Towards ethical ‘arts of existence’: through art therapy and narrative therapy

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Dedication

For Galiindurra, the sisters and all their mob,

and

‘Leticia’, ‘Groovy Gran’, Emma and their family

We go toward the best known unknown thing, where knowing and not knowing touch, where we hope we will know what is unknown. Where we hope we will not be afraid of understanding the incomprehensible, facing the invisible, hearing the inaudible, thinking the unthinkable...Painting is trying to paint what you cannot paint and writing is writing what you cannot know (Cixous, 1993, p. 38).
Acknowledgements

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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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(Author’s signature)
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‘Hang on there!’ says an imaginary Voice of Reason. ‘There might be some very good reasons for not inviting these poststructural ideas to the art therapy table. I heard that these ideas gatecrashed a much bigger party than ours, organised by the whole area of the human sciences, and behaved themselves appallingly. They poked their grubby fingers into every philosophical and political pie that was served, neoliberalism, neo-Marxism, post-Marxism, positivism, post-positivism, you name it. When they were challenged, they argued that eating with a fork was a historically and culturally situated practice rather than a universal necessity. And that was just for starters! They refused to partake of the main course, humanism, which as we all know everybody loves. Then, they began deconstructing the psychodynamic dessert before it even reached the table – as the chef was passing it across the counter to the waiter. Now, there’s an example of counter-transference for you! When one of the ideas was asked if she wasn’t deeply ashamed of herself, she replied that she didn’t believe in an essential and autonomous self to be ashamed of. As for the idea of ‘deeply’ ashamed, she claimed that metaphors of depth are related to the hermeneutic of the self that developed out of the expansion and secularisation of the Christian practice of confession, and that ‘shame’, in this instance, was an effect of modern normalising power. Boy, did she have a mouth on her! Then, to top it all off, the bloody lot of them got raving drunk on that late-picked French wine, what was it called? The 1984 Chateau de Foucault...’
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American Psychological Association (APA)
Australian Art Therapist, Registered (AATR)
Detective Inspector (D.I.)
Narrative, Discourse and Pedagogy Concentration (NDP)
New South Wales (NSW)
Sparticists (Spants)
United States of America (USA)
United Kingdom (UK)
University of Western Sydney (UWS)

A note on style

This thesis generally follows American Psychological Association (APA) style. Accordingly, I have cited the date when a work was first published as well as the publication date of the version of the text I am using (e.g. Foucault, 1984/2000). Page references are to the version I am using (e.g. Foucault 1984/2000, p. 66). I have found this practice to be a useful way of giving a basic temporal/historical location to the literature I am drawing on, especially since I have made fairly extensive use of recent editions. I break with the conventions of APA style at times in the service of the aesthetics and/or utility of my text. In particular, I have included footnotes rather than endnotes, so that the main text and the notes can be read together.

Variations in fonts are intentional and are part of the creative textual methodologies of this thesis.
This thesis enacts a response, rather than provides an answer, to questions of ‘what we are’ and ‘what we might become’, in the context of a poststructural enquiry into (my) practices of art psychotherapy and narrative therapy. My project is inspired by therapeutic meetings with many people over many years, and by the intellectual work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and other poststructural theorists, particularly those working at the intersections of poststructuralism with feminist and postcolonial theory.

Following Foucault, I take up the suggestion that therapy is constituted, through forms of modern power, as a crucial contemporary site of both governance and resistance. I propose that in different ways art psychotherapy and narrative therapy bring the rational, autonomous subject into question and disrupt the dominance of humanist and positivist regimes. Through thinking/writing art psychotherapy and narrative therapy together, I seek to destabilise their apparent opposition and to challenge the normative tendencies of each.

Rather than synthesising new possibilities for the domains of theory and practice through a dialectic of academic theory and clinical practice, I engage in this work with the (im)possibility of deconstructing the theory/practice divide. My subjectivities as therapy practitioner and beginning researcher come under erasure in this thesis through writing methodologies that disrupt narrative and subjective coherence. My work is that of creating and unravelling, of shaping a productive critique while unsettling the possibility of a decisive critical agency. I offer passionate and fragmented narratives of my relationships with poststructuralisms, with therapeutic practice and identity, with those who come to meet with me in therapy, and with Other possibilities that interrupt the trajectory of my attempts to ‘give an account’ of myself (Butler, 2001) and my work. In these ways, I shape an aesthetics of self together with an ethics of uncertainty and obligation to the Other, working towards a politics and poetics of transformation.
Chapter 1

Introductions

The ethical question of politics, or responsibility, has always haunted me, as I imagine it haunts all the fireflies irresistibly attracted by the art-candle (Cixous, 1994/1997, p. 6).
Since we cannot see through language as through a window to some true meaning, what is clarity but a relation of power so refined as to be rendered invisible? What does it mean to (in)form oneself or another in the distorting mirror of a text, painting or therapeutic encounter? How could there be either art or therapy, or writing, or an ‘art therapy’ or ‘narrative therapy’, without ambiguity? I propose an en-title-ment to engage in research that is located in the space of a contradiction: namely, that through art, therapy and writing I can “(pull) myself free of myself” (Foucault, 1980/2000a, p. 242), even though “all demystification sends you back to your own self” (Clement, 1978/1987, p. 69).

As when making that first mark on a blank sheet of fine art paper, I am anxious, as I begin this thesis, that there may be nothing ‘new’ to say/make, or if there is, that I may not be equal to the task of saying/making it. In attempting to understand the difficulties of beginning, I have revisited what Edward Said says on the subject.

The problem of beginnings is one of those problems that, if allowed to, will confront one with equal intensity on a practical and on a theoretical level. Every writer knows that the choice of a beginning for what (s)he will write is crucial not only because it determines much of what follows but also because a work’s beginning is, practically speaking, the main entrance to what it offers...

...The choice of a beginning is important to any enterprise, even if, as is so often the case, a beginning is accepted as a beginning after we are long past beginning and after our apprenticeship is over (Said, 1975, p. 3 & p. 76).

Said begins Beginnings: Intention and method (1975) with an exposition of and meditation upon the philosophical and practical difficulties of beginning to write a text.¹ I take heart from Said’s refusal to either take beginnings for granted or to reduce

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¹At the same time, Said cautions against being excessively preoccupied with beginnings, ironically citing his own extended meditation in chapter two of Beginnings: intention and method (1975) as a case in point.
their multiplicity and indeterminacy to a search for a single ‘origin’. However, I do not share his sense that my apprenticeship is over — indeed ongoing apprenticeship becomes one of the guiding metaphors of this thesis. I suspect that beginnings are similarly ongoing. According to Said, there are at least two kinds of beginning, one “temporal and transitive” (p. 76) and the other “intransitive and conceptual” (p. 77), one that formally initiates the time of its own discoveries and another (since it is impossible to ever locate a ‘true’ beginning) that is an infinitely receding point — the “felt absence of the absolute” (p. 76). These come together to mark the inauguration of a contemporary text. Such a text, Said claims, must be vital, optimistic, and even imprudent in its assumption of moving forward, yet it will also hark back to what is unknowable. “(T)he unknown remains with us to haunt us from its horizon even after we have consciously begun” (p. 78).

In this introductory chapter, I offer my readers, through academic discourse and through more intimate practices of memoir, a sketch of the terrain of this thesis project. Writing with and against the conventions of the thesis, I begin — almost — with an exposition of the problem formulated and addressed in this research. I introduce my readers to some of my impressions, understandings and experiences of postructuralisms, art therapy, narrative therapy and the expressive therapies. I also introduce some of my-selves, as I/we traverse the domains of therapy and research, theory and practice, truth and fiction, towards ethical ‘arts of existence’, in the hope that these initial meetings will be sufficient enticement for you to come with us on what is at times a difficult and tortuous journey.

**Introducing the thesis (im)proper**

This thesis enacts a response, rather than provides an answer, to questions of ‘what we are’ and ‘what we might become’, in the context of a poststructural enquiry into (my) practices of art psychotherapy and narrative therapy. My project is inspired by therapeutic meetings with many people over many years, especially with the children and families whose stories inform the later chapters of the thesis. I also draw inspiration from the intellectual work of Foucault, Butler and other poststructural
theorists, particularly those working at the intersections of poststructuralism with feminist and postcolonial theory.

Following Foucault, I take up the suggestion that therapy is constituted, through forms of modern power, as a crucial contemporary site of both governance and resistance. I consider how the historical and theoretical antecedents of art psychotherapy and of narrative therapy shape the respective possibilities and limits of each of these therapeutic practices, including their predominantly oppositional relation to each other. I propose that in different ways art psychotherapy and narrative therapy bring into question the rational, autonomous subject and disrupt the dominance of humanist and positivist regimes. I suggest how therapy might be thought and performed beyond the discursive categories of ‘self-knowledge’ and ‘expert knowledge’. Through thinking/writing art psychotherapy and narrative therapy together, I seek to destabilise the normative tendencies of each, bringing the binary of the social and the psychic into question.

Rather than ‘applying’ a poststructural theoretical framework and poststructural research methodology to practice examples from the field of therapy, this thesis problematises the production and division of the subjects and objects of therapy and research. Rather than synthesising new possibilities for the domains of theory and practice through a dialectic of academic theory and clinical practice, I engage in this work with the (im)possibility of deconstructing the theory/practice divide. Within a poststructural analytic of power, the theory/practice divide itself can be considered as a binary that is continually reconstituted through relations of power and knowledge, and is thus vulnerable to resistance. My work inevitably re-cites/ reconstitutes the binary of theory and practice in relation to researching and writing (about) therapy, even as it questions and moves at least momentarily beyond that binary.

Rather than setting up a binary of process and outcome in therapy, I would suggest that therapy can be a practice both inclusive and in excess of the desire for ‘results’ (Linnell, Hanslow and Rummery, 2006). Moving beyond binaries of process-oriented and outcome-oriented therapy, it becomes possible to acknowledge the subtle and powerful transformations in relationships and subjectivities that are paradoxically enabled by stepping away from expectations of specific behavioural outcomes.
I hope this research will make it a little more difficult for myself, and for other interested therapy practitioners, to think as we may have habitually come to think and to do as we may have habitually come to do. I hope to generate textual/aesthetic practices that make visible and reach beyond what we may otherwise take (and make) for granted. If, within poststructuralisms, transformation is inseparable from critique, then the work of imagining and performing the possibilities of poststructural art-based therapies is not separate from the work of deconstructing discursive practices of therapies already in circulation. Neither is ‘conceptualising’ separate from ‘constituting’ a poststructural art-based therapy. Given the material force of discourses in (re)constituting the normal, the natural and the true, it follows that the textual practices composing the thesis itself, the performativity of its writing and making, are crucial to my endeavour. Since I consider the writing of this thesis to be both performative and productive, I attempt to notice and de-naturalise the ways in which my writing inevitably reconstitutes the conventions of both therapy and research.

My subjectivities as therapy practitioner and beginning researcher come under erasure in this thesis through writing methodologies that disrupt narrative and subjective coherence. My work is that of creating and unravelling, of shaping a productive critique while unsettling the possibility of a decisive critical agency. Thus my research is necessarily an experiment in constituting and deconstructing the ‘I’ embodied in the text of the thesis. ‘I’ want to catch how ‘I’ am spoken and made visible by discourse; how ‘I’ am implicated in producing the very discourses that ‘I’ resist. I want to write and draw into being, at least momentarily, a poststructural subject whose possibility challenges the inscription within therapy of the normative tendencies of the ‘psy’ disciplines (Rose, 1998). This writing calls my autonomy, rationality and subjectivity as a therapist, and as the researcher/writer of this thesis, radically into question.

My thesis enacts how practices of poststructural thought are interwoven with therapeutic and artistic thinking and practice; how reading and writing practices, socialities and (inter)subjectivities, are variously intertwined. I offer passionate and partial narratives of my relationships with poststructuralisms, with therapeutic
practice and identity, with those who come to meet with me in therapy, and with Other possibilities that disrupt the narrative trajectory of my attempts to ‘give an account’ of my-self (Butler, 2001) and my work. Through messy stories and glittering fragments, I perform the opacity and vulnerability of the subject and the infinite indebtedness of each to the other. Such writing attempts to illuminate the multiplicity and indeterminacy of narratives even while it is shadowed by the limits of narrativity itself. In these ways, I shape an aesthetics of self together with an ethics of uncertainty and obligation to the Other, working towards a politics and poetics of transformation.

Introducing poststructuralisms

When I notice, as never before, how ‘empire’ nestles within the word ‘empirical’, positivism appears less innocent. The ‘advancement of knowledge’ is exposed as the colonization of the other in the guise of progress. (Is the main body of my thesis a sexed body? What does the predominantly female profession of art therapy en-gender?)

How did she meet poststructuralism? She had written a psychoanalytic account of some Harold Pinter plays for her undergraduate honours thesis, but was troubled by some of the conservative implications of this work for women. An academic in the English Literature department suggested she should read Lacan. She found the reading so difficult that she began ‘sitting in’ on Elizabeth Grosz’s lecture series on Lacan in the School of General Philosophy, where she had studied for a while before specialising in literature. She became taken with French theory, began going to Liz’s lectures on Foucault as well. At the same time, her marriage was breaking up. She left her husband, moved into a flat with her daughter, then into a communal house. Went out for a while with a man who read Deleuze in French. She experimented with hallucigenic drugs while struggling with translations of the AntiOedipus. The man dumped her. She remembers the giddy, sick feeling of embracing the idea that there is no essential self. She had an affair, simultaneously, with her best
woman friend and a man they had both fallen in love with. At first she had withdrawn, leaving the field to her friend, but then she had become ‘involved’. This initially ecstatic experience became riven with rivalries and misunderstandings, went horribly wrong. She had rationally argued for non-possessiveness while being all the time in the grip of monstrous insecurities, jealousies and obsessions. She had tried to manipulate the situation to meet her own needs but had failed miserably. She was shocked at her self. In the wake of this torture of humiliation and loss, she became angry for a while with all the men in her life – friends, lovers, family, and male French theorists. She read Cixous, Wittig, Irigaray, Clement, Duras, Spivak. She took female lovers and moved into a women’s household, flirting with but soon abandoning separatism, although, come to think of it, she has been a lesbian ever since.

She remembers attending a meeting around this time with women academics and postgraduate students who were hoping to set up a study group at the University of Sydney for women interested in feminism and poststructural theory. Some women ‘Sparts’ had hijacked the meeting, arguing that unless childcare was provided they would be excluding marginalised women from attending. Other women had put up a counter argument that the focus of this group was intellectual work, that the ‘rights’ agenda had not worked, had not delivered childcare, equal pay and so forth, so it was time to try something different – the politics of difference rather than the politics of equality. But, she protested, did that have to mean no longer actively supporting the campaign for more equitable access to on-campus childcare? To her horror and embarrassment, she had found herself offside with her poststructuralist feminist heroines and in agreement with a group of left-wing extremist puppets of the male revolution. After all, she too had a young daughter. She too had struggled with the inadequacy of childcare on campus. Did the realisation

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3 Members of the Sparticist Club, an ultra left organisation that insisted women’s oppression was a consequence of/ secondary to class oppression.
that intellectual work constitutes a crucial site of political struggle have to negate the socialist feminist political agenda?

She struggles with this dilemma for years. She works as a community activist, does community radio, organises gay conferences, women’s conferences, writing conferences, writes submissions, attends marches, protests, gets arrested a couple of times, works for women’s services, becomes a union rep — even joins the communist party for a while only to participate in the decision to disband the party in favour of the new left politics of coalition. She remains convinced, through all of this, that poststructuralisms, far from being elitist, are liveable and workable in spheres beyond academia, although she is not sure how to extend this possibility beyond personal politics into collective endeavour. Although in a way this is what she is already doing. After all, these poststructural ideas, as much as feminism, have helped her to ‘make sense’ (and non-sense) of her life.

Poststructuralism has been defined as “thought which examines the notion of difference in all its facets…examines writing as the paradoxical source of subjectivity and culture...(and) involves a radical questioning of otherness…and of the subject-object relation” (Lechte, 1994, p. 95). Poststructuralism is generally associated with a group of mid to late 20th Century French theorists who were intellectually formed within a European philosophical tradition. Strongly influenced by the structuralist turn in linguistics, anthropology and psychoanalysis, they rejected both the humanistic and phenomenological centering of an originating, unified human subject, and the Hegelian/ Marxist transcendental view of History. These poststructuralist thinkers also moved beyond structuralism by questioning its assumption of a deep and universal structure underlying language, culture and subjectivity.

Butler problematises generalizations about poststructuralist theory by questioning the alleged theoretical unity and purity of poststructuralism. She points out that the ‘French Theory’ within which she locates the ground of her own writing is a “curious
American construction” (Butler, 1999, p. x). ‘French theory’/ poststructuralism brings together certain French intellectuals who for the most part do not perceive themselves as allied and do not share a domestic readership in France. Foucault and Derrida, amongst the most influential of poststructuralist thinkers, had substantive and at times vehement disagreements. Foucault accuses Derrida of “the reduction of discursive practices to textual traces” (Foucault, 2000/1972, p. 416). Given Foucault’s emphasis on the materiality of discourse and the interrelation of discursive and non-discursive practices, he might well have dissented from Lechte’s formulation of writing (or anything else) as the ‘source’. Derrida utilises a notion of the undecidability of texts to problematise Foucault’s critiques of Descartes’ cogito and Freud’s theory of instincts (Derrida, 1967/1978a; 1992/1997). Foucault (2000/1983a) not only refuses the description of himself as ‘poststructuralist’ but also questions the general usage of the terms ‘postmodernism’ and ‘poststructuralism’.

It is clear, then, that poststructuralism is a contested term. While this could be regarded as an obstacle to the research, I prefer to regard it as an opportunity. The impure and contested status of poststructuralism exemplifies the proliferation of discourses (Foucault, 1976/1980), the play of difference (Cixous & Clement, 1975/1986; Derrida, 1967/1978b), and the rhizomic/ horizontal movement of de-territorialized thought (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1977; 1980/1987). Rather than being an impediment to this research, the differences within and between poststructuralisms can be taken up as an invitation for creative appropriation and synthesis of those ideas most suggestive for an arts-based therapy.

From a poststructural theoretical perspective, the researcher is not ‘outside’ the research as in early positivism. As in other qualitative approaches to research, it is assumed that the researcher influences and is influenced by the data, but in poststructuralism influence extends to a notion of mutual constitution. The process of research constitutes the subjectivity of the researcher and also effectively constitutes the research data. Davies (2000) describes the subject’s (here, the researcher’s) engagement with the fleeting reflexive spaces of thought that figure ‘agency’ within the play of discourses. Donna Haraway’s concept that “an optics is a politics of
positioning” (Meskimmon, p. 81) captures the significance, for poststructural research into art and narrative therapy, of the re-embodiment of the researcher’s vision and point-of-view.

Introducing the ‘research problem’

“What do you mean, ‘research problem’, “ she says to herself, “What a boring way to begin. And why don’t you tell them something about why this is so important to you? Why are you passionate about it? What would make you agonise over this for four formal years and informally for far, far longer? Why don’t you tell them about the almost unbearable ethical discomfort of sitting in endless clinical supervisions where interpretations through the lens of clinical theory erase the voices of ‘patients’, trainee therapists and dissenting clinicians? How, as an art therapy trainee, your political resistance to internalising discourses was recast as intrapsychic resistance? How you were required and came to require yourself to ‘recognise’ your protest as intrapsychic resistance in order to be the proper therapeutic/ pedagogical subject? Why don’t you tell them about the marginalisation of dissenting voices, of your voice(s), even within therapies that apparently promote dissent? What exactly are you composing when you, or at any rate your text, appears to be so ‘composed’?”

“Have a bit of patience”, she replies from some other location. “You have a whole thesis ahead of you. You don’t have to do it all in the very first paragraph. Anyway, is naming a research problem so very different from the externalisation of a problem in narrative therapy (White, 1988/1989) — a practice that you are somewhat committed to? Might it be a way of ‘pulling yourself free’ of certain discursive constitutions of oneself, one’s professional and disciplinary areas, and so forth?
The ‘research problem’ addressed in this thesis is that of how arts-based therapy could be conceptualised and practiced in relation to the mobile, unstable constellations of thought that constitute ‘a poststructural framework’ (c.f. Davies, 2000). This question involves a close engagement with theory, but it is not an attempt to propose a new theoretical basis for art therapy. Intellectual work in a poststructural vein unseats both dominant power and the modern subject, and more often undermines than underwrites its own assumptions. This fits with my desire to destabilise the power relations of therapy and to unsettle those pedagogies that transmit the mystique of therapeutic knowledge through practices of subjectification and ethicalisation. As Sally Swartz has pointed out, “(t)o unlearn clinical privilege is not simply to replace one theory with another, but to move into the realm of negotiating subjectivity itself” (2005, p. 508). Accordingly, I engage in this thesis with theories and methodologies that are inconclusive, that trade in complexities, uncertainties and contradictions, and yet offer the intellectual and performative force of a commitment to critique as the work of transformation (Foucault, 1981/2000). Such a commitment necessarily entails an ongoing questioning of my own practices, subject position and subjectivity as a therapist.

In particular, I respond to the possible implications for my practice of therapy and my position and constitution as a therapist — and for writing about this practice — of Foucault’s suggestion that our contemporary task might be to practice an art of self and an aesthetics of existence, as an alternative to a hermeneutics of self and a truth of existence. I critically extend this suggestion by engaging with the work of other poststructural theorists. I take up a suggestion of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak that a practice of thinking Derrida and Foucault together, despite their disagreements, can offset contemporary tendencies to appropriate poststructural thought into the project

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4 See Appendix 1 for a selective review of how poststructural theory has been cited/ taken up within art therapy literature.

5 While at different times in this thesis I use the words ‘identity’, ‘self’, ‘myself’ and ‘sense of self’ to reflect common usage around the different ways the ‘I’ is experienced and given meaning, the word ‘subjectivity’ more appropriately describes a notion of a self that is embodied and constructed in relation to discourse and the Other. In preferring this term, I agree with Mama (1995) who “use(s) the concept of subjectivity instead of the psychological terms identity and the self to indicate (her) rejection of the dualistic notion of psychological and social spheres as essentially separate territories: one internal and the other external to the person” (p. 1).
of Western humanism. I attend to Couze Venn’s question, when he asks, from beyond the space of Occidentalism, what we might become ‘after modernity’. Butler’s work has been particularly crucial for my thesis, given her projects of writing with and against Foucault, questioning the limits of narrativity, and revisioning psychoanalysis beyond the Oedipalisation of culture. The writing of Hélène Cixous, too, in excess of my initial intentions, has threaded itself delicately and insistently throughout this project.

