and it is this cigarette as actant and agent, and Helen’s desire to smoke, that is critical, in this moment, to the position of agency that she takes up.

There is, I suggest a co-constitutive relational agency between the cigarette and Helen, and Helen’s desire for a cigarette. I read, then, the break or contradiction between the two accounts as necessary for the fabrication of continuity, rather than simply a contradiction. I do not read the differences between the accounts as a question of veracity (could Helen take a break or not?). I understand the accounts to be simultaneously different and veracious in the context of their utterance. I read them as telling something of how Helen remembers, performs and accounts for herself in specific moments, contexts and relations. The differences between the accounts are refigurations through which the veracity of each moment of narration, of the narrative and the narrator, her relations and their affects, are coordinated as if coherent despite any apparent discontinuity and incommensurability between them.

I’m undertaking a rudimentary mapping here, between subject positions, desires, actants, discourses and narratives as an assemblage; and as an assemblage that is not singular or stable but always a play of differences. I see too, how I might trace other positions, actants, meanings, desires, performances, practices of government and matrices of intelligibility across Helen’s narrative, in order to understand the ways in which she (like
any other subject) constitutes herself through an act of narration. Such a tracing gestures towards the ways in which acts of narration occupy the intersections and interstices between a lived biography, discursive and narrative resources, investments, desires and meanings, technologies and practices of government (including technologies of self), and the spatial and temporal location of an embodied subject. In this way I’m working to recover something of the materiality of a narrative and of a narrative subject, not simply through the flesh of the body, but through the fabric of the networks, relationships, technologies, actants, places and times in which they are assembled as particular, idiosyncratic and relational subjects. In so doing I am also working to map, sketch, trace and articulate theoretical and methodological possibilities for working with narrated accounts of experience that are responsive to multiplicity, complexity and instability; possibilities that are open to an ongoing re-thinking and re-inventing of practices that do justice to that multiplicity, complexity and instability and might themselves be similarly multiple, complex and unstable.

**Remembering the past**

Every statement involves a field of antecedent elements in relation to which it is situated, but which it is able to reorganize and redistribute according to new relations. It constitutes its own past, defines, in what precedes it, its own filiation, redefines what makes it possible and necessary, excludes what cannot be compatible with it. And it poses this enunciative past as an acquired truth, as an event that has occurred, as a form that can be modified, as material to be transformed, as an object that can be spoken about, etc. (Foucault, 2002: 140)
Discourses, statements or enunciations do not reconstitute the past, repeat the already known, or ‘try to restore what has been thought, wished, aimed at, experienced, desired’ at the very moment in which it is expressed in discourse (Foucault, 2002: 156). Rather, the discursive expression of the past in and as the present is ‘a regulated transformation of what has already been written’ (Foucault, 2002: 156); and written on, through, and in the body as a constitutive folding of an exteriority as an interiority (and as a memory of a constitutive outside). As regulated transformations or refigurations, narratives of a remembered past are simultaneously discursive breaks with, and the piling up of, the already said. A history of becoming, as an account that fabricates continuity and homogeneity, is an accumulation of regularities and ruptures, continuities and contradictions, stabilities, incommensurabilities and changes. That which endures does so as a transformation, a variation, a rupture, a difference or refiguration emergent from the possibilities of the already known; a proliferation of differences that cannot be reduced. So what of this proliferation of differences might it be possible to remember and attribute the status of memory; of a thing, something, anything remembered?

Of what are there memories?
I’m working to articulate something of the practices of reorganisation, redistribution, modification and refiguration at work in the act of constituting, narrating and performing oneself as the subject of one’s own biography; as the ‘I’ who gives an account of oneself. That biography is accomplished through acts of remembering made up of past fragments, movements and moments brought into the present in an ‘unstable, makeshift harmony’ (de Certeau, 1988: 86). These acts of remembering are mobilised in relation to
things that happen in the present and this mobilisation is ‘inseparable from an alteration’ (1988: 86). More than this, memory derives its interventionary force from its very capacity to be altered, from being ‘unmoored, mobile, lacking any fixed position’ (1988: 86). There is, in acts of remembering, a ‘double alteration’ of both memory and its object, ‘which is remembered only when it has disappeared’ (1988: 87). If, as de Certeau asserts, memory comes from somewhere else, is outside of itself and moves things about, then I am interested in the alterations and movements that memory accomplishes in both that which is remembered, and in the one who remembers.

If the present memory of an event or experience is different temporally and contextually from the thing remembered (or other subsequent recollections of it), then memory does not tie us to the past. It is, rather, a condition of enduring and being present, as well as a condition of becoming; of the productive potential of memory in the present. I am articulating a sense of temporality in which ‘we live the “now” as a movement from a becoming-past to a coming-towards, so that the consciousness of the present always leaches into the memory of the having-been and the anticipation of a to-come’ (Venn, 2002: 56). Memory, as a temporal, relational and constitutive fold of the outside, is collective; a collective memory of the shared conditions of subjectification. ‘Why’, asks Ricoeur ‘should memory be attributed only to me, to you, to her or to him, in the singular … And why could attribution not be made directly to us, to you in the plural, to them?’ (2006: 94).

Memory, as ‘a sense of the other’, ‘develops along with relationships’ (de Certeau, 1998: 87). It is, in this sense, an effect of the constitutive relations through which it, and
the subject who remembers, are inaugurated. Narratives are spatialised and temporalised trajectories that traverse and organise these memories and relations, and are shaped as much by what is left out of the account as by what is actually told (Kuhn, 1999). That which might be present or remembered exists alongside that which is absent or forgotten, and these presences and absences are simultaneously one’s own and collective. Though particular memories might emerge at the site of a particular subject, ‘their associations extend far beyond the personal. Rather, they spread into an extended network of meanings that bring together the personal with the familial, the cultural, the economic, the social and the historical’ (Kuhn, 1999: 233). It is possible then to read the narrated account of a particular embodied subject as a relation among actants, practices of government, discursive formations, historical events, family histories, structures of feeling, and relations of class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and so on.

The memory or narrative of one subject is, then, a trace of the memories or narratives of other subjects. There is a movement that I am articulating here, between the one and the many. In place of reading the one as an exemplar of the many, I am more interested in the possibility that the many might be read from the one: a ‘one’ who is simultaneously an assemblage of the many, but an assemblage that has a particularity, specificity or haecceity emergent from the temporalised and spatialised relations among actants of which it is composed. Any account that any subject gives, or that another might give of that subject, is itself a relational actant and agent in an assemblage, rather than a stable account of those irreducible multiplicities, relations and assemblages. I’m gesturing here to the unsubstitutable specificity of subjects as narrativised assemblages that are always in motion, and that accounts of them need to be similarly mobile and account of this
specificity. The specificity of any subject-as-assemblage, as emergent from normative regulatory practices of government, might, I suggest, tell us something of the limits and possibilities of those normative practices. The subject, constituted through the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity, and as a constitutive folding of an outside, is a binding together of the constitutive relations between and among the inner and the outer, the social and the personal, the historical and the present, the one and the many. The memories of which a narrative is a fold are the folded memories of a whole network of relations among actants. These relations among actants, memories and narratives, between the ‘the conflictual and incoherent self and the incommensurable and indissoluble other’ (Pile & Thrift, 1995: 39), are co-ordinated through the apparatus of narrativity.

**Narrativity**

Every biographical narrative is coextensive with the biographical narratives of others. Narrativity is an apparatus through which the constitutive outside and its inside are held together and apart, so that it is possible to fabricate, from multiple relations, an ‘I’ who might give an account of her- or him-self as singular and stable. Narrativity, as both apparatus and embodied practice, enables the ordering of the lived experience of a subject in time so as to produce a sense of endurance and coherence.

I have elsewhere articulated an account of narrativity as the operation of a constellation of regulatory practices of government that constitute the possibilities for, and limits to, the intelligibility of the narratable, the narrated and the narrator. Narrativity incorporates
the range of practices through which embodied subjects are constituted, and constitute themselves, as the narrators of their biographical accounts of experience. These biographical accounts are temporalised, spatialised and narrativised in and as practices of everyday life; and as assemblages of the multiple and complex practices and relations through which any subject appears, and appears as if a singularity. Narrativity assembles and coordinates actants and practices within the relational networks in which they are situated and co-constituted. Indeed, de Certeau suggests that narrativity ‘haunts’ all descriptions, explanations and accounts of phenomenon and practices, and has a ‘necessary function’ in them as an ‘art of saying’ (de Certeau, 1988: 79, original emphasis). Biography is simultaneously ‘an art of memory’ and an ‘art of saying’ made possible through the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity.

For de Certeau a theory of practices ‘takes precisely the form of a way of narrating them’ (1988: 80). Acts of narration, the narrated and the narrator are indices of a way of speaking, thinking and acting that are performatively constituted through the normative practices, regulatory technologies and relations of power in which they are imbricated. In emphasising this constitutive and reciprocal movement between governmentality and narrativity I’m foregrounding the ways in which the ‘I’, when it seeks to give an account of itself, ‘can try to start with its own singular past and origins’, but finds that this self ‘both as narrating vehicle and as a subject to be narrated, is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration’ (Butler, 2008: 20).

The ‘I’, then, has no story of its own that is not at the same time the story of how that ‘I’ is produced within a matrix of conventions and norms that govern the formation of the
subject (Butler, 2008). The temporality of the subject emergent through these normative matrices, though experienced and performed as presence, is not confined to the present, for that subject has been formed within other, prior, temporalisations and spatialisations. The subject cannot, then, be present to those temporalities that precede or exceed her or his capacity for reflection or remembrance. The accounts we give of ourselves are, as a result, necessarily partial, and this partiality signals a constitutive incommensurability between subjects and those practices and relations of power through which they are constituted. I take this incommensurability to signal possibilities for the emergence of an irreducible, unsubstitutable and idiosyncratic subject as a specificity: one who cannot be fully known and accounted for; one who is incommensurable within the vector of temporalities through which they are normatively constituted as intelligible and recognisable.

Further, the structural conditions of narration make the giving of a full account of oneself impossible (Butler, 2008). Nor can subjects be fully reproduced in the accounts others give of them. This impossibility is located not only in a formative history that is irrecoverable, but also in the degree of opacity that attends the formation of the subject and delimits what any subject might know about oneself or another. The accounts we give of ourselves are partial; haunted by that for which we can devise no definitive story. We cannot explain exactly why we have emerged in this way, and our efforts at narrative reconstruction are always undergoing revision (Butler, 2008). In the face of this haunted partiality, these practices of recuperation and reconstruction, transformation and refuguration, I am interested in those practices of narration through which an illusion or performance of singularity and coherence might be accomplished: an illusion that
there is, indeed, an ‘I’ who persists, who insists that she or he is self-same over time. And yet, what is said or done, known or remembered by any particular subject, is contingent on what it is possible for that subject to say or do, know or remember, within the social body through which it is constituted. As Deleuze (2004) reminds us, in the same way that blood flows through the vessels of a flesched body, so discourses and their material effects flow through the social body. As rhizomatic eruptions in any particular body, they are indices of all that it is possible to say, become or do within the whole field of the social body. In this relation between the social body and the flesched body, any and every discourse, narrative, practice, memory or subject position is made possible by the whole field, and can be read as an iteration of it.

**Narrating ourselves**

Our biographical narratives and stories of origins do not originate with us. They arrive belatedly, ‘missing some of the constitutive beginnings and preconditions of the life it seeks to narrate’ (Butler, 2008: 37). This means that our narratives begin *in medias res*, when many things have already taken place’ to make us and our story possible in language (2008: 37). We are, says Butler ‘always recuperating, reconstructing’ and left to ‘fictionalize and fabulate’ those origins we cannot know. We create ourselves in new form each time we speak: ‘The narrative “I” effectively adds to the story every time it tries to speak … and this addition cannot be fully narrated at the moment in which it provides the perspectival anchor for the narration in question’ (Butler, 2008: 37).
How then, might we understand something of the accomplishment of giving an account of oneself as self-same over time? This is also a question of the articulation of experience as continuous and intelligible within the shifting relations through which subjectivity is constituted, and constituted as simultaneously enduring and changeable. It is a question, too, of the temporality of a subject who might claim to remember who they are, have been, or might become.

Ricoeur (1988) proposes that in order to reflect on, and make meaning from lived experience, we turn our lives into narratives. This movement between experiences and narrative reconstructions of them is accomplished through the ‘refiguration of temporal experience’ (Ricoeur, 1988: 3). This involves a ‘threelfold mimetic relation between the order of narrative, the order of action and the order of life’ (1988: 3). Mimesis(1) is prefiguration; the understanding we have of those constitutive practices through which the intelligibility and recognition of subjects is constituted and regulated. Mimesis(2) is configuration; the emplotment or ordering of events, memories and experiences through which relations between and among them are coordinated into intelligible and coherent accounts. Mimesis(3) is refiguration; the performative act in and through which the narrative becomes embodied as the life of the narrating subject. These performative movements refigure narrative, time, memory and the body as a particular subject. This particular subject, or embodied narrator is, for Ricoeur, ‘a narrative identity’.

‘Narrative identity’ refers not to an ‘immutable substance’, or ‘fixed structure’, but to a mobile subject emergent at the intersection between the temporal ordering of the narrative ‘as a structured totality’ and the disorder and discontinuity of the memories and
experiences recounted in it (Ricoeur, 1988: 6). Every named subject ‘is not only a figured self but also one who is constantly refigured’ (Venn, 2002: 58) within those shifting contexts, relations, temporalities, spatialities, discourses, narratives, subject positions and practices of government through which intelligibility and recognition might be secured. This concept of refiguration, as a metaphor of the mobile figure of the subject, articulates the subject not as stable and given, but as emergent; as a becoming that is never final. Any appearance of the subject as singular is in part accomplished through the ongoing practice of refiguration as spatialised and temporalised becomings that have an irrecoverable past, and an anticipated but unknowable future held within the corporeal presence of the moment of narration.

The meanings we ascribe to experience as narrated acts of memory are constituted and coordinated through the discursive formations and matrices of intelligibility available to us in our particular time and space. These formations and matrices are narrativised as performative accounts, scripts, plots or trajectories through which narratives are temporalised, embodied and performed. These formations and performances are not random or invented by the narrating subject, but constituted and coordinated within the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity. These apparatuses delimit ‘the space of experience’ and construct the ‘horizon of expectation’ (Ricoeur, 1988: 241); that which we remember, anticipate and desire. The space of experience and the horizon of expectation are temporalisations that ‘cross each other to constitute a particular subjectivity at the point of intersection’ (Venn, 2002: 58). A particular, idiosyncratic, embodied subject emerges at the points where ‘the history of a culture, sedimented in its
stock of knowledge, its narrations, its “texts”, joins with the history or biography of a particular individual’ (Venn, 2002: 58).

**Remembering myself**

As much as I had imagined I had traversed some distance from the constitutive past moment or memory of sexual abuse discussed in Chapter Two, this current engagement with questions of memory, of what might be simultaneously remembered, forgotten and refigured, loops back, arcs away from and towards the question of the acuity and veracity of my own memory. I’m visiting again the question of the unanswerable, unknowable indeterminacy of an originary moment/memory that may or may not have happened; or may or may not have happened in the way I remembered it.

I had previously resolved that some of many possible childhood traumas, known and not, had been narrativised as sexual abuse through discourses available to me at the time – discourses with a performative force; a force that could produce the very thing it described. I remembered experiences that may or may not have been mine, and remembered them in particular ways, gave them particular content, form and narrative expression through the discursive resources available to me. That is, I found citational resources in discursive and narrative practices that enabled me to give a particular account of an inchoate experience. The account that I gave satisfied the need to re/tell, know and understand that experience in a way that was intelligible to myself and others (though not necessarily true). I understood that the resources through which this was
accomplished were not mine alone, that they came from elsewhere and did their work for (and on) me.

I revisit these questions of experience, memory and veracity through the work I am doing here with the concept of refiguration. I’m rethinking the narrativisation of experience through the idea that narrator and narrative are coextensive; a movement between the embodied subject and the social body; a movement between what there is to narrate and how it is possible to narrate anything at all. Just as I have shifted my attention from questions such as ‘Can Helen have a break?’, I shift my attention from the impossibility of knowing, finally, if the events I remembered of my childhood ‘really happened’ in the way I remembered them. Remembering that the performatīve force of an assertion is tenuously moored in its content, I am not preoccupied with the veracity of ‘what’ I remembered, but ask instead ‘how’ I might have remembered what I did, and not ‘why’ I remembered something that may not have happened. I am, here and now, more concerned with practices of memory and narrative as temporal refigurations that render experience intelligible to oneself and another, than I am with the veracity of acts memory.

I relocate the question of veracity from the truth of the memories of particular subjects to that which it is possible to remember and narrate of the intersections between embodied experiences, and the conditions of possibility that circulate through the social body. I am suggesting then, that this mimetic relation between practices of government, narrative and the narrator tell us something of the veracity of being a subject rather than the truth of an individual subject or event. This is critical to the movement I am trying to trace
between the narratives of an embodied subject as memories of practices of constitution and regulation and the specificity of the experience of a particular embodied subject.

**True fictions**

I have suggested that the apparatus of narrativity coordinates practices of government and narration, subjects and narratives, temporality and subjectivity. Ricoeur (1988) reminds us that narratives are simultaneously composed of, and coordinated through, the domains of history and fiction. I am interested in this relation between history and fiction not as separate discourses or discursive traditions, but as an intersection between biographies as memories (or archives) of events and experiences, and biographies as narrativisations of those experiences. I am emphasising a relation between biographical narratives and constitutive histories that eschews any preoccupation with the veracity of the narrative as a ‘true’ account of what ‘really’ happened. Ricoeur (1988) emphasises that the accounts we give of ourselves say more about the ‘truth’ of being a subject, of practices of subjectification, than they do about a referential truth that must be verified in order to be believed.

For Ricoeur, history and fiction are interwoven rather than separate or oppositional (1988: 181). What history and fiction have in common, he suggests, is that they are not simply lists of events, but rather, temporal trajectories that draw connections between events in order to describe and explain them. I am interested in the extent to which we might understand biographical accounts as simultaneously historical and fictional; that is, as incorporating and composing historical events within the textual resources of fiction. Ricoeur proposes that fictional narratives imitate history in that they temporalise
and recount events as if they were past. They also refer to historical times, places and events as if the past of fiction were the ‘real’ past depicted by history. Conversely, historical narratives make use of techniques of emplotment and composition and the refiguration of events through acts of historical imagination (Ricoeur, 1988: 185).

Events, experiences and memories, and memories of events and experiences, are described, elaborated, accounted for and understood through narrativisations that are simultaneously historical and fictional, personal and collective. Events, experiences and memories are simultaneously history and fiction, and historical and fictional interpretations motivated towards the construction of intelligibility and meaning through the apparatus of narrativity: ‘Understanding is an interpretation; interpretation of the self … borrows from history as well as from fiction, making a life story a fictional history or, if one prefers, a historical fiction’ (Ricoeur, 1988: 114).

Ricoeur’s account of the relation between history and fiction does not restage an opposition between history as comprising the ‘factual’, ‘true’ or ‘real’, and fiction as the imaginary, unreal or untrue. Historical accounts are, he suggests, simultaneously real and imaginary; they employ the textual resources of fiction to evoke details that may be unrecorded, forgotten or unknown. Further, narratives are not necessarily stable or consistent over time, but rather may be reworked, or refigured, according to changing temporal and spatial contexts and the different practices, knowledges and relations emergent in them. They also accrue different emphases, intensities, embellishments, subtractions, meanings and trajectories according to the shifting relations in the present moment of their articulation. Contradictions, disunities and breaks are not, then, read as if competing truth claims (can Helen have a break or not? Did the things I remember
really happen?), but as evidence of change, or refiguration, in the narrative, the narrator and the narratable. Narrators are not permanent, continuous, immutable, fixed subjects. Nor are they, or their biographical accounts, reducible to determinations of stable truths or verifiable facts that demand, and depend on, coherence. I am interested in articulating biographical accounts of experience as simultaneously history and fiction, real and imaginary, and of possibilities for working with those accounts in ways that are similarly, and self-consciously, historical and imaginary. Further, in working with the accounts we give of ourselves and each other, I am not so much preoccupied with the production of coherence and truth claims as I am with understanding how they are told and retold, and how that telling and retelling is accomplished (Gonick, 2003).

In Chapter Three I gave an account of a performative speaking subject constituted through the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity. Having emphasised the mobility and variation of these apparatuses across time and space, I am working to give an account of the refiguration of a similarly mobile and variable performative subject constituted in relation to changing spatialised and temporalised practices of government and narration. The performative, as a repetition of a prior instance, is a ‘repetition that is at once a reformulation’ (Butler, 1997: 87). This reformulation is accomplished from among a repertoire of possibilities (including ruptures, breaks and excesses) through which practices of government operate to make ‘certain kinds of citizens possible and others impossible’ (Butler, 1997: 132). These (im)possibilities, are doubled injunctions for and against, they are invitations, compulsions and restrictions that are constituted and coordinated through their narrativisation as accounts of what it is possible to be and become in any particular body, in any particular time and place, in any particular
network of relations. But how, asks Butler (1997: 13), are these changing contexts and subjects restaged at the moment of utterance?

Ricoeur’s theorisation of the relationship between temporality and narrativity, especially as expressed in the concept of refiguration, accounts for the duration of a phenomenon, event, memory or experience that alters as it becomes attached to other narratives and discourses, events, memories and experiences. These are always accounted for in the present and represent a temporarily totalised account as if it is enduring and continuous. The endurance of the subject in time is accomplished and coordinated through acts of memory and its duration; through acts of remembering; through the refiguration of memory as narrative; and in acts of refiguration through which the subject is constituted in the present, as present, in the present moment of articulation.

Ricoeur (1988) locates memory and its duration in trajectories that incorporate times past, present and future. Since everything is narrated in the present moment of articulation, he refers to past, present and future as ‘past-present’, ‘present-present’ and ‘future-present’. This situates all articulations in the present, as present, such that what is past is refigured as present, as having an instantiation that is now and not then. In this way all narrated biographical accounts are refigured in and by the present; as the temporal and spatial present of a particular mode of government; the time and space in which the narrative is articulated; and as the succession of moments in which the narrative is given duration, whereby each successive utterance is refigured in terms of the present moment of delivery. In this refiguration of narrator and narrative, experience
and memory, as present, subjects give accounts of themselves as if stable and self-same over time; as if coherent and continuous.

**Coherence and continuity**

What is brought into being through the performative effect of the interpellating demand is much more than a “subject”, for the “subject” created is not for that reason fixed in place: it becomes the occasion for a further making. Indeed, I would add, a subject only remains a subject through a reiteration or rearticulation of itself as a subject, and this dependency of the subject on repetition for coherence may constitute that subject’s incoherence, its incomplete character. (Butler, 1997a: 99)

I am interested in this paradox between continuity and coherence; the paradoxical dependence of the subject on their temporal continuity for coherence, and of their necessary incoherence emergent from this continuity. This is a paradoxical teleological continuity that simultaneously produces a tenuous coherence. The subject emergent from this paradox is mobile, multiple and relational, always becoming; a subject whose arrival is ever deferred (Docker, 1994; Venn, 2002). This is a subject who is a play of differences captured in a performance of coherence and stability. This subject is endlessly re/produced, sometimes as an iteration of what went before, sometimes as mimetic to changing practices of government, and sometimes as resistances to, or excesses and ruptures of them. In any instance, the subject continues to ‘labour on itself in the service of making of itself a continuity’ so as to fabricate coherence and stability from diversity and change (Butler, 1997a: 72). It is through the apparatus of narrativity
that diverse events, experiences and memories are linked in causal associations to produce apparently unified intelligible wholes. Yet the coherence produced is not necessarily seamless, and may be a site of struggle and ongoing labour (Butler, 1997a; Byrne, 2002).