I take up the ideas and writing practices that flow from this engagement with theory in relation to specific accounts of my work as a therapist. Such an engagement with poststructural theory opens a philosophical and methodological space, within a specific practice of arts-based therapy, for the reconceptualisation of problematics and the problematisation of truth claims. As well as locating and discussing the effects of certain dominant discourses and discursive practices within art therapy, I hope to ‘make visible’ some marginalised possibilities for theorising and practicing an arts-based therapy.  

In giving context to this enquiry, I note how the broader field of the expressive therapies both includes and separates itself from art psychotherapy. I consider how psychoanalysis, as the theoretical antecedent of the psychotherapies, including art psychotherapy, shapes their assumptions, effects and potentialities. I position myself alongside other art therapists who engage art practice and aesthetic theory to challenge and exceed the normative and dominating tendencies of psychoanalysis while embracing its creative and critical potential (e.g. Maclagan, 2001: see also Appendix 1).

My thesis also engages with the practices and possibilities of narrative therapies in relation to poststructural approaches to art therapy. As a professional art therapist and therapy educator with an extensive engagement and strong political identification with narrative therapies, I ask if it is sufficient to practice arts-based therapy from a

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6 I take ‘discourse’ to include dominant gazes and visualities, and discursive practices to include visual signifying practices.
narrative perspective’. This opens out into a consideration of the obvious differences and subtle compatibilities of the apparently diverse approaches of art psychotherapies and narrative therapies, of the differences and commonalities in their historical and theoretical antecedents, and the possibilities and limitations of each.

I am compelled by this project to face how these therapies, and indeed all therapies, are implicated in the workings of modern power and the government of the subjects of this power. I am also compelled to critique, without wanting to relinquish, the claims of these therapies — which crucially include my own claim to be doing something useful in my work/world — to achieve a critical and transformative potential.

She remembers two recent responses to her expression of this dilemma, from two people who, in different ways and from different positions, have been her closest companions on this journey. They were sitting in a meeting of The Narrative, Discourse and Pedagogy Research Concentration (July, 2006) at which each member was to give a brief account of her research passions ~ ‘interests’ seeming too moderate a word. Bronwyn, her supervisor, had responded to Sheridan’s concern that, while her research critiques the reconstitution in therapy of the modern subject, a ‘postmodern subjectivity’ might not be liveable and could scarcely be an ‘aim’ of therapy. Bronwyn had replied that the (im)possibility and transformative potential of poststructural subjectivities inheres, not in an end product, ‘the subject’, but in the lines of flight that poststructural work opens up, however fleetingly. Peter, a researcher who is currently writing his doctoral thesis and with whom Sheridan has worked in various reading, research and writing groups, had then suggested that, if therapy can help people to negotiate their intelligibility to themselves and others, and hence their viability as contemporary subjects, then surely that in itself might be considered an honourable and useful task. She wonders how she so easily forgets these diverse and complementary possibilities, which of course are not entirely new thoughts to her, though they are rarely so elegantly
framed and concisely expressed as they are in this moment by these companions/ mentors/ friends. She wonders if her biographical narratives intersect with her ‘ethicalisation’ as a therapist to produce an endless self-torturing form of reflexivity that reconstitutes the very modernism she seeks to disrupt. Then she wonders if this very self-questioning, here and now, is an exemplar of these ethics.

In accordance with the poststructuralist view that writing does not simply represent but actively constitutes knowledge, my (re)search attempts to produce the (im)possibility of a ‘poststructural’ arts-based therapy — or at least one among many such (im)possibilities. As an integral part of a poststructural approach to this research, I trace the effects of the research process on my own subjectivity and multiple positionings as an art therapist and narrative therapist, and as a postgraduate student, poet and beginning researcher. I chart my interrelations with like-minded and challenging ‘others’ to whom I am indebted and with whom I am at times intertwined. I juxtapose diverse genres of textual production (poetry, narrative, drama, ekphrasis⁷, exposition, drawing, painting, photography), moving between the broad strokes of historical and theoretical speculation, the microworlds of therapeutic practice and memoir, and even the virtual/ imagined subjects and socialities of fiction.

⁷ the description in words of a visual art form
**Anti-thesis:**

Edward Said (1975) reads The interpretation of dreams (Freud, 1953/1991) as a prototype of a modern literary text, one which as textual practice exceeds the intentions of its author. Freud treats as forms of disguise both the dream images and the narrative into which they are inserted, in order to disassemble the dream. In doing so, he is searching for its truth, a truth to which he is already, in his own admission, married. Freud described the distinction between the earlier discoveries of Breuer, Charcot and Chrobak, and Freud’s own discovery of psychosexual determinism, as “‘the difference between a casual flirtation and a legal marriage with all its duties and difficulties’” (Said, p. 181). However, if one were to extend Said’s reading a little further by locating Freud’s fundamental assertion (that every dream is a disguised fulfilment of a sexual wish) in a discursive field that can also be disassembled, then Freud’s foundational insight could be seen as constructed, rather than as given. Then one might have a methodology that searches with the diligence of a quest for truth, without ever marrying itself to absolutes.

**Sin-thesis:**

Between/beyond flirting and marriage, I propose the delights of deferral and the struggle of perpetual engagement. Dear Reader, she did not marry him…

**Prosthesis:**

Putting out delicate feelers, becoming other, becoming alien to my known self in the attempt to enact difference beyond its usual calibrations — a difference that exceeds the possibilities of ‘difference from’ (Deleuze, 1968/1994).
Introducing art therapies

‘Art therapist in the spotlight’

**Pet hates:** Colouring-in books. People who say ‘oh yes I do a bit of art therapy too’.

**Current love interest:** Jung — he appreciates what I do. And I just adore the way he introduces me to his friends — “I’d like you to meet my better half”. **Favourite weekend:** Time in the studio and Sunday brunch with friends at my local gallery cafe — freud eggs and francis bacon on sourdough toast. **What are you enjoying?** Sculpture by the Sea. **Who are you listening to?** Winnie Cott and the Re-Kleins playing covers of old favourites — ‘Mammy’ and ‘It’s all over now, baby blue’. **Who are you reading?** Bowlby. And Harry Potter. **Who would you most like to sit next to on a plane?** Marion Milner and Frida Kahlo. (I’ll take the middle seat.) **If there were one word left to you in the world, what would it be?** Transitional object. **That’s two words.** Art, then. Or love.

She tries to remember — when and how did she meet ‘art therapy’? Was it twenty years ago, when as a counsellor in a women’s health centre, she offered art materials to women too bowed with shame and intimidation to give voice to the rapes, beatings and other humiliations they had endured? Was it a few years before that, when singing in a choir of like-minded queers had resurrected her spirits, added a femme flair to her wardrobe and reinvigorated her longings for justice and inclusion? Was it when she wrote a poem, aged ten, attempting to reconcile her deep homesickness for London and her maternal grandparents with her much-vaunted ‘new life’ on the other side of the world? Was it when she made huge visceral paintings in black and red, so dark and potent that her high school art teacher rang her parents to ask if she was depressed? (Shortly after this phone call, she had developed a penchant for painting miniatures, muted rural idylls bland enough to be hung in the annual school art show.) Was it in the early 1990’s, when she was the clinical coordinator of a specialist sexual assault service and wanting to gain relevant

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8Since I neither want to assume a reader’s knowledge or lack of knowledge about art therapy, I have appended an introductory sketch of the field (see Appendix 1).
postgraduate qualifications, but in a manner that enriched and extended her, rather than subjected her to the truths of a positivism from which she had long dissented? A friend had suggested that she contact the University of Western Sydney about their new masters courses in drama therapy and art therapy. She had actually applied to do drama therapy but was offered a place in art therapy when the other course did not proceed. Until then, she had neither known about nor aspired to visual art therapy as a distinct profession. She is in this sense at least the accidental art therapist...

Art therapy appears to me as an unsettled and contradictory enterprise – rich with extraordinary companionship, commitment and hope, yet painfully and personally conflictual; maverick in the extreme, yet aspiring to acceptance by the medical ‘establishment’; based in intellectually challenging and even esoteric theory, yet attracting a number of practitioners so committed to art practice that they are reluctant to put down their brushes for long enough to pick up their books. Indeed, the bringing together of contradictions and binaries strongly marks the theoretical and historical antecedents of art therapy as well as its current constitution: the studio and the clinic, the artist and the clinician, psychiatry and antipsychiatry, realism and surrealism, aesthetics and psychoanalysis, the rationality of scientific positivism and the absurdist, critical potential of the visual arts. As a relatively new profession, art therapy bears (and bares) the traces of how it is formed in a matrix of relations of power, disruptions and discontinuities — of how art therapists’ struggles for professional recognition, historical coherence and theoretical consistency are intertwined with each other and riven with conflicting interests. In contrast, older and more established disciplinary and discursive formations may have constructed relatively seamless narratives of their origins and fields. It was after all with an eye to the critical possibilities of studying the more recently formed disciplines that Foucault engaged on his genealogy of the social sciences, rather than studying the ‘hard’ sciences, whose epistemologies had ‘hardened’ into truths (Foucault, 2000/1980a). Moreover, the interdisciplinarity to which some areas of academia aspire is a ‘given’ of art therapy, which brings together, in name and deed, the ‘at least two’ (Irigaray, 1977/1981) of art and therapy.
Irrationale

The art therapist is trying to keep herself clean. For all her skills in mixing and blending, she finds herself marked out from her clinical colleagues by bright, unregenerate flecks of paint. Clay clings to the soles of her imported leather shoes. Charcoal smudges her cheeks; crayon ingrains the lines of her hands; she feels a dark, oily resistance under her nails. The more she attempts to adhere to the relative uniformity of the professional classes, the more she is adhered to by feathers and stars. Glitter secretes itself like sedimented sunlight in the folds of her neatly scripted client files. As she rises from her chair in the clinical team meeting, she hopes no one will notice how the seat of her black wool trousers is matted with drying glue. In her art therapy studio, the scarified wooden and linoleum surfaces are dusted with chalky residues. Purple, scarlet, golden, cobalt, azure, jade, turquoise, cinnamon, yellow ochre, burnt sienna and deep madder, these pollens are waiting for an updraft of warm air, a door left accidentally ajar.

Art therapy literature often poses the question of what, and who, is art therapy. In the literature, definitions of art therapy range from the inclusive to the particular. For instance, Case and Dalley (1992) begin their influential handbook with a paragraph entitled ‘Definition’. Here they specify that art therapy consists of a set of features. Art therapy involves self-expression through making art within the containment of a therapeutic relationship, and it is to be understood in terms of a three-way transference between the client, the therapist, and the art object. Art therapy is “now established within the firm base of psychotherapeutic principles” (p. 1). The authors, still under the heading of ‘Definition’, state their hope to “introduce the notion of a ‘standard’ practice of art therapy based on the training and experience of art therapists” (ibid).

Art therapists are usually trained and practicing visual artists before beginning their art therapy training, although trainees must also have studied some psychology and gained some prior experience in health, education or welfare. An ongoing practice and identity as a visual artist is a primary characteristic of being an art therapist. This sets up some interesting differences between the professional identities and cultures of art therapists, and the professional identities and cultures of other therapists and counsellors trained in psychology and the social sciences.
Yet in another British handbook of art therapy (Waller & Gilroy, 1992) published in the same year, the authors of a chapter on theory defined the field far more inclusively:

Art therapy is a term which has been used to describe a collection of diverse practices, held together fundamentally by their practitioners’ belief in the healing value of image-making. It has and still means very different things to different people, including to art therapists themselves (Waller and Dalley, 1992, p. 3).

In the United States, art therapy at first glance appears to embrace eclecticism (see Malchiodi, 2003), despite the Freudian orientation of the identified founders, Margaret Naumberg (1950) and Edith Kramer (1958). [Naumberg’s psychotherapeutic orientation, and her accompanying emphasis on insight through art, contrasted with Kramer’s teaching background and emphasis on art as sublimation. This initiated a long-standing distinction between ‘art psychotherapy’, in which the art process and product becomes the focus for a psychotherapeutic relationship and (at times) for therapeutic conversation, and an ‘art as therapy’ approach in which the making of art is in itself considered to be of primary therapeutic value.] The American Art Therapy Association has a history of vigorous debates that seek to allow diversity while preventing a collapse into ‘anything goes’. Forty years on, Ulman’s 1961 definition that “art therapy ought to be applicable to any endeavour that genuinely partakes of both art and therapy” is still considered relevant by the editor of the second edition of an influential text (Rubin, 2001, p. 343) and is echoed by Ulman herself in the same year (Ulman, 2001, p. 21). Yet alongside many discursive claims for the importance of ‘freedom’, in practice much USA art therapy is far more tied to schematic and diagnostic uses of art than its British counterpart. This is at least partly because of the way the availability of psychological health care is linked via the organisation of medical insurance to DSM diagnoses (Riley, 2001; Gilroy, 1997). The diagnostic emphasis may also be related to training and registration: in many states in the USA, practitioners are required to be registered in social work, psychology or family therapy in order to become licensed art therapists. When two British art therapists attempted to “(take) the pulse” (Gilroy & Skaife,
of American art therapy at the 27th Annual Conference of The American Art Therapy Association, they experienced a division, not only between American art therapy and the more phenomenologically and psychodynamically based British profession, but within American art therapy as well. The polarization the authors noted between a diagnostic use of art on the one hand, and an ‘art as healing’ (and therapy as ‘soul-making’) approach on the other, can still be found in the pages of current issues of Art Therapy. Whereas in the UK Winnicott is the major influence on the work of the majority of art therapists (Karkou, 1999), the psychoanalytic basis claimed for American art therapy by Maxine Junge (1994) is overtly present in only a minority of American publications.

However, psychoanalytic concepts may assume a truth status in approaches to art therapy that do not consider themselves to be primarily analytic. For instance, Harriet Wadeson’s (1987/2001) assertion that she takes an eclectic approach to art therapy appears to rest on the implicit ‘truth’ of the psychodynamic concept of transference. In a presentation to Australian art therapists, Andrea Gilroy suggested, based on comparative research, that

Fundamentally art therapy assumes the existence of the unconscious and works with the premise that what we think and feel, both consciously and unconsciously, will be better understood through the making of images within the context of a relationship with the art therapist. I think it is reasonably safe to say that this basic premise is accepted worldwide. However, art therapy has developed very differently around the world (Gilroy and Hanna, 1994, 1997) and attention has to be given to the varying cultural contexts and socio-economic systems, which have an impact on its professional development and clinical practice (Gilroy, 1997, p. 3).

According to Dreyfuss and Rabinow (1982), in Foucault’s work the rarity of statements (‘archaeology’) and the proliferation of discourses (‘genealogy’) constitute a Foucauldian critical methodology in the form of an interpretative grid. I have found this notion of a grid useful in considering the apparent contradiction between the relatively narrow canon of assumptions and the wide diversity of approaches to be found within art therapy.
Psychoanalysis is thus constructed as the theoretical antecedent of art (psycho)therapy, although the status of Freudian psychoanalysis as art therapy’s main historical antecedent has in some instances been disputed (Hogan, 2001). Although the centrality of art practice complexifies the process of art psychotherapy, both psychoanalysis and art psychotherapy assume a psyche in excess of a subject, conceptualise therapy as ‘working through’, and understand the therapeutic relation in terms of transference and countertransference. At times, in this thesis, I move between the subjects and practices of psychoanalysis and the subjects and practices of art psychotherapy, in terms of their shared assumptions of a ‘structural’ and dynamic unconscious.

Another frequently asked question in art therapy, related to the definitions in the previous paragraph, is that of how to conceptualise the relationship between art and (psycho)therapy in such a way that neither term is subordinated to the other. This is historically informed by the aforementioned distinction between ‘art as therapy’ and ‘art psychotherapy’, or as a distinction between a Jungian view of ‘art as (intrinsically) healing’ and a psychoanalytic approach that understands art therapy in terms of object relations and transference. The recent turn towards aesthetics in the literature tends to reverse the hierarchy of psychotherapy and art, privileging aesthetics while suggesting the mutually enhancing potential of aesthetics and psychodynamics. A poststructuralist approach might extend upon and problematise this move by examining what is taken for granted in the notions of ‘art’ and ‘therapy’, thereby deconstructing the binary of art and therapy that has been variously configured as an opposition, a continuum or a dialectic.

It is often asked whether art therapy needs its own unifying ‘theory’ or should remain a collection of diverse theories and practices loosely derived from the ‘parent’ disciplines of art/aesthetics and psychoanalysis/psychology (Rubin, 1984, 2001). Moves toward articulating a theory specific to art therapy have tended, not

11 Historically this debate bears a pragmatic and political relation to the question of whether art therapists are considered to be ‘primary’ or ‘adjunctive’ therapists, since, at least before the availability of specialist postgraduate art therapy training programs, it was necessary to assert one’s credentials as an art psychotherapist in order to justify working independently with clients, rather than under the direction of a psychiatrist or other clinician (Wadeson, 1980).
surprisingly, to do so through a synthesis of existing psychological and/or aesthetic theories, one of the most extensive early projects being that of Schaverien (1992). While this research will respond to the question of theory by conceptualising art therapy from a poststructuralist perspective and examining the apparent theoretical opposition of art therapy and narrative therapy, the thesis will necessarily call into question the possibility and desirability of locating or producing a ‘true’ theory of art therapy.

The questions and concerns that currently constitute the problematics of art therapy are generally based in and between a history of ideas and an analysis of psychological/subjective relations, thus enabling the reconstitution of the history of the profession as ‘progress’ and of the hermeneutic subject of art therapy as a self tied to the project of discovering its own identity, as a matter of personal ‘freedom’ (Rose, 2000b). Both the history of ideas and the hermeneutics of the self tend to reconstitute binary oppositions such as those art and therapy, self and other, sick and well, conscious and unconscious, individual and social. These historicising and individualising modes of thought establish, within and between themselves, a role for critique, but this is a critique that tends to reverse hierarchies rather than to deconstruct binaries.

As Susan Hogan has pointed out in her history of British art therapy, the histories of disciplines generally serve to legitimise dominant trends or counter trends within that discipline (Hogan, 2001). Historical analysis emerges within relations of power to reinforce or challenge a particular paradigm, without necessarily exposing the processes by which certain beliefs and practices come to be ‘truths’. Similarly, while self-questioning and reflexivity are arguably central to effective therapeutic practice, they do not in themselves guarantee the transformation of that practice. The ‘ethical scenario’ (Rose, 1996/1998) of (art) psychotherapy requires techniques of self-examination and reflexivity, from both therapist and ‘client’, which (re)produce the responsible, self-governing subject of contemporary regimes of the self.

Rather than providing answers to current questions within frames that re-inscribe history as transcendence and the subject as origin, poststructural enquiry can trouble
the divisions of thought that maintain and make invisible the relations of power and truth. A different order of questions becomes possible.

How is the subject constituted in this literature or practice? How is art constituted? What relations are constituted between art and the subject? How is change constituted in relation to artistic practice, therapeutic practice and the social?

**Introducing narrative therapies**

I wouldn’t define it as an approach... Is this work better defined as a world view? Perhaps, but even this is not enough. Perhaps it’s an epistemology, a philosophy, a personal commitment, a politics, an ethics, a practice, a life, and so on. And perhaps because whatever it is happens to be on intimate terms with recent developments in social theory that are generally referred to as “non-foundationalist” or perhaps “postmodern”, then whatever it is also happens to be a theory (White, 1991/1992, p. 37).

How did she meet narrative therapies? She remembers how, as a counsellor working in women’s health services, she puzzled over the apparent contradictions between feminist theorisations of the social and political ‘causes’ of women’s oppression and the increasing popularity amongst feminist women of pathologising, victim-blaming discourses, for instance in therapy groups for ‘sex and love addicts’ and self-help books such as *Women who love too much* (Norwood, 1990). She remembers an early, uneasy intoxication with the ‘insights’ into herself and others that were made possible by psychotherapy training, and she also recalls her subsequent decoding of these understandings as practices of power. She remembers wondering why feminist counselling challenged so much of dominant practice only to reproduce its structure through inversion. She remembers her relief when, in the late 1980’s, she went to some training about the effects of sexual assault with
Amanda Kamsler and Lesley Lang (see Kamsler, 1990; Lang and Kamsler, 1990) that introduced her to ‘a text analogy’ for therapy. She loved the narrative metaphor for therapy, ironically, not only for its centering of client’s multiple stories and for its deconstruction of therapy discourse, but because it enabled her to construct an autobiographical trajectory from her literary studies and writing practice through feminism, poststructuralism and community activism to her current practice as a therapist. Theoretical and political constructs that she held dear from her distant university days were being engaged in a reinvention of therapy and counselling. Familiars such as Foucault and Derrida had entered the therapy room, making visible and deconstructing its dominant assumptions and practices so that it, and she, could never be the same.

While I am professionally trained and registered as an art therapist, it is undoubtedly the extensive project of narrative therapy (White and Epston, 1990) that has been, and continues to be, most powerfully constitutive of my ‘identity’ and practice as a therapist. This thesis has inevitably involved taking myself up within “a tradition of immanent critique” (Butler, 1999, p. vii) in relation to narrative therapy, art psychotherapy and the expressive therapies more broadly. In relation to narrative therapy in particular, this form of critique has involved a close questioning of my current ethics and ethicalisation as a therapist, and of the limits and possibilities of the narrative metaphor in accounting for my-self as well as my work.

Narrative therapies emerged from a diverse field of disciplines and theoretical developments: feminist theory, literary theory, poststructural theory, anthropology, critical social theory, philosophy of science, and particularly the works of Gregory Bateson (in family therapy and anthropology) and of French philosopher-historian, Foucault (White, 1995a). These therapies engage a narrative metaphor for the processes by which peoples’ lives and identities are shaped and given meaning (White

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12 Much of this introduction to narrative therapy has recently been published as part of my contribution to a co-authored journal paper (Williams and Linnell, 2006.)
The ‘performative turn’, as well as the narrative turn, in literature and ethnography has shaped the theory and practice of narrative therapies from their beginnings (see White and Epston, 1990). The influence of the performative turn is apparent in how narrative therapists encourage the personification and dramatisation of externalised problems and/or preferences (e.g. Epston and Roth, 1996/1998, pp. 209—226) and the practice of reflecting teamwork as definitional ceremony (White, 1995b, 2000a).

Narrative therapies thus eschew the structural and systems metaphors that have guided much modernist therapy (e.g. the psyche as a structure for regulating instinctual energies, or the family as a system which seeks homeostasis) in favour of a discursive and relational understanding of identity. Narrative therapies assume that people both actively ascribe meaning to experience and have meaning ascribed within dominant relations of power and knowledge. Narrative therapy also assumes that people engage and are engaged in ‘performances of meaning’ that consolidate (and sometimes challenge) truth claims. Moreover, these therapies acknowledge that, in a culture in which normalisation, individualisation and rationalisation are effected through the technologies of the social sciences, therapy itself is a crucial site for the production of subjectivities and the performance of ‘truth’.