Temporalised performances of coherence are accomplished through narrativity as the ordering of experience and memory into trajectories that suggest movement across time and space. For Ricoeur (1988), narrative fabricates coherence through a temporal sequencing of events that follows principles of emplotment through which events, experiences and memories are ordered and described as linear trajectories that move from beginnings towards endings. These sequences, or narrative trajectories, suggest movement through an arc of events across time that is purposive and aimed towards closure. The continuity and coherence of narrator and narrative, subject and account, are performative effects of the temporalised trajectory through which multiple times, spaces and actants are coordinated as movements from the past, through the present, and towards the future. Massey’s (2005) use of the terms ‘trajectory’ and ‘story’ emphasises the process of change in a phenomenon. Whilst stressing their temporality, Massey also emphasises the spatiality of such phenomena, including their relation to other trajectories or stories. Further, her use of the terms difference, heterogeneity, multiplicity and plurality, signals ‘the contemporaneous existence of a plurality of trajectories; a simultaneity of stories-so-far’ (Massey, 2005: 12) ‘which are not simply alignable into one linear story’ (Massey, 2005: 71).
Massey understands the spatial as ‘the realm of the configuration of potentially dissonant (or concordant) narratives’ (2005: 71). Spaces, rather than being locations of coherence, ‘become the foci of the meeting and the nonmeeting of the previously unrelated and thus integral to the generation of novelty’ (2005: 71). The spatial brings distinct temporalities into new configurations. Narratives, like time itself, are not the unfolding of some internalised story or already established identity, ‘but about interaction and the process of the constitution of identities’ (2005: 71, original emphasis). Narrative is, in this sense, a spatialised practice through which the materiality of the subject is constituted, and constituted as intelligible and narratable. This constitution of the narrator through practices of narration and indices of narratability territorialise the embodied subject as human; as a human subject. Narrativity, as the temporalisation and spatialisation of the embodied subject (and of one who remembers) is a practice through which multiplicities, relationalities and incommensurabilities are held together as if coherent. I propose that contradictions, ruptures and dislocations are coordinated and given continuity through their refiguration as a moment in permanent relation with other moments, of movements in relation with other movements, as refigurations through which the subject is continuously re/constituted as coherent and continuous: ‘What must be stated, then, is that subjectivation, the relation to oneself, continues to create itself, but by transforming itself and changing its nature to the point where … the relation to oneself is continually reborn, elsewhere and otherwise’ (Deleuze, 1988: 95 & 104).

Given that I have argued for a relational rather than autonomous subject, there is also something of a paradox in the appearance, articulation and narrative performance of any
subject as if a coherent singular ‘I’. ‘If the other is always there, from the start … then a life is constituted through a fundamental interruption, is even interrupted prior to the possibility of continuity. Accordingly if narrative reconstruction is to approximate the life it means to convey, it must be subject to interruption’ (Butler, 2005: 52, original emphasis). As interruption, both narrator and narrative are simultaneously discontinuous and continuous; that is, they perform continuity out of discontinuity. The contents of a narrative are, says Cavarero, ‘necessarily discontinuous’, fragmentary, fleeting, and ‘even casual – because the work of memory is itself discontinuous fragmentary, fleeting and casual’ (Cavarero, 2000: 35). Further, since the scene of action or moment of narration is contextual and mutable, the subject emergent in that scene or moment is ‘necessarily intermittent and fragmentary’ (2000: 35). The specificity of an embodied subject is, I suggest, emergent from the co-constitutive relations among multiple and mobile assemblages of actants. It is from these unsubstitutable, discontinuous and fragmented assemblages that a similarly unsubstitutable, discontinuous and fragmented corporeal subject emerges. That the narrated biographies of these subjects are drawn from similar narrative and discursive resources, or matrices of intelligibility, ‘does not flatten them out into a homogenous substance, but rather renders them signs of an existence whose life-story is different from all others precisely because it is constitutively interwoven with many others’ (Cavarero, 2000: 71).

So, if we require someone to be ‘a coherent autobiographer’, we may be privileging (and preferring) the coherence or seamlessness of the narrated account over what Butler tentatively refers to as ‘the truth of a person’ (Butler, 2005: 64). She understands this truth to be clearer ‘in moments of interruption, stoppage, open-endedness – in enigmatic
articulations that cannot easily be translated into narrative form’ (Butler, 2005: 64). As I have suggested, the break in Helen’s narrative is not a question of the veracity of the account, but a question of understanding something of Helen’s idiosyncratic performance of herself within a vector of shifting temporalities, spatialities, relationalities and possibilities. It is, then, a matter of ethical reflexivity and responsibility that we make space for, and take account of, the opacity, incommensurability and incoherence of narrating subjects when responding to, or working with, their narrated biographical accounts. This is not, Butler reminds us, to privilege or prefer incoherence, but rather to emphasise that our incoherence establishes the ways in which we are relationally constituted: ‘implicated, beholden, derived, sustained by a social world that is beyond us and before us’ (Butler, 2005: 64).

In giving an account of oneself, that account is constitutive of a ‘self’, and the ‘self’ of the person who narrates that account becomes themselves an artefact of it. Further, this ‘self’ is ‘necessarily fictive in so far as it is a symbolic construction of coherence’ (Brown, 2003: 218). There is, then, ‘no ontological basis for fully harmonious unities’ since these apparent unties can be shown to ‘contain anomalous, irregular or disparate elements upon which this unity is imposed’ (Brown, 2003: 218). They also contain silences, omissions, elisions and conflations that mask the terms and processes, technologies and practices through which subjectivities are constituted and performed. How, then, might continuity and coherence be fabricated from irregularity and disparity?
Same but different

In emphasising the temporality of biographical accounts, and of narrators and their narratives as variations across time, Ricoeur works with the metaphor of a struck bell. The bell, when struck, produces a sound. This strike is an inaugurating event, after which the resonating sound endures. In claiming that ‘the sound still resonates’, Ricoeur emphasises that ‘still’ is understood to imply both same and other (1988: 28). The sound itself is the same, but it endures as a difference. It is in this sense not the same sound, but simultaneously ‘same’ and ‘different’, past and present, as a function of its duration. This continuity preserves the same in the other (Ricoeur, 1988, 28). For Ricoeur the subject who endures across time is simultaneously same and other; same and different. An experience or event, like the first strike of the bell, becomes a lost referent. The enduring effects, affects and traces of any event or experience are both a continuity and a break with that which is already lost. What persists is simultaneously emergent from, and the persistence of, a break expressed as variation or difference. There is then no ‘first’ experience that can be known and recovered as originary, or remembered and recounted with verisimilitude except as it is refigured in the present. That which might anyway constitute a first experience was already a break from those constitutive relations from which it was made possible.

In the same way as the sound of the struck bell endures in time, elements of a narrative are present and preserved in its duration as ‘same’, and altered as ‘other’. This signals both the fading clarity of the inaugurating event and ‘the increasing piling up of the retained contents’ (Ricoeur, 1988: 28). In this sense the continuity of experience might be understood as a simultaneous passing away, drawing together, becoming obscure and
a piling up of actants, relations, experiences, memories, affects, associations and meanings. Experience, refigured as narrative, accrues different emphases, inflections, intensities, additions and subtractions that are mobilised towards variable relations, flows, intensities, durations, resonances, affects and intersections that shift according to different temporalised and spatialised relations among actants in a network. This is a process through which experiences and memories, and narrativisations of them, continuously pass away, draw together and obscure other experiences, memories and narratives. It is memory, says Ricoeur (1988, 2006), that holds the narrative and the series of retentions that are connected to it together in the present. And, I suggest, narrative that holds experience and memory together in the present. Frances’ memory of a wound, recounted in Chapter Four, was accompanied and augmented by an increased piling up of contents that were mobilised not only for her in her present, but also for me in mine. Her memories called up the retained contents of my own memory, and in this sense instantiated an exchange of memories.

This ‘exchange of memories’ occurs ‘at the narrative level where they are presented for comprehension’ (Ricoeur, 1988: 7). This exchange incorporates and coordinates the memories of relational subjects, and their memories of those constitutive practices of government, of regulation and normalisation, through which they are made intelligible to themselves and each other. For Ricoeur, the role of the narrative in the constitution of a narrative identity involves a revision of the past; a revision which is performed by recounting it in a different way. Given the relational intersections of life stories, this revision is ‘neither solitary nor introspective of its own past, but rather a mutual revision’ accomplished through an exchange of memory (Ricoeur, 1988:9): one memory
for that of, and as that of, another. This exchange of memory constitutes not only our relationality but the bodily affects of such an exchange. This exchange of memory is itself an act of refiguration, where memory of the past is refigured as present and the narrative of one subject refigured as that of another.

This concept of refiguration informs my account of the ways in which subjects remember and perform themselves as coherent and enduring across time and space. It is a practice through which multiple, often contradictory, memories, narratives and lived experiences are forged into an apparently consistent story about a coherent self. The narratives through which subjects are constituted and articulated, and constitute and articulate themselves, are shaped by the narratives available in any given time and space. These narratives are discursive resources through which realities and subjectivities, as the constitutive effects of technologies of government, are fabricated and made flesh: they are technologies of government refigured as technologies of self. Practices of government are simultaneously practices of narrativity and constitutive narratives that are refigurations of prior modes and practices of government. Neither practices of government, nor the subjects emergent from them, are stable and coherent.

The narrated and narratable subject, and the narrative accounts they give of themselves, are constitutive refigurations of contradictions as continuities, incommensurabilities as coherences, and repetitions as differences. Narrators and their narratives, understood as relationalities, cannot then be understood as singular, stable or coherent. It is something of this complex, contradictory, heteronomous domain of interdependencies among actants, temporalised and spatialised in relational constitutive networks, that I am
attempting to articulate. I am working to both understand something of how we remember and narrate ourselves, and articulate a way of working with the narrated accounts we give of ourselves and each other.

**Whose memory is it?**

In recognising that lives are multiple, disjointed and fragmentary, Cavarero proposes that a fleeting ‘unstable and insubstantial unity’ (2000: 63) might be fabricated in the telling of one’s life story. An unsubstitutable and unrepeatable identity, exposed and contingent, is only conceivable, says Cavarero, in the necessary presence of the other. In this relation of presence an appearance is always a co-appearance, constituted through the reciprocal appearance of, with and as another. The narrative, narrated, or narratable ‘I’, is a heteronomous subject who feigns autonomy.

We are, says Butler, from the outset, ‘even prior to individuation itself’ (2004: 23), given over to the other and, given over to the other, we are ‘beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own’ (Butler, 2004: 22). This relationality, or ‘field of ethical enmeshment with others’, produces a ‘sense of disorientation for the first-person’, and as bodies ‘we are always for something more than, and other than, ourselves’ (Butler, 2004: 25). The recognition that one is, ‘at every turn, not quite the same as how one presents oneself in the available discourse’, might imply, in turn, ‘a certain patience with others that would suspend the demand that they be self-same at every moment’ (Butler, 2005: 42). I have earlier given an account of the ethical practice of recognising others as potentiality or becoming (Ricoeur, 1992; Venn, 2002), and here
extend this account of becoming through the concept of refiguration, of the relational movements between past and present, the present and the future, between one and another and between oneself as another. In this way, subjects cannot be accounted for in isolation, as stable, autonomous singularities or exemplars of taxonomies, categories or constitutive practices of government, but only as refigured multiplicities, relationalities and specificities.

As part of an ongoing project of articulating possibilities for working with biographical narrative accounts of experience, I have been working to: account for ‘the heteronomy and alterity of the subject’ (Venn, 2002: 53); attend to the place of temporality and spatiality in the constitution and reconstitution of the subject; emphasise the compossibility of self and other, and situate them within an iteration of narrativity as both practices of government and emplotments of experiences, memories and histories; and emphasise a simultaneously relational and unsubstitutable subject, given over to the other, and subject to change. I have emphasised that contradiction and coherence are not incommensurable, and have proposed a reading of contradiction as a break that signals the extraordinary labour of producing oneself within temporalised and spatialised matrices of intelligibility as if singular and coherent. These breaks are also lines of rupture between past and present, experience and expectation, and memory as a history of becoming that is simultaneously regulated and irreducible, personal and collective, stable and open to revision.
In the next chapter I consider how these constitutive memories are simultaneously acts of forgetting through which we are assembled, and assemble ourselves as the named subject, the particular ‘I’, of our biographical accounts of experience.
Inter/section #6: a medi(t)ation on remembering

‘Did my childhood happen? I must believe that it did, but I don’t have any proof … I will have to assume I had a childhood, but I cannot assume to have had the one I remember … Everyone remembers things which never happened. And it is common knowledge that people often forget things which did. Either we are all fantasists or liars or the past has nothing definite in it. I have heard people say we are shaped by our childhood. But which one?’ (Winterson, 1989: 92)

The biographical accounts we give of our experience are simultaneously fact and fiction, history and imagination; imaginative rememberings and renderings of experience emplotted as narratives. These accounts of memories, or memorialisations, instantiate trajectories that move from beginnings to endings, with multiple diversions, digressions and detours between the ‘once upon a time’ and the ‘ever after’. They are stories told over and again, in different scenes of address for different audiences. These repeated recitations, or re-citations, might begin again with ‘once upon a time’ and the promise of repetition, but at the same time perform difference: different emphases, inflections, affects, details, intensities and trajectories; maybe even different endings. These differences are temporalised refigurations of the account and the relations among actants, human and not, who comprise it. “‘Once upon a time’”, says Foucault, solemnly announces ‘that the story is there (in) the days and the things of “once upon a time”’, in a time past that is made present by ‘the half-uttered promise’ that both the story and the past ‘will be repeated every time’. This world of the past brought into the present, is a time and space ‘placed out of reach by
the ritual that begins it’ and in this space, ‘beings have a magical power to form allegiances between one another, to bind to one another, to exchange whispers, to cross the distances and the metamorphoses, to become others and remain the same’ (2004: 79). Our narrated biographical accounts of experience are exchanged memories and whispers, simultaneously materialisations and metamorphoses, here and there, then and now, same and different, oneself and another.
Chapter 6: Forgetting

‘Could a memory lacking forgetting be the ultimate phantasm?’ (Ricoeur, 2004: 413)

There are movements and relations I am attempting to trace in this chapter between memory and forgetting, forgetting and relationality, and relationality and assemblage. These movements are instantiated through the concept of forgetting and co-ordinated through the concept of assembling. So, this chapter is simultaneously about forgetting and assembling, and indeed, my point is that we are constituted and assembled as much through that which is forgotten as through that which is remembered. Significantly, among that which is forgotten, is our constitutive dependency on the other; those co-constitutive relations between actants through which we are made recognisable and intelligible to ourselves and each other as human subjects. Further, I suggest that some degree of forgetting is inevitable, if not necessary, in the act of constituting oneself, from among incommensurable multiplicities, as if a singularity. The apparent facticity of this singularity is conferred on, in, through and by the corporeality of the spatial frame of the body. This incorporated corporeality is the materialisation of constitutive relations in and as a body; as an assemblage of these relations as a specific corporeal human subject. In spatialising the human subject in this way, I also temporalise it in the present, in the historical present of neoliberalism as a specific iteration of liberalism. I do so in order to avoid theorising and articulating the human subject as if ahistorical, apolitical and asocial. Indeed it is some sense of a simultaneously historical, political and social subject that I am attempting to articulate.
The account I give of such a subject is, I remind the reader (in case you have forgotten), directed towards the articulation of possibilities for working with life-history accounts of experience collected in narrative interviews. I assemble, in this chapter, the philosophical contemplations, questions, propositions and concepts through which my inquiry has been articulated. I do so in order to assemble an account of possibilities for empirical work with biographical accounts of experience. Such accounts have already made an appearance in this text, including those of Frances, Chris, Helen and myself.

I have, in the preceding chapters, foregrounded the constitutive relations through which subjects and their biographical accounts are assemblages of moments, movements and heterogeneous elements, brought together in the present through acts of narration. I have articulated the ways in which these acts of narration are both figured through acts of memory, and are refigurations of them. I have suggested that one can neither remember nor narrate everything, and that the idea of an exhaustive narrative is a performatively impossible idea (Ricoeur, 2006). If, as I have proposed, we are neither fully recoverable to ourselves, nor to each other, then there is always a remainder, a lacuna, a forgetting in any of the accounts that we give of ourselves and each other.

I am interested in this remainder, enigma, lacuna or forgetting as the paradoxical ‘presence of absence’ (Ricoeur, 2006: 415). Ricoeur emphasises that forgetting is ‘so closely tied to memory that it can be considered one of the conditions for it’ (2006: 426). What is remembered, then, is also composed of that which is forgotten – as well as that which may never have been known or knowable. Having worked to unmoor memory
from content and the verisimilitude of its recollection in the previous chapter, I work, in this chapter, to unmoor that which is forgotten from content and the possible verisimilitude of its recovery. We might, I propose, address that which has been forgotten not through the recovery of its content, but through a re/collection of the co-constitutive relations among actants through which any subject is assembled as both a multiplicity and an apparently singular ‘I’.

I ask, in this chapter, how might we address the co-presence of memory and forgetting, the present and the absent, in the accounts we give of ourselves and each other, and how might we give an account of the presence of that which is absent when working with narrated biographical accounts of experience? In so doing I emphasise an account of forgetting not as a preoccupation with lost content and its possible recovery, but as disavowal: a disavowed dependence on the other (with autonomy emphasised over relationality); a disavowed opacity (assuming instead rationality and transparency); a disavowed dependence on a language that was never our own (but re/cited as if individual and authentic); a disavowal of normative practices of regulation (in favour of agentic acts of freedom and choice); and a disavowal of multiplicity, incoherence and contradiction (in favour of singularity, coherence and stability). These disavowals are not individual, volitional or wilful, but technologies of the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity through which the performative fiction of an individual subject is constituted.

Further, I propose that it is these (and other possible) disavowals that constitute the lacunae of any narrated account of oneself. My endeavour, in thinking about ways of
working with the accounts we give of ourselves and each other, is to make visible and present, however partially and contingently, some of these disavowals or absences. I work with concepts of forgetting and assemblage in order to trace some of those constitutive relations that might otherwise be elided, disavowed or forgotten in the performance of oneself as an autonomous ‘I’. I work also to trace some of those constitutive relations that might otherwise be elided, disavowed or forgotten both by narrating subjects and the researchers who engage with them and their narratives. This address to a forgotten dependency on the other is strategic to the practice of ethical reflexivity articulated in Chapter Four.

**Tracing erasures**

Of the multiple forms or modes of forgetting described by Ricoeur, I am specifically interested in that which he refers to as ‘the erasing of traces’ (2006: 414). This deals with the enigma of the present representation of the absent past. Indeed, Ricoeur reminds us, any given present is, from the moment of its appearance, already its own past (2006: 433). Every present is a forgetting of this past, which has anyway already ceased to be the past and reappeared as the present. ‘To think the trace’, says Ricoeur, one should think of it as both ‘an effect of the present and a sign of its absent cause’ (2006: 434). However, in the material trace, there is no otherness, no absence, for ‘everything in it is … a presence’ (2006: 434). That which is past, forgotten, disavowed, disowned, denied or erased is understood as present still in the corporeal performative subject and her or his memories and narratives of experience. The practices and relations through which subjects are assembled, and endure in time and space, bear ‘the mark of absence and of
distance’ (2006: 427). This mark of absence and distance is the present trace of that which is past. Similarly, Deleuze proposes that not only does the past ‘coexist with the present that has been’, but ‘it is the whole, integral past; it is all our past, which coexists with each present’ (1988: 59, original emphasis). Spoken or not, visible or not, audible or not, remembered or not, the constitutive past persists as presence, and its persistence as presence might be understood in relation to the traces of that which is simultaneously present and absent, and of the constitutive relations between them.

The location of the narrating subject and the narrated within this paradoxical present absence does more than sketch the terrain of the present, the visible and the audible. It also draws our attention towards ‘the spaces between’, to ‘the gaps’ in our accounts of experience, ‘where different meanings or points of entry to alternative, contradictory, non-commensurate and/or multiple narratives might lurk’ (Speedy, 2008: 68). The narrating subject, the narrative and the contours of narratability, the speaking subject, the spoken and the silent, constitute a terrain marked by ‘contingency, uncertainty, (and) permeable boundaries’ (Gonick, 2003: 9). In locating subjects, experience and narrativisations of experience within these contingent spaces, I am articulating possible relations, connections or traces not simply between that which has been narrated, but also between that which has not yet been told, may never be told, may even be ‘unsayable and unavailable for the telling’ (Speedy, 2008: xiv).

Just as I am not attempting to recover lost content, neither am I attempting to trace ‘one to one instances of transmission’ (Halberstam, 2005: 129) between cause and effect, between past and present events, or between practices and actants. Rather, I’m
attempting to trace particular temporalised and spatialised co-constitutive co-ordinates of relationality. It is possible, I propose, to follow some of these traces (marks, lines, territories, spaces, wounds) and speculate about the constitutive practices through which the narrated and narratable subject is assembled from actants, both past and present, present and absent, and relations among them. This is not a search for origins or causes, but for co-constitutive relations among actants. Indeed, every ‘origin’ is ‘irreducible to a dated beginning’ and, as such, has ‘the same status of fundamental forgetting’ (Ricoeur, 2006: 442). Further, since the idea of an exhaustive narrative is a ‘performatively impossible idea’ (Ricoeur, 2006: 448), there is a gap between what is remembered and what is forgotten, between the act of speech and what is said. It is in these gaps, absences, lacunae or ellipses that I locate the constitutive presence of that which is forgotten. I’m gesturing here towards interpretative acts that pay attention to the co-constitutive relational traces between temporalised and spatialised practices, events and actants, and their assemblage as particular embodied subjects with biographies: as particular narrated and narratable subjects. The narrated accounts we give of ourselves are composed of conduits, lines and traces of the multiple relations through which subjects are, and continue to be, assembled as human actants in networks of co-constitutive actants.

**Forgotten relations**

I have given an account of a relational rather than autonomous subject, and suggested that this autonomy is in part achieved through a denied dependence on the other (Butler, 1997a). This denial amounts, says Ricoeur, to ‘the status of something forgotten’
(Ricoeur, 1994:197, original emphasis), and suggests that recognition of the other, of an ethical relation to, with and as another, demands remembrance of this constitutive relationality. So, as much as I have composed this chapter through the figure of forgetting, I perform an act of remembering that articulates co-constitutive relations between actants, and the subject as an assemblage of these relations.

In emphasising a co-constitutive relationality I’m foregrounding an account of subjects, and the accounts they give of themselves, as assemblages of multiple relations between actants. These assembled subjects accomplish, in the accounts they give of themselves, a fictive autonomy and coherence through the forgetting of oneself as an assemblage of relationalities and multiplicities. In giving an account of subjects as assemblages of actants and relations, I address the biographical accounts we give of ourselves and each other as assemblages accomplished through the apparatus of narrativity.

Subjects are not simply assembled, and do not simply assemble themselves, in one body, and as only one body. Despite the illusion of continuity instantiated by the materiality of the spatial frame of the body, the subject is an assemblage of relations between multiple bodies. Embodied subjects are imbricated in assemblages of other bodies, and when these bodies come into contact with each other, both those bodies and assemblages are altered. Any assemblage of bodies (human and not), is simultaneously multiple and dependent on other bodies and relations, and idiosyncratic, that is irreducible and unsubstitutable in the specificity of the changing assemblages they accomplish, materialise or perform. I am giving an account of the human subject as a particular body, actant or assemblage; as a particular actant assembled in relational networks of actants,
human and not. As located in networks of relations, this body, as subject, actant and assemblage, is simultaneously co-ordinated by, and a co-ordinate of, those relations. Subjects are assemblages that transform, change or refigure their constituent relations, bodies and properties as they expand their connections and relations with other bodies and assemblages. Subjects are, in this sense, understood to be, rather than simply be made out of, the changing relations through which they are brought into associations, relays and connections with other actants. It is through the apparatus of narrativity that accounts of these multiple and changing actants and assemblages are constituted and co-ordinated as continuous, coherent and singular, whilst simultaneously discontinuous, incoherent and multiple.

I emphasise an account of subjects as assemblages of actants aggregated differently in different bodies, spaces and times, both past and present. What it is possible to say, know or remember, to be or do, imagine or become, is, like every moment of presence, embedded in every past: ‘Epistemological configurations are never replaced by the appearance of new orders; they compose strata that form the bedrock of a present’ (de Certeau, 1988: 146). Since relics of that past ‘continue to exist everywhere’ (1988: 146), no assemblage (of actants, relations, practices of regulation, or matrices of intelligibility) can be comprehensive or final. Rather, any assemblage is instead fragile, arbitrary, contingent and permeable to other times, other places, other practices and other actants. These other times, places, practices, actants and the subjects they materialize, ‘pullulate in the midst of our own’ (1988: 147); perhaps forgotten, but not gone.
I have, in the preceding chapters given an account of a co-constitutive, relational and yet specific, irreducible, idiosyncratic and unsubstitutable subject. I have located this specificity in the temporality and spatiality of a specific assemblage (itself an accumulation of ensembles of practices, memories, narratives, experiences and relations). Such an assemblage, materialised as a particular embodied subject or performance of subjectivity, constitutes, with all its variations, improvisations, ruptures, incommensurabilities, visibilities, opacities and ambiguities, the specificity of a relational and unsubstitutable ‘who’; or named corporeal subject. In addressing this ‘who’, I am interested in articulating the performative force of normative practices of regulation or matrices of intelligibility, as well as the uncodeable differences within their operations. I am interested in tracing those legibilities and illegibilities, presences and absences, which define every place and every subject in it, and take the form of ‘imbricated strata’ (de Certeau, 1988: 200). The subject, as assemblage, is ‘a piling up of heterogeneous places’ (1988: 201), ‘whose epochs all survive in the same place, intact and mutually interacting’ (1988: 202, original emphasis). These mutually interacting times and places are brought together through the apparatus of narrativity as a ‘putting-together of what coheres without being coherent, of what makes connection without being thinkable’ (de Certeau, 1988: 202), and of what is simultaneously present and absent, remembered and forgotten. These imbricated strata, these subjects, these assemblages of practices and actants that ‘all survive in the same place’, intimate the possibility of a ‘one’ who is simultaneously everyone, everywhere and everything; a one who is many, and a many who are one.
Assembling memories and lacunae

Memory, says de Certeau, is composed of ‘bits and fragments’, and when each or any bit or fragment emerges in any particular time and space, it is ‘relative to an ensemble that lacks it’: each memory ‘shines like a metonymy in relation to this whole’ (1988: 88). This metonymic relation is a trace, and the act of remembering an ‘art of connecting a concrete detail and a conjuncture in a relation which, in the memory, is suggested as the trace of an event’ (1988: 88). In the mobility of this memory, in its endurance, re-emergence or refiguration, ‘details are never what they are: they are not objects, for they are elusive as such; not fragments, for they yield the ensemble they forget; not totalities, since they are not self-sufficient; not stable since each recall alters them’ (1988: 88, original emphasis). Further, narrativised accounts of these memories are multiple, mobile and polyvalent, ‘because the mixing together of so many micro-stories gives them functions that change according to the groups in which they circulate’ (1988: 125). The memorable is, says de Certeau, ‘that which can be dreamed about a place’ and ‘in this place that is a palimpsest, subjectivity is already linked to the absence that structures it as existence and makes it “be there”’ (1988: 109). Subjectivity, and the subject it inaugurates, is a phantasm, haunted by what is present but no longer visible; is visible but no longer there.

Memory, like the one who remembers, is simultaneously absence and presence, part and whole, particularity and relation. The act of connecting what is present with conjectures as to that which is absent, informs my address to narrated biographical accounts as assemblages. The elements, both remembered and forgotten, of which these assemblages are composed, might, I suggest, be traced and articulated through a movement which
re/assembles them in the accounts we make of them; not as truths and totalities, but as complexities and conjectures that trace constitutive relations in multiple possible formations and directions. I am interested in subjects and the accounts they give of themselves as assemblages of constitutive relations, intersections and interstices; of presences and absences. This assemblage does not constitute a ‘whole’ subject, but rather a whole field of possibilities of which the subject is part. As composed of locutions and lacunae, no assemblage can give rise to a full account of a subject and the relations though which she or he is constituted. Indeed, de Certeau reminds us of the disappearance of the places, actants, experiences and events established by the spoken word. The narrated accounts that we give of ourselves are, he says, works of loss, of mourning and ‘identity depends on the … endless moving on (or detachment and cutting) that this loss makes necessary’ (de Certeau, 1988: 137).

There is a conceptual movement I am trying to accomplish here, a movement between bodies, a movement through which a body or actant might be understood through its relation to and with other bodies or actants. I look to other bodies and actants, human and not, in order to understand something of subjectivity and the embodied human subject. This movement informs the articulation of relations between actants, and possibilities for working with the accounts subjects give of those relations. I suggest that we might understand something of a specific subject through tracing the constitutive relations through which she or he is assembled within networks of other actants. So, I’m proposing that it is possible to understand something about subjectification, subjectivity and becoming subject, from attention to the co-constitutive relations between human and non-human actants in particular assemblages. I am, in this way, visibilising the human
subject as a specific actant by looking for it where it might otherwise be forgotten, but is made all the more visible because it is assumed not to be found there. This other space of visibility works with the idea that what is invisible, absent of forgotten in any one space might be legible in another, in its space of assumed absence. What is absent, silent, invisible, forgotten is anyways present; otherwise and elsewhere. I’m trying to think of this absence as forgotten relations that might be traced to times and spaces other than those in which we might expect to find them. So, in working with narrated biographical accounts I’m looking for traces of constitutive relations among actants (human and not), but do not confine this search only to what is said. This is ‘a putting together of what coheres without being coherent, of what makes connection without being thinkable’ (de Certeau, 1988: 202); of what might be heard without being said, of what might be surmised without being knowable, of what might be remembered without being present, of what might be forgotten without being absent.

I temporalise and spatialise subjects, events, memories, constitutive practices and experiences in mobile networks of relations among actants, without assuming a past in which memories might be stored and from which they might be retrieved. Indeed, Massey (2005: 10) emphasises that space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations. I frame my address to spatiality through Massey’s propositions that space is: ‘the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions’; the sphere of ‘the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality’ and ‘co-existing heterogeneity’ in which multiplicity and space are co-existent and co-constitutive; and that space is ‘always under construction’ (2005:9). In this sense space is a product of ‘relations between’ which are necessarily embedded in material practices.
that are always in the process of being made, or in the process of becoming: ‘It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far’ (Massey, 2005: 9). This simultaneity of stories-so-far constitutes a space of excess that cannot be remembered or narrated in its entirety, in all its multiplicity, and must necessarily be, in some measure, forgotten: ‘This is a space of loose ends and missing links’ (2005: 12). In thinking of spatialised subjects and networks of actants in this way I am interested in tracing those loose ends and missing links that are constitutive of the corporeal assemblage we recognise as a corporeal subject; one who might give an account of her- or him-self.

**Assembling my thinking**

The subject, assembled through presences and absences, memories, forgettings, and co-constitutive relations, is understood as neither universal nor individual, but as a virtual multiplicity: ‘The universal, in fact explains nothing; it is the universal that needs to be explained. All lines are lines of variation which do not even have constant coordinates’ (Deleuze, 1992: 162). To speak then of tracing constitutive relations is not to engage in a practice of totalising, unifying or exhausting possibilities. It is, rather, a practice of engaging with multiplicity, with simultaneity and paradox that emphasises becomings and possibilities.

In thinking about forgetting as the presence of absence I am articulating an approach to working with narrated biographical accounts of experience that attends to what is said, but understands the subject to be both more and less than what they might say. I am
gesturing towards those possible, multiple relations between actants that are co-
constituted and co-ordinated within the apparatus of narrativity; where narrativity is
simultaneously articulated as governmentality, discursivity, corporeality, performativity,
relationality, subjectivity and specificity. In this sense, though what is said is understood
as discursive, discourse is situated as an actant in a co-constitutive network of actants,
rather than as a single frame of address. Indeed, Latour suggests that explanations
‘resorting automatically to power, society, discourse’ might have outlived their
usefulness (2004: 229). He directs attention instead, to assemblages of actants in
networks (though not to an account of subjectivity or subjects). Similarly, for Deleuze
and Guattari (2004), the rhizome is a conceptual move from hierarchies to networks.
Rather than linear progress, an address to rhizomatic networks emphasises multiplicities,
intersections and complexities. Such an approach resists constitutive accounts of the
operations of authority, regularity and inevitability, and opens up possibilities for
becoming that avoid closure. The subject assembled within a rhizomatic network, and
through the apparatus of narrativity, becomes more than a textual domain for analysis
and instead a space in which inquiry may proceed with unknown, unanticipated and
unimagined (perhaps even unknowable and unimaginable) consequences. This address
to relations and intersections is also located ‘in the interstices of the no longer and the
not yet’ (Lather, 2007: 124).

In articulating a way of working with narrated accounts I work with contradictory and
unstable distinctions and movements that emphasise ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’,
‘assemblage’ rather than ‘discourse’ (with discourse an element of an assemblage) and
‘re/tracing’ rather than ‘deconstruction’ (that is, a tentative tracing of relations among
actants, including those which might be forgotten or disavowed). These acts of addressing narrated accounts of experience and of following or tracing co-constitutive relations among actants in a network or assemblage, are informed by my theorising of narrativity as an apparatus through which the narrative, narrated, narrator and narratable are constituted and assembled.

No narrated account takes place, says Butler (2008), without a structure of address, and in this sense no account belongs only to the person who offers it. This address, as both scene and structure, establishes the account as an account, and the account is completed ‘only on the occasion when it is effectively exported and expropriated from the domain of what is my own’ (2008: 36). It is only in dispossession of oneself, then, that one might give an account of oneself. This account, as simultaneously appearance and loss, is mediated by a body of knowledge that inaugurates the subject and animates its performance as a knowing body; as a body that remembers and recounts itself at the very same time as it is dispossessed of itself. Since there is no account, no history, or experience that is fully narratable, ‘to be a body is, in some sense, to be deprived of having a full recollection of one’s life. There is thus a history to my body of which I can have no recollection’ (Butler, 2008: 37). And yet, I suggest, though un-narratable, it might be understood still as a present absence in the narrated accounts we give of ourselves.

I claimed, at the beginning of this thesis, that I wanted to restore the embodied narrator to a transcribed narrated account of experience. In avoiding an address to biographical narratives as disembodied textual accounts, I have positioned the narrated account as the
textual effect of an embodied narrator. I have articulated the embodied subject as co-constituted in relations with other bodies, human and not; and the human subject as one body or actant assembled from many bodies, actants, relations, possibilities or becomings. In thinking of the embodied subject as a particular assemblage of actants and relations, I come to account for the embodied subject and their specificity precisely in terms of these relations. I recover not the facticity of a particular embodied subject, but the specificity of a particular body as an assemblage of relations; a subject whose unsubstitutability or idiosyncrasy is precisely a function of this relational assemblage. Further, this assemblage is never a stability but always a movement, a becoming, and this constitutes the irreducibility and unsubstitutability of the subject. Movement, multiplicity and possibility are articulated through narrations, relations and becomings as assemblages that are ‘in constant variation, are themselves constantly subject to transformations’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 90).

**Assembling subjects**

I work with Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) concept of assemblage in order to capture something of the simultaneous and paradoxical play between contingency and structure, organisation and change, regulation and idiosyncrasy. Among the many iterations, complexities and possible readings of the concept, I emphasise an account of assemblage as: acts of relating, arranging, organising, co-ordinating, and putting or bringing together; that which results from these acts of arranging; that which is spatialised as a territory, and territorialised as a subject. These territories are not fixed and stable, but always being made and unmade, reterritorialised and deterritorialised, moving together
and coming apart. An assemblage is neither an accumulation or compilation of discrete units nor a unified whole. It is, rather, a series of movements and relations, of foldings, crossings, intersections, interstices, creases, interpretations and meanings that produce obscurity, oblivion and erasure as much as they do visibility, intelligibility and recognition. An assemblage is a collection; a collecting together of heterogeneous elements brought together in particular relations which, when brought together, express a particular character. Since Deleuze and Guattari emphasise that assemblages are not objects or things, but qualities, speeds, flows and lines, their character is defined not by what they are, but by what they can do, or become.

Deleuze and Guattari (2004: 97-98) map the concept of assemblage diagrammatically along two axes; one horizontal (content and expression), and one vertical (territorialising sides and deterritorialising sides). On the vertical axis the assemblage has territorial sides, or reterritorialised sides, which stabilise it, and cutting edges of deterritorialisation, which carry it away. I am specifically concerned here with the horizontal axis, content (machinic assemblages), and expression (collective assemblages of enunciation) and of the relationship between them. Content refers to a machinic assemblage of bodies and states of bodies in various degrees of interaction. Machinic assemblages emphasise the materiality of bodies, forms, actions, passions, desires and substances, and relations between them. Deleuze and Guattari emphasise that the material or machinic aspect of an assemblage ‘relates not to the production of goods but rather a precise state of intermingling of bodies in a society, including all the attractions, repulsions, sympathies, antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and
expansions that affect bodies of all kinds in their relations with one another’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 99).

Expression, as collective assemblages of enunciation, emphasises language or discursive practices, acts, or statements of ‘incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 98). These make some statements possible and others not. They constitute possibilities for, and limits to, the sayable. The concept of collective assemblages of enunciation emphasises the impossibility of individual enunciation: ‘There is no individual enunciation. There is not even a subject of enunciation’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 79). Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the social character of language and, like Butler (2005), a dependence on a language that is never one’s own. The ‘I’ is a grammatical fabrication that emerges as a redundancy or remainder in the relational assemblage of the narrator, the narrated and the narratable.

There are no individual statements, only statement-producing machinic assemblages … We can no longer speak of distinct machines, only types of interpenetrating multiplicities that at any given moment form a single machinic assemblage … Each of us is caught up in an assemblage of this kind, and we reproduce its statements when we think we are speaking in our own name; or rather we speak in our own name when we produce its statement. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 41)

Collective assemblages of enunciation are brought into particular relations with machinic assemblages. Each has ‘their own formalization’ and ‘no relation of symbolic
correspondence or linear causality”; ‘the two forms are in reciprocal presupposition, and they can be abstracted from each other only in a very relative way because they are two sides of a single assemblage’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 155). I work with narrated biographical accounts of oneself as assemblages; as assembled by subjects who are themselves in ‘reciprocal presupposition’ within machinic and enunciative assemblages; subjects and assemblages steadied on their territorialising side and dissolved on their deterritorialising side. I locate my analyses of narrated biographical accounts of experience in the conceptual space or territory formed by these reciprocal relations between different assemblages. I work with those accounts in order to understand the ways in which multiple actants form machinic assemblages which are co-ordinated with assemblages of enunciation through the apparatus of narrativity.

Subjects are assembled as subjects through the ‘subject effects’ produced in the apparatuses through which those very human subjects are constituted and regulated as human subjects (Rose, 1998: 171). I’m emphasising the appearance of a subject not as a body awaiting inscription, but as a specific form of assemblage through which subjectivity itself is assembled as a relation between bodies (human and not), and as assemblages of them. It is in these assemblages that subject effects are produced as ‘effects of our being-assembled-together’ (1998; 171). Subjectification is in this sense ‘the name one can give to the effects of the composition and recomposition of forces, practices, and relations that strive or operate to render human beings into diverse subject forms, capable of taking themselves as the subjects of their own and others practices upon them’ (1998: 171). It is this linkage of human subjects into other actants, practices and relations, into different forces, intensities and flows, into multiple and mobile
assemblages, that I am specifically attempting to address in this chapter. I recognise that though these linkages are by no means causal or stable, they are, none-the-less, traces of the lines of articulation between and among actants. In this way, analyses of practices of subjectification, of subjectivities and of subjects-as-relations, are speculative acts that trace these non-causal links, threads or relations.

Assembling bodies and affects
Since assemblages are heterogeneous, with no predetermined end point or conclusion, they are always in the process of becoming. Becoming refers, in part, to the ways in which material bodies become other, and this becoming-other is a process by which something (or someone) simultaneously continues to become other while continuing to be what it is (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004). Bodies undergo modifications or changes when they act upon, or are acted upon by, other bodies. These modifications or changes arise from relations between bodies, and these relations between bodies, and the changes or becomings they instantiate, are referred to by Deleuze and Guattari (2004) as ‘affects’. Affects are becomings: they are ‘the relations composing, decomposing, or modifying an individual’, and these relations have corresponding intensities that affect it, augment it, or diminish its power to act (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 256). These affects are emergent from the capacities of bodies for engagement with the power of other bodies. Power is understood as relational, and relations between powers or forces have the capacity for ‘affection’; that is, the cumulative forces, powers and expressions of change (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004).
Affect refers to the change, variation, modification, or becoming that occurs when bodies come into contact: ‘the affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 265). Affects are becomings emergent from relations between bodies and are mediated by materialities, temporalities, and spatialities in the form of continuous events. They are modifications emergent from the operation of movement and time on bodies. I am trying to think here of the embodied subject as a relation, of a body as affect and affection assembled from co-constitutive relations with other bodies; a co-constitutive relation in which the concept of affect describes the variations that emerge from these relations. The subject, as assemblage, is both relation and becoming, transformed or refigured by the affects that emerge when bodies come into relations with each other, changing each other in the process. A body is not defined by the forms that determine it, nor as a determinate substance or subject. Rather ‘a body is defined only by a longitude and a latitude; in other words of the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 287, original emphasis).

The body is ‘nothing but affects and local movements, differential speeds’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 287), multiplicities and becomings. And yet these multiplicities and becomings, as assemblages, have a specificity, or haecceity that is particular to them: ‘It should not be thought that a haecceity consists simply of a décor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that holds things to the ground. It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity; it is this assemblage that is
defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 289). Haecceity then, acknowledges the specificity of an assemblage, its idiosyncrasy and its unsubstitutability for any other assemblage: ‘the elements in play find their individuation in the assemblage of which they are part’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 291). To think, then, of the subject as an assemblage is to think of multiple, mobile becomings that are never the same in different moments and movements, times and spaces. To think, then, of the subject as an assemblage is to trace something of the movements through which the subject is articulated as a becoming, and of these becoming relations as affects and as relations of affects. All bodies, human and not, are therefore active in this process of becoming, each actant a relation of affection to and with every other actant in the networks in which they are co-constituted and assembled.

In foregrounding narrated accounts as textual effects of an embodied narrator, I work to articulate something of these active relations between bodies, or actants, who, through attribution of capacities to affect each other, are agents in the constitutive networks in which they appear. In this way the locus of analysis shifts from an ascription of agency to human subjects, to an account of agency that emerges in, and is distributed across, a network of actants as assemblages of relations, affects and becomings. This decentres the human subject in the very act of attempting to theorise subjectivity, and attributes power and agency to all actants in a network, human and not. I am, then, attempting to articulate something of subjectivity and the subject by attending to all actants in a network, human and not, animate and not, and the co-constitutive reciprocal relations
among them. This is a movement through which the subject is simultaneously territorialised, deterritorialised and reterritorialised.

The body, spatialised as a territory, defined by a longitude and a latitude, can only be understood in relation to those spatialised relations through which it is assembled as a particular kind of body. This spatialised body, as speeds and affects, is never located in a single time, or ‘in the same time’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 289). Rather it is located in the indefinite time of the event, ‘the floating line that knows only speeds and continually divides that which transpires in to an already-there that is at the same time not-yet-here, a simultaneous too-late and too-early, a something that is both going to happen and has just happened’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 289). In working with narrated biographies I am attending to this temporalisation and spatialisation of the embodied subject as a territory and as a becoming, a coming and going, a presence and an absence.

In the constitutive apparatuses, relations of power and normative regulatory practices through which bodies are assembled, spatialised and territorialised, and assembled, spatialised and territorialised as human bodies, actants or subjects, ‘human beings are addressed, represented and acted upon as if they were selves of a particular type’ (Rose, 1998: 169). I am particularly interested in the ways in which subjects are addressed, represented and acted upon as biographical subjects; that is, as subjects with, of and as a biography. This biography is assembled, through the apparatus of narrativity, in the present and as presence; in the historical present and in the present moment of articulation. I work with the concept of assemblage not as a successive accumulation of
actants, relations, events, memories, experiences, practices, effects and affects in time, but as a way of accounting for their simultaneity and assemblage in the present. An assemblage is understood as the composition and decomposition of bodies and relations in time and space, and as bodies and relations that are refigured in the present, as presence, and as a specific corporeal ‘I’ who might give a biographical account of oneself as a history of becoming.

**Assembling oneself as an ‘I’**

I reiterate my earlier claim that biographies, as constructions of coherence made out of that which was never coherent, are necessarily fictive. Further, the ‘self’ or ‘I’ assembled and articulated in a biographical narrative becomes an artefact of that narrative. Both narrator and narrative are assembled through the apparatus of narrativity, itself a machinic and enunciative assemblage of regulatory practices and matrices of intelligibility, of bodies and relations, of times and spaces, of memories and forgettings, through which narrator, narrative and narratability are constituted. That narrated and narratable self is not only incoherent, but inconstant; refigured across time and space in each telling. Narrated and narratable biographical subjects can never be fully harmonious unities nor separated from those constitutive contexts, actants and relations through which they are made recognisable and intelligible to themselves and each other. Rather, they are assemblages, embodiments and performances of anomalous, irregular and disparate elements, of silences and omissions, upon which unity is imposed. This unity, expressed as an ‘I’, instantiates an embodied subject shaped through temporally and spatially situated practices, relations and narratives of self-identification and self-
realisation. Corporeality is a performative site for narrative mastery of practices of regulation, with various disciplines of the body marking oneself as recognisable and intelligible as an individual: as a named subject who is simultaneously self-same over time and space, and capable of becoming other. These marks are the traces of those constitutive practices and relations through which a corporeal subject emerges as a particular body, actant or assemblage.