Just as the stories we live by and which (en)live(n) us are multiple and often contradictory, so the historical and theoretical antecedents of narrative therapies are many, and at times in contradiction. An influence from an ethnographic and interpretive perspective within the social sciences can sit a little uneasily with poststructuralism, especially when it comes to theorizing subjectivity. The interpretive method assumes a phenomenological subject who is an active maker of meaning, whereas the agency of the poststructural subject is problematised as discursively produced within relations of power.

Rejecting an expert position, the narrative therapist takes a stance of ‘co-authorship’. Co-authorship is understood not as a negation of therapeutic influence, but as an.

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13 Narrative therapies are not the only therapies to be influenced by the linguistic turn, which has had varying degrees of influence in most contemporary approaches to therapy, but I have limited my account to some aspects of the implication of this turn for narrative therapies.
acknowledgement and taking up of the therapeutic conversation as co-production. Within the context of a ‘co-authoring’ relationship, narrative therapists pose questions characterised by an orientation to curiosity, unknowingness and the subjunctive mood, in order to facilitate a richer account of the person’s life, relationships and identity. Given that people usually come to therapy because either they or others perceive something ‘within’ that person as a problem, narrative therapists’ questions seek to locate someone’s difficulties in narratives other than those that internalise, essentialise and pathologise the ‘self’. The therapist poses questions which are oriented towards the deconstruction of dominant, often problem-saturated, personal and familial narratives — asking about these narratives’ histories, current influence and possible future effects, and exploring the relationship of what is experienced as problematic to the ‘grand narratives’/discourses of culture and identity.

As well as deconstructing ‘dominant stories’ the therapist invites the person coming to therapy to entertain the possibilities of ‘insurrectionary’, ‘discontinuous’ and local knowledges implicit in their narrative, which can be incorporated into preferred accounts of self and relationship. It is assumed that these preferred/alternative accounts can be generated from the subjugated stories of the person’s (past, present, even hoped-for) life, from stories that others hold about the person and from marginalized narratives of the culture. Derrida’s deconstruction and Foucault’s genealogy inform the narrative approach to deconstructing the dominant story and making visible its relationship to dominant discourse/grand cultural narratives, and they also frame the notion of preferred stories as related to the indeterminacy of narratives and the mutual conditioning of power and resistance.

In an assumption borrowed from ethnography and parallel to the values of qualitative research, it is held that ‘rich’ stories of ‘literary merit’ (White, 1988) — detailed, specific and ‘experience-near’ — will offer opportunities for the development of preferred accounts of identity and meaning that are not available in ‘thin’ descriptions, i.e. unitary, reified and generalized accounts. These preferred stories, in narrative therapy, do not have an independent truth status but are regarded as contingent on the narrated and relational character of identity, the multiplicity and indeterminacy of narrative possibilities and the discursive context of the production of
subjectivities. Preferred stories do not ‘replace’ previously dominant stories, but
rather emerge alongside of, in relation with and/or resistance to them. In narrative
therapy it is also considered of primary importance not to disengage the notion of a
co-authored conversation from other narrative therapeutic practices that de-centre the
role of the therapist and open up space for the recognition and production of a
multiplicity of other ‘co-authoring’ relationships within and beyond the therapy.

Michael White (1997) asserts that he has never claimed a truth status for alternative
descriptions of identities and practices, and that his understanding is that “we are as
multi-desired, multi-motived and as multi-intentioned in our lives as our stories are
multi-storied” (p. 231). Identity in narrative therapy is conceptualised as fluid and
relational, and much emphasis is put on the contexts and relationships that sustain a
‘preferred story’. White (1995a) anticipates the risk of (re)producing an authentic,
humanist subject by recommending the deconstruction of ‘positive’ as well as
‘negative’ identity conclusions, the latter being understood as ‘emblems’ adopted
within contingent discourses of selfhood rather than as qualities intrinsic to a true self.
The ‘unpacking’ of identity conclusions is thus a means to counter the ‘naturalisation’
of the subject of the preferred story.

However, there remains a sense in which such moves predominantly imply a
volitional and conscious subject. Although not an autonomous individual, narrative
therapy’s subject is ascribed a ‘sense of agency’ sustained by accounts of hopes,
dreams, intentions, passions and conscious commitments. My colleague Carolyn
Williams and I have sought to problematise the subject of narrative therapy in a joint
exploration of how narrative therapeutic practices might inform poststructural
interviewing methodology (Williams and Linnell, 2006). During our work together,
Carolyn formulated the question of whether the self as narrative coherence is the aim
(or perhaps, we might have said, the effect) of such therapy. At the same time as the
unpacking of identity conclusions interrupts the possibility of a seamless ‘preferred
story’, the very possibility of ‘unpacking’, or critique, depends on a certain coherence
of the intentional subject. To my mind, the question of narrative coherence is a more
specific and profound question than that more commonly asked question of whether
narrative therapy reconstitutes the humanist subject, since other poststructural
practices, as well as other therapies, perhaps inevitably reconstitute that subject to some degree. In subsequent chapters of this thesis, with the assistance of the work of Butler (see Chapter 3), I extend this troubling of narrative coherence into a questioning of subjectivity through a consideration of the limits of narrativity itself.

In our work together, Carolyn and I also problematised the notion of the narrative therapist as co-author, noting how co-authorship is differently figured between narrative therapy and poststructural research methodology.\(^1\) Narrative therapists are concerned with the ethics of co-authorship in the context of therapeutic privilege. They problematised the possibility of an ‘equal’ partnership between co-authors and attempt to offset the possibility of therapist domination through practices of accountability to the ‘client’, with the therapist taking the position of a ‘junior partner’ in the collaboration. A poststructural theoretical perspective also problematises ‘co-authorship’, not only through considerations of power relations, but also in terms of the radical indeterminacy of narratives. At the same time as narrative therapy takes up the potential for transformations offered by the radical indeterminacy of texts, it underplays how the radical shifts and contradictions of such texts/conversations complexify relations of co-authorship.

Carolyn and she began to ‘co-author’ a paper in 2003 based on their different roles in a research project investigating PhD pedagogies from a poststructural perspective.\(^2\) In (s)her (idan’s) section of the paper, she took up a subject position as a narrative therapy practitioner and an outsider to academia, albeit one with some familiarity with poststructural theory. She initially thought

\(^1\) Initially Carolyn drew my attention to how differing meanings of ‘co-authorship’ play out within the research literature on interviewing, depending on whether the writer comes from a phenomenological or a poststructural perspective. Scheurich suggests that the meanings and iterations of a co-authored research interview text is “a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity, a moving feast of differences interrupting differences” (Scheurich 1995, p. 243) — a formulation very different from that of co-authorship as a production of shared meanings.

\(^2\) The project, titled ‘Rethinking Postgraduate Pedagogy: on the history and praxis of the PhD in Australia’, was a three-year Australian Research Council funded project. The Chief Investigators were Alison Lee, Bill Green and Lesley Johnson. Carolyn was the research assistant on the project and I was employed on several occasions as a consultant to the project, in my role as a narrative therapist.
the writing of this paper had little to do with her concurrent research for her doctoral thesis, which was, after all, ‘about art therapy’. With hindsight, this astonishes her. She had felt obliged to excise herself as a narrative therapist, and even her subjective experiences as a doctoral candidate, from her thesis, from an extended, formal and academically defining account of her therapeutic work. She had also virtually excised herself as beginning researcher from the co-authored paper, although she had mentioned her current status as a doctoral candidate in an ironical footnote to ‘Sheridan’s story’. She wonders what theoretical and social discourses, what ‘personal’ and professional narratives, are imbricated in even the consideration of such a violent, almost surgical elision of these categories from these different texts. What does this tell her about the operations of power within and between therapy and research, within and between therapies, and within and between research frameworks? What does it tell of the subjectification of the therapist and beginning researcher herself?

In this thesis I propose that in different ways both narrative therapy and art psychotherapy have a critical potential to decentre the rational, autonomous subject (Linnell, 2007). Whereas art psychotherapy destabilises the subject through the psychoanalytic assumption of the primacy of unconscious and intersubjective processes, narrative therapy destabilises the subject by asserting that subjects are continually produced within discourse/relations of knowledge and power. Thus the discursive subject of narrative therapy remains at odds with the internalising accounts of unconscious motivation and authentic feeling that attend upon the predominantly psychoanalytic and humanistic subject(s) of art therapy. Following Foucault’s suggestion that ‘desire’ was the ethical substance in the early Christian era and that our feelings have become the ethical substance in contemporary times, narrative therapists are wary of the tendency of therapeutic discourses to fetishise feeling (in humanistic accounts) or desire/loss (in psychoanalytic accounts). This does not mean that narrative therapy conversations are unemotional or dispassionate — quite the contrary — but that narrative practitioners subscribe to an anthropology and a poetics of emotion rather than a psychodynamics of emotion, and to a discursive, rather than
an intrapsychic, understanding of how particular emotions are privileged. Feeling and passion are located in relation to a person’s embodied and lived narratives and to an emerging construction of preferred identity rather than in relation to the effects of displacement and the surfacing of repression. The explicitly and/or implicitly psychoanalytic assumptions of much art therapy, such as repetition, transference and working through, are challenged by narrative therapy, which would focus on how such ideas are part of an internalizing discourse that can invisibilise the ways in which discursive and institutional practices continually produce subjectivities. Narrative therapy is engaged in a project of contextualizing and deconstructing the discursive and institutional contexts in which subjectivities are produced and reproduced, and is in tension with more psychoanalytically oriented notions of subjectivity that speak in terms of the mechanisms of repetition, displacement and disavowal. Narrative therapists are interested in the co-construction of accounts of how people are both shaped by and subvert dominant discourses and narratives, rather than in making way for the re-entry of repressed stories of irrationality, loss, trauma and desire.  

(In a psychodynamic moment she finds herself asking, is repression the repressed Other of narrative therapy?)

In a project parallel to and distinct from that of narrative therapy, Johnella Bird (2002, 2004) has developed relational language practices that engage in an ongoing exploration of the ‘in-between’. She emphasises the negotiation of the meanings of therapeutic conversations and therapeutic relations. Bird’s work attempts to disengage the self from an identity with pathology, while refusing the binary opposition of ‘self’ and ‘problem’ that she suggests is often produced by narrative therapies. For Bird (2004), relational consciousness and relational language are what ‘makes a difference’. Bird raises salient questions about therapy, but I do not necessarily want to assiduously take up the particular language strategies she suggests. I am concerned that both relational language and the early narrative therapeutic practice of externalisation tend to inscribe a ‘norm’ by recommending certain forms of 

16 Deborah Britzman might almost be speaking of therapy, rather than education, when she suggests that “the self’s relation to its own otherness and the self’s relation to the other’s otherness...is forgotten when the...desire for a stable truth, in its insistence upon courage and hope, shuts out the reverberations of losing and being lost” (Britzman, 1998, p. 134).
pervasiveness and devastation of ‘error’ in therapy, suggesting the need to carefully
negotiate consensual and contextual, rather than fixed, meanings. While this is an
impeccable suggestion, I suspect that practicing therapy ‘under erasure’ involves
relinquishing any notion that ‘error’ can be negotiated or spoken away. While my
ways of speaking in therapy undoubtedly owe much to Bird’s work as well as to
narrative therapies, my focus in this thesis is on cultivating a therapeutic poetics,
rather than on learning a therapeutic grammar.

Introducing the expressive therapies

The ‘expressive therapies’ is sometimes used as an umbrella term for the various arts
therapies, while at other times it denotes a distinct profession of multimodal
expressive therapy with its own training and accreditation, a therapeutic approach that
brings a number of the arts together. In Australia, music therapists were the first of
the arts therapies, or expressive therapies, to establish formal professional status, then
the (visual) art therapists. Drama therapy, multimodal expressive therapy and, to a
lesser extent, dance therapy are gradually becoming more formally established in
Australia, while the therapeutic use of poetry is widespread but not organised as a
distinct profession or modality.

How did she first meet the expressive therapies?

The answer to this question inevitably overlaps with her stories of art therapy.
After all, the separation of these two modalities is partial, inconclusive and
variable — as much about histories and politics as theories and practices. A
further and perhaps more controversial question occurs to her — is she an
expressive therapist? Her answer to this, while indefinite, is also a matter of
definition. She is formally trained and registered as an Art Therapist, but her
practice is somewhat akin to expressive therapy in that she draws on a broad
range of art forms. She is also trained in psychodrama, which some people
consider to be an expressive therapy, although she is unsure if this inclusion is
appropriate. So she may have first formally encountered the expressive therapies at the beginning of the 1990’s when, prior to training as an art therapist, she took a subject at university that explored drama in education and therapy, or perhaps it was almost ten years earlier...

She goes along to her first psychodrama training with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. The course is held in a magnificent federation Anglican Church hall, on a tree-lined street not far from the waters of Iron Cove, in the inner west of Sydney. It is a late summer evening; the air is warm and fragrant with frangipani. The occasion has brought together a motley assortment of inner city types with some Latin American people from the evangelical church of the psychodrama director, who is also the ‘progressive’ pastor of a Spanish Baptist parish in the outer southwestern suburbs. They all sit around in a circle on the floor, talking about their apprehensions and anticipations.

She has come here with her colleague and friend, a Uruguayan lesbian feminist woman from the women’s health centre where they both work. Neither of them is in concert with the orthodoxies made overt in the architecture of the building and in the dominant religious culture of this group. They have come because another colleague from their workplace has commended the psychodrama director and his approach to therapy, which brings together dance, drama and the visual arts, and is focussed more on the body and less on dialogue than contemporary North American psychodrama.

17 Psychodrama (and sociodrama) is a humanistic, experiential therapy that takes up a dramatic metaphor for human existence and approaches therapy through the structures, processes, language and techniques of theatre, with a particular emphasis on dramatic games and improvisations. Unlike drama therapists, psychodrama practitioners are not expected to be trained and practicing dramatic artists, although many of them are, the overlap between psychodrama and playback theatre being particularly strong.
She looks around, beginning to take in the specificities, differences and deviations of bodies, genders, cultures, sexualities, beliefs, locations, privileges, marginalisations, histories, advantages, injustices, hopes, politics, relationships, ages and so forth that will make up this ‘psychodrama group’. This unlikely diversity, even incompatibility, is to become, for her at least, the paradoxical condition for sublime moments of acceptance, connectedness and transport — moments that theory might limit to a concept of transcendence.

At some point the psychodrama director invites them to ‘come to the stage’. It is a real stage, although this is not necessary for psychodrama — a semi circle raised a little above the main floor of the building, with its own domed ceiling and stained glass windows in the walls framing the half-circle. This stage, at first so strange and exposed, is to become, over the ensuing years of her training, a familiar point of entry into an alternative realm of experience. Here she will become a ‘protagonist’ in a drama. She will play, touch, dance, sing, laugh, cry, and be still. She will hold others, and she will be held. She will love and hate this large, soft, compassionate and arrogant man who calls himself a ‘director’.

Through entering the aesthetic, cultural and psychological space of the psychodrama, she will learn much about the possibility of accepting and transforming self and community. She will engage with a radical opening of herself to specific embodied others and to the Otherness of imagination. She will also learn how easily, and with what devastating consequences, the power and mystique of an alliance between therapy and the arts can be abused.

Whereas (visual) art therapy is based in the specificity of the practitioner’s background and ongoing practice in the visual arts, the approach of expressive therapy emphasises intermodality and a high sensitivity to aesthetic processes in and between a multiplicity of forms. As the editors of an introduction to the expressive therapies explain:
(E)xpressive arts therapists cannot claim to be specialists in every artistic discipline, though some of them, in fact, have multiple competencies. What they can claim, however, is to be specialists in intermodality: that is, to be capable of grasping the junctures at which one mode of expression needs to give way to, or be supplemented by another (Levine & Levine, 1999, p. 11).

The separation of the aesthetic sphere and its division into specific art disciplines is a relatively recent phenomenon, and is again being challenged by contemporary art (Levine & Levine, 1999). Expressive therapy, with its emphasis on moving between expressive modalities, can thus claim a connection with ancient traditions of healing through creativity prior to the separation of the aesthetic sphere, and it can also claim a connection with postmodernism. This privileged relation with both the post-modern and the pre-modern lends great historical and current legitimacy to the expressive therapies. However, I suspect there is an unexamined tension in this claim, given that a slippage occurs between the pre-modern and ‘universality’, and that postmodernism disputes the possibility and/or desirability of the universal.

The cultural, theoretical and disciplinary multiplicity of the expressive therapies demands that any search for common theoretical ground be cognisant of difference. Stephen K. Levine has elaborated a response to this challenge in successive publications (e.g. Levine, 1996; Levine and Levine, 1999; Knill, Levine and Levine, 2005.) His (re)formulation of the philosophy and practice of the expressive therapies, within understandings of post-modernism and a re-visioned phenomenology, is compelling. Both art and the subject are radically repositioned through a serious engagement with contemporary Western philosophies and the critique of modernism. Aesthetic theory is recast, away from Kantian aesthetics as a progression of Cartesian logics, and towards Nietzsche’s figuration of a Dionysian poeisis (Levine, 1997, 2005):
(A)lthough we keep art making at the centre of our understanding, we try to free it from the traditional context in which it was understood, a context based on the confidence of the capacity of reason to comprehend and master reality. We “deconstruct” this context by showing the assumptions on which it was based and then try to look at the phenomenon of art in its own terms. In doing so we see that art making cannot be conceived of as the imposition of an already formed idea upon the matter at hand...(A) necessary surrender of control means that the artist enters a chaotic field...if we can stay with this chaotic experience, it often happens that something emerges... (Levine, 2005, pp. 10—11).

These ideas constitute a major philosophical shift, not only from classical assumptions of the separation of the aesthetic sphere (a shift that is also made in art therapy), but also from assumptions of the integrity of the subject. The theorisation of personhood within a reconceptualised field of expressive therapy seeks not to reinstate the autonomous and self-contained individual:

If there is a post-modern conception of poiesis (art making) as a form of Bildung (shaping), then, it cannot be based upon a subject-object opposition that leads only to mastery or victimhood. Rather the human being today has to be conceived of as de-centered, without a foundation of certainty leading to knowledge and control. Such a being is not autonomous, not self-enclosed and cut off from others or the environment. Dependency and vulnerability are not extrinsic to existence but rather are the conditions of its possibility. Far from being an impediment to our creativity, however, these characteristics are what enable us to respond to the world...Poiesis, the creative act of shaping or forming, is a response to the call of the world; it depends on my capacity to listen to that other which addresses me (ibid, pp. 71—72).
I am in agreement with the therapeutic aim of the expressive arts therapies in encouraging expressive therapy participants, clients and trainee therapists alike, to seek a shaping of art and ‘self’ that makes space for difference, disruption and particularity, rather than integration, and which is decentered through its obligation to the Other. The writings of Levine are aesthetically rich in metaphors that open up thought and the possibilities of a postmodern expressive practice. For instance, the trope of ‘decentering into an alternative reality’ expresses the transformative potential of a movement into imaginative expression. The notion of ‘staying on the surface of the artwork’ refuses to bury the possibilities of the arts in therapy in the reductions of depth psychologies (ibid).

However, I also wonder if the recent, major work of Levine and his colleagues (Knill, Levine & Levine, 2005), ‘towards a therapeutic aesthetics’ of the theory, practice and pedagogy of expressive therapy, reconstitutes aspects of the subject and of practice that these authors seek to deconstruct. Levine (1999 & 2005), who defines the Other as “that class, race or gender that must serve ruling groups” (1999, p. 19), notes the ‘post-modern’ fracturing of Eurocentrism and underscores the call of the Other. However, although the subjects of therapy and pedagogy appear in these accounts as gendered and culturally different subjects, the politics and power relations of gender and culture seem to be marginalised in the (re)constitution of a generalised and self-responsible humanity. Perhaps the authors want, and I would concur with this, to go beyond identity politics, but I do not see how one can do so effectively without trafficking in a necessary though always insufficient naming of specific embodied and situated relations of power and subjectivity. Perhaps a vexed but crucial difference between postmodernisms and poststructuralisms marks this contemporary project of the expressive arts therapies. The authors courageously embrace the ‘postmodern’ possibilities of chaos and multiplicity, but do not emphasise the positivity of power, the tendencies of power relations towards domination, or the imbrication of power and knowledge.

In setting out a philosophical framework for the expressive therapies, Levine takes up aspects of Turner’s ethnography (Turner, 1969), figuring therapeutic change as a contemporary rite of passage. The ritualised space of expressive therapy is marked by
liminality, understood as a chaotic and transformational stage in-between the point of departure and the destination, and communitas, or the coming together of initiates in an intense, shared experience of becoming that constitutes a temporary sociality beyond the usual conventions of the social. Within this liminal space, ordinary senses of time and place, and some aspects of expected social conduct, are suspended. This suspension of norms is necessarily temporary. The subjects of this ritualised space and therapeutic transformation return and are reincorporated into their everyday lives.

This move from a psychological to an ethnographic paradigm is reminiscent of aspects of narrative therapy. However, in figuring the expressive therapist as responsible for structuring chaos, leading the initiates into the unknown and conducting them back to safety, Levine does not extend the aesthetic process of ‘decentering’ from everyday reality to a decentering of the power of the therapist. This raises the question of whether these therapeutic processes rely on an elision of the power relations and cultural specificities of therapy itself. It is suggested, in this conceptualisation of the expressive therapies, that the position of the therapist becomes similar to that of persons trained and authorised in many cultural traditions to conduct rituals of transformation. The universal re-emerges in this comparison. The shaman is mapped onto the person of the contemporary expressive therapist. Such a person becomes an authentic expert/expert in authenticity, despite the authors’ attempted refusal under the sign of the postmodern to equate authenticity with wholeness.

Narrative therapies challenge the expert position of the therapist by taking up a Foucauldian perspective of power, seeking to minimise the risk of domination by the therapist through practices of ‘co-authoring’. Art psychotherapy complexifies the therapeutic relation in a different way, at least partially de-throning the therapist’s authority through a theorisation of transference and counter transference. The expressive therapies, on the other hand, re-install the therapist as a ‘ritual master’, one

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18 Tootel (2004) extends the consideration of decentering the position therapist and minimising the possibilities of domination to include the ethics of research about therapy.  
19 In her stories of therapeutic and pedagogical practice, Ellen Levine (Knill, Levine & Levine, 2005), whose work is more influenced by psychoanalysis, uses a series of different tropes, such a ‘parent’, mentor, midwife, and ‘friend-like’, to express particular tonalities and stages in therapeutic relations.
who is ironically responsible for managing the disintegration of the modern tropes of mastery and autonomy.