I have emphasised that the temporal and spatial character of this subject so assembled endures as if coherent and self-same over time through acts of memory – which also incorporate acts of forgetting. Memory is itself assembled, and assembled in and as a biography through a ‘line of development of emotion, intellect, will, desire’ (Rose, 1998: 180) produced through the accumulation of relations with other actants – including events, experiences and artefacts such as photographs, documents and memorabilia, and practices such as the ritual repetitions of always already refigured stories - ‘and the attachment of image, sense and value to them’ (1998: 180). But, Rose emphasises, one is capable of being ‘a “person-with-memory” only by virtue of being “composed-together” with these heterogeneous elements’ (1998: 181). The ‘I’ who speaks, who remembers and narrates a biography, is an assemblage of multiplicities, relationalities and affects. This emphasis on the subject as an assemblage of heterogeneous elements, shifts attention from an account of the ‘I’ as autonomous and singular, to the ‘I’ as multiple and relational. It also shifts attention away from a preoccupation with the human subject towards those other actants (human and not) through which the assemblage of the subject is accomplished. This shift in attention is concerned not so much with the constitution of the subject but with: the co-constitutive
relations between other actants, forces and practices; the connections, relations, and flows made possible by them; and the possibilities for becomings instantiated by them. The specificity, haecceity or idiosyncrasy of a ‘who’, is located in the assemblages through which that ‘who’ is instantiated, rather than in the singularity of an embodied human subject. The embodied human actant or subject is ‘the unstable resultant of the assemblages within which humans are caught up, which induce a certain relation to ourselves as embodied’ (Rose, 1998: 184, original emphasis).

These assemblages are neither entirely random nor entirely fixed. They are idiosyncratic, multiple and mobile, and co-ordinated through shifting temporal and spatial co-ordinates which work to normalise and stabilise, regularise and regulate human subjects. And yet, from among these diverse, multiple, unstable, changing and heterogeneous relations and assemblages, Rose (1998: 195) identifies a number of recurrent themes in contemporary practices of subjectification: choice, fulfilment, self-discovery and self-realisation. The work of a self who might realise its possible becomings through autonomous agentic acts of choice, is referred to by Rose as an identity project, crafted through attention to a style of life, or life-style, ‘in which life and its contingencies become meaningful to the extent that they can be construed as the product of personal choice’ (1998: 195). The emergence of an ‘I’ from this identity project is, I have emphasised, accomplished through a disavowed relationality.

In working within this paradoxical account of a multiple self as singular, a relational self as if autonomous, and an incoherent self as if coherent, my attention to the narrated biographical account simultaneously works with what is spoken and what is not, what is
present and absent, what is remembered and forgotten. My attention is directed not so
much to an interpretation of what the narrator says, or to what the language of the text
means, but to what it does - specifically what it does with regard to ‘what components of
thought it connects up, what linkages it disavows, what it enables humans to imagine, to
diagram, to hallucinate into existence, to assemble together’ (Rose, 1998: 178). In
attending to what is and is not, what might and might not, be said, I do not focus on
particular uses of language, such as discourses, words, sentences, phrases, tropes,
metaphors and so on, or with what these mean. Rather, I attend to the ways in which
what is said is assembled in relation to other multiplicities, actants, and relations, and to
the changes, affects or becomings that these instantiate. This involves a mapping of
connections, associations and relations between and among actants in an assemblage,
where they simultaneously form an assemblage by drawing in, or connecting to,
elements from other assemblages. As much as I am speaking about an actant as
emergent in networks of relational actants, I am emphasising that these other actants are
already constituted within other networks of assemblages. The practice of tracing
relations through these networks entails not simply an understanding of a particular
narrative or narrator as an assemblage, but as assembled from actants and relations
already located in other assemblages, each of which is altered when it comes into contact
with another. It is these multiple and changing relations between assemblages that
account for the emergence of a particular, temporalised and spatialised assemblage as an
embodied and idiosyncratic subject.

Subjectivity is always a relation: of citizen to government; of subject to discourse; of
subject to subject; of subject to object; of being to doing; of the individual to the
collective; and of the self-same to the other. Though always relational, subjects constituted through a biographical project of self-realisation work to produce accounts of themselves as if they are the authors of their own lives. This self-authored subject constitutes their particularity and their agency through constitutive, normative and regulatory discourses and narratives of autonomy, individuality and responsibility. There is a tension, here, between the illusion of autonomy, the inevitability of interpellation and the necessity of relationality. The position of the unitary rational subject, one who makes free choices which determine the life trajectory, is troubled through recognition of the ways in which the subject is always constituted through multiple and intersecting temporalised and spatialised, that is historical, political, geographical and social, co-constitutive relations among actants. Any articulation of the subject as autonomous, such as that made through a biographical account of the ‘I’ who speaks, simultaneously necessitates reference to, and disavowal of, the whole network of relations through which the subject is assembled as an ‘I’ who speaks alone, and for themselves only. This temporalised and spatialised biographical ‘I’ fabricates its presence in the historical present, and in the present moment of articulation, necessitating a remembering that also incorporates a forgetting.

**Assembling oneself in the present**

This thesis emerged from a study of work and subjectivity; specifically the relationship between historical changes in work practices and historical changes in modes of subjectification and performances of subjectivity. I have worked, in the thesis so far, to foreground the work that subjects perform when assembling themselves as the narrated
and narrative ‘I’ of their own biographies. When conducting interviews for this study I was startled by the ways in which the invitation to talk about one’s working life was taken as an invitation to talk more broadly about one’s life, with work providing a narrative arc rather than confining or defining the content of the narrative. Narratives of childhood, family, relationships, health, stress, failure, pleasure, desire, were narrated with an unexpected intimacy that moved beyond a simple account of work. Clearly, these accounts were shaped by a domain of narrativity that foregrounded a particular way of talking about oneself, or constituting oneself as the subject of biography.

I have given an account of the biographical narrative as more than an accomplishment of an autonomous individual. I have emphasised its relational dimensions, and situated these within the concept, or apparatus, of narrativity. Narrativity is understood as the constitution of narrators, narratives, narration and narratability within practices of government and of self, within machinic and enunciative assemblages, within constitutive normative practices that prescribe and regulate the constitutive possibilities for, and limits to, the subject as becoming. I have given an account of relations between the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity, and between discourse and narrative, that resists any either/or distinction between them. I have also given an account of bodies, actants or agents as more than human, as assemblages of the corporal and incorporeal, the human and not, the present and absent, the remembered and forgotten. Having emphasised the temporality and spatiality of the subject, of the location of an embodied subject in both the historical present, and in the situated present moment of articulation, I have located the biographical accounts collected for this research in the present iteration of liberalism expressed as neoliberalism.
In addressing the government of subjectivity, Rose (1999: 263-4) argues that the late twentieth century was characterised by ‘an acute “ethicalisation of existence”’ which intensified the demand that citizens, in the name of their own self-realization, take responsibility for their own conduct and its consequences. In this way responsibilities for health, welfare, security and mutual care became the responsibility of the individual rather than the state. Rose (1999) foregrounds the practices through which the identity of this responsibilised individual is articulated in terms of the individual crafting of a psychological subjectivity within a personal biography. He argues that our contemporary regime of subjectification ‘cannot simply be understood in terms of the proliferation of an “expert” discourse – a science of the soul together with its accredited scientists’ (1999: 264), but that the relation between the psy saturation of ‘popular culture’ and ‘everyday experience’ and the discourse of psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, social workers, counsellors and other ‘engineers of the human soul’ (1999: 264) is more complex: we have become experts who take care of ourselves.

Rose (1999) suggests that an earlier identification with a work ethic has been written over by an ethic of self-care and self-realisation. The paid work one performs is not simply a means to an end; rather it has become a site through which we find, express and understand ourselves, the truth of who we really are. These practices of the self are part of a larger programmatic ambition of neoliberal government for the restructuring the economy, the labour market, work and the worker, and are present in orthodoxies of managerial practice which are founded on organisational psychology. Rose (1999) traces the emergence of managerial discourses and practices in the 1950s and 60s that
explicitly deployed theories of self-actualising subjectivity to ‘work on the ego of the worker itself’ (1999: 113), such that the emphasis of managerial practice shifted from the management of social relations that ensured maximum contentment, to practices that released ‘the psychological strivings of its members, so that adaptability, innovation, responsibility and commitment could be channelled into organisational success’ (1999: 113). I am particularly interested in this shift from work as income to work as a labour of, and on, the self.

Like Rose (1996, 1999), Beck, Giddens and Lasch (1994) describe the contemporary historical, political and social iteration of liberalism as one of intensified individualisation, characterised by the segmentation of each life course by the market and the state. Individualisation refers to ‘first, the disembedding and second, the re-embedding of the ways of life of industrial society by new ones, in which the individuals must produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves’ (Beck, Giddens & Lasch, 1994: 13-14). Both the state and the market increasingly demand that subjects perform themselves as entrepreneurs of the self, as responsibilised and self-reliant actors who compete with others for employment, wealth and status. Practices of consumption become as much about gaining purchase on the commodification of subjects as they are about the purchase of commodities (Brown, 2003; du Gay, 1996; Langman, 2003; Rose, 1999; Self; 1993). Langman observes that: ‘Slowly, almost imperceptibly, there has been a growth of consumer based identities, shopping-mall selfhoods, fandoms, taste cultures, and lifestyle enclaves’ (2003: 183). Contemporary selfhood is, suggests Brown (2003: 203), less connected to either work or personal relations and is, instead, more invested in the idea of ‘unlimited personal consumption of goods, signs, experiences,
relations’ - and identities. These consumer based identities are constitutive, regulatory norms that are embodied and performed by subjects in the articulation of themselves as individuals who can choose who they might be or become.

Rose (1999) traces the ways in which the primary economic image offered to the modern citizen is not that of the producer, but that of the consumer. Through acts of consumption we are urged to shape our lives by the use of our purchasing power. We are, says Rose, obliged ‘to make sense of our existence by exercising our freedom to choose in a market in which one simultaneously purchases products and services, and assembles, manages and markets oneself’ (1999: 103). The image of the citizen as a choosing self entails a new image of the productive subject. The worker is not portrayed as an economic actor, rationally pursuing financial advantage, or as a social being seeking the satisfaction of needs for solidarity and security. Rather,

The worker is an individual in search of meaning, responsibility, a sense of personal achievement, a maximized ‘quality of life’, and hence of work. Thus the individual is not to be emancipated from work, perceived as a task or merely a means to an end, but to be fulfilled in work, now construed as an activity through which we produce, discover and experience ourselves. (Rose, 1999: 103-4)

If, as Chris suggested in Chapter Three, ‘you are who you say you are’, then who we might say we are is performatively assembled in the practices through which we consume those identities and narrate those biographies constituted and regulated through the temporalised and spatialised apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity. I am
concerned not only with the assemblage and narration of oneself, of one’s experience, but also with tracing the constitutive relations through which subject and experience are constituted, regulated and performed in and as a biography; as a biographical subject, and as an expert of the self.

Assembling experience
As experts of the self, and of self care, we have come, says Rose, to ‘inhabit a network of assemblages which presuppose, fabricate and stabilise particular versions of the self’ (1999: 265). These versions of self are assembled through the apparatus of narrativity, through ethical scenarios, discursive repertoires and performative possibilities for subjects who, as ‘professionals of themselves’, are experts of their own existence. Such scenarios and repertoires are couched in the languages of trauma, stress, attitude, intelligence, self esteem, choice, fulfilment and self-realisation, and shaped through narratives which serve as exemplars of ethical scenarios. Such narratives make up the bulk of media representations and incorporate maxims and techniques of self-conduct that make everyday actions possible and judgeable. Rose (1999) recognises that these discursive and narrative practices and repertoires do not propose some singular and monolithic version of personhood and self-conduct. Rather, a plurality of forms of selfhood are represented as solutions to the dilemmas of existence, but this plurality operates within a limited and relatively fixed array of problems and possible solutions. ‘Their dilemmas concern the struggles for self-realization through choices made in shaping a biography: contingencies of family relations and sexual relationships, of economic aspirations and lifestyles, of illness and bereavement, of the prospect of death.
And these solutions presuppose, and thus fabricate, a certain “irreal space” that lies within each human being’ (Rose, 1999: 265). This internal zone has its own characteristics, process, historical laws. It is a ‘psy shaped space’ that lies between the biological materiality of the body ‘with its nerves and fluids’ and the ‘moral complexity of human conduct with its dilemmas of right and wrong, good and evil’ (1999: 265).

I’m interested in tracing those practices and relations through which the biographical accounts we give of ourselves are imbricated in the form of self-reflection that has emerged in this psy shaped place as a form of ‘speaking out’ (Rose, 1999: 266). This speaking out takes the form of a narrated biography and public discourse in which certain intimate, personal or ‘private’ aspects or features of human existence and conduct are articulated, usually in the form of first person reports. In these reports ‘inner truths are rendered outward’ (1999: 266) and ‘public life and public actions become intelligible only to the extent that they can become converted into psychological terms, understood in terms of expressions of the personalities of the individuals concerned’ (1999: 267). Such accounts of experience constitute a mode of working upon and representing selfhood that is recognisable and intelligible to both oneself and another.

This is achieved narratively and discursively through the mobilisation of ethical technologies and repertoires for the conduct of conduct in particular contexts and for particular purposes. These comprise images, norms, evaluations and techniques of selfhood which constitute and mobilise relatively standardized forms of individuality and personality, each with their own set of habits, dispositions, tastes and aspirations. Rose (1999: 269-70) argues that it is not so much that these representations function to
‘construct’ the self, but rather, that they make it possible for each individual to relate to themselves in the course of their life in particular ways. ‘These representations of dilemmas and means of coping with them cast a grid of visibility over existence, they single out certain types of event as significant and problematic at the very same time as make certain ways of conducting oneself in relation to these thinkable and possible’ (1999: 270).

I am not so much concerned here with elaborating the operation of psy discourses in the production of a biographical narrative, or articulating the ‘psy shaped spaces’ they materialise. Rather, I emphasise the ways in which neoliberal mentalities of government fabricate everyday experience as lived in a space that is ahistorical, apolitical and asocial, a space of forgetting, a space in which what emerges as salient is the ‘self’.

As the truest meanings of our world retreat from history and public zones into an internal space of the lives of individuals, or as history becomes intelligible only in so much as it plays out, constrains, enables, distorts, terminates the only truth we have – the living by ordinary people of their ordinary lives – so subjection itself, the appearance of being a subject and of experiencing oneself as such, becomes the site, the space, the locus, the arbiter of all our joys and all our ills. (Rose, 1999: 268)

Illouz (2003) articulates the ways in which ‘speaking out’, of narrating one’s experience of oneself as a subject, is performatively produced in and by television talk shows. She argues that in the performative space of the talk show, narratives about self, life, lifestyle
and freedom of choice, (focussed on social norms and personal relationships) stage the normative dilemmas of the contemporary moment. The primary demand of this moment is that, as part of the project of self-realisation, we are called upon to choose and fashion our emotional lives. ‘Talk shows articulate the fact that autobiography has become a “choice” biography, in which the self must now struggle to find or invent the normative “recipes” to regulate conduct’ (Illouz, 2003: 124). Talk shows are, Illouz suggests, a space for staging and expressing the limits and potentials of processes of individualisation, in which all aspects of identity are open for examination, interrogation, deconstruction and refashioning. Similarly, I suggest that other forms of popular cultural texts, including cinema, television, magazines, newspapers, self-help books, novels, biographies and autobiographies, articulate constitutive spaces in which the performative possibilities for becomings are assembled, and assembled through the apparatus of narrativity as biography. Those life stories produced and circulated by the market transform the biographical subject and their biography into commodities to be consumed – that is, as regulatory frames for the articulation of one’s own life-story. For Illouz this is ‘a new face of global capitalism: it is not “the flesh, bones and blood” of people that are mobilized for the engine of capitalist profit, but their life stories and family secrets that supply the invisible commodities of techno-capitalism’ (2003: 140).

Further, Illouz asserts that the very category of autobiography mobilised in and through these media texts emerges at the intersection between the apparatus of capitalist organisation and everyday life. These texts articulate discussions about new forms of social life, especially those ‘social pains that have not been codified in the traditional liberal discourse’ (2003: 141). I am interested in Illouz’s assertion that family secrets
and social pains have become integral to the telling of a life history in the contemporary moment. This is indeed what I have performed myself, with the telling of secrets and wounds in Chapter Two, and the contention that stories of the performative imbrication of subjects in storied histories of cultures and communities, and in personal storied histories of regulation, are wound through with stories of wounds.

**Assembling myself**

I have given an account of the apparatuses, practices and relations through which biographical narratives of experience are constituted, assembled and preformed. I have suggested that it might be possible to trace the co-constitutive relations among actants, simultaneously present and absent, remembered and forgotten, through which any articulation of the self in and as a biography is made possible. These necessary others, both human and not, are not simply a supporting cast, but simultaneously constitutive of the performatively assembled ‘I’, and part of it. It is something of these co-constitutive relations among actants through which performances of oneself as a biographical ‘I’ are accomplished, that I am trying to trace, re/assemble and articulate. So, what might this mean for any account that ‘I’ might give of myself?

The biographical ‘bits and fragments’ (de Certeau, 1988: 88) that follow constitute a particular account of memory and experience as a performance of myself in a particular spatialised and temporalised relational context. They were written in a collective biography workshop with colleagues, and focussed on experiences of school violence or bullying. One of the purposes of the collective biography workshop is to identify some
of the ways in which individual accounts of experience are inscribed within collective, normative and regulatory discursive practices (Davies & Gannon, 2006). In writing of my experience of school violence I was attempting to unsettle the idea that I, or anyone else, might only and ever be positioned as either bully or victim. I attempted to map a set of movements and relations through which I performed both bully and victim, and of those affects and relations of composing, decomposing, or modifying ‘myself’ through the corresponding intensities that affected, augmented or diminished my power to act (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004). I emphasise, in giving an account of myself, that these affects, emergent from the capacities of bodies for engagement with the power of other bodies, are relational. They are assembled in and through relations of power as affects between and among those other bodies or actants (human and not) of which the embodied subject is a co-constitutive relation. In the textual fragments that follow, the constitutive past persists as presence, and its persistence as presence is understood in, from and through the traces of that which is simultaneously present and absent, remembered and forgotten.

Pleasure in four acts:

Act 1: The Sooky Bubba

His big brother was inventive when it came to variations on a theme, always finding new modes and moments for ridicule. Inevitably it ended in tears, the small brother, feeling ridiculed, left pathetic and crying. Even then the big brother was inspired to innovation.
He changed the words to the rhyme ‘kookaburra sits in the old gum tree’ to ‘sooky bubba cried in the old gum tree’, sung, of course, in appropriately derisive tones. The smaller brother cried all the harder, confirming, of course, that he was indeed a sooky bubba.

**Act 2: The Willow**

There was a willow tree in the front garden, unique among the eucalypts. His big brother showed him how to strip fronds of the willow into smooth white switches that whipped through the air. Showed him how to choose just the right one. When it had been wet the grey clay in the scrubby bush near their yard was soft and pliant. They rolled it into balls, and, carefully placing it on the ends of their willow fronds, flung it through the air, aiming always for the side of the local shop which stood alone in the bush and, closed on weekends, made an ideal target. On Monday mornings the shopkeeper would complain to our parents and insist that we stopped. But we didn’t. The delicious willow fronds, the sensuous clay, the delight of the mud ball leaving our sticks and arcing through the air. The splat on the shop. The telling off. The pleasure of transgression.

**Act 3: The Ring-Master**

There were four boys on the basketball court. It was asphalt and surrounded on all sides by a high mesh fence. There was only one entry or exit. He stood in the middle, wielding a willow frond. Bending and turning as he swept it through the air. Lost somehow in the pleasure of this bending, this turning, this sweeping, the feel of the willow in his hand. He was barely aware that his friends were there. He was aware though, of the other boy,
trapped in the corner furthest from the entrance to the court, furthest from his possible exit. This cornered boy ran and darted and swooped as if to avoid the sweeping willow. It was meant to hurt him by frightening him, not by making any contact with him. The boy with the willow sang as he swept. He was pleased by his song, an innovation on an advertising jingle ‘the milky bar kid’. Instead he sang of the ‘picky nose kid’, sang loudly and tunefully at this corned boy who was ridiculed for publicly picking his nose in class. There was pleasure in this singing, this act of sweeping the willow, and the play of words.

**Act 4: Good like Jesus**

They were on the landing at the entrance to the building, he and his friends and the boys from another class. The landing was barely large enough to contain them all, and there was little room to do much other than go with the flow of the moving mass of bodies. Certainly no way to turn around, to head in any other direction, to get away. To get away from the boy that always taunted and poked and hit him, reminded him that he was not a proper boy, not a boy who would fight back like a man. But he was like another man, a man his mother had told him about. That man said ‘turn the other cheek’. That it was better to face your enemy with courage and be strong and not be like the enemy. It was better to be good, and kind and gentle. And so he stared blankly at the other boy, received his blows without resistance or comment, and felt strong in his silence, felt pleasure in his virtue.
There is a movement through these four acts that emphasises the extent to which a moment, an apparently isolated act or incident, is imbricated in other times and spaces, moments and acts, past and present, remembered and forgotten. In putting the four narrative fragments together in this way I am foregrounding the embodied reverberation of experience over time and space, of embodied memories that call up and make present other acts, actants and affects. Such an account of subjectivity and experience resists the tendency to account for them as autonomous acts or specific incidents, as if in each and every act the intentional subject is in control, is acting independently of any other moment or experience - and is thus alone entirely responsible for what they have done. I resist too, the reduction of the stories to a repertoire of discourses and positions within them. It is through their imbrication in other acts, in the lives of others, and in relations with other actants, that possibilities for action are produced. This imbrication recognises the salience of relations between actants, human and not, between subjects and times, spaces and events and embodied responses, yet not within a linear cause and effect model. Causes and effects are at once everywhere and nowhere; not tied to each other in any fixed chain or sequence, but strung together in configurations that erupt and disperse differently across times and spaces, and in changing temporalised and spatialised assemblages of actants. The sensuous willow, instrument of pleasure and threat; the song, a recitation of power and violation; the mud, a viscous joining of brothers; abjection taken into oneself and sent away to another; the landing a space of containment in which the foreclosure of escape instigates a performance of self-righteous passivity as moral strength. Boys, bodies, spaces of confinement, brothers, ridicule, rejection, inclusion, desire, pleasure, fear, a home, a shop, a school, a song, derision, imitation, mud, a willow, a landing, crying, kookaburras in gum trees – these
are all actants in the assemblage of my biography, actants without whom I would have no story to tell, actants without whom I would never make an appearance as a biographical ‘I’.

My account, like that of any other, is ‘the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 287); under given relations of visibility and opacity, of remembering and forgetting, of absence and presence, sound and silence, and of oneself and another. It is these co-constitutive relations among actants that I intend to trace in working with the biographical accounts of experience that we give of ourselves. I extend the possibilities articulated here in the next and final chapter, in which I attend to the transcript of one interviewee, Steve, in an attempt to see what might be made and done with them; made and done with his account of himself.
Inter/section #7: a medi(t)ation on forgetting

I began composing this intersection whilst walking up the street, on the way to the doctor actually, and it was a welcome distraction that momentarily helped me forget that I was about to undergo some tests that I didn’t particularly want to take. Now, in the account of forgetting I have just given, I attempted to distinguish the act of forgetting from an account of the forgotten. That is, I tried to set forgetting free from a preoccupation with lost content, or with its possible recovery. So, in this account of my trip to the doctor, I’m not so much interested in the forgetting of the tests as I am with what the act of forgetting accomplished in opening a space for thinking about this intersection. This is a positive account of forgetting as potentiality. Anyway, in thinking about this intersection I almost began with an address to ‘you my reader’.

But who is this ‘you’ and in what sense might you be mine? This benign figure of speech elided a complex set of positionings and relations. By ‘you’ I meant to refer to the particular named reader who is reading this now, whoever you are, and wherever you are. Some of the many possible ‘yous’ might be anyone, anywhere and unknown to me; whilst others I can identify by name as my supervisors or examiners. But because I know your names, in what sense might I claim to know who you are? So the ‘you’ I am addressing is simultaneously multiple and singular, general and specific, known and not, knowable and not. Further, what is it that makes you my reader? I can clearly make no claim to ownership. Maybe I mean you who are reading my text? But is it properly my text when some of it has been borrowed from others, or is about others? So the ‘my’ in ‘my text’ is as multiple, contingent and unstable as the ‘you’ who is the reader. I’m gesturing here to the forgettings that need to take place so that
the impossibly complex phrase ‘you my reader’ is rendered apparently simple. The relation between ‘you’ and ‘my’ constitutes an impossibly complex and irreducible assemblage of actants and relations that can never be fully accounted for. So, to continue, I must simultaneously remember and forget this impossibility and work into the space between in order to say something else. ‘Light and shadow’ reminds Foucault, ‘are from the same sun. Invisibility is made evident by the visible’ (Foucault, 2004: 105). I might now say that remembering and forgetting are from the same temporality, each made possible, like shadow from light, by the other. If an assemblage is composed of the temporalised simultaneity of oneself and another, the human and the non-human, of visibilities and invisibilities, of light and shadow, of transparency and opacity, sound and silence, remembering and forgetting, then how might we do justice to the complexity of any assemblage in the accounts we give of it? How might we address and articulate another-as-assemblage and do justice to the multiplicity and complexity of the narrated accounts of experience she or he performs for us? I suggest that we might begin by actively forgetting some of the things we have taken for granted as obvious, some of the habituated theoretical assumptions and movements we routinely make, and work into the space vacated by them in order to say something other than we have said before. It has just occurred to me that I have slipped into the collective pronoun without realising it. What I am saying is that it is ‘I’ who is going to undertake such a forgetting – but then, if ‘I’ am a fiction of autonomy that forgets its relationality, perhaps ‘we’ is the more appropriate designation?
Chapter 7: Assembling

In this chapter I am simultaneously assembling the propositions, questions and concepts I have contemplated across the previous six chapters, and assembling them in and as an account of the life-history narrative of one subject: ‘Steve’. This is an experiment rather than a direct application of a stable or coherent set of principles and practices. It is an experiment in thinking and writing differently than I have before, and thinking and writing differently about biographical accounts of experience. As an experiment it is a tentative, partial and unstable account that simultaneously operates within, and stretches the limits of, what it might accomplish. It is an account of interpretive possibilities rather than an application of principles and practices that generate conclusions. It is an experiment emergent from a re-thinking of taken-for-granted theoretical positions and practices when working with narrative interviews.

I address the materiality of Steve as narrator by emphasising the materiality of the networks of relations among actants, human and not, through which he and his biographical account have been constituted, assembled and narrated. I am paradoxically, simultaneously, attempting to give an account of Steve as an assemblage that is more than human, and attempting to articulate something of the specificity of Steve as a human subject. In so doing, I instantiate a paradoxical movement in which I simultaneously de-centre Steve in the account I give of him (by my framing it through the non-human actant ‘beer’) and give an account of his specificity.
There are of course many actants, human and not, in Steve’s account, and I work with a number of them, including practices of government and narration, discursive formations and positions within them, people, rooms and household items. However, since I am attempting to spatialise and temporalise Steve and his account across the trajectory of a narrated life-span, I have specifically chosen ‘beer’, as it is appears in his account of childhood, is physically present in the scene of the interview, and is figured in his account of an anticipated future. This choice of beer is also informed by the move to explicitly de-centre the human subject in my account of subjectivity and coordinate it instead through a non-human actant. Having earlier suggested that constitutive categories, if mobilised as homogenous theoretical and analytic frames, are at risk of producing over-determined accounts of subjectivity I recognise, in the account I am about to give, the risk of giving an over-determined or over-extended account of the place of beer in my account of Steve. I work, then, to make ‘beer’ variously appear, disappear and reappear, to both remember and forget it. My address to beer as an actant in Steve’s account of himself is, then, a self-conscious experiment, and I emphasise that neither Steve nor his account of experience can be reduced to any single actant such as beer - or for that matter any other single category or practice. Rather I address beer as an actant and agent that forges relations among heterogeneous elements in an assemblage, and in a particular assemblage known as Steve. I am, in this experiment, working to make the familiar strange, the strange familiar, the absent present, and the present simultaneously here and there, now and then, gone and yet to come.
The stories-so-far

I have worked, across the preceding chapters, with a number of questions, propositions and concepts through which I have assembled an account of a narrating and narratable subject. I have also articulated possibilities for working with spoken accounts of experience collected in life-history narrative interviews. In producing this account I have worked with theory not as a hypothesis to be tested through research, but with research as a space in which to develop theory about research (Gonick, 2003). I have also worked with writing as a mode of research and as a practice through which theory might be developed. In turning my attention, in this final chapter, to one interview, I ask how I might engage with this interview and assemble my thinking-so-far into an account of possibilities for working with biographical narratives of experience.

I have foregrounded an iteration of the subject as an assemblage of spatialised and temporalised co-constitutive relations between bodies, human and not, and, in this chapter spatialise and temporalise the giving of an account of oneself in the context of an interview. I situate the interview as a simultaneously relational space of articulation; a space in which one is invited to give an account of oneself, and a technology for eliciting narrated accounts of experience. I have suggested that the interview is a conversational space already constituted in popular culture as a space of disclosure; a space that marks the parameters of possibility for the performance of a biographical account of the self (Illouz, 2003; Rose, 1999). For Scheurich, the interview is a particular conversational space, is a site in which ‘interactions and meaning are a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity, a moving feast of differences interrupting differences’ (1995: 14). Rather than only understanding the interview as a technology that carves out and solidifies a
particular kind of space, Scheurich suggests that it is also a space in which interviewees ‘carve out a space of their own’ (1995: 24). Further, since it is a space in which trajectories and meanings ‘continually migrate and change’ (1995: 27), the interview ‘always exceeds and transgresses our attempts to capture and categorize it’ (1995: 28). It is in and from this mobile and unstable space that I locate my mobile and unstable account of Steve and his life-history narrative.

In attending, in this chapter, to the narrative of one specific subject, I give an account of Steve in and as an assemblage of bits and fragments (de Certeau, 1988) and as simultaneously the one in the many and the many in the one. In understanding Steve as a relational assemblage of multiple bodies or actants, I variously refer to him as Steve, ‘Steve’, the Steve-assemblage, Steve-as-assemblage and the assemblage-known-as-Steve. I do so in order to resist stabilising and individualising him as the ‘real object’ or ‘true subject’ of my accounts of him. I am also multiplying, de-essentialising and de-individualising Steve, my accounts of him, and my accounts of subjectification and the human subject. There is, I have emphasised, nothing essential about, or singular to, the human subject. The embodied human subject is understood as a co-constitutive relational assemblage of bodies, both human and not. This assemblage is understood as a multi-directional movement of sutures, folds and flows rather than a ‘straightforward and frictionless relation’ among bodies (Søndergaard, 2005: 298). And yet, just as I have proposed that there is something specific to any assemblage, expressed as haecceity, I am proposing that the assemblage of any human subject, and of a particular named embodied subject, has a specificity of its own.
I situate ‘Steve’ as simultaneously an assemblage of co-constitutive relations among bodies, an idiosyncratic named and embodied subject, and a mark or trace of multiple temporally and spatially practised and spatially practised practices of regulation. I understand Steve-as-assemblage to be inflected by a set of contemporary practices of neoliberal government and their emphasis on freedom, choice, lifestyle, consumption, responsibility and autonomy. In giving an account of Steve as an assemblage of co-constitutive relations among bodies, I simultaneously resist the reconstitution of him as either an individual or as an exemplar of a taxonomy, category, pattern or social phenomenon. I attend to Steve and his narrative not as an exemplar of the many, but as an assemblage of the many, and an assemblage of bodies both present and absent from which those presences and absences might be traced. I trace those relations among actants through which ‘Steve’ is assembled in multiple spaces, both near and far, both here and not, and in multiple temporalities, both past and present, now and then, and yet-to-come. In attending to one subject and one narrative, both subject and narrative are understood as an assemblage of possibilities that operate at the site of one particular embodied subject. That subject is articulated as being-assembled-together from the possibilities at play in the field of practices of subjectification that work on, through, in and with bodies, such that the one is simultaneously understood in and as the many, and the many in and as the one.

In working with the narrative of the named and embodied assemblage-known-as-Steve, I give an account of his multiplicity, heterogeneity, complexity and contingency as assembled ‘without predictability’ (Lather, 2007: 106). I recognise that there are limits to what I might know about Steve just as there are limits to what Steve may know about himself – or I about myself. In assuming subjectivity to be a relational assemblage of
actants, I do not produce a coherent story of Steve, but assemble bits and fragments of the relational actants through which he is co-constituted as the embodied assemblage that bears his name. I approach the possibility of his endurance, coherence and continuity in time and space through a principle of ‘multiplication and dispersion’ (Lather, 2007: 111) that refuses closure; a principle through which I articulate Steve as a becoming-subject of whom no final account can be given. Through my address to ‘Steve’, I am articulating a constitutive movement between regulation and irreducibility, phantasmic autonomy and stability, and a lived specificity and relationality. Such an address is motivated by a theoretical and methodological commitment to work with narrated life histories in ways that are ‘not overcoded in terms of received understandings’ or ‘absolute frames of reference’ (Lather 2007: 148/149). In working to destabilise ‘identificatory strategies’, I avoid ‘synthesizing apparently contradictory elements’ and work instead to ‘maintain them as sites of displacement, of inconsistency and complexity’ (Gonick, 2003: 17).

And yet, I recognise that the biographical account Steve gives of himself (that any of us give of ourselves) is a normative and regulated improvisation or performance of himself as if coherent, stable and whole. In thinking about, and working with, Steve’s narrated biographical account of experience, I am not so much concerned with an analysis of Steve’s narrative as I am with an engagement or experiment with Steve-as-assemblage. This experiment is a becoming-theorising of Steve-as-becoming. In framing my address to ‘Steve’ in this way I am attempting to operate within the limits of the knowable and sayable in order to:
- de-individualise ‘Steve’ and constitute him as a relational, yet idiosyncratic, assemblage of multiplicities and relationalities
- articulate ‘Steve’ as an assemblage of multiple co-constitutive relational actants, human and not
- resist and complexify a cause-and-effect description of the operation of normative practices of government
- de-stabilise neoliberalism as a singular and adequate framing of ‘Steve’ and his relation to the operation of normative practices of regulation
- temporalise and spatialise Steve and his biographical account as presence – as simultaneously past-present, present-present and future-present
- emphasise Steve-as-assemblage as a becoming, and as such, unknowable as a stable and coherent subject
- give an account of ‘Steve’ as a machinic and enunciative assemblage
- articulate disorder and incoherence not as the absence of order and structure, but as the simultaneity of multiple orders, and practices of narration as interventions that attempt to make this multiplicity intelligible, liveable and endurable.
Assembling an account of Steve’s account of himself

I have suggested that it is possible to understand something of embodied human subjects from attention to those other bodies, both human and not, through and with which they are assembled. In giving an account of Steve I do not begin with reproducing a narrative description of him that co-ordinates taxonomies of gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, socio-economic location, education, occupation, employment or life stage, but recognise that the multiple assemblages that constellate Steve across time and space are saturated with these categories and the discourses and positions through which they are embodied and performed. These normative, regulatory matrices of intelligibility are neither identical nor continuous with subjectivities, but conditions of possibility through which subjects are assembled in discontinuous ways.

In giving an account of Steve (or more precisely of Steve’s account of himself) I assemble discontinuous bits and fragments in order to trace and articulate something of the ways he is assembled with, and is an assemblage of, other bodies and relations. I expressly avoid ‘a classificatory introduction’ (Gonick, 2003: 17) to Steve, as it is precisely this synthesis or reduction of the subject to a typological framing that I am problematising. I am not trying to recover, explain, describe or understand a singular embodied Steve, but addressing those multiple bodies and relations through which the assemblage-known-as Steve gives an account of himself. I’m trying to avoid reducing Steve to a series of positions in discourse, or articulating him as an exemplar of normative categories or taxonomies of personhood, yet simultaneously recognise that discourses, and positions in them, are technologies for the constitution and regulation of a performative subject. Further, discourses, practices or categories are not understood as
stable, but rather, as heterogeneous differences inflected by the temporal and spatial specificity of their location in certain assemblages of bodies in certain times, spaces and relations.

In giving an account of Steve as both relational assemblage and haecceity I trace those co-constitutive relations among actants or bodies, human and not, through which he articulates himself as subject and narrator of his biography. In simultaneously multiplying, de-essentialising and de-individualising ‘Steve’, I frame my account of him through the multiple co-constitutive relational actants through which the Steve-as-assemblage is spatialised, temporalised and narrated. Those other actants, relations, temporalities and spatialities might be traced endlessly on and out, in and as other assemblages, through the networks in which they are inaugurated and imbricated, constituted, regulated and transformed. Similarly, Steve-as-assemblage is situated in extended networks and assemblages of actants, narratives, practices, relations and affects.

Remembering that an assemblage is a becoming rather than a stable arrangement of elements, a methodological inquiry that works with the concept of assemblage is ‘a tentative and hesitant unfolding’ of multiplicities and relations (Law, 2004: 41-42). Such an inquiry emphasises, among other things, heterogeneity and variation, complexity, diffusion and messiness; ‘a generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities’ (2004: 7). Further, as Deleuze reminds us, assemblages are simultaneously haecceities and multiplicities, and what counts in a multiplicity is not ‘the
terms or the elements, but what there is “between”, the between, a set of relations which are not separable from each other’ (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987: viii).

By engaging with ‘Steve’ as an assemblage of co-constitutive relational actants, I’m attempting to articulate the becomings through which a particular assemblage – an embodied human subject – might be accounted for. I trace co-constitutive relations among multiple actants not in order to describe a whole network, but to describe how that network is assembled and articulated as a specific subject. The embodied subject, in this instance ‘Steve’, emerges as a specific sort of body (or haecceity) at the points of intersection, connection or relation between the different bodies in an assemblage. I’m not simply interested in Steve as one of many actants in an assemblage, but in Steve as an assemblage of multiplicities; of multiple actants assembled within, through and beyond him. He is not simply one actant in a network, but himself a multiplicity or network of actants – bodies, thoughts, feelings, memories, actions, practices, relations and so on. ‘Steve’ is not simply a body in an assemblage, but himself an assemblage of bodies. The Steve-assemblage is emergent in, from and as this network of actants, and is assembled through those practices in which a constitutive exterior is infolded as an interior; through which many bodies are constitutive of what might otherwise be understood as ‘a body’. So, I am giving an account of Steve as a corporeal incorporation of a network of co-constitutive relational actants, both corporeal and incorporeal, both human and not.
Assembling ‘Steve’

I am not undertaking an exhaustive or elaborated account of the biographical narrative Steve gives of his experience, but rather, attempting to articulate a movement that traces and sketches co-constitutive relations among those actants through which he and his account of himself are assembled. I also gesture towards possibilities for further tracings and sketchings that might take me who-knows-where, and with who-knows-what consequences. In avoiding a narrativised account of Steve framed in the first instance by categories of age, gender, education and occupation (yet addressing them as actants in the Steve-assemblage), I frame my account of him as an assemblage of multiple actants through an address to one specific actant: ‘beer’. I emphasise that beer is not only an actant in the Steve-assemblage, but is itself an assemblage of human and non-human actants; hops, agriculture, brewers, breweries, bottles, commerce, drinkers, markets, laws and so on (with each of these in turn assemblages of other actants). From this actant ‘beer’ I trace multiple relations, in multiple directions, to multiple actants in multiple networks and assemblages – fridges, kitchens, class, gender, lifestyle, choice, education, employment, childhood, memory, wives and sons. I do so without treating the non-human actants such as ‘beer’ and ‘fridges’ as ‘dumb objects’, without addressing lifestyle and choice as only discourses, without positioning gender and class as stable analytic categories, and without thinking of kitchens and studies as mere rooms.

Beginning with beer

In framing my account of the Steve-assemblage through the particular actant ‘beer’, I reiterate that any actant in a network is both ‘an effect and an accomplishment’ of complex interrelations, or ‘chains of influences’, involving humans and nonhumans.
For Latour, an actant is ‘anything that modifies a state of affairs by making a difference. ... Thus, the question to ask about any agent is simply the following: does it make a difference in the course of some other agent’s action or not?’ (2004: 226). In this sense any actant that might authorize, encourage, enable, suggest, influence, block, or forbid any action is understood by Latour as simultaneously an agent and a ‘backdrop for human action’ (2004: 226). Particular temporal and spatial contexts, and assemblages of co-constitutive actants, human and not, constitute possibilities for the elaboration of forms of human action and ways of experiencing and narrating oneself. The times, places and co-constitutive relational actants through which bodies are materialised, circumscribe the possibilities for action, for the performance of bodily practices, for organising, experiencing, imagining, desiring and articulating oneself in particular ways.

In organising and coordinating my account of Steve through the actant ‘beer’, I trace the ways in which multiple actants in the network of Steve’s biography are relationally co-constituted. I attend to the intersecting relations that converge and flow through ‘beer’ as a particular actant in the Steve-assemblage. In choosing ‘beer’ as one actant among many I am not attributing special significance to it, but showing how attention to a non-human actant might tell us something about the relational co-constitution of actants through which a particular assemblage, in this case a human subject, might be materialised. And yet, neither is the selection of beer as actant completely random: I read it as an actant through which Steve spatialises and temporalises the account he gives of himself, and to which he attaches particular significance. I am attempting to articulate the ways in which ‘beer’, as actant and intersection, is simultaneously an
actant and a relation through which multiple actants, practices, memories, emotions and affects are coordinated and given coherence across time and space. These multiple actants, and the complex co-constitutive networks of relations through which they are assembled across time and space, are co-constitutive of the assemblage-known-as-Steve. This address to relational co-constitutive multiplicity frames analyses of these actants without situating them as constitutive categories that operate in any singular or stable way, and yet have a performative force that is constitutive of ‘Steve’. I address these assemblages of actants as simultaneously normative and irreducible, regulatory and unsubstitutable, multiple and singular, coherent and episodic, fragmented and coordinated, remembered and forgotten, present and absent. I coordinate this address to assemblages of actants through the apparatus of narrativity as the simultaneous co-constitution of narrator, narration, narrative and narratability; and as the assemblage of the subject in and as a biographical account of experience.

In attending to the ways in which ‘beer’ is both spatialised and temporalised in the biographical account Steve gives of himself, I am simultaneously spatialising and temporalising ‘beer’ and ‘Steve’. I locate beer in Steve’s past, in his present and in his future. I locate it in his hand in the study and in the fridge in the kitchen. In spatialising and temporalising beer in this way, I am also spatialising and temporalising ‘Steve’ and the co-constitutive relations among actants through which he is assembled, and through which he assembles himself in time and space, and in the spatial frame of a body named and known as ‘Steve’. I trace these temporalised and spatialised locations of beer in those assemblages that link actants, events, experiences and memories; discourses, narratives and matrices of intelligibility; multiple constitutive and regulatory practices.
and technologies of government and self; multiple effects, affects, thoughts and emotions; and various times and spaces.

I begin by locating beer in the spatio-temporal present of the interview where it appears as a physically present actant in Steve’s hand before it appears as an actant in his narrated biography. It is present in his hand even whilst absent in the narrative, but not absent in the assemblage through which Steve is assembled, or in the narrativisation of that assemblage in and as a biography. I am not, then, preoccupied with the presence of beer only when it is visible or spoken of, and suggest that even though it may not be visible or mentioned, it is still present as an actant in the assemblage-known-as-Steve. In foregrounding co-constitutive relations between actants in this way I am attempting to read, and work with, both ‘Steve’ and his biographical narrative as a machinic and enunciative assemblage.

As elaborated in Chapter Six, machinic assemblages are assemblages of bodies and states of bodies in various degrees of interaction. They emphasise the materiality of bodies, forms, actions, passions, desires and substances, and relations between them; relations between the ‘intermingling of bodies in a society, including all the attractions, repulsions, sympathies, antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and expansions that affect bodies of all kinds in their relations with one another’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 99). Collective assemblages of enunciation emphasise language or discursive practices, acts, or statements of ‘incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 98), which make some statements possible and others not. They also constitute the possibilities for, and limits to, the sayable, and
emphasise the impossibility of individual enunciation. In working with machinic and enunciative assemblages I do not try to conflate the corporeal with the incorporeal, nor the discursive with the non-discursive, but emphasise the constitutive and not always tangible spaces between them. Nor do I assume that materiality can always be converted to meaning. I am as much interested in the lacunae in locutions, in the forgettings in rememberings, and in the opacities in grids of visibility as I am in that which is tangible and narratable.

In what follows I temporalise and spatialise the actant ‘beer’ in Steve’s narrative, and in the Steve-assemblage. I locate beer in his hand, in his childhood, in his mobility, in his lifestyle and in his future. I trace the presence of beer in these locations and in the multiple co-constitutive actants through which both ‘beer’ and ‘Steve’ are simultaneously made present and accounted for. In Chapter Six, I assembled an account of myself through a collection of bits and fragments composed into a series of acts. I similarly compose my account of the Steve-assemblage into a series of acts in order to emphasise that my account of Steve as a performative becoming is also a performative becoming of my own act of theorising.

**Act 1: The beer in Steve’s hand**

It is 7.30 o’clock at night when I arrive at Steve’s home. His wife, who answers the door, is not expecting me. Steve is playing golf. He has forgotten that we have an appointment. I wait in the street until he arrives home at 8pm. I suggest we reschedule but he is happy to continue. When we enter the house we proceed through the kitchen. Steve’s wife is sitting at the breakfast bar reading a novel, the ingredients for their
dinner arranged on the counter ready for cooking as soon as he is ready to eat. The interview takes place in Steve’s study. It is filled with framed certificates and qualifications, floor to ceiling shelves filled with books, a golf-putting machine on the floor, golf clubs, folders and papers all over a very large desk. Whilst I set up the tape recorder (an actant in the assemblage of the interview that constitutes particular performances and acts of speech) Steve returns to the kitchen to get a beer from the fridge. On returning to the study he sits in a swivel chair at his desk and I’m in an armchair. He drinks his beer from the bottle while we talk. I surmise that this is his domain, and it occurs to me that perhaps the kitchen is his wife’s domain. At this point she remains nameless. His wife sits at the bench in the kitchen, reading, waiting for the moment in which she can cook their dinner. This temporalisation and spatialisation of the home suggests a certain gendered arrangement that designates times and spaces for particular performances of masculinity and femininity, of a mode of heterosexual marriage and the division of labour. How, I wonder, might these impressions of embodied spatialised and temporalised arrangements and performances of bodies, be read alongside and through the biographical narrative that Steve gives of himself? In locating Steve in the spatiality of his home, and of his study, I am speculating about his location in a social, domestic, gendered and sexualised economy of relations, practices and performances. Steve is in his study, where the beer is in his hand. His wife is in the kitchen, where the beer is in the fridge. Since both the beer and the fridge appear in Steve’s narrative, how might they be understood as actants in the Steve-assemblage?
STEVE: We’ve grown up in a house where the kids have opened the fridge door and they’ve got a choice and then when they got older, they had a choice of beer as well you know when they got to probably 16 and older, but they had a choice, they could have a Coke or they could have a Fanta or they could have a fruit juice or they could have a cordial or whatever. They’ve got used to just opening the fridge and oh I’ll have this and everything was available.