The assumed necessity of an active therapist with expert knowledge about when and how to move between artistic modalities is an interesting problem for an expressive arts therapist wanting to complexify and mediate relations of knowledge and power. As a facilitator of the aesthetic process, the therapist is reconstituted as a ‘change agent’. In this metaphor, the therapeutic relation is acknowledged but relegated to a “backdrop” to the aesthetics of the client’s explorations in art, whereas surely the messy intersubjectivity of therapeutic relations cannot be backgrounded in a poststructural understanding of therapy. This backgrounding enables the therapist to transpose modernist, even hierarchical, practices such as that of the therapeutic ‘prescription’ into the aesthetic realm, as though instructing a client to go home and paint rather than watch TV every day is somehow a less dominating or mechanistic act than telling her to brush her teeth, or instructing her to alternate which parent is in charge of managing the children according to odd and even days of the calendar. The concept of therapist as ‘change agent’ engages with the possibilities of change for the client, but leaves a notion of the therapist’s agency relatively unexamined.

The practice of decentering into an alternative reality, from what is generically described by the authors as the client’s ‘hopeless situation’, runs a risk of marginalising the present/absent possibilities of hope within that person’s stories of their everyday life. While taking some account of the social causes and conditions of ‘hopelessness’, this approach does not make visible the construction of ‘hopelessness’ as a category of existence, or consider that deconstructing the production of this category, in therapy discourse as well as in popular understandings, might in itself be a therapeutic activity. Nor does it engage, as narrative therapy does, with the Derridean notion of the ‘absent but implicit’, in which a sense of hopelessness might gesture toward the traces of the subjugated histories of a person’s disappointed yet honourable hopes for a more just and inclusive world (White, 2000b).

‘Poeisis’, or the creative and shaping capacities of a person in relation to their world, is arguably not so much a largely unrealised potential of beings but a present/absent
and marginalised subjective and social practice. I suggest that a kind of poeisis is always already embedded in the fabric of everyday, specific and situated subjectivities and socialities, although often marginalised and made invisible through pathologising and impoverishing discourses and practices. It seems to me that a poststructurally oriented theory and practice of arts-based therapy, while it must enter into the space of the mysterious and the sublime, needs also to rehabilitate the poetry in and of the everyday (Speedy, 2005), by engaging the powers of art to search out and honour the marginalised arts of living of those who come to therapy. Otherwise, the ritualised space that the expressive therapies can offer for aesthetic experience/experimentation might ultimately re-stage the pathologisation and isolation of the subject, reinstate the therapist as expert, and reinforce the separation and mystification of the aesthetic sphere.

**An outline of chapters**

In this first chapter, I have introduced the reader to the terrain of the thesis, via more or less formal, but always subjective, beginning accounts of my relations to and understandings of poststructuralisms, art therapies, narrative therapies and the expressive therapies. I have introduced the theoretical frameworks, disciplinary regimes and professional areas, together with memories of pedagogies, politics and practices that frame my concern with working towards ethical ‘arts of existence’. I have offered a flavour of how, inspired by Foucault, I intend to approach my thesis as a ‘book of experience’ (Foucault, 1978/2000a). Foucault describes how he takes up each piece of work in connection with the processes unfolding around him, in response to the cracks, the “silent tremors” in the institutional contexts within which he finds himself and in the specificities of his relations with others, so that “each time is always the fragment of an autobiography” (Foucault, 1981/2000, p. 458).

Following on from the broad introduction to my fields of research and modes of enquiry in Chapter 1, Chapters 2 and 3 offer an expanded and more specific account of the theories that (in)form this thesis. In these chapters, I introduce some poststructural theorists whose work is to be put into play in relation to my exploration of art therapy and narrative therapy. While I have engaged with a range of
poststructural ideas and theorists in this thesis, I have not taken these up in an equal fashion, and that bias is reflected in these theoretical chapters/stories.

Chapter 4 extends the intellectual framework of the thesis through engaging with questions of poststructural research methodology, especially the writing methodologies that have emerged from the work of a number of contemporary poststructural feminists. In this chapter I also engage with the discursive character of the visual in relation to this thesis project.

Chapters 5 and 6 engage, through poetry, story, visual images and discursive analysis, with two stories of arts-based and narrative therapeutic work with children and families. The first of these chapters considers my therapeutic engagement with a family whose stories have resonated closely with the biographies of myself and my family, while the second of these chapters tells of my therapeutic relations with a family whose legacies, positionings and narratives as Indigenous Australians pose questions about the politics and practices of working with the Other of ongoing colonisation.

Chapter 7 invites a further consideration of how writing as research calls for an ethics of uncertainty, unknowability, vulnerability and obligation to the Other (Butler, 2004a). In this concluding but necessarily inconclusive chapter, I bring together the threads of these accounts of the therapeutic and the theoretical, and of research and writing practice — accounts that push against the limits of therapeutic ‘identity’ and engagement. These threads continue to unravel and to escape into many different lines of flight towards ethical ‘arts of existence’.

I have appended a further introduction to art therapy for those readers with a specialised interest in this field. Appendix 1 offers an orientation to art therapy in the Australian context, a brief review of how poststructuralism has been taken up in art therapy literature, and an account of the ‘aesthetic turn’ in art therapy. This appendix also includes a discussion of the binary of ‘directive’ and ‘non-directive’ practice in art therapy. I conclude the appendix with some reflections and questions about the
operations and interrelations, within the practice of art therapy, of the signifying practices of speech, silence, and visual art.

_P.s. just in case ‘the reader’ is wondering...._

How did she meet feminism? Pregnant at eighteen towards the end of her last year of high school, moving to Sydney with her new husband and away from school friends and family, unable to take up an offer of a place at university, she plucks the first paperback edition of _The Female Eunuch_ (Greer, 1971) from the shelves of her local newsagency.

_The rest is her stories..._
Chapter 2

Browsing the store of poststructural theory

(My intent is) not to be confined by theory, but for theory to appear as what it is, useful and traversable (Cixous, 1986/1988, p. 144).
As she walks up the wide Travertine marble steps to the entrance of the store of poststructural theory, she passes a picket line. In an eerie echo of the anti-globalisation movement, two elderly gentlemen in shabby evening dress are waving placards that declaim, with the clarity of socialist materialism and the biblical force of prophesy,

CULTURE TODAY IS INFECTING EVERYTHING WITH SAMENESS

and

INDUSTRY IS INTERESTED IN HUMAN BEINGS ONLY AS ITS CUSTOMERS OR EMPLOYEES, AND HAS IN FACT REDUCED HUMANITY AS A WHOLE...TO THIS EXHAUSTIVE FORMULA

These messages are clearly urging her to reconsider the capitalist and consumerist implications of her current metaphor. But she is here now, outside the store, and it has taken her a long time to get here. She steps through revolving glass doors into the orange and black 1970’s retro interior.

The entire ground floor is taken up with the Men's Section. A man, only a few years younger than she, asks if he can assist her. He has shaved his head to disguise a receding hairline and is wearing one silver earring, deeply distressed Levis and an old leather bike jacket over an inside-out faded black T-shirt with the seams showing. Perhaps, he enquires casually, she is looking for a little something for the current man in her life? She says that she is just looking. As he walks away, she wonders if anything on the ‘specials’ rack of last season’s men’s continental intellectual fashions will actually fit (for) her.

She flicks through the rack of fine garments, some bright and richly embellished, others darkly elegant and subdued. A pair of mahogany slacks from the House of Bachelard reverberates with memories of dark interiors, the drawers and wardrobes of her childhood. (She wonders if this item has been put back on the wrong rack, but the nostalgic image projected by the Bachelard line has after all been a major influence on later designers of the ‘po-mo’ school.) The exquisite suit by Lacan is simply impossible — even gazing at it, let alone trying it on, is enough to underscore the disillusion most people encounter in the changing room mirror. And it’s so tiny that it must surely have been made for an ‘hommelette’.

She flicks past the shining gold buttons and matching eye-lets adorning a camouflage green Bataille jacket. Catches herself wondering if a sleek, synthetic waistcoat is an original Baudrillard or one of the numerous imitations around the place, all virtually indistinguishable from the real thing.

She lingers over the intricate weave of a Derrida linen dress shirt, attracted and disconcerted by its differance in relation to the shirts on either side of it — by her sense that the garment is not quite, and never could be, finished.

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2 This is Lacan’s joke (Grosz, 1990), not mine.
She really likes this one, but it’s difficult. She isn’t sure how to wear it, so she defers judgement; after all, with this particular creation, she is not compelled to ‘decide’...

Jacques Derrida

(If you were to bide your time awhile in these pages you would discover that I cannot dominate the situation, or translate it, or describe it. I cannot report what is going on in it, or narrate or depict it, or pronounce it or mimic it, or offer it up to be read or formalised without remainder. I would always have to renew, reproduce and reintroduce into the formalising economy of my tale — overloaded each time with some supplement — the very indecision I was trying to reduce (Derrida, 1987, p. 2).


Derridean ‘differance’ — difference and deferral — is not unlike a Freudian displacement that has escaped from its marriage to psychosexual determinism into an intense and indeterminate textual erotics, or jouissance.

The metaphor of ‘writing under erasure’ (Derrida, 1967/1976) has been taken up within a broad poststructural and deconstructive project of writing between and beyond binaries (e.g. Davies, 2000). “Under erasure” is Spivak’s translation of Derrida’s “sous rature”:
This is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both the word and its deletion. (Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible.)...

...In examining familiar things we come to such unfamiliar conclusions that our very language is twisted and bent even as it guides us (Spivak, 1997/1974, p. xiv).

Derrida’s ‘deconstruction’ has sometimes been viewed as a nihilistic project for the destruction of order and reason, or, alternatively, as a methodology that could be ‘reasonably’ ‘applied’ to a text, but Derrida makes it clear than neither of these options capture a deconstructive mood.

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structure from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work (Derrida, 1997/1967, p. 24).

Derrida continually unhinges the assumed unity of sign and signified, word and thing, writing and voice, presence and absence refusing the ‘nostalgia’ (Spivak, 1997/1974) of unified presence and being. But this undoing is also the undoing of the one who is doing the undoing. Deconstruction is always an ‘inside job’, and as such cannot be the work of something or someone in a meta-relation to that which is “under erasure”. Thus deconstruction is not critique. It is not even a critique of critique, but rather an undoing of the deciding agency assumed in taking up a critical position (Derrida, 1995a). Thus Derrida’s work inscribes a profoundly ethical uncertainty, a radical openness to the other, at the heart of this thesis.
...and so, with Derrida close to her heart yet indefinitely deferred, she continues
to search through the rack of extraordinary ‘specials’. As for this shimmering
invention from the studio of Deleuze and Guattari, what is it? Why is it in the
Men’s Section when it looks like a ball gown, or a sunrise, or an exotic bird?
And what is that nomadic melody drifting on the air? ~ There’s no place like
rhiz-home...

Held up to the light, this fabric(ation) is infinitely changeable, becoming the
rippling cerulean of the ocean, the stark reds and oranges of the desert, now
black and velvety as a bat’s wing on a moonless night, now silvery and
slippery, indefinite as autumn mist. She desires this chimera more than
anything. She is sure, too, that it would be very ‘becoming’, but she also knows
it is not to be had.

**Giles Deleuze/ Felix Guattari**

Rather than cutting off possibilities through the linear organization of the thesis, I am
challenged by Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of horizontal/rhizomatic thought and
deterritorialisation to follow potentially productive lines of flight, traversing horizons
of thought into unimagined landscapes (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/1977,
1980/1987.)

Guattari and Deleuze undertake a ‘de-territorialisation’ of the Oedipal organization of
self, family and culture to be found in Freud (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1977, 1977).
Their work challenges the Freudian hermeneutics of depth and reduction, playing on
the possibilities of proliferation across surfaces, enacting a philosophy of difference
and a politics of desire.

Deleuze’s philosophy of difference frees difference from the strictures of ‘difference
from’, suggesting a serious ethic of decentred playfulness and a transcendental yet
embodied specificity to practices of self-dissolution and becoming-other (Deleuze,
His theory of desire is productive and decentralised, leading Patton (2000) to suggest that Deleuzian desire is comparable with and complementary to Foucault’s analytic of power. Deleuze has written extensively on the arts, including cinema, music and painting (Bogue, 2003), and he elaborates many of his ideas through an exploration of the aesthetics of these different art forms. In an extended study of Francis Bacon, rich with possibilities for art therapy, Deleuze (1981) analyses the facture (mark-making/aesthetic properties) of Bacon’s paintings in terms of sensation, rhythm and an intense interplay between corporeality and a desire of becoming-other. “For Deleuze, the visible holds a particular fascination. To think differently is to see differently…” (Bogue, 2003, p.194). Visual art, as the embodiment of sensual perception, and as counterpoint to the transcendental gestures of music, holds a privileged place in Deleuze’s philosophy.

In art therapy, there is a need to theorise complex subject and object relations between the therapist, the person coming to therapy, and the artwork. In attempting to understand these relations as mutually constitutive rather than simply representational, I follow a long tradition of artists and art therapists who argue for the creative, as well as the expressive and hermeneutic, significance of art (e.g. Milner, 1950; Fuller, 1980; Waller and Dalley, 1992). Art making, in this view, is not only the making of art; it is also what art makes of its maker in relation to the world. The proposal of Nicholas Rose (1996/1998), following Deleuze and Guattari, that our ‘selves’ do not necessarily stop at our skins but are extended or become other through our use of ‘technologies’, could inform an account of how artwork may not simply reflect, but may also constitute, the capacities and identities of those who engage with art therapy.

Then she picks up a deep purple jacket circa 1960, a stylish, contemporary creation cut on the bias from a classic blend of European wool and silk. The label reads ‘Experience’ per Michel Foucault. She slips it on. This one she will certainly take with her. It’s a bit broad for her, but very well cut, and the colour really suits her complexion. Perhaps she’ll grow into it, a little.
Michel Foucault

There are two meanings to the word “subject”: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity through a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to.

(The subject) is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself...Undoubtedly there are relationships and interferences between...different forms of the subject; but we are not dealing with the same type of subject. In each case, one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself. And it is precisely the historical constitution of these various forms of the subject in relation to the games of truth that interests me (Foucault, 1982/2000b, p. 331 & 1984/2000c, pp. 290—291).

Foucault suggests that the modern ‘self’, rather than being conceptualised as universal or ‘given’, might be thought of as recent, and continually produced or created through historically and culturally specific relations of knowledge and power. Much of this thesis is a response to the radical implications of that suggestion.

Truth and the subject

For Nietzsche, “truth was the greatest lie” (Foucault, 1985/2000, p. 476). Following Nietzsche, Foucault “would like, in short, to resituate the production of true and false at the heart of historical analysis and political critique” (1980/2000, p. 230). The kind of history that can facilitate such a task is one that refuses the twin myths of origin and progress, recognising that power and conflicting interests are present at the inaugural moments of ‘reason’. Such an ‘effective history’, or genealogy, examines what is closest to it and gives consideration to what might be considered ‘below’

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3 This emphasis on the analysis of objects that are marginalised by their very closeness to us is something that Foucault’s genealogy shares with his earlier metaphor of archaeology. Both the ‘archaeological’ suggestion that implicit knowledges give rise to formal
notice, even the body itself. Foucault’s genealogy recognises that it is a perspectival
knowledge, grounded in the particularities of time, place, preference and passion.
(Foucault, 1971/2000). As a situated knowledge, genealogy does not claim to operate
outside of the relations it seeks to analyse. However, it does offer powerful tools for
unsettling what would otherwise remain taken for granted.

Foucault defines his overall project as a ‘genealogy’ of the subject: a critical and
historicising account of how human beings in modern Western culture are constituted
as both subject and object (Foucault, 1982a/2000). By analysing the historical
conditions of emergence and the theoretical antecedents of the modern subject,
Foucault suggests that our understandings of our ‘selves’ and of our lives are more
recent and less inevitable than we might otherwise assume. Foucault poses the
question of ‘what we are’, and also the question of how we might refuse what we are.
Foucault emphasised that the positivity of contemporary criticism must entail “an
historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and
recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking and saying” (Foucault,
1984a/2000, p. 315). As archaeology, this criticism will “treat the instances of
discourse that articulate what we think, say and do as so many historical events”
(ibid). As genealogy, this criticism will “separate out, from the contingency that has
made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we
are, do, or think” (ibid p. 315—6). Foucault specifies three major and interrelated
areas for consideration: the discourses of the human sciences, the disciplinary
practices of Western democracies and the self’s relation to the self in Western culture.
His work offers methodological suggestions for the analysis of discourses, power
relations and ethical/subjective formation. Foucault’s research led him to critique
what he describes as the “repressive hypothesis” (Foucault, 1976/1980, p. 15) and to
formulate an “analytics” (p. 82) of modern power as productive, decentralised and
mutually implicated with knowledge.

knowledges, and the related ‘genealogical’ suggestion that knowledge is constituted through
relations of power, implicate therapy in processes of dominant knowledge formation and
subjectification. In this view, therapy cannot be assumed to be either an innocent vehicle for
progress and healing or a conservative force that ‘represses’ freedom and pacifies the desire
for social change.
Foucauldian ‘genealogy’ can highlight issues of significance for the ongoing development of a critical and reflexive praxis of art therapy. Foucault’s critique of the ‘truth claims’ of the human sciences can invite us to historicise and deconstruct taken-for-granted ideas and practices within art therapy. A Foucauldian analytic of power (Foucault, 1976/1980) poses fresh questions about our discipline’s relationship to ‘governmentality’ (Foucault, 1978/2000) and normalising judgement, thereby giving impetus to the current and historical discussion around the ‘clinification’ of art therapy. A view of power as both disciplinary and productive invites a consideration of how our clinical and pedagogical practices may engage our clients, our students and ourselves in certain ways of constituting identity. A view of resistance as an always-present response to power might provide an alternative framework for considering our own stories and images, as well as those of the people who come to meet with art therapists.

I find Foucault’s work highly suggestive for challenging the binaries that mark much debate within and between therapeutic modalities. Rather than choosing between binary positions, it seems to be more useful, following Foucault, to enquire into the production and maintenance of such binaries, into the history and effects of the unhinging of thought and emotion, the formation and divisions of the disciplines, the problematisation and separation of psychic and social spheres. Foucault offers ways of challenging or undoing the art/science binary that has marked art therapy and research methodologies alike. Rather than ‘siding’ with the possibilities of proof through scientific method or valorising irrationality as giving privileged access to emotional (as opposed to intellectual) ‘truth’, Foucault questions the production of such a binary.

Foucault’s later work on ethical subjectivity, with its emphasis on modern ‘techniques’ and ‘technologies’ of the self, is particularly rich in suggestions for an ethics and aesthetics of therapy. However I think it is important not to isolate Foucault’s ethics from other aspects of a genealogy of the subject. Foucault pointed out that new forms of power (and, one could add, new forms of knowledge and subjectivity) emerge and may become dominant in different times and contexts, but that they do not ‘replace’ existing forms, which may also become more or less
influential (Foucault, 2000/1978). The ‘ethics’ of art therapy are necessarily informed by a critical ontology of the present — by a continual questioning of what is otherwise taken for granted in clinical theory and practice.

**Problematisation**

Foucault speaks of ‘problematisation’ as “the set of discursive or nondiscursive practices that make something enter into the play of the true and false, and constitutes it as an object for thought” (Foucault, 1984/1996, pp. 456—7). In this sense of the word, problematisation is one of the ways that historically specific knowledges and practices come to be accepted as ‘normal, natural and true’. Problematisation is therefore a practice of dominant power, but it can also be a practice of resistance. Since Foucault exposes the political and historical contingencies of any supposedly disinterested claim to knowledge, a Foucauldian/poststructuralist ethics would require the researcher to openly ‘locate’ her interests and investments. In this view, a researcher can generate a strategic starting point from within the narrative of her own experience: a ‘problematisation’ that in turn connects with relevant issues for a wider community of interest (Foucault, 1984/2000b). This proposal extends the radical feminist assertion that ‘the personal is the political’, drawing attention to the discursive work involved in the mutual constitution of individual and collective concerns.

For Foucault, critical thought is itself a difficult and necessary practice of freedom (1981/2000). Thought is “freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem (1984/2000b, p. 117)”, “the act that posits a subject and an object, along with their various possible relations” (early 1980’s/2000, p. 459). It is important to analyse, rather than take for granted, the formation, and mutually constitutive relationship, of both the subject and the object of thought within a field of practice — to understand how things become ‘problematised’ and how they thereby enter a domain of thought in which they can be considered as either true or false.

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4 The editor of this text gives its original publication date as ‘early 1980’s’.
In tandem with problematisation, a method of ‘eventalisation’ disrupts self-evidence and undoes necessity by rediscovering the singularities and specificities of a particular occurrence/event. As a researcher breaks down an event into its specifics, it becomes more possible and indeed obligatory to relate the specifics of the event to other social and discursive practices, so that attention to discontinuities and idiosyncracies paradoxically increases the researcher’s capacity to locate the proliferating tendencies and effects of power. (Foucault, 1980/2000b).

Knowledge

Foucault’s interest in the human sciences⁵ — a field that incorporates the psychotherapies — is of significance for a poststructurally oriented thesis about art therapy because it provides a frame within which to locate the profession historically and discursively, in the process unmasking powerful implicit assumptions. Foucault’s emphasis on both local and broad categories of thought is indicative for how one might attempt a study of art therapy that disrupts and displaces the profession’s dominant theoretical and practical assumptions.

For Foucault, the human sciences did not inherit ‘Man’ as the object of their investigations (and hence as both the subject and object of ‘his’ own thoughts) — they constituted him. And if ‘man’ in this sense could be invented, he could also disappear⁶ or be re-invented. Much of Foucault’s later work could be seen as an attempt to reconstitute, differently, the relation of subject to object — of ourselves to ourselves. Therapy, in this view, rather than being a refinement of an historical and universal practice of healing, is only made possible through its relatively recent mutual constitution with the invention and problematisation of ‘man’. Similarly, a subjective and reflexive practice of art is only a possibility when a theory of subjectivity complicates the assumption of pure and transparent representation.

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⁵ For Foucault, the human sciences become an object of investigation because these disciplines occupy an anomalous zone between ‘pure’ science and ‘mere’ opinion. Foucault suggests that it is both more possible and more strategic to study the historical contingency of truth claims in the recently formed ‘sciences of man’ than in the more established ‘hard’ sciences (1980/2000a).

Thought this way, art psychotherapy is an inevitably ‘modern’ practice. If the modern age invented ‘man’, then modernity is continually constituting what it means to be human, and shaping who is included and excluded from humanity (c.f. Butler, 2004a). Therapy plays a crucial role in this constitution. Therapy, as a discursive practice within expanding modern rationalities, is constitutive of subjectivities, socialities and truths. Such modern practice is marked with a self-consciousness and reflexivity that it is necessary to go beyond, a project in which Foucault’s refusal of a hermeneutics of the subject and his ethic of critique become crucial. Such a refusal could lead to an ongoing critique and transformation of the ethics of therapeutic practice. By locating the apparently individual question of therapeutic transformation in relation to power and the social, and by dethroning ‘objectivity’ and its dominating effects, therapy can contribute, little by little, to the shaping of a more inclusive and just sociality, or at least to a greater alertness to the strategic tendency for forms of power to become domination.