I imagine the fridge as a point of intersection between and among those machinic and enunciative assemblages through which we might understand ‘Steve’ as an assemblage of global capital, branded merchandise, choice, lifestyle, consumption, childhood, desire, gendered relations and so on. These actants are co-constituted and assembled in other relational networks and intersect in this context, in this narrative, in the fridge in Steve’s kitchen. This temporalises and spatialises actants, networks, relations and assemblages in the present, in the presence of Steve’s home, and in the Steve-assemblage who lives there.

I am interested in further contemplation of possible co-constitutive relations between technologies and subjectivities. I am specifically interested in assemblages of, and intersections between, technologies of government, technologies of self and technologies such as mobile phones, the internet, prostheses, organ transplants, IVF, psychopharmaceuticals and so on, and in the ways in which these are constitutive of a performative subject. In the same way as I have located the refrigerator in Steve’s narrative as part of the flow of global capital, and of practices of choice and
subjectification, I am interested in this broader question of a constitutive relation between capital and subjectivity as mediated by human and non-human actants, and by practices such as consumption, freedom, desire and choice through which the subject is constituted and assembled. I think then of flows of capital as flows of subjectification, and as flows that articulate and animate actants and relations among them. How then, might we locate the operation of capital (as an aspect of regulatory technologies of government) in biographical narratives of experience as relational flows that make certain movements possible and desirable?

**Act 2: The beer in Steve’s childhood**

When Steve is asked to respond to a question about generational differences in childrearing, he frames his response around the concept of choice, specifically of restricted choice. These restrictions are articulated in relation to his own childhood: to practices of parenting which did not extend choices to children; and to the limited availability of consumer goods and the limited financial capacity of his father to purchase them. This collection of memories is coordinated through the actant ‘fizzy soft drink’, and specifically its unavailability. It is also the actant through which Steve frames his account of generational changes in relation to the accumulation of financial and social capital, especially as expressed through the actants ‘money’, ‘choice’ and ‘consumption’.
**PETER:** So would you describe your family and your child rearing practices as appreciably different from those of your childhood and your family’s child rearing practices?

**STEVE:** Oh, yes, absolutely. The biggest difference, if you speak to anybody of my age, we didn’t have a lot and we didn’t get a lot – we certainly weren’t asked what we wanted for tea, we were told this is what you get and if you don’t like it well you go hungry, tough luck. We didn’t have, I mean and Suzie and I laugh about it sometimes, having a soft drink, a fizzy soft drink, my God that was just – that was a big treat. You only ever did that on birthdays and maybe at Christmas – a fizzy soft drink!!!!!! You had cordial and/or water, that was it. Now that wasn’t because my mother and father didn’t want to give me everything, that was because they couldn’t because a: they couldn’t afford it or b: it wasn’t available anyway so we didn’t get any choices. That is really noticeable if you look at myself and my sister who is 4 years younger than me, there is a very big difference between the way we were brought up and my younger sister who’s 10 years younger than me. So, even in my own family, there was a big difference between my generation and the children that were born 10 years later. My mother and father had a lot more money, they were prepared to let her have a horse and both my sister and I were gob smacked, we would never have even asked for a horse and she was, we would say, she was extremely spoilt. But then, of course, as parents, when our kids were growing up, because we could afford it, we gave it to them, we didn’t think of it as spoiling them. So they’ve come up in an era where, in our house – my father would never have had beer in the house, I mean never ever. We’ve grown up in a house where the kids have opened the fridge door
and they’ve got a choice and then when they got older, they had a choice of beer as well you know when they got to probably 16 and older, but they had a choice, they could have a Coke or they could have a Fanta or they could have a fruit juice or they could have a cordial or whatever. They’ve got used to just opening the fridge and oh I’ll have this and everything was available. So that has to give people a much different outlook on things to people of our generation. Now I don’t necessarily think that that’s bad per se, it’s different but I don’t necessarily think that it’s bad, it’s just the way life has evolved.

I’m interested in the ways in which Steve frames his narrative of generational change through the actants ‘fizzy soft drinks’, ‘beer’ and ‘choice’. This account of change centres on the fridge as a cornucopia of consumer brand-name products, and structures a trajectory between childhood and fizzy soft drinks, and adulthood and beer (they had a choice of beer as well you know when they got to probably 16 and older). The position of the actant ‘beer’ in Steve’s narrative captures something of a generational change in practices of choice and consumption and a trajectory to adulthood in which boys become men, and men become fathers; and fathers who want more for their children and are able to give it to them. Another of the things parents might give their children more of is ‘choice’. Steve’s sons are articulated as having choices never available to him, and choice is a signifier of generational change and ‘evolution’. In Steve’s narrative, choice is linked to practices of consumption, and consumption is characterised through brand-named products that are part of the corporatisation of markets and global flows of capital which align subjects with temporalities and spatialities that extend beyond the immediate-present temporal and spatial location of the consumer. Further, these
products are part of a performative circuit through which specific practices of consumption, of specific products, suggest certain performances of subjectivity. As Rose (1999: 270) observes,

Our habitat is already inscribed with images, norms, evaluations and injunctions – from the architecture of our homes, the arrangement of living quarters, the division of our spatio-temporal existence into zones of leisure, labour, pleasure and desire, to the flashing neon signs urging us to ‘drink Coca Cola’ as it is the ‘real thing’. Increasingly these disseminate repertoires of the self in terms of ‘identities’: relatively standardized forms of individuality and personality, each equipped with sets of habits, dispositions, tastes and aspirations.

This nexus between consumption and subjectivity is particularly salient in the context of the move from producer to consumer economies in Western capitalist democracies such as Australia. In these capitalist democracies, choice is articulated as freedom, and especially the freedom to choose among consumer goods and lifestyles. These conflations of democracy, freedom, choice, consumption and lifestyle are characteristic of neoliberal practices of government (Bansel, 2007; Hamilton & Denniss, 2005; Higgins, 2006; Rose, 1999; Self, 1993).

The generational shift that Steve and his wife have worked to accomplish for their children is not without ambivalence: I suppose, again, we’ve only got ourselves to blame. We made them like that. There is a causal association here that links practices of parenting to the modernist project of progress and improvement. Neoliberalism
intensifies this narrative of progress and upward social mobility by linking the accumulation of financial capital to the accumulation of cultural capital, especially as expressed as the increased capacity for consumption. In this sense, practices of parenting and discourses of progress and generational change become actants in the network through which Steve and his family are assembled and articulated. As Steve suggests: *I suppose the one thing that’s common through all the generations is that you want your kids to be better, to be more well off – not necessarily in money terms but to be more well off, to have a higher standard of living is probably a better way of putting it. You want your kids to have a higher standard of living than you had.* This association of generational change with financial improvement is inflected, for Steve, with a desire to have, unlike his father, unrestricted and ongoing access to beer. ‘Beer’, assembled in relation to ‘father’ and generational change, carries resonances of childhood privation and links Steve into practices of consumption.

The beer that Steve drinks is identified as a brand-named light beer, and this actant ‘light beer’, links Steve into circuits of discourses and practices related to health and responsible alcohol consumption. This might be read as an aspect of the extent to which, within neoliberal discourses and practices, ‘choice’, ‘freedom’, ‘consumption’ and ‘responsibility’ are conflated as the freedom to choose consumer goods that are signifiers of chosen identities or subject positions. Beck, Giddens & Lasch (2004) emphasise the extent to which neoliberalism as a mode of government instantiates a proliferation of narratives, discourses, products and identities that link subjects to markets and practices of consumption aimed squarely at the expansion of capital.

Further, insofar as subjects are constituted as individuals responsible for their own health
and well-being, we might read the actant ‘light beer’ as connected to other co-constitutive actants such as ‘health’, ‘lifestyle’, ‘consumption’ and economic practices which aim to minimise the cost of alcohol-related disease to the state. It is also, as I have suggested, connected for Steve to his childhood and narratives of privation and progress, and to the desire for generational change which he articulates as class-mobility.

I am interested in further contemplation of multiple co-constitutive relations between temporalities, trajectories and possibilities, especially possibilities as articulated within trajectories that articulate relations between the past, present and future as opportunity, progress, success, optimism and satisfaction; or as their other, regression, failure, despondency, and regret. These are located within trajectories that assume causal relations between actants, effects and affects. They constitute subjects as autonomous agents capable of responding or intervening in ways that assume a relation between practices of freedom and practices of pre/determination, between inscriptions and performances of fixity and change. I am interested in the narrative practices through which these trajectories are emplotted and assembled in relation to a constitutive exterior and infolded as a constitutive interior, such that the subject is inserted within and articulated through this movement in, as and of time. How then might we locate the operation of relational accounts of causation in biographical narratives of experience; accounts through which narrators assume constitutive relations between times, practices, subjects and consequences, and articulate them through practices of emplotment that co-ordinate experience within normative matrices of intelligibility, teleology and continuity?
**Act 3: The beer in Steve's mobility**

In addressing Steve’s geographical and social mobility through the actant beer, I am not suggesting that beer can be articulated as an origin or cause, or as an explanation of this mobility. Rather, I am interested in working with an iteration of beer as an absent presence or forgetting. Since ‘origin’ is ‘irreducible to a dated beginning’ it has ‘the same status of fundamental forgetting’ (Ricoeur, 2006: 442). I’m gesturing here towards interpretative acts that pay attention to the co-constitutive relational traces between temporalised and spatialised practices, events and actants, and their assemblage in and as particular embodied subjects. It is in these relational traces, spatialised as erasures, gaps, absences, lacunae or ellipses, that I locate the constitutive presence of that which is absent or forgotten. I am exploring then, the possibility that beer is an apparently absent actant but one whose agency is present still in Steve’s account of himself. I am also interested in the imbrication of the actant beer in the relations and intersections between historical, political and social practices, and in relations with those other actants through which Steve’s account is accomplished. Further, I am interested in the possible place of beer in the instantiation of narrative trajectories that coordinate these relations among actants across time and space.

I am attempting, then, to trace Steve’s assemblage of mobility, and of himself as mobile, through attention to assemblages of practices of migration and consumption, narratives of progress, improvement and achievement, and to shifting class locations. Rather than begin with the category ‘class’ and theorise Steve’s location within it, I’m attempting to signal the ways in which different actants are assembled in ways that co-constitute bodies and affects in ways that cannot be simply attributed to, or captured by, stable
attributions of class-as-a-category. Further I am suggesting that ‘beer’ might be understood as a co-constitutive actant in Steve’s articulation of class migration and mobility. I’m emphasising the ways in which this address to relational co-constitutive actants might tell us something about the ways in which biographical subjects and their accounts of experience are assembled through the apparatus of narrativity and practices of narration.

**STEVE:** So I came out to Australia. And then sometimes life takes a strange twist of fate and I met a young lady, an Australian, who knocked me off my feet and so I got married very quickly and, after I got married, decided that I’d better do something with my life so I basically continued my accounting but actually did a lot of studying. I … basically started on the corporate ladder at that time and slowly worked my way up … during that period of studying and moving up the corporate ladder, I had two children, two boys and I suppose that like most people of my age, you got married and you had kids and the husband worked and the wife stayed at home and looked after the kids, that was very much how life was. So, therefore, I was very much a career person, have been a career person all my life so that 13 years when we were bringing up the kids, you know, that was what I did and at various times, like everybody in the corporate life, worked very long hours, probably did what – basically what most people of our age did, you know, and certainly of my education and background. That’s what men did, we went to work and we earned money and we climbed the corporate ladder of success and we got as high as we could and we earned as much money as we could and we bought houses and sent our kids to decent schools and let
them play soccer and sport and bought them musical instruments and dragged them around on Saturday for various sports and I would say that it was like a very large percentage of the Australian middle class people of my age, that’s what you did.

Steve migrated to Australia from the UK when he was 20, paying a nominal fee of £10. This assisted passage was part of a policy by the Australian government to encourage post-war Anglo migration to Australia to build both population and a workforce; a ‘White Australia’ policy that privileged British migration and selectively excluded non-British immigrants (Galligan, Roberts and Trifiletti, 2001; Webster, 2000). Steve’s act of migration, of geographic mobility, is located within temporally and spatially specific practices of government that constituted him as a mobile subject and worker. In this way migration and labour, migrant and worker, are relationally co-constituted. So, Steve’s migration, and his association with work, movement and progress, is intensified through this association of assisted passage with the constitution of an expanding Anglo labour force, and with temporalised constructions of masculinity. Further, I’m suggesting that migration, as articulated in Steve’s biography, presented an opportunity to embark upon a migration from the privation of his childhood and intensified the desire to climb the corporate ladder and improve his socio-economic position. I am proposing that migration and labour might be read as a ‘ladder’ out of and away from the past. In so doing, I am attempting to signal the ways in which biographical narratives incorporate trajectories, or as Ricoeur (1988) would suggest, practices of emplotment, that move the narrative from one event to another, and move them in this instance, through the modernist narrative of progress in which each sequential period or generation is an improvement upon the last. In Steve’s account, migration is followed by marriage and
this is figured through a bread-winner-responsibility discourse that instantiates certain movements towards self-improvement through study and increased earning capacity. This movement is spatialised and temporalised in the post-war period characterised by the plentiful availability of full-time work for men, affordable housing in the expanding suburbs and clearly defined gender roles (Hobsbawm, 1995). It also follows a trajectory that charts a transition from directionless young adulthood through marriage and responsibility to mature adulthood through reproduction (Halberstam, 2005).

By his own account Steve locates his biography within normative discourses of what ‘men’ of a certain ‘class’ with a certain ‘education’ and ‘background’ did; in which labour market practices privileged men and discouraged women from full-time work (Howe, 2001; Pocock, 2003). This is, I suggest, reflected in the spatialisation of Steve’s home into gendered domains or spheres of belonging and activity, and requires that his wife assume a relation to, or assemble herself within, gendered practices that stabilise Steve’s assemblage of himself as ‘male breadwinner’, ‘head of the household’, ‘husband’ or ‘father’. What I am emphasising here is that the performative assemblage ‘Steve’ is co-constituted and coordinated in relations between and among practices of government, familial and sexual relations, responsibilities, desires and choices, all of which are inflected by the temporal and spatial specificity of both the historical practices of government through which he is articulated and articulates himself, and of the historicised biographical experiences, memories and narratives through which these practices of government are assembled and lived. Since practices of government are themselves not coherent or stable, then their assemblage in and as ‘Steve’ is inevitably
similarly incoherent and unstable; simultaneously regulated and idiosyncratic, with lines of continuity and contradiction radiating in all directions.

Steve’s articulation of the actants ‘class’ with ‘money’, and ‘money’ with ‘progress’, is challenged by his older son who seems, by Steve’s account, to have defied the onward and upward trajectory of progress. He has a poorly paid job which he really likes and is described by Steve as probably working class - despite having grown up upper-middle class. Though Steve cannot imagine living on so little money, perhaps his son is located in a trajectory of another sort all together, one that we might trace as specific to his time and space. This difference between father and son constitutes a break from the modernist narrative of generational improvement through which Steve articulates both his relation to his father and his own progress. This break, instantiates for Steve, a complex, contradictory and ambivalent relation to his son, and his son’s chosen lifestyle.

Peter: Right, so you mentioned before people of your class and education and generation, so I’m just wondering how you would factor class into, say, your children’s lives?

Steve: I think they’re pretty much the same, they’ve grown up upper-middle class, I mean that’s how I would describe myself, I’m certainly not poor. I’m certainly not working class I mean that’s for sure, I’m the General Manager of a 10 million dollar company and I get paid reasonably well, I certainly wouldn’t describe myself as working class. And certainly on the socio-economic scale, I would be nearer the top than the bottom, that’s what I would describe as class. I’m very conscious of that and
I’m very conscious of class, my children are very unconscious of class. My older son would be, he’d just look at me and tell me I’m probably – excuse the expression – up myself or I’m a wanker or something. He’s very much, well I would describe him as probably working class. He’s not, but I would describe him as working class because he has a poorly paid job which he really likes, which most people would be very envious of but I think God how can he live on, you know, the money that he gets?

Through this account of his son’s difference from him, Steve articulates the instability of class and the possible (and confusing) failure of the progress narrative: Steve’s father was ‘working class’, Steve has worked hard to improve his financial position and perform himself as ‘upper-middle class’, Steve has raised his children to be ‘upper-middle class’, Steve’s eldest son has made different choices from Steve and has a ‘poorly paid job’. Steve has some trouble articulating his son in terms of his own categories of class; his son is both working class and not. There is something in this doubleness that captures the contradictory positioning of subjects within discourses, discursive positions and narratives that are correlated to ‘the real’ but never an adequate or stable account of it. This difference, as a break between father and son, is not simply a difference: it is an unintelligible difference. Steve cannot reconcile his son’s happiness with his poverty, and indeed contests the possibility of happiness and poverty being assembled together. Indeed, Steve reports that they sometimes argue about it. Steve also reports that his son would probably just look at me and tell me I’m … up myself or I’m a wanker or something. This is a possibly painful disavowal of Steve’s desire for progress for himself and his family – as well as a possible source of regret.
STEVE: I was going to say, I suppose when you get to 60 and you have a chance to reflect on life, although I’m not 60 yet, I’m only 59 but you know in the 60th year of your life, you have an opportunity to reflect. I suppose if I have any regrets, I do have the regret that I probably was not as good a father as I would have liked to have been. I don’t think I was a bad father but I think going to work – now when I say that, we lived at Emu Plains and to go to work, I’d catch the 10 past 7 train and I used to be back at 9 o’clock, so you don’t actually get a lot of time to see the kids when you’re working like that. And as I said, I haven’t had many jobs where I haven’t been away for 12 hours a day. So if you’re looking at differences, it’s funny I sometimes envy the modern generation, where the man seems to get much more involved with the family and the wife and I often discuss that. Sometimes we think oh how terrible it is, you know they’ve all just mixed up roles but I think men have a much better opportunity these days. You see, Penny never worked so it was always accepted – when I say never worked, she worked here but she’s just of that generation that when women got married they tended to have a baby and stay home and we were right at the end of that generation if you like, pre Germaine Greer and the career sort of people. And I think that people, particularly probably in your survey, that people 2 or 3 years older than me, would probably be even more of that generation and I suppose it’s just different. But that’s how it was and how it has been my entire working life, I’ve been the one who goes out and gets the money, Penny’s been the main person who looks after the kids and she’ll tell you, she used to have 2 kids while I was gallivanting around on overseas trips or attending business conferences, who was the one who in the evenings had to juggle one here at drum practice and one doing clarinet practice
and one at soccer training and one at basketball training – who was the one who
looked after that? Well it wasn’t ever me, it was always Penny, she was there and I
was off doing something else. I did try most of the time, maybe when they were a bit
older but certainly when they were younger, I spent a lot of time with them on
Saturdays and Sundays but you know, two days out of seven …

**PETER:** You used the word ‘regret’ – so how does it feel to look back and …

**STEVE:** Well, I’m not one to sit down and mope about it and think oh Jesus woe is
me, I haven’t been a good father, I mean I wouldn’t sit and mope about it but I
sometimes think you know you sit down and think you know has it been all worth it? I
don’t know, I can’t exactly say. I mean has it been worth it? You’d better ask my kids
that. But I did the best, I mean I can always say that. Okay, from my own personal
point of view, I would probably have appreciated spending more time with my kids in
many ways but you can’t go back, you just did the best you could.

**PETER:** What difference do you think it might have made had you spent more time in
the past?

**STEVE:** I have no idea but it would have been nice to find out. But I really don’t
know whether things would have worked out any differently. You are what you are to
a certain extent and you know I think about I’ve had the opportunities, I could have
taken life a little bit easier at university, I mean it just wasn’t in my nature so maybe it
wasn’t in my nature to make more time to be with the kids. Because maybe it’s just
that when I got to work, I get involved, I’ve got to be the top dog, I’ve got to be the
one who’s giving the input to the decisions, maybe it’s just me and maybe I wouldn’t
have been happy anyway.
The account Steve gives of his life is, I suggest, an assemblage of memories coordinated through spatialised and temporalised relations among actants, past and present, present and absent. It is also an assemblage of relations of desire; of desiring relations.

Assemblages are passional, they are compositions of desire. Desire has nothing to do with a natural or spontaneous determination; there is no desire but assembling, assembled, desire. The rationality, the efficiency, of an assemblage does not exist without the passions the assemblage brings into play, without the desires that constitute it as much as it constitutes them. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 440)

Desire is constituted relationally, rather than a capacity, need, expression or experience of an autonomous subject. It is composed of both affects and intensities that correspond to a body’s relations with other bodies, both human and not (Deleuze, 2004; Deleuze and Guattari, 2004; Latour, 1987, 2004). It is a generative force that forges connections among and between co-constitutive relational actants in a network or assemblage. Steve’s desires, then, do not originate in him, but are the infolded affect of relations with other bodies or actants. His desires for progress, for the accumulation of capital and for class mobility are assembled in relation to multiple spatialised and temporalised actants. Practices of government, infolded and performatively materialised as technologies of self, are folded along with relations to those many actants in the passional assemblage that is ‘Steve’. There are a number of assembled relations, of relational assemblages, that I am interested in here. Steve locates himself in a historical period where men worked and women assumed responsibility for the home and care of the family. He constitutes this as how it was, and has been, and as what everyone did. So, Steve did
what everyone else did in a historical period he marks off as pre-Germaine Greer (who, too, becomes an actant in the Steve-assemblage). I have suggested that Steve’s positions and performances as son, migrant, husband, father and worker were assembled within historically specific practices and relations. I have suggested too, in Chapter Four, that the constitution and regulation of the subject within normative regulatory practices of government is an inaugurative wound; a wound of subjectification. That past, invisible and forgotten wound constitutes the very conditions of possibility for performing oneself as a recognisable and intelligible subject. However, I propose that this inaugurative wound, always a present absence, is felt as present in moments of rupture; in those moments when the subject is subjected to changing relations, practices or technologies that constitute a break from the normative conditions of the past.

I suggest that for ‘Steve’, the discourse of ‘regret’ is mobilised by and through a retrospective re-inscription of ‘father’, or refiguration of ‘fathering’ in the present, and that this has a performative force through which Steve comes to question his past practices as a father. I propose that there is, in Steve’s account, an assembled relation between: the son’s difference from the father; the historical shift in what constitutes a normative performance of fathering; the possibility that this difference signifies a failure not only of the modernist narrative of, but also of Steve’s desire for, progress; and of Steve’s position as father and his performances of fathering. ‘Regret’, in this instance, is instantiated by a historical shift in parenting practices in which fathers are expected to be more present and engaged with their children, especially their sons. This more recent discourse is a break from an earlier discourse of the breadwinner-father whose primary task was to provide for, and improve the lot of, the family. This new normative
discourse of fathering is a rupture between that prior discourse and this rupture is painful for Steve. This pain is, I suggest, not simply the pain evinced by ‘regret’, but a memory of the pain of being formed as a specific subject in another time and place, and through other practices of subjectification. I am not so much giving an account of a pain that Steve actually feels, or has experienced, but am thinking of this historical shift, this break, as a moment of rupture in which we might glimpse the complex and ambivalent work of accomplishing oneself within normative matrices of intelligibility. Steve manages this break by suggesting that the past cannot be changed, that he did the best he could and that you are what you are. One’s nature, ‘who’ one ‘is’, is a mobilisation of a modernist subject of fixed essences in the face of changes that cannot be accommodated, or about which one is ambivalent and undecided.

Addressed and articulated in this way, ‘Steve’ is an assemblage of co-constitutive relational actants, including gender and class, migration, modernist narratives of personality, fixity, progress and generational change, regulatory practices of government, freedom, choice and consumption. These actants are coordinated in and as a biographical narrative through which Steve simultaneously assembles these actants and is assembled by them. Each of the actants in the networks of machinic and enunciative assemblages through which Steve is constituted, normalised and regulated, and through which he constitutes, normalises and regulates himself, simultaneously have a haecceity that is their own, and also constitute a haecceity that is ‘Steve’.

But where is the beer? Having assembled and coordinated my account of Steve through the specific non-human actant ‘beer’, I suggest that in Steve’s narrative of mobility
‘beer’ is relationally linked to the actant ‘money’ - which I read as a signifier of progress and class-mobility. I am interested in the possibility that beer is a present absence in the trajectory of Steve’s narrative, especially a trajectory of progress and change. I have suggested that beer in Steve’s childhood is figured as something to which his father did not have access, and that unrestricted access to beer is of some importance to Steve. I read this as a figuration of Steve’s difference from both his father and the comparative poverty of his childhood as compared with his adult life and that of his own family. The consumption of fizzy soft-drinks in childhood and beer in adulthood figures a movement between the child and the adult, the son and the father, the boy and the man. So, in this sense, beer is more than consumer product, and Steve’s thirst more than a physiological need to be met through drinking it. Rather, beer is both an actant and an absent presence in a network of relations, and in an assemblage composed of relations of desire, through which Steve assigns himself a space within a social-economic hierarchy. A fiscal economy is in this sense a signifier of both class and possibilities for mobility. I suggest too, that it also part of a sexual economy, an emotional economy, and an economy of desire for change, success, opportunity and the living of a specific style of life, or lifestyle (Rose, 1999).

I am interested in further contemplation of possible co-constitutive relations between spatiality, migration and change. I am interested in White’s (1995) spatialisation of habituated positions and performances of self as territories, and in his articulation of the possibilities for locating and moving towards, or into, different territories. This resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) descriptions of practices of territorialisation, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. This spatialised movement is described by
White (1995) through the metaphor of migration. I am interested in the operation of ‘migration’ as both metaphor and literal movement; as a movement by and through which subjects relocate themselves from one space to another; from one subject position to another, from one narrative to another, from one assemblage to another. This has implications for geographical and social mobility and the sorts of changes that these spatialised movements instantiate in the spatialised embodied subject. These changes are understood as both constitutive relation and affect, and located in the multiple and mobile networks in which they are assembled. How then, might we understand subjectivity as multiple and mobile, and trace the movements articulated in biographical narratives of experience as changes with multiple and mobile, desired and feared, predictable and unpredictable consequences? How too might we reflect on the narrative practices through which subjects articulate their pleasure, anxiety or ambivalence about these changes, and on the demands that incorporating them into coherent narratives of self and experience make?

**Act 4: The beer in Steve’s lifestyle**

Steve accomplishes some degree of narrative coherence through the articulation of a philosophy of life, and this philosophy is linked to a preferred style of life, or lifestyle.

**STEVE:** And I suppose the thing that I think that for me the thing was the over-riding concern was money, houses, cars, all of those sorts of things – all of the sorts of material trappings that I enjoy in my life. Buying expensive golf clubs and going on expensive holidays, all of those sorts of things and I suppose that’s one of the reasons
I went back from the university. I thought wow, bugger it, if I’m going to work hard, I might as well work hard and get a lot of money for it – so that’s basically my philosophy in life, I like the nice things in life. So money has been a big driver.

I have emphasised that the constitution of oneself as a subject of and with a biography is accomplished in part through the work of a subject who might realise possibilities for becomings through autonomous agentic acts of choice. This is, says Rose, an identity project that is crafted through attention to a style of life, or life-style, ‘in which life and its contingencies become meaningful to the extent that they can be construed as the product of personal choice’ (1999: 195). I have already suggested that the provision of consumer goods in Steve’s refrigerator for his children to choose (including beer) is an instantiation of them as subjects of choice, and that this is a practice of parenting that is related to a broader pedagogical project of producing the choosing subject (Bansel, 2007). I read the choices that they are invited to make as emergent from the intersection between a modernist/liberal narrative of progress and a neoliberal narrative that emphasises practices of consumption. Choice, in Steve’s account, is co-constituted in relation to the actants ‘money’, ‘consumption’, ‘lifestyle’ and ‘progress’, and articulated through an account of economic aspirations and improved lifestyles. Steve’s father would never have had beer in the house, never ever. Steve, in contrast, always has beer in the house, and this is part of his location of himself within a generational trajectory of progress inflected by practices of freedom, choice and consumption. This trajectory is mapped onto a career trajectory – the corporate ladder of success – that is articulated in relation to ‘money’. Steve’s decision to move from lecturing in a university to working
in the corporate world is articulated as a matter of lifestyle rather than as a preference for a different kind of work; and ‘lifestyle’ is correlated with ‘money’.

These actants, ‘money’, ‘choice’, ‘lifestyle’ and ‘work’, though articulated in a temporal present characterised by neoliberalism as a mode of government, cannot be understood as simply attributable to neoliberalism. Clearly Steve temporalises his desire for progress and improvement against the privation of his childhood and the assumption that each generation anticipates improved economic well being for the next, which is how he articulates the experience of his own childhood and his relation to his father.

**STEVE:** I think that it’s natural in parenting that you want your kids to enjoy a better standard of living, to enjoy an easier life than you did and I think that’s certainly true of our parents. Our parents, they had a lot tougher life than we had but their big aim was to give us a better start in life and they did and I think that mostly they did that because they saw that education was important, they saw that you know my father came out through the school of hard knocks. I think my father always wanted me to be, to do better than him and I think I wanted my kids to do better than me and I think that that generation have actually rebelled a little bit. They’ve said well our interpretation of doing better than them has tended to be material things and they seem to reason that well I’ve got all these material things and so what have we got the video recorders, the CD players and the mobile phones and maybe they’ll start looking for something else but I don’t know how it’s going to all end up.
This is a modern/liberal articulation of progress and the subject as economic actor that is intensified within neoliberalism. This signals something of the extent to which temporalised and spatialised practices of government are understood as refappings of earlier practices and narrative trajectories that are inflected by the specificity of the temporal and spatial location of bodies assembled in the present. As Steve recalls it, his father emphasised education as the pathway to improved life conditions and opportunities. Education and pedagogical practices are actants in this narrative of progress that lead directly to practices of consumption in much the same way as the training of Steve’s children standing in front of the fridge constitutes them as agents of choice. In this constitution of agency, freedom is articulated as the freedom to choose, choice is articulated as the freedom to consume, and consumption articulated as the freedom to become both the subject and agent of progress. And yet Steve is ambivalent about this narrative of progress and how it’s going to all end up.

**STEVE:** They’ve got used to just opening the fridge and oh I’ll have this and everything was available. So that has to give people a much different outlook on things to people of our generation. Now I don’t necessarily think that that’s bad per se, it’s different but I don’t necessarily think that it’s bad, it’s just the way life has evolved.

**PETER:** So, independent of being good or bad, what sorts of differences do you think it makes in the lives of people who’ve had access to those choices?

**STEVE:** They – I think they have this, well it’s here, it’s available, I’ll take it and we’ll worry about the consequences later. … So it is, the attitude is well, all these
things are here and they’re here for us to enjoy and we’ll enjoy it and, oh well, we can get a job later on and we can pay the credit card bill off, oh there’s always ways – I don’t know whether they con their parents. And I remember we helped our son out, we helped both our sons with money at various stages so I suppose, again, we’ve only got ourselves to blame. We made them like that… but there’s a few aspects that I think are terrible. … the next generation that came after us is very, very much more selfish than our generation, I see it with my children. We have made our kids like that because we were so intent on giving them everything and you know telling them they were good and that they were free people and they could do what they like but we’ve developed this very selfish nation. … But is it really any different to how I live my life, is it really any different – I did what I thought was good for me and for my immediate family – is it really any different? I don’t know whether it is.

Steve articulates this act of opening the fridge and choosing as constitutive of a different outlook and a different sort of subject. He recognises the performative force of this relation to a refrigerator, to acts of choice and consumption and to changes in subjectivity. And yet he is ambivalent about these changes. There is a tension, in Steve’s narrative, between his articulation of the younger generation as perhaps different, and perhaps not. There is an indeterminacy to this conundrum; differences, as I have argued, are diffuse and multiple rather than stable. Steve pursued what he desired and his children pursued what they desired, but these desires are different according to the specificity of the spatialised and temporalised relations in which they are imbricated. Steve and his children are, I suggest, simultaneously similar and different, for as I have
proposed, difference is never a variation from a stability, but a refiguration of something that is anyway always changing.

Assemblages, and subjects as assemblages, are constituted through historically variable practices of regulation, with lines of difference and similarity moving, simultaneously, in multiple directions; variously running parallel, crossing, diverging and doubling back on themselves. There is a tension too, in Steve’s account, between the expectation that the next generation will have more than the last, and the possibility that things have gone too far, that the next generation are too selfish. My point here is that practices are not lived in any stable way, and that experience and narrativisations of it are contradictory, ambivalent and incoherent. I suggest that we need to sit with these contradictions rather than move too swiftly towards explanatory accounts that render them meaningful and coherent. This recognises that there are limits to what we might know, claim to be able to know, to what might be knowable, and signals the instability of normative practices as meaning the same thing and having the same effects and affects for each and every subject.

**STEVE:** … but there’s a few aspects that I think are terrible. … the next generation that came after us is very, very much more selfish than our generation, I see it with my children. We have made our kids like that because we were so intent on giving them everything and you know telling them they were good and that they were free people and they could do what they like but we’ve developed this very selfish nation. … But is it really any different to how I live my life, is it really any different – I did
what I thought was good for me and for my immediate family – is it really any different? I don’t know whether it is … But life’s a choice and I think my kids have got the choice, they were both given the choice, I made a decision very early on that I would do anything and I would pay for anything that was associated with their education and I did because, as far as I’m concerned, that’s all they’re getting from me, an education, an opportunity. I’ve tried to bring them up as well as I can, give them an opportunity, kick them out in the world and tell them to go and work out their own life.

For Steve, life and its complexities, ambiguities, ambivalences and differences are articulated as a function of choice. The subject as agent of choice is alone responsible for her or his life. Steve provides his children with an education, which is seen as the basis from which they might make choices, and choose to improve their life. This is a reiteration of Steve’s father’s emphasis on education as opportunity and of the pedagogical practice of parenting that instantiates children as agents of choice; as agents who might stand before an open fridge and choose a drink. Yet, when Steve’s eldest son makes choices that are different from those of his father, those choices become unintelligible to Steve, and a site of contestation.

**STEVE:** Sometimes I think that, deep down, they’re really no different to me and at other times I think they’re quite different to me. I have one son who’s a Vet and I have one son who drives a boat on Hamilton Island and takes people snorkelling or fishing or on eco tours. He’s got no bloody money, he never will have any money but
he seems quite happy. He’s got lots of certificates, he can drive boats of this size and 
he’s a rescue diver and he’s got no money but he’s enjoying himself – well he says 
he’s enjoying himself. We sometimes argue about that.

I speculate that the choices Steve’s son has made have been constituted through different 
temporalised and spatialised assemblages of actants and that these are unintelligible to 
Steve. His son is neither the subject of progress and class transformation, nor the 
ten entrepreneurial neoliberal subject who is fiscally savvy and understands lifestyle as acts 
of consumption. Steve’s son is perhaps assembled within other narratives, discourses 
and practices of ‘lifestyle’ that emphasise the pursuit of pleasure and happiness over the 
pursuit of money. I am not attempting to stabilise Steve and his son as particular subjects 
with particular desires, but signal the ways in which there is no necessary and stable 
correspondence between causes and effects, between normative practices of government 
and stable performances of subjectivity. In this sense, narratives of choice and progress 
are understood as constituted within different and multiple matrices of intelligibility, 
which render them less than stable, and less than coherent.

I am interested in further contemplation of possible co-constitutive relations between 
regulation, pleasure and desire. How might desire and pleasure be constituted, 
embodied, performed and mobilised within and as relations among actants? What things 
might be brought together, and what things kept apart as machinic and enunciative 
assemblages of desire, and how might these be understood as intersections between 
practices of regulation and the practices of an unsubstitutable biographical subject? How 
might we work with assemblages of actants framed through Deleuze and Guattari’s
(2004) account of desire as: positive and productive; a concept of life as material flows; a process of experimentation on a plane of immanence; a force that forges connections and enhances the power of bodies in their connection; as simultaneously desiring production and social production? How then, might we rethink regulation and understand its operation in the constitution and assemblage of a biographical subject as more than oppressive, repressive or entirely deterministic, and more in terms of becoming?

Act 5: Beer in Steve’s future

**STEVE:** I sometimes feel that I would like to retire. We bought a place at Tea Gardens, when I say we bought a place at Tea Gardens, we got a place at Tea Gardens and another mortgage, or a mortgage – I’d like to spend more time fishing and playing golf. Penny’s the main reason, but I enjoy the materialistic lifestyle, I’ve got used to the materialistic lifestyle so therefore I’m very nervous about actually going on an allocated pension and not having enough money to live on. A lot of my aunts and uncles have retired and I come from a fairly large family, in fact, my youngest aunt’s only 7 years older than me and she’s only just retired. She’s telling me how wonderful it is but she’s also telling me how much she has to live on and I was very shocked … but I said to her well I’ve worked it out and I can’t see how anybody can live on less than 50 thousand dollars a year, after tax. The thought of living on anything less than 50 thousand a year after tax absolutely horrifies me so, yeah, sometimes I’m getting a bit tired and I get a bit fed up with the corporate life
and the corporate politics. ... you know when you start getting around 60, you think
oh God you know why don’t I put it all up and retire? What frightens me about
retirement? I don’t know really – not having enough money would be the biggest
thing, not having enough money to do the things that I like to do – okay you’ve seen
that I like golf, you know I’m a golf tragic but I like going and playing at Horizons or
I might go away for 4 days and play the Murray River courses, I like paying $500 for
a new driver and all those sorts of things. How can I do that if I’m retired? And I
could not possibly – some friends said to me the other day, you know, oh well we go to
the club on Thursday or something, you know that’s 8 dollar a meal day, you know
that’s usually allowable in the budget and I thought oh God, good grief don’t ever let
me get to the stage where I ever have to worry about whether I’m going out for an 8
dollar a meal, an 8 dollar club meal on a Tuesday or whatever. I couldn’t stand that
– so it’s a worry. See I’m spoilt...

Steve is anxious and ambivalent about retirement and, like the younger generation he is
so ambivalent about, also spoilt. His ambivalence centres not on his interest in work
itself, but on work as the source of income that supports his lifestyle. Whilst his
preoccupation with lifestyle and superannuation might be read as a fold of neoliberal
practices of entrepreneurship and responsibility, it is also inflected by the modernist
trajectory of progress that Steve articulates; from a childhood with no fizzy soft drinks
and a father with no beer, to the desire for a never ending supply of beer that secures the
social and economic gains that Steve has made for himself and his family. This cannot
be read simply as a neoliberal practice or technology of government that secures the
amenability of the subject to providing for oneself in retirement and guaranteeing levels
of consumption similar to those pre-retirement. Given that Steve was in his late thirties when neoliberal economic practices were introduced into Australia, we might understand his investments in, and desires for, progress and mobility to have been constituted and solidified in a liberal post-war era, and especially through the practice of migration.

Geographic migration is related, in Steve’s narrative, to class migration; to the onward and upward trajectory of improvement. If, as Steve’s narrative suggests, the actants money, lifestyle and class are assembled together with mobility and identity, then loss of income is not simply a loss of purchasing power and lifestyle, but a challenge to Steve’s location of himself as upper-middle class. This location is figured in relation to Steve’s working class background, and captured, I suggest, through the relationship between his father and beer. I propose that Steve has refigured his class location through investment in certain discourses, strategies, practice and technologies of self. He is anxious, and not unexpectedly, about the multiple losses that reduced income might entail. The complexity of this is not captured by a simple address to materialism, but a much more complex relation of the subject-as-assemblage to other co-constitutive actants in the assemblage through which subjects make an appearance and give an account of themselves. Though Steve suggests that he has sufficient retirement income, he is still nervous about the possible loss that the cessation of work and the income derived from labour might entail.
**STEVE:** And I'd have to be honest and say that providing I don’t live more than 20 years, I could easily live on what we’ve got and there’s stuff to live on 50 thousand a year for the next 20 years anyway, but I’m still nervous about actually taking the time and I doubt whether I will take the time to be honest, I will probably, even if we go up to Tea Gardens, I’ll probably find some TAFE who needs someone to teach financial accounting or go back to maybe teach it at one of the universities on a casual/part time basis, or I’ll do a bit of consulting or whatever. I can’t see me actually walking away totally, just like that.

Steve’s ambivalence and anxiety about the future secure his investment in discourses of self-care and self-management through the operation of retirement income through superannuation. His ambivalence and anxiety are necessary actants in the network of relations through which neoliberal practices of government shift responsibility for welfare and aged care to the market and the individual, and frame a temporally and spatially specific relationship between the individual and the market. For Steve, part of his anxiety about the future is about his capacity to sustain the patterns of consumption he figures as necessary to his lifestyle, and to the ways in which he understands himself as an embodiment of generational change figured against the lack of beer in his childhood. Indeed, in Steve’s imagined and preferred future there will always be beer in the fridge.
**STEVE:** I suppose because – I suppose the one thing that’s common through all the generations is that you want your kids to be better, to be more well off – not necessarily in money terms but to be more well off, to have a higher standard of living is probably a better way of putting it. You want your kids to have a higher standard of living than you had. I mean not in stupid things, I mean I said to my wife, I said I don’t care what happens but when we got married I said I don’t care what happens but we’re never going to be poor and not have beer in the fridge. If I want a beer when I come home, I want to have a beer when I come home ...

I am interested in further contemplation of possible co-constitutive relations between temporality, refiguration and becoming. I am interested in the subject as an assemblage of multiple temporalised bits and fragments that are coordinated through the apparatus of narrativity as if coherent and continuous. In foregrounding the ways in which these assemblages are temporalised as present, where the present is understood through Ricoeur’s (1988) articulation of the simultaneity of past, present and future, I emphasise that multiple becomings have already taken place, and am interested in the ways in which these are coordinated in time and space as possibilities for further becomings. These possible becomings are located in the multiple assemblages through which a subject is constituted, and in the affects between them, which alter them at the same time as they constitute them. How then, might we work with narrated biographical accounts of experience in order to: understand the operation of refigurations of practices of government, narrative trajectories, discourses and positions within them; imagine possibilities for becomings that work within and against normative practise of regulation by articulating subjects as co-constitutive relationalities, multiplicities and differences.
rather than autonomous individuals; and articulate possibilities for becomings that are
immanent in the perpetual present – yet at the same time recognise the multi-
directionality and unknowability of their consequences?

**Beer as continuity and coherence**

Though I have been at pains throughout this thesis to emphasise fragmentation,
discontinuity and incoherence, to resist giving an account of ‘Steve’ that re/assembles
him as a coherent subject, and resist over-determined accounts of homogenous
categories or single actants, I have also emphasised a paradoxical coherence and
continuity that comes from the embodied endurance of the subject over time and space. I
have emphasised that the forgotten absent is none-the-less present, and that this presence
constitutes a continuity that is figured through memory and practices of narration. I have
suggested, in the account I have given of Steve, that beer is an actant through which his
narrative might be understood as an assemblage that temporalises and spatialises him in
the simultaneity of past-present, present-present and future-present. Beer is
simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, here and there, present and absent,
remembered and forgotten. It is linked to other actants in those networks or assemblages
through which ‘Steve’ gives a biographical account of himself and his experience.

I have gestured here to the ways in which normative and regulatory practices of
government are inflected by temporal and spatial relations and specificities. Repertoires
of possible becomings, and co-constitutive relations among actants, are assembled in
relationalities that constitute the simultaneous regulation and specificity of human
subjects. I have suggested that it is the specificity of the actants in any assemblage that constitute the idiosyncrasy or haecceity of the assemblage, and of the human-subject-as-assemblage. I suggest that by attending to the actant beer, we might understand the ways in which it is inflected by the specificity of the Steve-assemblage. And conversely, that by tracing the presence of the actant beer in Steve’s narrative we might understand something of the specificity and idiosyncrasy of his assemblage within normative practices of regulation.

In foregrounding, temporalising and spatialising the place of the actant ‘beer’ in Steve’s biographical narrative in this way, I have given a different sort of account of neoliberalism and subjectivity than one that primarily addresses the operation of normative regulatory discursive repertoires and practices of government. In temporalising and spatialising beer in this way I have also attempted to temporalise and spatialise Steve-as-assemblage and consider the ways in which past, present and future, memory and experience, desire and ambivalence are coordinated in and as narrativity; in and as the constitution and coordination of the narrator, the narrated, the narration and narratability. Indeed, my account of Steve is similarly coordinated through narrativity: through my engagement as narrator and yours as reader; through the acts of narration and the narratives I have performed; through those practices of enunciation that have constituted the narratability of the ideas I have worked with; and through the assemblage of other co-constitutive relational actants, including texts, theories, theorists, ideas, concepts, colleagues, dreams and questions.
I have not attempted to give a comprehensive account of ‘Steve’ but articulate something of the constitution of the Steve-assemblage as an idiosyncratic rendering of practices of regulation. I have worked to simultaneously recognise the operation of normative practices of regulation and unravel their stability, singularity and coherence. Having emphasised messiness rather than coherence in the accounts we give of ourselves and each other, I think of messiness and incoherence not as the absence of order, but as the simultaneous co-existence of multiple orders; of an impossible and overwhelming excess of multiplicities. Attempts to live with, and contain this multiplicity, result in practices that filter, exclude and elide this too-muchness by reducing it to norms that are never anyway as stable as they appear. I’m proposing a counter movement that embraces this too-muchness as simultaneously unbearable and as the possibility of becoming. This is a movement that recognises that normativities are unstable regulatory fictions, and that becomings have no fixed shape. Becomings are, in this sense, unknowable and unpredictable - yet happening all the time. This requires of us that we embrace ambiguity, ambivalence, incompleteness and uncertainty, with who knows what consequences. This is, as Haver says, ‘an affirmation of the thrownness’ of existence, irrespective of anything we might construe to be an intentionality (Haver, 1997: 280). This does not mean, he reminds us, that anything goes, ‘but that precisely, because anything goes, not everything goes: not that everything is possible, but that anything is possible: this is the play of relationality per se, of futurity’ (Haver, 1997: 280).
Inter/section #8: a medi(t)ation on assembling

Just as I have recognised that there are lacunae in any of the accounts we give of ourselves, I recognise that there are lacunae in this thesis-as-assemblage: in its theoretical framings and philosophical contemplations; in the accounts I have given of my own experience; and in the accounts I have given of Frances, Chris, Helen and Steve. I think of these lacunae not as omissions but of spaces of rupture, forgetting, opacity and possibility; spaces to which I might return, time and again, and begin, over and again, following different trajectories, making different connections and mapping different relations. So here, closer to the end than the beginning, I turn my gaze simultaneously back and forward, to the horizon of possibility that begins elsewhere and otherwise, and goes who knows where. ‘Time’, says Foucault, ‘is lost in space, or rather, it’s always absolutely positioned in this deep and impossible figure … which is a circle: there what has no ending is revealed as being identical to what begins again’ (Foucault, 2004: 113).
Concluding

How does one conclude a discussion in which the limits to understanding have been as central to the analysis as claims to knowledge? (Gonick, 2003: 161)

How, indeed?