Following Foucault’s focus on the human sciences and his method of disrupting and reorganising disciplinary categories, Rose (1996/1998) has studied the constitution of what he calls the ‘psy’ disciplines. By grouping together psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, Rose can describe the common discursive features of areas that often appear in opposition to each other. He can account for the emergence and proliferation of these disciplines, which take the modern ‘self’ as their object. By breaking up and regrouping these disciplines, Rose makes visible how they are imbricated in practices of governmentality and normalising power. This analysis situates art therapy — for all its emphasis on the unconscious and the recuperation of irrationality — as part of an expansion of forms of rationality that shape a self-governing neoliberal subject of ‘choice’. This is an important frame for the more localised stories of therapeutic work that form the central chapters of this thesis.

In his early work on the discourses of the human sciences, Foucault (1966/ 1994) gives a privileged status within the human sciences to both psychoanalysis and ethnology because of their critical capacity in relation to their fields of knowledge. Psychoanalysis radically decentres the truth of the subject it seeks to investigate, while ethnology historicises and culturally contextualises that truth. This privileging
of both psychoanalysis and ethnology holds considerable interest for me because of
their influence, respectively, on the constitution of art therapy and narrative therapy.
My research for this thesis has underlined for me that, despite their apparent
incompatibility, narrative therapy and art therapy share a radical potential for
destabilising the truth of positivism. Foucault’s analysis has assisted me to understand
this shared potential, while Butler’s theories (see next chapter) have enabled me to
understand the opposition of narrative therapy and art therapy as an effect of/
productive of the binary of the psychic and the social.

**Discourse analysis**

Within a Foucauldian framework, the word ‘discourse’ is asked to do the work of
suggesting that a range of signifying and social practices, such as writing, speech and
art, act at a local and immediate level to produce our experience and constitute the
realities within which we live (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990). For Foucault, discourses
have real/material effects that constitute subjectivity and truth. Textual work within a
Foucauldian frame identifies how dominant cultural discourses shape specific
narratives and signifying practices, which in turn constitute without fully determining
those dominant discourses. Differences within and between discourses and narratives
open space for ‘resistance’. According to Foucault, the statements or units of
discourse — graphs, tables, etc. as well as written statements — that make up a
discursive formation or archive do not merely describe knowledge: they regulate,
produce, and distribute it as truth. Their operation is characterised as a ‘positivity’.
The notion of productive signifying texts that are not only linguistic but include art
and social acts expands the notion of discourse in a manner useful to a critique of art
therapy, which is distinguished among therapies for its emphasis on the visual and
non-verbal. The idea that what is sayable and visible is historically conditioned is
suggestive for a revised problematics of art therapy. Art therapy often concerns itself
with an opposition of seeing and saying – with the idea that art makes visible that
which cannot be spoken. This gives rise to a hermeneutics of the art therapy product.
From a Foucauldian perspective, I am at least equally concerned with how the sayable
and the visible are produced, through historical relations of power, in binary
opposition to the unspeakable and the invisible. I am also concerned with what art therapy does as well as with what it ‘means’.

Gazes and critical visualities

Foucault, having taken up the theme of the psychiatric/clinical gaze in *Madness and civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Foucault, 1961/1967), extends his analysis of gazes and visualities in *Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception* (Foucault, 1963/1994). The constitution of the medical gaze through the practice of dissecting corpses in clinical anatomy renders disease visible and divisible below the envelope of skin. This inaugurates a positivist science that analyses life from the point of view of death, or the analytic of finitude. The medical model is formed and then mapped onto an understanding of emotional and psychological ills. The image of the corpse and its dissection speaks eloquently to the effects of pathologising, categorising and objectifying practices within psychology and psychotherapy. The clinical ‘gaze’ is a particular and dominant visuality that may be either reproduced or challenged by the visualities of art therapy, given a notable tension in art therapy theory and practice between the certainties of scientific positivism and the notion of therapy as a form of art.

The specificity of Foucault’s accounts of ways of seeing breaks up the empire of the gaze into local and embodied visualities. Gary Shapiro (2003) claims that Foucault often parallels his major works with shorter expositions in terms of the visual, so that, for instance, his analysis of the visual practices of Manet composes an alternative to panopticism.

Gillian Rose (2001) offers a useful account of Foucauldian discourse analysis in relation to the emerging field of visual culture and the development of a critical visual

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7 In a metaphorical vein, an ‘analytic of finitude’ is reminiscent of the Freudian death drive – of notions of aggression and vulnerability that are taken up further in the work of Melanie Klein. Death, lack and loss imbue the hermeneutics of art psychotherapy, while, in the shadow of the analytic of finitude, those therapies grounded in philosophies of optimism and hope can begin to look shallow. For art psychotherapy, it can be almost ‘counter intuitive’ to refuse a hermeneutics of depth in order to notice frequently unregarded, obvious, close, everyday forms of discourse and discursive practice. This emphasis on the surface is an example of something ‘difficult to think’ in art therapy; and it is something that, once thought, makes it possible to imagine how things might be other than we take them to be.
methodology. As a visual methodology, discourse analysis can ask what is made visible through the signifying practices of art, what is visibilized or obscured in the exegesis or ‘ekphrasis’ of an image, and how specific visualities interrelate with specific signifying practices. Discourse analysis can also highlight specific visualities and visual signifying practices as forms of resistance. Gillian Rose suggests that, while one dimension of discourse analysis focuses on art as a signifying practice, another dimension focuses on the social and institutional production of visualities. This may be a useful schematic separation although Foucault emphasized a relationship of mutual constitution between social and signifying practices. I agree with Gillian Rose that researchers need to reflect on “how you as a critic of visual issues are looking” (G. Rose, 2001, p. 16), although not with her assertion that Foucauldian work fails to meet this criterion for a critical visual methodology because “discourse analysis refuses to be reflexive” (ibid, p. 142). A contemporary Foucauldian approach does not refuse to acknowledge reflexivity, but it does complicate the assumption of an essential, humanist subject who ‘looks’.

According to Gillian Rose (2001) visual imagery can never be innocent; it is always constructed, through various practices, technologies and knowledges. The meaning of an image or set of images is made at three sites: production, the image itself, and its audiencing (ibid). The practices, technologies and knowledges involved in the construction of visual images and their meanings in art therapy are a complex interplay of the psychological, the aesthetic and the social. They encompass the implicit and the explicit, and span the professional cultures of both therapy and art and the cultures of those individuals and groups who come to therapy. The construction of images within the context of art psychotherapy is usually based in and reproduces a theoretical assumption that ‘art’ is an expression — albeit often in a disguised or displaced form — of an ‘authentic’ aspect of the interiority of its maker(s).

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8 Dr Andrea Gilroy introduced the relevance of visual culture and visual methodologies at a weekend workshop for postgraduate students engaged in art therapy research at the University of Western Sydney, November, 2003.
This assumption is structured by and also perpetuates modern humanistic and psychological discourses about the ‘nature’ of both art and therapy. The art of art therapy is often also thought to express its maker’s relationship to significant others, including the therapist. It is less frequently thought to express a relation to the social and to culture, including visual culture. Even when a broad account is offered of the expressive possibilities of art therapy, an implicit hierarchy may operate to suggest that the expression of interiority (perhaps drawn out through the relationship to the therapist) is the primary purpose of art therapy. If the therapeutic frame is psychodynamic, the art making might be regarded as a partly unconscious product that repeats historic and current patterns of personality and relationship through a three-way transference to both the artwork and the therapist (Schaverien, 1991; Case and Dalley, 1992). If the framework is existential or humanistic, then the artwork may be regarded as an expression of authentic (or inauthentic) consciousness (Moon, 1995, 2001; Garai, 1987/2001). The notion of art as purely an expression, rather than also as a production, of feelings, stories and relationships, tends to invisibilise operations of power and mask the potential for relations of either co-construction or domination in the art therapeutic context.

When therapeutic art making is viewed as primarily the expression of a person’s interior world in relationship to a supportive and/or containing other, then the conditions for the production of such an image are likely to be established to facilitate this form of expression. For instance ‘expressive’ and plastic media may be preferred technologies and may be given priority over photography, film, video and computer generated imagery. The room and furniture may be set up to encourage an alternation between one to one interpersonal engagement and attention to the processes of making art, perhaps with some comfortable chairs at angles to each other (or in a circle for a family or group) in one part of the room and art table(s) and materials in another part of the room. The person(s) coming to therapy may be engaged, through explicit and implicit messages, in a view that an intense or absorbed attitude and expressive forms of art making are to be understood as appropriate therapeutic engagement and authentic self-expression. They may then produce an image in such a way that the image itself authenticates this notion of expressing the inner world of the maker, and the therapist, as the audience to this production, may confirm this through
her responses — perhaps with subtle and even unintended signs of interest or encouragement. Such an account, while over-simplified, draws attention to how theory and practice work together to reproduce and create each other, and even to construct the work of art itself.

Yet at the same time as the truths of art therapy are reproduced and documented at these multiple sites of construction of the art therapy image, these truths are also challenged and perverted. Each citation and performance of the subjects, relations and images of art psychotherapy is as much an unravelling, as a performance of truth. ‘Resistance’, in all its multiple and overlapping meanings, comes into play. Art therapy is implicated in the citation and reproduction of dominant discourses in relation to both art and psychology and with an associated reproduction of the subject of modernity. However, this reproduction is never total. There are always and inevitably subtexts, slippages, variations, excesses, ‘mistakes’, rebellions and so forth that signal the potential to move beyond the taken-for-granted truths of art therapy.

Hence art therapists work, knowingly and unknowingly, at the sites of production, audiencing and the image itself, and this work both reconstitutes the known and true, and opens a space for difference. Art psychotherapists have argued to varying degrees that art therapy is the creation of something new as well as the reflection of something deeply inscribed in the psyche (see Case and Dalley, 1992). This position mediates the tendency for the work of art to be subjugated to the psychological in theorisations of art therapy. However, this view of art therapy as creative as well as expressive does not generally entail a consideration of the positivity of social and intrapsychic relations of power. The notion is still one of art making as an expression and refinement of interiority, rather than as a production of the space of interiority itself.

**Power relations**

If power never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it
induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault, 1976/2000, p. 120).

When Foucault critiques the human sciences he is speaking not only of theories but also of disciplines, as assemblages of discourses and practices (Milchman & Rosenberg, 2000). According to this view, truth is produced not only in formal theoretical writing, but also at the everyday, administrative level of documentation. Such documentation — course leaflets, the public documents of professional associations, case files — can be seen as producing implicit knowledges that are mutually reinforcing with more formal academic and clinical discourses. Discourses and practices are also considered to be mutually conditioning and constituting. In these ways, ‘higher knowledge’ is thoroughly implicated with disciplinary power.

Foucault has sometimes been misunderstood as claiming that power and knowledge are the same thing, whereas he tells a nuanced story of an historically changing relationship between knowledge and power, wherein power is implicated in what forms of knowledge become dominant and are seen as legitimate claims to truth (Foucault, 1983/2000b). For Foucault, power exists “only as exercised by some on others”; it is “an action upon the actions of others” (1982/2000a, pp. 340—341). In the contemporary scenarios of ethical subjectivity, power is also an action upon the actions of one’s self. Modern power is simultaneously individualising and totalising (Foucault, 1982/2000b). According to Foucault, modern power does not primarily operate through repression, but through the decentralised production of truth and normality. In liberal democracies, surveillance by the state is increasingly replaced by practices of management of the self and others according to a proliferating range of norms. Pastoral power becomes secularised and invested in the disciplines of the human sciences, giving their theories, practices and practitioners a particularly authoritative status in peoples’ lives. This insight troubles the liberatory claims of progressive therapies, since the pursuit of freedom through self-knowledge serves to tighten the noose of (self) subjectification.
Foucault’s analysis of power relations invites a consideration of the extent to which my theories and practices as an art therapist might collude with or challenge the expansion of normalising power and its distressing consequences for people who are subsequently labelled or label themselves as abnormal or deficient. It prompts a consideration of those ideas and practices within art therapy that assist people to resist the totalisation of their identities that can sometimes be the consequence of contact with helping professionals and institutions. While the power relations invested in therapeutic authority cannot be avoided, neither are they inherently good or bad (Rose, 2000). An understanding of power as productive suggests that art therapy can assist in the development of capacities that assist people to negotiate relations with themselves and others. An acknowledgment that therapists are involved in constituting the identities of those who come to art therapy enables therapists to aim to exercise therapeutic authority as consultatively as possible and with a minimum of domination.

A Foucauldian perspective of power’s positivity can give rise to a number of questions in relation to those who come to art therapy as ‘clients’. How does art therapy describe/constitute its clients? How is ‘clienthood’ understood in art therapy literature and in other documentation? How does art therapy state its aims for the client’s relationship with his/herself, with the therapist, with the art process and product? What aspects of the client are problematised in the documentation? How does art therapy ‘enrol’ clients in the process of therapy? How is meaning attributed to the client’s experience of therapy and to the artwork? What part is played in the constitution of the client by the therapeutic relationship including the three-way transference, (here considered as a ‘technology’), and the activity of making of art?

**Discipline**

Whereas domination leaves the subject no choice, disciplinary power works by coercion. It organises space, activities, time, and an integration of all of these (McHoul & Grace, 1993). While prison provides an extreme and formative instance, disciplinary power also operates in other institutions such as barracks, hospitals and schools. According to the perspective of disciplinary power, the clinical setting is composed of spaces, times and practices that act on art therapists and their clients to
produce the professional and clinical subjects of art therapy (c.f. Tipple, 2003; McHoul & Grace, 1993, pp. 66—76). Training courses could also be viewed through this ‘disciplinary’ lens, by analysing timetabling, assessment processes, the supervision of practicums, etc. It would be far-fetched to assume an equivalence between the regularities of therapy — discursive practices which punctuate rather than define either a community or institutional life — and the totality of life in prison.

Nevertheless, therapy is administrated in ways which regulate the subjects of therapy (both therapist and client) in time and space — the therapeutic hour, the regularity of appointments, the arrangements of furniture and bodies in space — and includes practices of surveillance such as the one-way mirror, case conferencing, duties of care and protection and various systems for record keeping. Therapy practices can be ‘double-edged’: therapeutic confidentiality and therapeutic abstinence, for instance, are important protections, and they may also operate as technologies of hierarchisation, individuation and isolation (i.e. as dividing practices). Even the formation of the art therapy therapeutic or training group, with the participants and leader/conductor seated in a circle, each participant’s image laid out before her, might mirror something of the architecture of surveillance exemplified (although never practically realised) in the Panopticon (Foucault, 1975/1991; 1996/1978) while substituting a more apparently open and egalitarian form of observation for the hierarchical discipline of the prison: the disciplinary gaze democratised, circulated, ‘ethicalised’; turned towards the normalisation of others and oneself.

**The repressive hypothesis**

Foucault proposes that repression is only one of the modes by which an aspect of human existence becomes an object of attention. Foucault traces the rise of the repressive hypothesis in relation to the problematisation of sexuality (1976/1980). He

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9 The problematisation of sexuality, if not often the overt focus of contemporary therapy, remains implicit in its Freudian psychodynamic legacy. Moreover, the liberation of this problematised sexuality is intrinsic to the project of the humanistic therapies. From a Marxist-humanistic perspective in therapy — the perspective, for instance of Wilhelm Reich — it is as much our task to liberate the truth of our sex and of our authentic selves from sexual and emotional repression as it is to liberate our working lives from economic oppression. However Foucault’s critique of the repressive hypothesis positions such
is interested in how repression becomes a dominant hypothesis to the extent that the supposed repression of ‘the truth of sex’ comes to be taken as a sin, and as the repression of the truth of ourselves.

Through this repressive hypothesis, a form of transgression and revolt is made possible, but this revolt is itself an inversion, caught up in the same discursive terms as that which it seeks to resist. Whereas once one confessed the sins of the flesh and aspired to purity, now one confessed the sin of sexual repression and aspired to sexual liberation. The technologies of pastoral power, in particular the practices of the Christian confession, are expanded and then secularised. A continuing imperative to examine oneself and to confess the truth shapes and is shaped by the domains of psychoanalysis and the psychotherapies, such that (art) psychotherapy is inextricably implicated in this incitement to confess ‘the truth of ourselves’.

Foucault acknowledges practices of liberation from oppression, giving the example of a colonised people liberating themselves from their colonisers, but he also suggests that, just as repression is only one mode of power, so processes of liberation do not define all the possible practices of freedom (Foucault, 1984/2000a). Moreover, frameworks which derive their explanatory and critical capacity from a notion of power as primarily repressive can be seen as discursively producing the very lack of freedom they would wish to either explain as inevitable or challenge as unjust.

Foucault’s critique of the repressive hypothesis thus constitutes a radical criticism of both the psychodynamic and humanistic underpinnings of art therapy, which rest in the first instance on a theory of intrapsychic repression, and in the second instance on a theory of liberating the true and authentic self.

**An analytic of power**

Although Foucault initially saw Freudian psychoanalytic theory in terms of its radical potential for decentering dominant conceptions of a rational subject, in his later work he became more concerned with the subjugating/subjectifying effects of Freudian ‘liberatory’ politics as implicated in the reproduction of the very operations of power that they would hope to critique.
theory. I understand this shift, not as ‘progress’ in relation to the ‘truth’ about Freud, but as a critical and historical comment on the differing discursive effects of Freudian psychoanalysis. The contradictory potential of psychoanalysis to disrupt rationality and yet to rationalise the hermeneutics of the modern subject is very much in accordance with my own clinical and personal therapeutic experiences, and it is a dilemma that haunts the territory of this thesis.

In relation to the effects on the subject of the deployment of sexuality, Freudian psychoanalysis becomes an occasion for the further rationalisation of the repressive hypothesis. However, Foucault does not read Freud as simply an architect of a theme of repression. Lacan’s account of Freudian psychoanalysis substitutes a law of desire for the repression of instincts. Lacanian desire is ‘produced’ rather than repressed, but it is also always-already governed by “the father’s no”. In this way, Lacan and Freud share a negative representation of power in which you are “always already trapped” (1976/1980, p. 83). Foucault sketches out this dominant representation of power in order to establish the basis for an alternative explanation. Such a power works in the negative by specifying limit or lack, it creates binaries, and it lays down rules for what can be said, so that the object is only intelligible within an understanding of that object’s relation to the law.

In contrast to this dominant, ‘jurido-discursive’ representation of power, Foucault offers an analytics of power’s positivity. This is not an alternative theory of power because Foucault asserts that power does not exist separate from being exercised. Since power has no separate ontological status, rather than saying what it is, Foucault attempts to specify how it works. As “a mode of action upon the action of others” (Foucault, 1978/2000, p. 341), power is distinct from, although often tending towards, domination. Foucault (1976/1980) elaborates an analytics of modern power as productive, decentralised and mutually constitutive with knowledge. Power relations are conceptualised as tending towards but never achieving totalisation because they are always creating and responding to resistances.
Foucault (1976/1980) offers some suggestions for analysing relations of power. In taking up these points in relation to my thesis, I could be attentive to the following considerations:

- A sensitivity to discontinuities, sudden breaks and multiple trajectories within accounts of art therapy.

- A consideration of anecdotal accounts of art therapy as mutually constitutive with formal claims to truth.

- A consideration of how case studies and other accounts of specific clinical practices of art therapy are mutually constitutive with art therapy theory.

- A focus on the subject positions made available to clients, practitioners and trainees within the literature and within clinical and pedagogical art therapies.

- A consideration of how art therapists actively participate in the discursive construction of their own and their client’s subjectivities.

- A reconceptualisation of intrapsychic resistance as resistance to power-knowledge.

**Ethics**

Ethics, in Foucault’s sense, concerns the production of ethical subjects through particular practices of the self in relation to the self. ¹⁰ Foucault makes a distinction between morality and ethics. Ethics is that part of morality which constitutes an ethical subject through practices of the self in relation to the self. No one is simply an agent of a moral code, since there are different ways of conducting oneself in relation

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¹⁰ In the course of the three completed volumes of the *History of sexuality*, Foucault’s focus shifts from the technologies of discipline, via a consideration of the deployment of sexuality in the production of modern identity, to a more explicit interest in *ethics*, or the self’s relation to the self. This shift in focus mirrors, to an extent, how psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, arising as critical alternatives to the ‘great confinement’, were at first preoccupied with the problematisation of Eros in relation to Psyche and only later generalised from a theory of sexuality to a theory of the ‘self’.
to moral precepts. Just as moral codes differ widely, so do the various aspects of 
ethical formation. The relative importance of moral code and ethics can also differ —
some moralities have highly prescriptive codes while others are more open and 
ethically based.\footnote{Elsewhere I have suggested that that art therapy training courses put a high value on the ability of trainees to become autonomous, self–regulating subjects, even while trainers have an ultimate responsibility in deciding if and when people are ready to practice. It is interesting to consider how training courses invite trainees to constitute themselves and how art therapy educators understand their role in this regard. It is also worth asking how art therapy professional associations mediate between the necessity for agreed codes of conduct, and an understanding of ethics as subjective practice. It seems to me that at times there is a conflict of ‘morailities’ between educational and professional institutions within Australian art therapy, in that the professional association has considered itself obliged to focus more strongly on prescribing rules, while the courses have focussed more strongly on producing ethical subjects.}

Foucault (1983/2000a, pp. 263—269; 1984/1992, pp. 27—28) offers four points to consider in mapping the constitution of the self as an ethical subject. This map raises questions about the ethical self-constitution of the subjects of art therapy\footnote{These ‘technologies of the self’ are mutually constitutive with the discursive production of the clinical subject of art therapy in the literature and the disciplinary production of the art therapist and their clients through pedagogic, clinical and professional relations of power.}:

- **Ethical substance**: the aspect of self that is considered relevant to moral conduct. (What do art therapists, trainees and clients understand to be the aspect of themselves that art therapy works on in order to transform?)

- **Mode of subjection**: the way in which the individual establishes her relation to the moral code and recognises herself as obliged to put it into practice. (How do these subjects of art therapy come to recognise that these ethics are ‘truly’ applicable to them?)

- **Ethical work or self forming activity**: practices which one performs, not only to change behaviour, but also to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behaviour. (What techniques of the self must be practiced in order to achieve and sustain competence in relation to this aspect of selfhood?)
• The **telos**: a commitment not only to moral action but also to attaining a particular mode of being. (What mode of being do these subjects aspire to attain through the acceptance and practice of these ethics?)

The constitution of the ‘ethical substance’, or the aspect of the self that is problematised as in need of transformation, changes across time and contexts (Foucault 1983/2000a). Whereas in Christian theology the dominant ethical substance tended to be ‘desire’, for Kant and the Enlightenment it was intention, and in the mid to late 20th century it seemed to be ‘feelings’. Within a Western, consumer-based democracy, Rose (1992, 1996/8) suggests that the dominant contemporary ethical substance is our capacity to make choices.

It seems to me that different therapies promote different conceptions of the ethical substance, and therefore make different assumptions about what kind of therapeutic transformation, or telos, is to be achieved. If the ethical substance differs, so too does the subjective state to which one aspires and the skills one must practice to attain that way of being. Rose (2000a) suggests that ‘behaviour’ is the ethical substance to be transformed in contemporary positivist psychology, although I would add that ‘thinking’ as well as ‘behaviour’ is the ethical substance of the cognitive-behavioural models that are considered ‘best practice’ in Australia at present. Similarly, instincts and unconscious desires are the ethical substance in psychoanalysis, and our ‘feelings’ are the ethical substance in humanistic approaches.

Both Rose (2000a) and White (2002) invoke the relevance of Foucault’s ethics for the theory and practice of therapy. Rose and White concur that therapy is constitutive of clients’ identities, and that therapists are privileged and influential in the power relations of therapy — therefore an ethical obligation of therapists is to participate in power relations with a minimum of domination.

However there are significant differences in the way that Rose and White engage with a Foucauldian perspective. Rose follows Foucault in using the classical Greek concept of *techne* to draw out the pedagogical relationship between therapist and client made explicit in cognitive behavioural therapy but implicit in all psychotherapies, even in
psychoanalysis. Rose suggests it is not a matter of whether, but of how, a transmission of life skills is effected between therapist and client. White and other narrative therapists have preferred a ‘co-authoring’ metaphor for the therapeutic relationship (Epston and White, 1990). For these therapists, a heuristic use of Foucault’s notions of resistance and the proliferation of discourses, and of Derrida’s deconstruction, provide a basis for locating, narrativising and amplifying those ‘preferred’ ways of doing (action) and ‘being’ (identity) which are marginalised and/or implicit in the stories of people coming to therapy. While in a broad sense this might imply a pedagogical relation, such a pedagogy would eschew the teaching of ‘life skills’ in the conventional sense. From the perspective of narrative therapy, the ‘life skills’ discourse is implicated in the construction of norms associated with a discourse of personal failure. A ‘life skills’ approach (even if these skills involve foregoing ‘outcomes’ in favour of the dance of transference and counter-transference) assumes a lack on the part of a client that reinforces the expert position of the therapist.

Although both Rose and White focus primarily on the ethical constitution of clients, both authors also note the relevance of considering the ethical constitution of therapists. It seems to me that the ethical substance of therapists’ lives closely parallels the ethical substance assumed to be relevant for the ‘clients’ of particular approaches to therapy (Linnell, 2004). Indeed, the application of these ethics to themselves is a primary means by which therapists come to understand and embody the historically and culturally contingent theories and practices of their discipline as ‘normal, natural and true’. Cognitive-behavioural therapists learn and apply systematic thinking and behavioural intervention, thereby transforming themselves into the subjects of rational thought and reasonable action. Psychoanalysts undergo a training analysis in order to develop ‘insight’ into their own psychic topographies, and humanistic therapists engage in experiential training in order to gain self-awareness and cultivate high levels of empathy and intuition. Both psychoanalytically informed and humanistic therapists thus become subject to the requirement to ‘know themselves’ (Foucault, 1982/2000). I have found myself wondering to what extent the ethical substance might differ between a psychodynamically and/or humanistically based, and an aesthetically based, practice of art therapy. In the former approach the
ethical substance might be unconscious processes and/or feelings, whereas in an aesthetic approach it might be something like ‘imagination’ or ‘creativity’.

These ethics of therapy are predicated, although to varying degrees, on the assumption of an autonomous and self-governing subject. According to Rose,

> Psychology has participated in the invention of a variety of procedures by means of which individuals, using the techniques elaborated by psychological experts, can act upon their bodies, their emotions, their beliefs and their forms of conduct in order to transform themselves, in order to achieve autonomous selfhood.…. Within this psychological ethics, the self is obliged to live its life tied to the project of its own identity (Rose, 2000a, p. 18).  

Since narrative therapists regard their task as the co-authoring of lives and relationships, the ethical substance to be transformed for a narrative practitioner is the landscape of her own narrative of action and identity (see White, 1991/1992) in connection with the life narratives of significant others, including those who come to therapy. While narrative practice is mediated by an acknowledgement and decentering of therapeutic privilege, and an understanding of the self as constructed in relation to discourse and the other, narrative practitioners are not separate from the discourses we attempt to critique. Narrative therapies are necessarily implicated in the broader project of modern psychology, social science and therapy. In particular, ‘intention’, which Foucault identified as an ethical substance associated with the Enlightenment, is often a privileged category in narrative therapy, suggesting a tendency in such therapy to reconstitute the rational subject of Enlightenment. If

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13 This is an online article. The quotation may be found under the subheading ‘Ethics, paragraph 9.
14 This privileging of intention (albeit as an antidote to dominant therapy theories of motivation, function, desire etc.) is present in White’s (2004c) quip that life generally consists of about 98% un-lived intentions, and that we might greatly improve our happiness, well-being etc. by even a tiny reduction of that percentage to around 95% — the reference is to an unpublished welcoming address and I am not sure if I have accurately recalled the alleged percentages.) White’s comment is of course also an appropriation of and joke against the positivist technologies of psychological measurement and percentiles.
narrative therapy is to continue to take up a Foucauldian ethic of critique, then the critical potential of narrative therapy to disturb the constitution of an autonomous self-regulating individual must, paradoxically, remain in question.

Refusing what we are: an ethic of permanent critique

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are...to imagine and to build up what we could be in order to get rid of this kind of political ‘doublebind’ which is the simultaneous individualisation and totalisation of modern power structures...We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of the kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries (Foucault, 1982/2000, p. 336).

Foucault has me wondering – what would constitute a refusal of ‘what we are’ as art therapists? How could we refuse to incite our clients to discover who they ‘truly’ are? How can we refuse what we are as researchers, as educators? What ‘becomings’ are made possible by such a refusal? What freedoms are thus engendered? If the dominant contemporary ethical substance is choice (Rose, 1996/1998), then it becomes crucial to problematise self-awareness and agency in order to ‘refuse what we are’. This ethic informs the particular notion of ‘freedom’ in Foucault, and in this thesis.

Foucault once asserted that he wrote “experience book(s) as opposed to truth book(s) or demonstration books” (1978/2000b, p. 240). Such books are inspired by a personal experience of the writer that the book makes accessible to others. They render current social and political mechanisms intelligible, thus enabling a detachment from and different perception of the present. They invite a change in modes of thinking and open on to the possibility of collective practices of transformation. Foucault is worth quoting at length on the inseparability of practices of critique and transformation. Rather than critical thought being a precondition for a deferred moment of transformation, such thinking is the work of transformation:
A critique does not consist in saying things are not good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what types of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based... Above all, I don’t think criticism can be set against transformation, “ideal” criticism against “real” transformation. Thought does exist, both beyond and before systems and edifices of discourse. It is something that is often hidden but always drives everyday behaviours... Criticism consists in uncovering that thought and trying to change it: showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To do criticism is to make harder those acts that are now too easy.

Understood in these terms, criticism (and radical criticism) is utterly indispensable for any transformation... as soon as people begin to have trouble thinking things the way they have been thought, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult and entirely possible.

So there is not a time for criticism and a time for transformation... As a matter of fact, I believe the work of deep transformation can be done in the always turbulent atmosphere of a continuous criticism (Foucault, 1981/2000, pp. 456—457).

**An aesthetics of existence**

In his late work, Foucault (1983/2000; 1984/1990) challenges the separation of the aesthetic sphere by elaborating an aesthetic metaphor for the ethical shaping of ourselves and our relationships. As an alternative to the frequently invoked concepts of self-knowledge and self–discovery, Foucault suggests that the ongoing work of ethical subjectivity might consist in ‘making’ ourselves as a work of art, and that this might be our major contemporary ethical and aesthetic task: “From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art” (Foucault, 1983/2000, p. 262). To me, this is a
beautiful instance of how Foucault opens space for refusal and creation within and against the contemporary discursive order. Despite Foucault’s differences with Derrida, the ethical substance of ‘choice’ could be seen as coming ‘under erasure’ in Foucault’s work, in that (a) choice is both discursively constructed and a work of thought.

Reading Foucault according to his own notion of experience/ experiment, his work is as much a performance as an exposition of an ethic of permanent critique and an aesthetics of existence. His writing embodies the art of engaging the reader in an experience of the transformative possibilities of resistance.

Foucault’s ethics/aesthetics of existence could fit with a recent turn, or return, to aesthetics within art therapy theory and practice. I am struck by the consonance between Foucault’s suggestion of an aesthetics of existence and the ‘aesthetic turn’ in art therapy; between the metaphor of making our-selves and the experience and expertise in art making that is necessary to arts-based therapy. It is tempting to turn from what Rose (1996/1998) calls the ‘psy’ disciplines, from the association of art therapy with psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, in favour of an aesthetic basis for art therapy practice. There is a risk in this, however, of romanticising and essentialising the concept of art, thereby reproducing an historical and ongoing binary, which in art therapy literature is expressed as a tension between ‘art psychotherapy’ and ‘art as healing’. Just as one can engage Foucauldian genealogy to explore the relation of the self to the self, one can similarly situate the concept of ‘art as healing’, a concept which often suggests there is a universal and transcendent character to art’s healing powers. While some commentators identify ‘precursors’ of art therapy in earlier times or different cultures (McNiff, 1992; Junge, 1994), I suggest it would also be unwise to assume any equivalence between these phenomena and contemporary art therapy. What European culture designates as ‘art’ may not exist as such within those indigenous cultures that do not separate the aesthetic, cultural and social spheres.15

15 From the perspective of this thesis, a useful tool might be the concepts of ‘exo-colonisation’ and ‘endo-colonisation’. Whereas exo-colonisation refers to practices that accompany imperial expansion into non-European countries, endo-colonisation refers to the practices by which colonial powers govern their own population (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000).
Foucault suggests that, rather than mapping a colonising sameness of subjectivity and culture over the face of difference, we could practice an art of making ourselves strange to ourselves.\textsuperscript{16} Such an ethics and aesthetics — one might say an (a)e(s)th(et)ics of existence — avoids the binary of the aesthetic and the psychological by bringing poststructural notions of ethics and subjectivity into play.

Having argued that Foucault’s late suggestion for a contemporary ‘telos’ tends to reconstitute the Enlightenment subject he is wishing to destabilise, some poststructural feminist commentators propose an ‘ethico-politics’ based in the differences within and between embodied subjects (e.g. Diprose, 1994). Foucault’s notion of his works as books of experience (1978/2000b) and his ethic of permanent critique (1981/2000) arguably construct a very different ethics and aesthetics of existence to that of the Enlightenment subject. For Foucault, rather than either ‘we’ or ‘I’ being transcendent or prior, both are mobile and unstable. Just as the ‘I’ is not identical with itself, ‘we’ signifi es, not a diverse but relatively stable and developing sociality, but a nomadic and strategic coming together around particular points of resistance (Foucault, 1984/2000b).

I am nevertheless interested in what is made available to thought by these feminist practices of ‘reading Foucault against himself’ (Butler, 1990/1999). In particular, I am interested in the further destabilisation of the self that can come from close engagement with notions of the Other.

Moreover, in engaging with the slipperiness and discontinuities of Foucault in the context of this thesis, I have become aware of my tendency to try to ‘make sense’ of Foucault in ways that are reductive of the Other of his text. Thus my suggestion that

Danaher et al argue that it is these latter practices of endo-colonisation that predominantly concern Foucault, although his work has been used to explore exo-colonisation as well (eg Said, 1978). Assumptions that modern, Western concepts of the self and of art have universal relevance can be seen as forms of both exo and endo colonisation. A therapy based on assumptions of universality then becomes an exemplar of “heterotopia” — Foucault’s word for a postcolonial phenomenon in which one culture sets itself up alongside another, like the clubs of the British Raj with their sherry and cigars while, outside the enclave, Indian life proceeded unregarded in its diversity (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000, pp. 113—114).\textsuperscript{16} Cf. White’s (2004b) notion of exoticising the everyday.
Foucault’s work could be thought of as a performance of his ethic of permanent critique and an art of engaging the reader in an experience of the transformative possibilities of resistance threatens to unify disunity and fix the ‘unfixable’.

Of course, Foucault always escapes my attempts at capture. Speaking after his death, his friend Hélène Cixous asked:

*He is a nomad, even in his work: do you believe that he has built his house? Not at all. ‘That’s not it’, he said to me about his last volume, ‘I’ve been mistaken. I have to re-cast everything. Go elsewhere. Do it otherwise*¹⁷ (Cixous, in Leary, 2002).

¹⁷ My emphasis.
She is settling into the weave and cut of her new jacket, almost as if it might become a second skin. Yet, catching a glimpse of herself in the mirrored surfaces of the art deco interior, she mistakes herself momentarily for someone else, as through this Other, both familiar and strange, is walking toward her.

Drifting now from an imagined fictional world to the more subtle fictions of memoir, she remembers a conversation with a colleague that took place only this morning. Michelle had recently presented her work to an audience of her peers in the local community health centre. Searching for a quotation – just one quotation that would do justice to the immensity of Foucault and his influence in her practice as a therapist – Michelle had chosen this question:

“What can I become in the contemporary order of being?”

It is such a beautiful question.

She (ridan) plays with the question, considering for a moment whether the ‘I’ is, and must remain, I-olated from the Other.

“What can ‘I’ become in the contemporary order of being?”

What can ‘I’ become in the presence of the Other?

How might my/our becomings disorder the contemporary order of being?
Chapter 3

AnOther stor(e)y

_The real question is: can there be otherness? Does philosophy accept otherness or does it reduce it to the Hegelian space that does nothing but dialecticise, annul, cancel, or incorporate it (Cixous, 1991, p. 90)?_
Going up, madam?

The wrought iron door creaks closed across the front of the old fashioned lift. Her tummy lurches and then settles as she begins to ascend.

First floor ~ Women’s clothing, haberdashery, cafe, bookshop and homeware.

She steps out across a gap that reveals a little too much of the giddy chasm of the lift shaft, into a high-ceilinged room with tall windows overlooking a park laid out with curving paths and Moreton Bay figs. There is something simultaneously homely and exotic about this light-filled space. She is about to set off in the direction of the dress section to find something French and feminine to wear close to the skin, under her new Foucault ‘Experience’ jacket, when the aroma of coffee and freshly baked bread reminds her that it’s time for lunch.

The cafe is crowded with women and men pausing for refreshment before launching themselves back into the aisles. Looking around for a free table, she catches the eye of someone familiar sitting at a north-facing window. The dark-haired woman smiles in recognition and beckons her to the table. She feels a faint ripple in the surface of time, as fiction and reality again converge...

I’ve read your proposal, Bronwyn says, and it seems to me that what you are doing at present is creating a poststructural conceptual framework for art therapy ~ that you are already quite some way along that path. I’d like to see you go with it, see where it might take you.

This is her first meeting with her new supervisor.
I’m glad to meet up with you here in the women’s section, Bronwyn adds, because at the moment your thesis relies a bit too much on ‘boy theorists’. You talk about Kristeva and Butler—I’d like to suggest that you to take a look at the work of another couple of women, Cixous and Clement...

And by the way, the rocket salad here is very good.

As the waiter approaches to take their order, time shudders back into its narrative path.

Suitably nourished, she wanders over to a table strewn with all manner of fine and colourful fabrics and threads. Here are the materials she needs to stitch together theory, experience and imagination into something of her own.

She runs her fingers across a Chinese satin, pale as milk, its circular design etched in delicate embroidery. There is a fine tension here. Revolutions of multicoloured threads break free from the regularities of the pattern and run off in multiple trajectories, only to be caught up with a strong gold thread and cross-stitched into another, more vibrant circle.

Julia Kristeva

The work of Julia Kristeva, a semiotician and psychoanalyst, is highly influential within visual arts, cultural theory and psychoanalysis (Moi, 1990). Kristeva’s work offers a response to the psychoanalysis of Lacan. Many concepts within Kristeva’s work are suggestive for art therapy, including her notions of the speaking subject (Kristeva, 1972/1990) and subject-in-process (Kristeva, 1974/1984), abjection (Kristeva, 1980/1982), the semiotic (Kristeva, 1973/1990; 1974/1984), and her general privileging of artists and aesthetics (Kristeva, 1980; 1987/1989; 1996/2000).

Kristeva’s ‘analytic of revolt’ can be critiqued for the terms upon which it establishes a dialectical relationship between the symbolic and the semiotic. While suggesting that the sterility of the symbolic order must and will be challenged and modified by
revolt, Kristeva ultimately subjugates irrationality to the rational, madness to reason, the feminine to the masculine and the maternal to the paternal, restoring the Lacanian ‘law of the father’ as the universal condition of individual sanity and social order (Grosz, 1989; Butler, 1990/1999). Nevertheless, many of her concepts can be heuristically engaged in an expansion of the cultural and therapeutic significance of embodiment, aesthetics and artistic experience. These themes are most commonly examined in psychoanalytic art therapy through Klein’s child analysis (1975/1988) and Winnicott’s development of object relations (1965), and the interest of both of these psychoanalysts in art and play (see Klein 1952/1991; Winnicott, 1971).

Each of Kristeva’s concepts could be more fully explored for their implications for the theorisation of art therapy. For instance, Kristeva’s theory of abjection could enable art therapists to conceptualise the revulsion to ‘mess’ which often characterises responses to an invitation to make art and can position art therapists as ‘lowly’ in a hierarchy of professional standing. Considered as a state of abjection, ‘mess’ could suggest the liminal status of art making, ‘in-between’ psychic and bodily processes, or the symbolic and semiotic orders. The notion of abjection can also challenge mother-blaming tendencies, which art therapy inherits from other psychoanalytic discourses, by identifying these tendencies as a manifestation of fear of the maternal chora (Kristeva, 1974/1984). The concept of the semiotic and the linkage of artistic and analytic revolt (Kristeva, 1996/2000; 2002), are richly suggestive for a reconciliation of aesthetic and psychodynamic perspectives in art therapy.\(^1\)

Kristeva’s notion of the subject-in-process informs an understanding of a decentred/irrational dimension to my subjective experiences of writing this thesis. Her theorisation of the semiotic and its relationship to art and literature suggests that

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\(^1\) Kristeva’s privileging of art within a dialectic of the symbolic and the semiotic is reminiscent of Sally Skaife’s theorisation of a dialectical relationship between art making and the verbal in art psychotherapy groups (Skaife, 1995, 2000; Skaife & Huet, 1998). Like Kristeva, Skaife engages a dialectical understanding of the subversive potential of art in relation to subjectivity and (group) culture. In her later work, Skaife (2001) finds this dialectical understanding insufficient, turning to Merleau-Ponty’s theories of embodiment and intersubjectivity to inform a less neat, but more visceral and subtle, account of the relations in art therapy groups.
bringing artistic and literary processes into the methodology of this thesis offsets the possibility of my explorations hardening into a rigid conventional structure.

Kristeva’s thought could form a basis for theorising art psychotherapy by highlighting the critical capacities of both art and psychoanalysis and offering an intellectual framework for bringing these terms together. However, I remain wary of the tendency for Kristeva’s writing to support a liberalised patriarchal hierarchy by offering a dialectical ‘solution’ to, rather than a dissolution of, binary oppositions (see Grosz, 1989; Butler, 1990/1999). It seems to me possible to take up/appropriate some of Kristeva’s ideas, alongside questioning how aspects of modernity are reconstituted both through her theories and through the practice of art psychotherapy.

Despite this attempt at ordering disorder, things are becoming a little disarrayed in the women’s section. The table promising ‘substantial reductions’ is succumbing to opposite tendencies. Its vast surface is spilling over with the expansive possibilities on offer. Whole garments are tumbled together with fabrics and threads. She pulls an opera jacket of deep indigo velvet from among the tousled remnants. Something for a cool summer evening perhaps, when she might put aside her daily apparel and bathe in moonlight.

**Catherine Clement**

Clement’s work is an extraordinary philosophical and rhetorical performance, drawing on mythologies, anecdotes, histories, autobiographies, quasi-fictions, political critiques and cultural commentaries. She re-establishes feminist and class issues within her textual practice, without reconstituting the rational claim to truth or the biological essentialism which poststructuralist theory has respectively problematised in Marxism and radical feminism. With Hélène Cixous (1975/1986), she imagines and writes the feminine transformation of culture in a collaboration that exemplifies differences between (these two, and all) women as much as it celebrates the difference of women.
Clement (1978/1987) romps seriously through what could only be an intimate’s critique of Freud and Lacan, refusing to deny the social responsibility of psychoanalysis to heal. Moreover, she shares art therapists’ affinity with Winnicott, and on similar grounds. Writing of women in opera, Clement recalls the childhood tale of the little match girl who freezes to death in the snow: each match she strikes to warm a long night brings momentarily to life an intense image of a joy she has longed for but has been denied. Clement continues:

I like the English psychoanalyst Winnicott. He was an old man who knew a lot about childhood. He noticed that for a long time — sometimes until they are grown up — children go to sleep with stuffed animals or bits of cloth. He called these “transitional objects”. Well, what do you expect, after all, he was a psychoanalyst and he was not worried about being understood by his peers. A transitional object is a temporary support, a support for the duration. It is an object which the child brings to life when he pleases, one he attacks and destroys and that is strongly resilient…It guarantees the transition into the world…

The matches are the opposite of this transition. They flame and there is nothing left. The women, whose eternal story I have told you, blaze up all at once and there is nothing left. Nothing is left but the music. Yes, finally, the music, like a transitional space; the music that is neither outside nor inside, but elsewhere and surrounding you. The music where love and hatred can interact without vital risk, and where the light of passion burns and immediately goes out. Life is different, nothing in it happens that way. But opera still endures with its limited stories because music plays the blessed role of the stuffed animal in it (Clement, 1988/1989, p. 179).

Clement’s writing exemplifies the operatic range of discursive possibilities and stylistic registers available to a broadly poststructuralist and feminist writing, thereby
inspiring the writing of this thesis. She is committed to the pleasurable fullness of sound, passion and movement, and she is also devoted to asceticism and the void. To reach toward the inexpressible, Clement turns to music, and to poetry, the form of language closest to music. She is just as interested in silence as in sound. Music and poetry are an interplay, a mutual interpellation, of sound and silence.