Giving an account of myself #1

Here at the end, I confer upon the text a retrospective coherence that it never had as it was assembled in bits and fragments. So what might I say I have done? I have simultaneously given an account of myself and my biography, of my intellectual project and my research, and of my engagement with possibilities for working with narrated life-history accounts of experience. In so doing I have worked with the accounts of experience given by and about Chris in Chapter Three, Frances in Chapter Four, Helen in Chapter Five and Steve in Chapter Seven. In working with and through these accounts I have contemplated the practices through which subjects, experience and biographical narratives are constituted and performed. What, I have asked, might anyone in any particular time and space say about her- or him-self? How might any of us, anywhere, have come to be able to say anything at all? How is what we say constituted as sayable or not, intelligible or not? How do we hold together the incoherent and discontinuous moments, events and memories that constitute our experience as if coherent and continuous? These questions have both informed, and emerged from, my engagement with narratives, practices of narration and the giving of an account of oneself.
I have located both the constitution of the subject and the giving of an account of oneself in the apparatuses of governmentality and narrativity. Through these apparatuses disparate events, relations, knowledges, practices, discourses and memories are constituted, coordinated and assembled into recognisable, intelligible and coherent accounts of oneself. It is, I have suggested, through acts of narration that we ‘grasp together’ the discontinuous bits and fragments, the ‘multiple and scattered events’ of our lives and life-stories, and coordinate them in and as a ‘whole and complete story’, schematised and made coherent and intelligible in and as narrative (Ricoeur, 1984: x).

Indeed, that which I am now writing, and that you are now reading (though temporalised in different moments of presence) is a narrative through which I am giving an account of what I have done in producing this thesis.

This is a text that signals its constitution as a text; as a written account of the inquiry it purports to represent. It is written in multiple genres and voices that oscillate between a performance of disinterested reportage - such as descriptions of governmentality theory and neoliberalism - a performance of intimacy and disclosure - such as descriptions of my own experience - and a reflexivity that self-consciously signals the contemporaneous thinking through which the ideas and contemplations expressed in the text were composed and exposed. So, it is as much a writing project as it is an act of research. Indeed the writer, the act of writing and the written are actants in the assemblage of the research; and of the thesis as an assemblage of relationally co-constitutive actants (including interviewees, theorists, theories, books, quotations, supervisors, conversations and so on). It is a performative text: that is, I have attempted to perform the ideas,
uncertainties, thoughts, speculations and propositions through which the text is articulated. As a performative text it is animated by the limits to what it is possible for me to say, think, know or write within the spatialised territory of the doctoral thesis. It is, as I gestured in the beginning, a project excited by and performed within those limits; a project that simultaneously capitulates to and resists them, risking, in the process, possibilities for the intelligibility of myself as an appropriate(d) doctoral candidate, and the text as an appropriate doctoral thesis. It is, in these ways, an assemblage of acts of re-searching (Speedy, 2008) what I might think or know, or think I know, or know that I do not know. As a knowledge project it is composed of knowing and not knowing, of speculations and propositions that are stabilised on one side and undone on another, and it is this movement between them that I have been at pains to articulate.

I have been engaged in the act of re-searching my thinking about, and my theorising of, narrated life-history accounts of experience in order to articulate possibilities for working with those accounts in ways that emphasise partiality, multiplicity, contingency, opacity, contradiction, incommensurability and incoherence. I have attempted, in working to extend my understanding of governmentality theory and discourse analysis, to remain alert to the risk of producing a reductive reading of the relationship between practices of regulation and the constitution of an embodied subject. I have worked to resist a reading of life-history narratives that assumes stable relationships between regulatory discourses and practices of government and subjectivity, or between causes and their effects. In working with narrated biographical accounts of experience, including my own, I have attempted to ask questions of, and about, qualitative inquiries that are 'not necessarily interested in seeking causal determinations or direct access to
experience’ (Gonick, 2003: 56). I have articulated a subject simultaneously regulated by practices of government and an excess of them; a regulated subject who is simultaneously and paradoxically an irreducible, unsubstitutable irregularity. These principles of simultaneity and paradox emerged as central framing concepts or devices upon which my thinking turned, often in many directions, and all at the same time.

I have articulated the subject as an excess of practices of regulation, and hence not reducible to them. In working against a modern, liberal or neoliberal account of an autonomous, agentic and rational individual, I have articulated a fictive, relational and idiosyncratic subject; a subject co-constituted in relations with other bodies, both human and not. In working with the concept of a specific, idiosyncratic subject, I have worked against neoliberal accounts of an autonomous individual set against and apart from the social or the collective. Rather, I have worked to articulate something of the non-reductive, indeed non-reducible, specificity of a relational subject. I have given an account of a corporeal human subject who is paradoxically more and less than human, one who is paradoxically singular and multiple, and whose materiality, agency, singularity and multiplicity are constituted through those actants, agents, relations and networks in which they are assembled, and of which they are an assemblage. This subject is unsubstitutable as one for another precisely as a function of the haecceity of the assemblage of and from which they are an incorporated corporeality.

Cavarero’s (2000) address to the specificity of a relational unsubstitutable subject, or ‘who’, informed my articulation of a subject whose unsubstitutability is emergent from the specificity of the co-constitutive relations through which she or he has been
assembled as a specific embodied human subject. This is a multiple, relational, heterogeneous, mobile, embodied and idiosyncratic subject. For Massey, the very possibility of ‘any serious recognition of multiplicity and heterogeneity’ depends on a recognition of spatiality (2005: 11). This recognition has both political and ethical implications, for the ‘thorough spatialisation’ of social theory, and the political thinking emergent from it, ‘can force into the imagination a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell’ (2005: 11). It is the ethical re-telling of these stories of and about others that I have simultaneously engaged with, theorised and problematised.

I have also engaged with, theorised and problematised questions of subjectification and subjectivity; with how subjects are constituted and constitute themselves in, as and through their biographical accounts of experience. In so doing, I have followed Rose’s suggestion that we might ‘produce more in terms of intelligibility’ if we consider the question of subjectification less in terms of the kind of subject produced (a self, an individual, or an agent) and more in terms of ‘what humans are enabled to do through the forms into which they are machinated or composed’ (1998: 182). Like Deleuze and Guattari (2004), Rose emphasises that what humans are able to do is not intrinsic to the flesh, body, mind, psyche or soul, but constituted through the links or flows of force through which human beings are assembled in constantly changing times, spaces and relations with other bodies, both human and not. My inquiry has been directed towards articulation of the co-constitutive relations between human and non-human actants in temporalised and spatialised networks or assemblages. This inquiry has been informed by a theoretical relation forged between Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) concepts of
assemblage and of bodies as more than human, and the emphasis on co-constitutive actants as agents in networks of relations taken from Actor Network Theory (Callon, 1986; Callon and Latour, 1981; Latour, 1987, 1988, 1993; Law, 1992). These co-constitutive temporalised and spatialised relational actants, and the accounts we might give of them, have been articulated through a proposed relation between governmentality and narrativity. It is through such a relation that actants, relations and assemblages are performatively constituted as simultaneously and paradoxically, regulated and irreducible, normative and specific, singular and multiple.

These preoccupations with simultaneity and paradox, temporality and spatiality were nowhere more acute than in my own biography. I have given an account of my past, or possible past, coordinated through acts of remembering and forgetting that called into question the veracity of that which I remembered, and might know or believe to be true. This informed my preoccupation with questions of memory, with remembering and forgetting, and with my desire to know. These preoccupations informed and shaped each of the chapters, and each of the chapters was shaped through a series of propositions and questions coordinated through the concepts thinking, knowing, speaking, relating, remembering, forgetting and assembling. In giving an account of myself, and of the accounts that others have given to me, I have searched for ways to ‘stage the aporias’ (Lather, 2007: 145), the lacunae, excesses and opacities involved in the telling of my own stories as well as those of others. I have worked with concepts of indeterminacy and paradox as a way ‘undoing fixities’ (Lather, 2007: 105) and as a way of playing with, and playing out, constitutive relations between regulation and irreducibility, normativity and specificity.
This has involved not simply the re-searching of my own thinking about biography, but re-searching ways of working with narrated biographical accounts of experience. This has engaged me in contemplation of questions of theory and methodology. I have attempted, in this regard, to make connections between my theorising of subjectivity, governmentality and narrativity, and coordinate them through concepts of temporality, spatiality, performativity, relationality and idiosyncrasy. I have attempted to generate multiple inconclusive lines of inquiry and interpretation that problematise assumptions of stable and coherent relations between causes and effects. I have worked to capture a certain disorderliness in the multiple and contradictory ways in which lived subjectivities escape codification (Gonick, 2003). In articulating the subject as a relational assemblage of bodies, both human and not, I have specifically questioned ‘anthropomorphic notions about human beings as central actors in the shaping of their worlds’ (Speedy, 2008: 186). In this way I have given an account of a de-individualised and de-centred, embodied and unsubstitutable human subject. This account has been accomplished through a ‘certain open-endedness, incompleteness, uncertainty, and ambivalence’ (Gonick, 2003: 55) and yet, paradoxically, here I am, giving an account of myself and my research that imputes coherence and closure to it.

**Giving an account of myself #2**

I have worked to give an account of the subject; of the work of being constituted and of constituting oneself as a subject; of the work of subjectification; of subjectivity at work. Although we have become adept within postmodernism at talking about normativity, we
are less adept, says Halberstam (2005), at describing in detail the practices, positions and performances that escape one-to-one accounts of transmission between causes and effects. I have embraced the challenge of describing a relational and irreducible subject by working reflexively with theory and narrated biographical accounts of experience; both my own and those of others. I have worked to open out questions of theory rather than move too swiftly to analyses and definitions of narrators and their narratives. I have done so, in part, by articulating a reflexive, relational response to the narratives, and by positioning my accounts of others as explorations, rather than their accounts as exemplars. I have worked with Chris’s narrative in Chapter Three in order to theorise the performative force of speech as simultaneously a technology of government and of self. I have worked with Frances’s narrative in Chapter Four in order to theorise a relational account of subjectivity, and of subjectification as a constitutive wounding. I have worked with Helen’s narrative in Chapter Five in order to theorise the temporalised practices through which one narrates oneself as simultaneously self-same and changeable.

I have worked with these narratives of experience, as well as those of my own, in an attempt to articulate something of the unsubstitutable specificity of a subject who is an excess of practices of regulation. I have located this specificity in the haecceity of a particular assemblage of actants and relations, embodied in, and as, a human subject. I have done this not only through an address to questions of subjectivity, but also, in Chapter Seven, through an address to the narrative of one particular subject: Steve. I have emphasised that Steve, like any of us, is an irreducible and idiosyncratic subject on account of: his relationality; his being assembled-together in multiple and mobile, and
hence unsubstitutable, co-constitutive relations with other bodies; and of his endurance as temporalised and spatialised refigurations of relations, experiences and memories through which he gives an account of himself. The account that I have given of Steve as a relational assemblage is itself assembled through the theorising developed in relation to the accounts that others have given of themselves, and that I have given of them. In this way, any ‘I’ is a sign of multiplicity and relationality rather than singularity and autonomy.

I have suggested that the constitutive past and its relations and assemblages leave traces in the present, and that these present absences might themselves be traced (in however a rudimentary and non-totalising way) to reanimate those co-constitutive relations through which human subjects are assembled with other bodies. This attention to co-constitutive bodies shifts attention from ‘the body’, meaning the corporeal human body or embodied subject, to ‘the linkages established between particular surfaces, forces and energies’ (Rose, 1998: 184). Through these linkages human actants are assembled with other actants, both human and not, in multiple and changing relationships. The corporeality of the human subject is not, then, ‘delineated by the envelope of the skin’ (Rose, 1998:185) but is rather ‘the unstable resultant of the assemblages within which humans are caught up’, and which induce certain relations to ourselves as embodied (1998: 184). These assemblages constitute relations between, and are co-constitutive relations among actants, events, experiences and memories; discourses, narratives and matrices of intelligibility; multiple effects, affects, thoughts and emotions; sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches; various times and spaces; and multiple constitutive and regulatory practices and technologies of government and self.
I have given an account of practices of subjectification, subjectivity and subjects as complex interconnections and lines of force between heterogeneous components that make possible, stabilize and transform particular relations to oneself and others in particular times and spaces. Practices of subjectification constitute the subject through being-assembled-together with particular bodies, knowledges, technologies and practices that produce certain ways of being-human, that ‘territorialize, stratify, fix, organize, and render durable’ particular relations that human subjects establish with themselves and each other (Rose, 1998: 186). These assemblages of actants and relations are capable of being affected in multiple ways; predictable and not, knowable and not. I have not been concerned with the identification of origins or causes, truths or meanings, but with the co-constitutive relations among bodies through which subjects are assembled; through which they are constituted, regulated and transformed. It is these relational linkages between actants within assemblages that I have traced and sketched when working with Steve’s narrated biographical account of experience. I recognise that any account I have given of these relations and linkages has been necessarily partial, provisional and an articulation of possibilities rather than probabilities.

In the accounts I have given of Steve, of myself and of those other subjects who appear in my text, I have traced multiple interconnections, contradictions, tensions, presences, absences, coherences, incommensurabilities and co-constitutive relations among temporalised and spatialised actants. In addressing the heterogeneity of subjects, I have responded to ‘the problematics of telling stories that belong to others’ (Lather, 2007: 87) by producing similarly heterogeneous accounts of them. Further, I have not presumed to
tell the stories of others: rather, I have told stories, among many possible, of how they may have been assembled in particular times and spaces from the multiple relational actants through whom their stories have been both narrated and made narratable. I have not assumed a stable coherent subject who can be accounted for in her or his totality or authenticity. Rather, in understanding the subject as an assemblage of co-constitutive relations between bodies I have given an account of the specificity, haecceity or idiosyncrasy of a named embodied subject as an assemblage of relations among actants.

I have emphasised that actants in an assemblage are not necessarily the same in each and every assemblage in which they appear, and that this multiplied difference constitutes the haecceity or idiosyncrasy of any particular assemblage. I have suggested that through an address to these multiple actants and changing assemblages, we might understand something of the constitution of subjects as idiosyncratic assemblages of normative inscriptions, meanings and performances of age, class, gender, sexuality (and so on). In framing my account of Steve through the non-human actant beer rather than through constitutive typological categories, I have articulated the ways in which inscriptions such as class and gender are emergent from, and intersect with, other practices, experiences and relations among co-constitutive actants. This has, I suggest, produced multiplied and complexified accounts of subjectification and subjectivity as relations among co-constitutive actants rather than as exemplars of stable, normative, constitutive categories, taxonomies or practices.

Rather than simply giving an account of Steve and his imbrication in normative discourses, positions and practices, I have attempted to capture something of the
multiple, temporalised and spatialised relations through which he is constituted. It is through these relations that he is both constituted, and constitutes himself, as the subject of his own biography; and as a subject who might give an account of himself. In giving such an account of Steve I have resisted any assumption that he, or any other subject, might be understood to have been constituted through ‘a set of fairly specific, determinate, and more or less identifiable processes’ (Law, 2004: 5, original emphasis), or through recourse to a number of set principles automatically applied to the object of study - which amounts, says Law, to a ‘methodological version of auditing’ (2004: 6).

Law’s aim to broaden, subvert and remake method emerges from a number of commitments, including contesting the expectation that we can arrive at more or less stable conclusions about the way things are, and that we can name, analyse and deconstruct stable objects of study such as ‘Steve’, subjectivity, neoliberalism, gender and so on. Law emphasises a necessary move to ‘escape the postulate of singularity’ and respond creatively to a world that is taken to ‘be composed of an excess of generative forces and relations’ (Law, 2004: 9); to live more in and through ‘slow method, or vulnerable method, or quiet method’, method that is multiple, modest and uncertain (2004: 11). I have tried to avoid making grand claims about my intentions that might be tied up, synthesised or summarised as a specified number of propositions or insights. In giving an account of subjectivity, and of a particular subject, I have emphasised a non-reductive multiplicity and uncertainty, and embraced possibilities for approaching research as a space for developing theory about research rather than testing hypotheses and drawing conclusions (Gonick, 2003: 57).
Giving an account of myself #3

I have given an account of a narratable, narrativised, narrating and narrated subject. This is a subject constituted as the narrator of her or his own biography or life-history. I have emphasised that the narrated biography is neither a truth account of the past, nor ‘a project that one simply makes up’ (Ricoeur, 2007: 195). Rather, it is a work of memory through which the subject gathers her- or him-self together and ‘attempts to construct a life story that is both intelligible and acceptable, one that is both intellectually readable and emotionally supportable’ (2007: 195). This work of memory is also a work of forgetting, of remainders, lacunae and opacities. And yet ‘there never “remains” anything of the subject’, since she or he is re-created on each occasion (Deleuze, 2004: 105). The struggle for subjectivity ‘presents itself, therefore, as the right to difference, variation and metamorphosis’ (Deleuze, 2004: 105-6). It is something of this subject as simultaneously moment and movement, stability and change, normativity and idiosyncrasy, similarity and difference, presence and becoming, human and not, that I have attempted to articulate in my address to biographical accounts of experience. I have coordinated these multiple and changing moments, movements and bodies through the apparatus of narrativity. I have assembled an account of these multiple and mobile bodies as assemblages that are temporalised as refigurations of the past made present, and spatialised as the simultaneity of stories-so-far (Massey, 2005).

In emphasising a subject who is the constitutive effect of this simultaneity of stories-so-far, the ‘conditions of emergence’ of any subject can never be fully accounted for; especially since the subject is opaque and ‘not fully translucent and knowable to itself’ (Butler, 2005: 19). So, although I recognise that the accounts we give of ourselves rely
upon a formative history and relationality ‘that cannot be easily reconstructed in narrative’ (Butler, 2005: 132), I suggest that the apparatus of narrativity (as the constitution and co-ordination of the narrator, the act of narration, the narrated and the narratable) is a technology through which we might trace constitutive relations, or ‘relays of influence’ (Halberstam: 2005: 152) among bodies or actants. Narrativity is also an apparatus for the articulation of a relational assembled subject as a becoming, as an assemblage of bodies and relations simultaneously remembered and forgotten, known and not, transparent and opaque, present and absent, and always refigured in the present as presence.

Emergent from an engagement with the enigma of my own memory, I have been concerned with the present and its relation to the past, and particularly to memories of the past. I have articulated an account of the present, and of the present moment of articulation, as simultaneously past, present and future. Ricoeur’s (1988) account of a non-linear temporality emphasises reversibility over retrieval in acts of memory and narration. Such acts are shaped by a simultaneously restorative and anticipatory movement in which all moments are co-present. In this sense meaning and truth are not determined by their status as event, but constituted retroactively, repeatedly and differently; and, since time is reversible, alternative stories are always possible. Events, memories, and memories of events, are not merely archived in spaces constituted in and by the past, but are refigured in the present and as presence. In the process of being configured (constituted) on the basis of a normatively regulated and prefigured subject (the one who is pressed upon us and that we take as our own) the subject is endlessly refigured (re/produced over and again), sometimes as an iteration of what went before,
sometimes as mimetic to changing forms of governance and practices of subjectification, and sometimes as an eruption of resistances to, or excesses and ruptures of, the normalising technologies through which subjects are constituted.

These refigurations are contiguous with the movements of multiple and changing assemblages of bodies as becomings. The subject, as a changing assemblage, ‘continues to labour on itself in the service of making of itself a continuity’ (Butler, 1997a: 72), thus establishing its temporality and endurance. This temporality and endurance, or refiguration across time and space, fabricates the coherence and stability of the subject who is changing.

What is brought into being through the performative effect of the interpellating demand is much more than a “subject”, for the “subject” created is not for that reason fixed in place: it becomes the occasion for a further making. Indeed, I would add, a subject only remains a subject through a reiteration or rearticulation of itself as a subject, and this dependency of the subject on repetition for coherence may constitute that subject’s incoherence, its incomplete character. (Butler, 1997a: 99)

It is this incomplete, always changing, often opaque and idiosyncratic (yet normatively constituted and regulated) relational subject-as-assemblage that I have attempted to trace and articulate; and to trace and articulate in the account I have given of Steve-as-assemblage when working with the account he has given of himself. In addressing subjectivity and the biographical subject as an assemblage, I have traced the co-
constitutive relations between the multiple elements of, or actants who comprise, any assemblage. Law, citing the work of Mol (2002), refers to this as a ‘praxiography’; an act of investigating ‘the uncertain and complex lives of objects in a world where there is no closure’ (Law, 2004: 59).

**Giving an account of myself #4**

‘(T)o live is to live a life politically, in relation to power, in relation to others, in the act of assuming responsibility for a collective future. To assume responsibility for a future, however, is not to know its direction fully in advance, since the future, especially the future with and for others, requires a certain openness and unknowingness; it implies becoming part of a process the outcome of which no one subject can surely predict’ (Butler, 2004a: 39).

**Giving an account of myself #5**

I have traced multiple co-constitutive relations through which a biographical subject produces a life-history account of experience in the context of a narrative interview. In theorising the practice of giving an account of oneself, I have given an account of the constitution of the narrating and narratable subject, the practice of narration and of possibilities for working with narrated accounts of experience. I have worked with one particular narrative in order to theorise a relationship between the one and the many, such that the one might be read as the many, rather than as an exemplar of the many. Having read the many in the one I might now move on to those other narratives in the corpus I have collected, reading each of them as an assemblage, and all of them
together-as-an-assemblage. I might read them through the framing propositions, questions and concepts I have developed here, and trace lines and flows of relations between and among them, with who knows what consequences. Here, at the end of the account I have given of my research, I recognise that both that research and my account of it have been composed of opacities, lacunae and omissions as much as anything else. I might, then, even begin again, and re-search my research, finding and giving other possible accounts of it, for, as I have suggested, time is reversible and alternative stories are always possible.
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