Clement devotes a whole book to syncope (Clement, 1990/1994) — to the faltering of time, a moment ‘out of time’, a rapture in which the self is elsewhere. In linguistics, syncope is the suppression or elision of a syllable or letter. “The most familiar language produces syncope spontaneously: “m’sieur”, “mam’selle”, “p’tit” (Clement, 1990/1994, p. 5); or in the Australian vernacular it would be o’right, c’mon, g’day. In the body, syncope is a faint or passive fit, a trance, a moment of unconsciousness, a falling down/ out of awareness, a being temporarily elsewhere. In dance, syncope is a suspended moment, the swoon and hold of the tango. In music, the rhythm falters and sways, holding a note over, producing dissonance. Similarly, in poetry, the line is enjambed, carried over by and producing an excess.

We are, says Clement, “obsessed with the autonomous and aware Subject, and even if nowadays we force it to follow the path of the unconscious (like a policeman tailing a suspect) we never doubt its existence, even less its fundamental validity, without which no democracy, no individualism is ever possible” (ibid, p. 5). Clement laments how the social and the individual are dependent on and subordinate to an i-solated self that is tied to the project of discovering its true nature. Thankfully, in syncope, there is the promise of ‘nothing’ to be found.

She is/ is not browsing among fragments of fabric, poetry and philosophy. She is/ not in the present moment of writing this text. She is/ not in the presence of a dream. She is/ not... walking and not walking on a summer’s evening in her opera jacket, holding and not holding in her arms an elusive veil of moonlight. She wanders dreamlike among the syncopated shadows of the scribbly gums, running her fingers across their greywhite limbs. She touches the scarified trunk of one particular tree, tracing the scribbles that give
this tree its name, the wayward and authorless inscriptions of its irreducible otherness.

**Hélène Cixous**

Cixous w(h)(r)ites out, or “puts under erasure” (c.f. Derrida in Davies, 2000, p. 144) such binaries as head/heart, active/passive, nature/culture, logos/pathos, high/low, slave/master, man/woman and, one might add, philosophy/fiction and discursive/poetic. These are “dual hierarchised oppositions” (Cixous, 1975/1986, p. 63—64) by which logocentrism organises the thinkable, and phallocentrism achieves and retains dominance at the cost of the repressed/marginalised feminine/other.

Cixous’ textual practice of feminine writing releases/produces the conditions of possibility of an otherwise unthinkable, ‘de-subjectivised’ and re-embodied woman/humanity, a hyperbolic utopia that radically destabilises the current organization of self, relationship and the social. This “(im)possible” (Davies, 2003, p. 1) performance of an (im)possible future is prefigured in the feminine Imaginary, since “the unconscious, the other country without boundaries, is where the repressed survive” (Cixous, 1975/1976 p. 98). Cixous (1975/1981) incites women to write, to repaint our half of the world. She calls upon an embodied, discursively produced and productive notion of ‘the feminine’ that is ironically marginalised within the predominantly female profession of art therapy. Without the provocation and support of such poststructuralist feminist writers, the feminine could be similarly disavowed within the writing of this thesis. Cixous’ call to write ourselves and each other into existence invites a feminist, ficto-critical response to the question ‘but what would poststructuralist art therapies (and therapists) look like/feel like/do/be/become?’

At the same time, Cixous’ writing cannot be strictly defined by an early (although by no means currently irrelevant) and polemical project of creating an alternative to the dominant patriarchal structure of discourse. Although the body of Cixous’ writing is feminine, the feminine/poetic is not tied to gender. It is not ‘tied’ to anything. Yet it is always in an ethical relation of generosity and openness toward the other (Blyth, 2004). This is the otherness of both others and oneself.
For Cixous, the ‘I’ in writing is not identical with herself, s/he is always other. Writing is “writing what you cannot know before you have written” (Cixous, 1993, p. 38), and writing is also writing what you cannot know. The first other is oneself: through writing, ‘I’ become more than my known self and yet cannot be fully known (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1994/1997).

Drawing, too, for Cixous, is the art of drawing what you cannot know, or cannot see.

It’s not a question of drawing the contours, but of what escapes the contour, the secret movement, the breaking, the torment, the unexpected. The drawing wants to draw what is invisible to the naked eye. (Cixous, 1998, p. 23).

The brushstrokes of a painting, the lines of a drawing or written text are traces of an otherness that can be sensed, but cannot be captured (or arrested, or ‘apprehended’). These gestural strokes and lines, like dreams, are imbued with “(a) feeling of the secret” (Cixous & Calle-Gruber 1994/1997, p. 85), with the shape of that which is unknowable and infinitely deferred.

In a portrait of Cixous’ writing as “writing-thinking”, Mireille Calle-Gruber suggests that a “relation of uncertainty” and “the undecidable” are crucial to Cixous’ work (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1994/1997, p. 137). The reading of such writing “puts everything into questions” (ibid), as well as bringing everything into question.  

Cixous plays upon the consonance, in French, of death (mort) and the word (mot):

It’s so dark here where I am searching for a language that makes no noise to whisper what is neither living nor dead. All words are too loud, too rapid, too sure, I’m searching for the names of the shadows between the words (from Défluge, in Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1994/1997, p. 152).

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2 In the next chapter, I will take up Cixous’ work further, in the context of writing as a mode of enquiry.
The task of art is a departure, a ‘going without saying’: loss forms a space between the words, a door in the picture (ibid), and we pass through.

As she walks away from the overflowing table with her arms full of richly textured linens, fine wools and subtle silks, she is hopeful that she at last has the makings of something, although of just what, she is less sure than ever. She is walking back to the lifts at the rear of the building when she notices an out-of-the-way shelf labelled ‘Other fictions’. She begins to flick through an assortment of titles.

She picks up a volume with a curiously folded dust jacket and a cover image of two overlapping spheres. The design is reminiscent of distant high school geometry classes - could it be something like a venn diagram, but with more dimensions? Becoming-other than what we are. She mutters the title suspiciously to herself, supposing she has picked up another one of those ubiquitous new age, self help guides to how to heal yourself and change your life in twelve easy steps. But there is nothing easy about this one. It’s an invitation to (re)think Western poststructuralisms together with the death of neo-colonial privilege, to leave the ‘shore’ behind and dance a two-step out along the jetty of postcolonial theory3, as a prelude to diving into some very deep water.

**Couze Venn**

Venn (2000, 2002) seeks to create a space outside the Western privileging of the autonomous and rational individual from which to pose the question ‘who comes after modernity?’

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3 Venn notes that some of the voices that problematise the egocentricity, autonomy and rationality of the modern, Western subject come from a space ‘in-between’ western thought and the ‘theoretical jetty’ (Derrida, 1990) of postcolonial theory”, but are not ‘at home’ in either (Venn, 2002, p. 55).
Venn’s question complements Foucault’s (1984) question, ‘What are we today?’ For Foucault, the work of critiquing the present is the work of transformation (Foucault, 1981/2000), but Venn proposes that Foucault’s question “exceeds genealogy, since the subject is located by reference to a memory and an historicisation, as well as to a narrative of emancipation, and to a sense, therefore, of futurity” (Venn, 2002, p. 56). According to Venn, it is necessary to both memorialise our pasts and critique our presents in order to imagine our (im)possible futures.

While Venn acknowledges that Western poststructural theories offer a radical break with many modernist assumptions, he also suggests that in subtle ways these theories can tend to reproduce a separation of self and other, individual and social, inadvertently reproducing the modern, Eurocentric ideal of autonomy. Venn agrees with Foucault that power is productive, but argues that the latter’s frequent foregrounding of the subjugating effects of power can reproduce an opposition of the individual and the social. For Venn, it is important to also consider how non-coercive forms of power produce sociality and intersubjectivity.⁴ He suggests that one paradigm of how non-coercive power can apprentice us to the other and inscribe us as social beings can be found in the (symbolic configuration of) the relationship of women and their children.

Challenging the occidental tendency, even within poststructuralisms, to reproduce binaries of self and other, individual and social, Venn proposes the possibility of becoming-other through processes of apprenticeship and choreography. These metaphors suggest that the self is formed always in relation to the other, not only through learning and self-reflection, but also through an aesthetic and embodied experience of connection that Venn calls “autopoesis” (Venn, 2002, p. 58). ‘Apprenticeship to the other’ is thus the self-reflective, but learned, autopoetic character of the figuration and refiguration of subjectivity, not reducible to the model of

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⁴ I do not entirely agree with Venn’s critique of Foucault, who in my opinion does explore the possibilities of non-coercive relations, particularly through his consideration of friendship (e.g. Foucault, 1981/2000b). Foucault draws in this work on the ‘other’ possibilities of what more recently has been named ‘queer culture’.
internalisation or Nietzschean willing… in part a way of appropriating, making one’s own what belongs to the ‘we’ or intersubjective domain of culture, a way of folding the outside inside one’s self, that changes the self (Venn, 2002, p. 58).

This concept of apprenticeship has an affinity with Foucault’s ethics and aesthetics of the self, while avoiding what Venn calls the “volitional slippages in Foucault” (ibid, p. 59). For Venn, the ‘we’ of culture becomes part of every embodied and storied ‘I’. Transformation of selves and relationships cannot be reduced either to an active and conscious ‘will’ for change, or to a passive and unconscious ‘internalisation’ of early experience or family and social mores. Transformation is a complex dance of self and other, in which we appropriate that which belongs to the “intersubjective domain of culture” (p. 58) into our-selves. What Venn is proposing here has an affinity with, but goes beyond, Foucault’s ethics and aesthetics. Foucault (1983/2000) himself points out that ‘intention’ as an ethical substance is a rational, Enlightenment ideal, and yet Foucault’s ‘art of self’ can be critiqued for seeming to suggest that we could each consciously and intentionally give form to our lives. Venn offers a reconfiguration of an ethics and aesthetics of existence that cannot be reduced to the individual subject’s intention.

Venn suggests that we are ‘heteronomous beings’ — intersubjective, self-reflective, emotional, embodied and embedded — and as such are neither autonomous nor simply intentional. Venn chooses the word ‘being’ for this refigured story of who we might be, because he wants to interrupt the Western philosophical opposition between the self as either ‘embodied existence’ or ‘socially constructed’. Both language, in particular narrative, and embodied experience entwine us with others. Our sense of an ‘interiority’ (or psyche) can be understood as a fold in the social fabric, established, embodied and maintained through relations with others. Our bodies are archives of and monuments to both personal and collective memory and experience. Our stories are entangled with the stories of others, emplotted in culturally available ways, and ‘stitched’ into wider historical narratives.
Venn offers four cornerstones to his account of embodied, narrated and relational ‘ways of being’:

*Being in time*
Temporality is fundamental to our ability to question our ways of being. Our relation to time is one of becoming rather than one of linearity, since our sense of the present, our memory of the past and our anticipation of the future ‘leach’ into each other.

*Narrativity*
Following Ricoeur, Venn suggests that it is through narrative that we come to know ourselves as being-in-time, so that “every self is a storied self…mingled with the stories of other selves” (p. 57).

*Being–with*
Following Merleau-Ponty, Venn suggests that being is intersubjective. As narrated and embodied beings we are ‘alwaysalready’ interconnected with the stories and bodies of others and with objects in the physical world. Being-with (or intersubjectivity) is not directly re-presentable, but is intimated in experiences of liminality, mystery and the sublime.

*Emplotment*
The plots with which we make sense of our experience are ‘givens’ within the culture. We figure and reconfigure our stories of self through the ‘interlocution’ or mediation of others within broader cultural and historical discourses of identity, themselves open to reworking.

Bringing together many strands from phenomenology, psychoanalysis and poststructuralism, and particularly from the philosophies of Foucault, Merleau-Ponty, and Ricouer, Venn (2002) offers a sustained reading of the politics and poetics of Fanon’s (1970) *Black Skin, White Masks*. Venn points out that the production of “dissident discourses” is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for subjective and social change (p. 60). It is through a poetics of practice, an apprenticeship to
otherness and a choreography of intimate relations that we can become ‘Other-wise’ (Venn, 2002).

From this perspective, therapeutic change could involve both a refusal of dominating and subjugating relations of power (Foucault, 1982/2000, 1984b/2000) and a privileging of non-coercive relations of power (Venn, 2002).

A foregrounding of the poetics as well as the politics of therapeutic relations seems to me to be highly significant for an ethics and aesthetics of poststructural therapeutic practice. The work of therapy might be thought of as an apprenticeship to the unending stories, and as a dance with the myriad ways of being, of those others who come to therapy, including the Otherness within one’s self.

She tucks the book under her arm and continues browsing, but is immediately distracted by the silken-red tassel of what must be a bookmark, wedged in between the selected works of Foucault and Derrida. (These two get around she mutters to herself, having seen them in the Men’s section as well.) Pulling on the tassel, she finds herself desperately attempting to reel in an apparently endless stream of illuminated characters on a finely woven textile scroll. It unravels around her in loops and whorls. Soon she is at sea in a veritable ocean of text, whipped into peaks and troughs by a prevailing wind from the East.

**Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**

Spivak is an uncompromisingly brilliant and difficult writer, whose texts twist and turn, advocating for marginalised cultures and subjectivities, while refusing to be positioned as the postcolonial and feminist Other of Western poststructuralisms. Spivak notes the tendency to “assign a static ethnicity to the Other in order to locate critique or confirmation of the most sophisticated thought or act of the West”, suggesting that “it is necessary for all of us to watch out against the curious politics of this all-too-seductive move” (1985/1999, p. 110). She goes on to say that elsewhere she has called this kind of vigilance, within the necessity of what one writes, “a critique of what we cannot not want” (ibid).
Spivak seeks to writes (out of) a deconstructive space between and beyond the individual voice and its effacement in a collective politic, between and beyond “the itinerary of the ethico-political in authoritarian fictions... the complacent apath(ies) of self centralisation ...and the bigoted elitism (theoretical or practical) conversely possible in collective practice” (Spivak, 1980/1996, p. 101). For Spivak, Western postcolonialisms run the risk of reproducing the elitism of other and more conservative Western ‘isms’, effacing the names of specific others under the sign of a generalised ‘native informant’ (1999). Her preference is therefore to take up the “gymnastic(s)” (c.f. Spivak, 1992/1996, p. 158) of a deconstructive positioning. For Spivak, deconstruction is committed to transformation without being utopian, approaching the promise of change

...in the language of persistent effort and deferred fulfilment, in a future that is not simply a future ‘present’...This way of working, half in and half out of what is at hand, negotiating with pre-existing structures of violence, is the way that works, the way things work (Spivak, 1985/1999, p. 110).

Spivak is a major translator of Derrida. Derrida’s writing is both an inspiration and a ‘pedagogy’ for Spivak (Landry and MacLean, 1996), but she is nevertheless never his subaltern. Spivak cannot simply ‘repeat’ Derrida, according to the notions of alterity and iterability, since “every repetition is an alteration (or iteration)” (Spivak, 1985/1999, p. 86—7), and her translations and interpretations of his work have been formative for the understandings of an English language readership. For Spivak, critics of Derrida’s emphasis on writing miss the texture of his writing – the material and creative possibilities of text as textile. Her own iterations of/in/through Derrida make possible an ethics of ‘unlearning’ the privileged confines of the autonomous Western subject, whether this subject is figured through colonial and patriarchal dominance, or in the inverted form of an identity politics that paradoxically denies the capacity and responsibility of the subject to hear, speak with and respond to the other.
Part of Spivak’s project is to refuse the (Anglo-American) assimilation of Derrida’s deconstruction into a kind of neo-Romanticism, and the normalisation of Foucault’s ethics of the care of the self into the program of a Western liberal humanism. Reading Foucault by way of Derrida’s interest in the interrelationship/rift between the general and the narrow, Spivak considers how Foucault’s “bestowal of the name power upon a complex situation produces power ‘in the general sense’ ” (1992/1996, p. 144). Spivak restores a productive ‘narrowness’ — a cultural situatedness and even a kind of domesticity — to Foucault’s concept of pouvoir-savoir, or power/knowledge. She surfaces the vernacular “can-do-ness” of the French verb ‘pouvoir’ and the “homely verbiness” of ‘savoir’, highlighting the common occurrence of such verb couplets in French (savoir-faire, savoir-vivre, etc.).

In Spivak’s reading, power/knowledge takes on the radical ordinariness of “being able to do something — only as you are able to make sense of it” (p. 151). People act within/against their permissible narratives; their ‘agency’ is both made possible and limited by discourse. Spivak gives the example of what is made possible for a woman within different narratives of marriage. The ‘knowing’/savoir of the practice of exogamous marriage, as the passing of a woman from the protection of her father to that of her husband and eventually to that of her son, makes it possible that this woman can preserve the stability of marriage. Conversely, the ‘knowing’ of marriage as a presumed site of reciprocity, intimacy, and emotional and sexual fulfilment makes it possible that a woman not met in these ways can seek her fulfilment elsewhere. (Lest this example seems too much the province of a ‘Western’ feminism, I remind myself of Spivak’s ongoing engagements with the terrible fact of the self-immolation of Hindu widows.)

Spivak prefers an ontic, rather than ontological, version of Foucault’s pouvoir/savoir. This is not a move away from theory in the direction of empirical practice, but a call to remember the historical and cultural specificities of language. Spivak destabilises the tendency to reincorporate Foucault’s idea of power/knowledge into naturalised systemic notions of power. Consistent with Foucault insistence on the heterogeneity of power relations, Spivak restores a heterogeneity to power that the general naming of power threatens to remove.
Spivak is concerned to challenge ‘applications’ of Foucault and Derrida, to read their texts by way of “the deconstructive theorising of practice” in which “theory brings practice to crisis, and practice norms theory, and deviations constitute a forever precarious norm” (1992/1996, p. 153—4). Foucault slashed with Derrida prevents Foucault being normalised, turned into a blueprint for social justice movements and made fit for liberal academic and political consumption.

For Spivak it is crucial to preserve a critical rather than a dogmatic basis for a philosophy of action: to be aware of the limits of knowing rather than to shape a generalising program for ‘freedom’ in Eurocentric terms. Proposing that it is necessary to resist the normalisation of ethics in the program of a liberal humanism, Spivak suggests giving the proper names of Foucault and Derrida in to each other, even against their lack of endorsement for such a move. She writes an asymmetrical and difficult ‘Derrida/Foucault’, slashed apart and brought together, as a condition of possibility of being able to ‘give in’ to both.

For Spivak, as for Venn, writing contorts in the persistent attempt to memorialise colonial injustices and transfigure future possibilities. Contextualising her infamous claim that the subaltern cannot speak (1985), Spivak has said that she was then at beginning of something, where the suicide of the young woman Bhubaneswari Bhaduri posed the problem of “trying to find a way of putting this woman as a lesson for me that was more complicated and more apposite than Foucault or Deleuze” (Spivak, 1993/1996, p. 288).

So, “the subaltern cannot speak”, means that even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act. That’s what it had meant, and anguish marked the spot (Spivak, 1993/1996, p. 292).
Then the wind drops. The churning ocean of text subsides into silvery ribbons, twisting around her feet. For an instant, she fears that it might catch fire. As she steps out of the charmed and dangerous circle of discourse, a streamer of letters is still tangled in her hair. Returning to the shelf of books, she picks up a thick volume with a lurid cover. She loves detective novels, especially if they don’t take themselves too seriously. This one has a really terrible title, but the cover notes promise that the author has subverted the genre through her citation and disruption of a dominant literary theme.

The book is called *The Butler Did It*.

*A bit of light reading for late at night after a long day at the computer, she tells herself.*

Later she will remember this thought with an ironic sigh as she rereads the concluding chapter for the third time. She will still be uncertain about whose Face that was at the window, still doubt whether the terrible words scrawled on the glass could really be held responsible for the chain of gruesome murders that propels the mystery. The narrator, to her knowledge the first transgender detective in the genre, won’t have the answers either. The redoubtable Shirley Locque and her philosophically minded offsider Ms Whatsonia will, however, respond admirably to the threat of death and the indeterminacy of the plotline. They will engage the reader in an intelligent questioning of the authenticity of various conflicting accounts of who done it. Despite the persistence of their uncertainties, they will engender in her/ the reader a keen sense of obligation to the most vulnerable, marginalised and abject of the other characters. Rather than suspecting these abject souls of inhuman acts of cruelty, and subsequently ‘entertaining’ ideas of retaliatory violence, she will detect another possibility, make a novel response.
Judith Butler

You may think that I am in fact telling a story about the prehistory of the subject, one that I have just been arguing cannot be told. And there are two responses to this (1) that there is no final or adequate narrative reconstruction of the prehistory of the speaking subject does not mean we cannot narrate it. It only means that at the moment when we narrate we become speculative philosophers or fiction writers. And (2) it is this prehistory that has never stopped happening and, as such, is not prehistory in any chronological sense. It is not done with, over, relegated to a past, which then becomes part of a causal or narrative reconstruction of the self. On the contrary it is that prehistory that interrupts the story I have to give of myself, which makes every account of myself partial and failed...The I is the moment of narrative failure in every attempt to give an account of myself (Butler 2001, pp 36—37).

Butler’s writing not only gives an intellectual ‘account’ of, but enacts, discursive agency together with an ethics of vulnerability, accountability and gratitude to the Other. The indeterminacy of narrative, and of the ‘I’ who narrates, become occasions for opening our-selves radically to Other possibilities. We do not cease to tell our stories. We continue to attempt to narrate the un-narratable. We will try to make sense of our ‘selves’ and we will seek recognition from the Other, because, as Spivak might say, this is something we cannot not do. Even Butler, while questioning the limits of narrativity, continues to tell us her stories. What does it mean, I wonder, that ‘I’, in the context of this thesis, am trying to make sense of multiple and inevitably partial accounts of ‘Butler’?

I go back to the first thing of hers that I ever read, to those well-known opening words about her childhood. (I am a therapist, after all.)

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5 Many of the ideas and expressions in this section of this chapter were co-emergent with and included in a paper that is to be published next year (Linnell, 2007).
To make trouble was, within the reigning discourse of my childhood, something one should never do precisely because that would get you in trouble. The rebellion and its reprimand seemed caught up in the same terms, a phenomenon that gave rise to my first critical insight into the subtle ruse of power: the prevailing law threatened one with trouble, even put one in trouble, all to keep one out of trouble. Hence I concluded that trouble is inevitable and the task how best to make it, what best way to be in it (Butler 1990/1999: xxvii).

Butler is quick to point out that this childhood story is an allegorical construction of sorts, although based in memory. Reading on, I am reminded of the kind of trouble Butler makes or gets herself into: feminine trouble, troubling the feminine, engendering desire, undoing gender, contesting boundaries. In the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble* from which I have quoted here, the original 1990 preface containing these words is preceded by a new preface that, with hindsight, situates the book as a form of ‘immanent critique’ that sought to promote more inclusive forms of feminist theory. Butler’s critique is a particular type of ‘trouble’, made in the service of expanding the possibilities of feminist theory, of social worlds, and, indeed, the categories of who and what can be regarded as ‘human’.

Butler is prominent amongst those poststructuralist feminists who question the historical and philosophical basis of Foucault’s ‘art of self’, producing an account of ethico-politics that emphasises relationship and is sensitive to differences within and between subjects (Williams, 1996). Butler “reads Foucault against himself” (1990/1999, p. 124), not only in the cited instance of critiquing a contradictory call to sexual emancipation in the journals of Herculine Barbin, but in numerous engagements which draw from, critique and extend Foucauldian theory. Butler’s poststructural critique of theories of the unconscious and subjectivity (Butler, 1997a), and her imagination of an historically and culturally contingent unconscious (Butler, 2000), could transform both psychoanalytic and Foucauldian perspectives of art therapy.
In this thesis I am deeply curious about what might come from bringing together Foucault’s account of the subject and Butler’s critical engagement with the limits of accountability itself. In pursuing the notion of a non-narrativisable excess, I am cautious of the dangers of falling into yet another metaphysics of the subject, or myth of origins. From my practice as a narrative and art therapist, interested in how therapy is itself implicated in the production of abnormal and pathological subjects, I am constantly reminded of just how much that appears either self-evident or mysterious about the processes of subjectification can be painstakingly historicised, narrativised, and thereby made available for question. Nevertheless, I am also interested in how the ethics of accountability and the genre of narrative may themselves shape subjectification, and from what borderlands they may be questioned.

Butler’s notion of performativity (Butler, 1997a) is a brilliant metaphor for how truth claims are continually produced, embodied and ‘spoken into existence’ (c.f. Davies, 2003, p. 1). The trope of performance also suggests that a space of difference opens up through each citation/ performance of a claim to truth. Butler gives an example of the performativel power of what, following the English theorists, Austin and Searle, she calls speech acts, when she describes critical response to her book, Antigone’s claim: Kinship between life and death (2000). Butler explores what possibilities might be opened up by placing the story of Antigone, Oedipus’s daughter, at the centre of psychoanalysis, rather than the myth of Oedipus himself. As the offspring of Oedipus’s crime, and as a woman within a Greek culture where only freeborn men were accorded the rights of citizens, Antigone is already positioned as forbidden to speak. She commits an unspeakable act by even speaking of, let alone carrying out, an intent to bury her brother inside the city walls against the edict of her uncle, Creon, the king. In doing so, she challenges the limits of the law: not only the specific, social law of the Athens of her time, but the Law of symbolic order which Lacanian psychoanalysis, following Freud, asserts to be a universal truth.

Butler analyses the treatment of Antigone in the work of three philosophers. According to Hegel, Antigone’s defiance symbolises an act of kinship at the limits of the sphere of viable cultural norms. According to Irigaray, Antigone signifies the violent ‘remainder’ of the feminine at the point of transition from matriarchy to
patriarchy. According to Lacan, Antigone signifies the border between the imaginary and the symbolic, and the limits of the speakable. Butler’s reworking of this myth engages with and goes beyond Hegel, Irigaray and Lacan to suggest that we could radically reconfigure both the unconscious and sociality. Rather than treating the nuclear, patriarchal, heterosexual family as a symbolic norm from which we are sufficiently enlightened to tolerate social and cultural deviations, Butler’s work expands the liminal area between the psychic and the social into a platform for a different understanding of subjectivity and culture. The point here is not to create a new psychoanalytic ontology by replacing one myth with a ‘better’ one. Rather, the effect is a destabilisation of the truth of origins and an opening out of possibilities for subjectivity itself. One critical response from a psychoanalytic position to Butler’s work was to tell her that it, like Antigone’s crime, was unspeakable, that it posed a threat to the stability of human culture, and that Butler could not challenge the symbolic order because it was the Law. Noting this, Butler writes:

Those who disagree with me tend to claim, with some exasperation, “But it is the law!” But what is the status of such an utterance? “It is the law!” becomes the utterance that performatively attributes the very force to the law that the law itself is said to exercise. “It is the law” is thus a sign of allegiance to the law, a sign of the desire for the law to be the indisputable law, a theological impulse within the theory of psychoanalysis to put out of play any criticism of the symbolic father, the law of psychoanalysis itself (Butler, 2000, p. 21).

Thus Butler, like Foucault, engages critically with what the latter philosopher calls ‘the father’s ‘No’, the basis of the dominant, negative representation of power that Foucault calls ‘juridico-discursive’ (Foucault, 1976/1980). Foucault’s critique moves from a negative representation of power to an analytic of power’s ‘positivity’, from a centralised representation of power towards its deterritorialisation, and from psychoanalytic discourse towards an (a)esithetic of the subject. Butler, too, engages with power’s positivity, analysing how citations and performances of truth claims consolidate ‘the truth’. Butler also confirms Foucault’s view of the inevitability of
resistance to power, noting how each citation and performance, each repetition, is also an undoing of what it does, since no citation can be identical with that which it seeks to reproduce. However, for Butler, it is less a matter of refusing psychoanalytic discourse than of troubling it deeply. Butler’s critique leads her to radically re-vision the basis of psychoanalysis, reinventing its myths of origin, co-opting its explanatory powers, and undoing the force of repression so that ‘outlawed’ forms of sociality, connection, and subjectivity become more possible and more fully liveable.\(^6\)

Butler draws on the explanatory powers of psychoanalysis in an account of the subject’s passionate attachment to that which constitutes her subjection. She asks “how are we to understand, not merely the disciplinary production of the subject, but the disciplinary cultivation of an attachment to subjection?” (Butler, 1997b, p. 102). In responding to this question, Butler works with and against Foucault’s account of subjectification and of resistance as an effect of power. For Butler, the resources of the discursive are not in themselves sufficient to account for attachment to subjection or for resistance to its totalising tendencies.

Butler proposes that a constitutive ‘loss’ of the body founds the disciplinary subject in Foucault, and that this body is remaindered/becomes a constitutive outside to discourse. Butler further suggests that “(i)f according to psychoanalysis, the subject is not the same as the psyche from which it emerges, and if, for Foucault the subject is not the same as the body from which it emerges, then perhaps the body has come to substitute for the psyche in Foucault — that is, as that which exceeds and confounds the injunctions of normalisation (ibid, p. 94). If so, against Foucault’s notion of the soul imprisoning the body, stands a psyche that precedes, exceeds and destabilises discourse and signification. For Butler, “the psyche, which includes the unconscious, is very different from the subject: the psyche is precisely what exceeds the imprisoning effects of the discursive demand to inhabit a coherent identity, become a coherent subject (p. 86). On this basis, Butler asks whether resistance is always and

\(^6\) These comments on Antigone’s claim expand upon those I offered in a paper at the Australian Art Therapy Conference (Linnell, 2003). Angela McRobbie (2004) also considers Butler’s ‘take’ on Antigone, locating Butler’s questioning of the universality and ‘normality’ of heterosexual kinship arrangements in a contemporary socio-political context in which the New Right has eroded many feminist positionings.
only (as Foucault would suggest) an effect of power within discourse. “More precisely, is the resistance upon which psychoanalysis insists socially and discursively produced, or is it a kind of resistance to, an undermining of, social and discursive production as such? (p. 88).

Butler’s work inspires questions that are crucial for the work of therapy, and indeed for the work of subjectivity itself. How are we, who are constituted over and over again as autonomous, doomed to fail so miserably at this independence? Is it because we are always already linked to others through gratitude, debt, through an embodied connectedness that predates and survives the myriad modern forms of constituting self and knowledge as singular and impregnable? Is our vulnerability a consequence of how we are formed in discourse, how we are obliged to perform over and over again, each time risking that to which we have become passionately attached? Or are we vulnerable to our formation in discourse because life is precarious, even before our precarious subjectivity is precariously formed and performed? And if these positions are not mutually exclusive, and these questions not fully answerable, what are the ethics associated with such insights? (Butler, 1997a, 1997b, 2001, 2004a).

In Butler’s view, an originary vulnerability to the Other haunts the subject from its horizons, such that s/he is always and inevitably a subject of both power and desire (Butler, 1997a, 2004a). This vulnerability can lead, defensively, to a psychodynamics and politics of aggression against the perceived threat posed by the Other and by particular marginalised and abjected others. Alternatively, it can be realised as the very basis of an ethics of non-violence and care toward these others (2004a).

By bringing together Foucault and Freud, Butler’s work has been crucial to the theoretical framework of this thesis. Butler’s work assists me to analyse the opposition and connection between a psychoanalytically informed art therapy and a poststructurally informed narrative therapy, through a consideration of their theoretical antecedents. Narrative therapy and psychoanalytically informed art

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7 In considering psychoanalysis as a theoretical precursor of art psychotherapy, I am for the moment collapsing together the subjects and discursive practices of psychoanalysis and art psychotherapy. This is only an approximate move. The presence of art does not merely
therapy can seem almost mutually exclusive, although there have been some reconciliatory moves (e.g., McFayden, 1997; White, 2004a). I find this polarisation interesting, given that both narrative therapy and psychoanalysis attempt to theorise a decentred subject and to understand the possibilities for subjective and social transformation inherent in this subject’s instability. In both narrative and psychoanalytic therapies, language, relationship and embodiment are key terms in the constitution and destabilisation of the autonomous, self-identical individual.

Something like a Butlerian insight that the reiteration of the subject and of language is both citational and productive of difference (Butler, 1997b) informs both narrative therapy and psychoanalytic therapies, but it informs them very differently. Narrative work eschews a consideration of psychodynamics and transference, focusing instead on deconstructions, retellings and audiencings of people’s stories, in relation to other socially and culturally constructed and embodied/embedded narratives, as a site for subjective and social transformation. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, is concerned with the scene of therapy itself and with the therapeutic relation as a repetition and reparation of that which cannot be directly thought or remembered, that which cannot directly enter a time-based narrative.

The transformation potential of psychoanalysis and the psychodynamic therapies, including art psychotherapy, depends largely on the premise that repetition within a different relational frame is healing. Extending this psychoanalytic precept through Butler’s notion of ‘performativity’, each repetition is both a citation and a discursive production of difference. In this way, there is no ‘pure’ repetition. This is underlined liberalise, but also disrupts, a psychoanalytic perspective. This disturbing potentiality of art is evident both in art therapeutic practice and in the poetic and artistic methodologies of this thesis.

5 The apparent incommensurability of narrative therapy and psychoanalytic therapy has antecedents in the relationship of family therapy and psychoanalysis, and in associated disputes as to whether the individual or the family/social unit is the most effective and appropriate focus for therapy. McFayden (1997) suggests that the narrative turn in family therapy, towards a position of non-directiveness and uncertainty and away from a focus on intervening in the family system, could herald a rapprochement with psychoanalysis. White (2004a) draws on the alternative Jamesian tradition in psychoanalysis, and specifically the work of Russell Meares, in a discussion of narrative therapy in relation to the subjective effects of trauma, suggesting that there can be shared sentiments, although divergent practices, amongst practitioners from these different therapeutic traditions.
in art psychotherapy by the material production of the artwork. The making of art within therapy could be said to make visible and available to a therapeutic process some of the ways in which a discursive production always exceeds its representational and citational qualities.

Since there can never be a pure repetition, is the re-citation of narratives, and the performance of a choreographed dance of the Otherness within the self of the ‘client’ with the Other of the therapist, therapeutically sufficient? Or is it necessary to actively challenge the discursive reconstitution of the modern subject within therapy? Psychoanalytically oriented therapies tend to take the former position, whereas narrative therapy takes the latter.

In narrative therapies, the therapist as co-author engages in a collaborative deconstruction and production of multiple narratives (White and Epston, 1990; White, 1992). She asks questions that help tease out, from the discursive complexities of the subject’s formation in power, distinctions between that subject’s constitution through dominant discourses and discursive practices and the subject’s taking up of positions and narratives in ways that challenge or exceed dominant prescriptions. In psychoanalytic therapies, the therapist as ally and ‘other’ makes herself available for projections and allows herself to become implicated, but not absorbed, in a different form of reiteration, whereby a ghostly non-narrativisable realm of early connection and loss appears in the present narrative as a transference.

The preferred position of the narrative therapist is decentred although influential (White, Hoyt and Zimmerman, 1998), perhaps reflecting an ethnographic heritage in which the therapist attempts to leave the smallest possible footprint in the culture of the family, whereas the psychoanalytic therapist must be centred in order to incite a series of displacements.

The practices and ethics, indeed the ethicalisation of the therapist, within the different approaches of narrative therapy and psychoanalysis, are at times in contradiction. A move that is recommended within one approach would often be considered at unwise, and possibly harmful, within the other. From the perspective of psychoanalysis, I
become obliged to question the kinds of reiterations produced within narrative therapy: to ask if the more active and questioning style of the narrative therapist could be defensive and likely to further the client’s defences, if the collaborative position of the narrative therapist promotes an exclusively positive transference and maintains an illusion, and if the generation of a ‘preferred story’ risks a ‘flight to health’ at the expense of psychoanalytic insight or ‘self-knowledge’. And as a narrative therapist, I become obliged to question the sorts of reiterations produced within psychoanalytic therapies: seeing transference as an effect of a set of technologies of power (White, 2000c) that produce the subject of therapy as regressed and resistant, and privilege the therapist’s knowledge of the shape, if not the content, of what the ‘patient’ cannot by definition know. These examples not only highlight the incommensurability of different therapeutic ideas and practices; they also draw attention to the work that subjects do in policing the boundaries of their own and others’ subject positions and subjectivities (Davies, 2000).

Psychoanalysis, of course, is not somehow magically outside the discursive and narrative construction of knowledge and reality, simply because it posits a formative prehistory to the subject’s formation in language. Psychoanalysis cannot be other than yet another story, one with powerful and suspect claims to universality. As Søndergaard (2002) has pointed out, perhaps it is precisely the theoretical and discursive dominance of psychoanalysis that makes its truths seem so self-evident. Moreover, psychoanalysis can have the devastating trick of labelling as denial or repression any attempt to critique its truth status. Psychoanalysis is implicated in creating the normal through a production and abjection of the abnormal, and in problematising instinct and desire, thereby giving rise to an expansion and consolidation of technologies of regulation, normalisation and self-government (Foucault, 2003). In my areas of work I have had very good reason, faced with the normative and pathologising practices of much analytically oriented therapy, to take up, in relation to psychotherapy, psychoanalysis and my own profession of art psychotherapy, a Foucauldian critique of the repressive hypothesis and of juridico-discursive power (Foucault, 1978).
Similarly narrative therapy is not, by virtue of taking up the narrative metaphor in its poststructural dimensions of multiplicity and indeterminacy, exempt from a poststructural critique of subjectification. Attempting to bring poststructural research methodology together with narrative therapy has led my colleague Carolyn Williams and myself, as told in chapter 1 of this thesis, to raise some questions about just who is the subject of narrative therapy and to ask whether “the self as narrative coherence is the aim of such therapy” (Williams & Linnell, 2006, p. 72). Thinking this further through Butler’s intervention, I begin to wonder whether this problem might flow from any therapeutic take-up of narrativity. Clearly ‘narrative’ is not the sole province of ‘narrative therapy’: it was after all Anna O, a patient of Freud’s colleague, Joseph Breuer, who first named ‘the talking cure’ (Breuer, 1895/1995). In all therapies we have ways of making you talk, and to talk in ways we are trained to hear. When narrative therapy makes space for the wordless and metaphorical dimensions of the therapeutic encounter (White, 1995, 1997, 2000a), it turns towards the liminal and the poetic, and this turn may mark a limit of narrative itself.

Butler (2001, p. 34) expresses a concern with “the way in which narrative coherence may foreclose upon an ethical resource, namely, an acceptance of the limits of knowability in oneself and others.” In its appreciation of the significance and limits of narrativity, Butler’s work creates further ‘ground’ for both the theory and practice of narrative therapy while offering a poststructural critique of its limits. To me, this kind of critique is crucial in sustaining narrative therapeutic practice as a form of enquiry, rather than allowing it to solidify into received knowledge. Meanwhile, Butler’s close questioning and re-visioning of the founding myths of psychoanalysis assist me to reconsider my ambivalent relationship to this tradition. It becomes possible to maintain a Foucauldian critique of how psychoanalytic discourse and practice enables normalising power9, while simultaneously drawing upon the critical potential of psychoanalysis in order to trouble the figure of a self-identical, self-reflexive, and autonomous subject.

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9 Rose (2005) offers a Foucauldian analysis of the search for certainty in the new mental health discourses of risk management. His text underscores the professional challenges for a contemporary therapist attempting to insist on an ethics of uncertainty.
The discursive subject of narrative therapy appears far less at odds with the psychoanalytic subject of art therapy from a perspective that analyses the intricate mutual constitution of social and psychic realms and acknowledges intrapsychic suffering as an effect of power (Butler, 1997a). The deconstructive questioning associated with narrative therapy can make this mutual constitution and these effects of power available to the therapeutic conversation, at the same time that psychoanalytic and art psychotherapeutic practices provide space for the eruption, intensification and containment of emotions and memories that appear ‘out of time’. Although different therapeutic practices invite different narratives of self, and what is available to be ‘storied’ changes across time and context, there is arguably always a non-narrativisable excess. Failure to recognise this implicates therapy in the reconstitution of the autonomous subject of rationality.

Butler’s work incites me to question the ‘I’ in this thesis, since for Butler, as for Foucault, the subject cannot be a point of origin. Hence (to reprise the point that inaugurates this section of my chapter), the subject cannot ever give a full and reliable account of its origin:

...I would have to say that I can tell the story of my origin and even tell it again and again, but the story of my origin I tell is not one for which I am accountable, and it cannot establish my accountability. At least, let’s hope not, since, over wine usually, I tell it in various ways, and the accounts are not always consistent with each other (Butler, 2001).

My acts, my speech, my thoughts and feelings as a therapist and researcher are in Butler’s terms citational, and even my sense of myself as an agential subject is itself a citation of predominantly humanist and modernist notions of agency. A space of difference opens up within these citations, and I actively ‘take up’ these possibilities of difference. Yet even as ‘I’ ‘take myself up’ within these possibilities, there is an opacity and indeterminacy to such acts and to the subject that commits them, who is
committed to, or by, them. This suggests a limit to my reflexivity in my work as a therapist, and to the accounts I offer in this thesis. I am of course not without the possibility, the necessity and even the inevitability of performing ‘agency’. But if I propose or assume that I can ‘exercise’ even a poststructural version of agency as perhaps I must propose in order to do my work, am I not already undone?

My effectiveness as subject of whatever order is always somewhat mysterious to me, displaced from intention, played out in layers of histories and memories and relations and bodies. Nor, having attempted to dethrone the self-identified agency of a phenomenological subject, can I rely on the intervention of a critical theory to pull the wool from my eyes. Sovereign theory is as problematic as any other sovereignty. The effect of this realisation, as Butler points out, need not be nihilism, paralysis, unbounded relativism, amorality or despair. Humility, connectedness, open-endedness, might rather be the implications of such radical uncertainty (Butler, 2001). And perhaps I cannot even afford to be certain of uncertainty, or grounded in an assuredness of ungroundedness. At the limits of reflexivity I do not so much turn as become the turn itself, that which is always forming through turning towards the Other, losing myself at the moment of self-consciousness, finding myself only in that which I must strive to, but cannot, know. (Butler, 1997a).

Well, she thinks to herself a little crossly, Perhaps the Butler didn’t do it after all, because that would be incompatible with an ethics of non-violence. What is it anyway that the Butler is supposed to have done? Given an ethics of uncertainty, how could she ever know? Perhaps it’s more a question of what the Butler undid?

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10 Indeed were there not an opacity and indeterminacy to such actions, the Foucauldian concept of resistance to power would be reduced in practice to a personalised version of resistance in a Marxist-revolutionary sense.
While she loves her excursions into the wonderland of Philosophy, they often make her head spin. Perhaps it is better to eschew such vast ontological questions in favour of specifics. For instance, what is it that the Butler has done/undone for her? But after all this reading about obligation and responsiveness to the other, that sounds like a selfish question.

She puts down her bags and sits for a while on a new, 'old fashioned' bench in an internal courtyard. She is tired, a bit grumpy, and somewhat overwhelmed. She has all this exciting 'stuff', but what is she going to do with it? As the sunlight fades from the courtyard, she sighs and gathers her things together. And so, for a time at least, she leaves the store of poststructural theory, still wearing her new Experience jacket, her green bags overflowing with exquisite colours, textures and fabrications, her new books tucked under her arm. As she passes the picket line again, she notices that one of the protesters is playing the fiddle, a mournful yet uplifting improvisation, while the other is simultaneously weeping and holding a placard. She stops to read it.  

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11 The words on the placard are those of Theodor Adorno (forthcoming), cited in Leppert (2005, p. 107). The internal quotation is from Goethe’s Faust I, line 784 (ibid).
Her eyes fill with tears.

She passes him a wisp of silk, from her other-worldly treasures, to wipe his eyes.
Chapter 4

A madness in her methodologies

(The thinking that has it out with [s’explique avec] philosophy, science or literature as such does not totally belong to them. It calls for a writing that sometimes can be read with an apparent felicity...but a writing whose status, in a certain way, is impossible to assign: Is it or is it not a theoretical utterance? Are the signatories and addressees identifiable in advance or produced by the text? Do the sentences describe something or are they doing something? ...You reach a border from which what seemed to be certain appears in its precariousness or in its history, without necessarily disappearing or collapsing (Derrida, 1983/1995, p. 117—8).
At home again, but feeling not quite at home, she puts down her parcels, makes herself a pot of tea, takes out her little purple book and begins to write. She often writes about herself like this, in the third person, but then, when she writes in the third person (and even when she writes in the first person), it isn’t always about herself.

Some may think that this candidate has bitten off more than she can chew — that reason might choke on surfeit or be blinded by excessive indulgence in that regressive masticatory habit called writing. Which may be accomplished in the sense that a skilled rendition of Mozart is ‘accomplished’, but may never be complicit, achieved, or identical with itself.

A madness in her methodology must eschew logical steps, seize her in its death-defying embrace and dance her to another beginning...

Bladeblahblah. She flicks back through the pages she has already written. On one page she has scrawled

‘Writing methodologies’ — a vigorous, embodied and imaginative approach to writing and as research. Eg Lather Richardson St Pierre Davies.

Links with other theorists. Theory and methodology — separate chapters?

Getting myself all in a ‘Lather’?
Foucault & books of experience. Could I ask myself 'what does this writing do' not 'what does this writing mean?' (But what does that question mean or do, exactly?)

'writing methodologies' - suggests writing is itself a methodology and a form of research that produces 'data' ~ not transparent tool for 'writing up' data.

B. says some Scandinavian p.s. feminists have begun to call their data 'creata' (Perhaps creata sounds worse in an English language context?) In 'writing methodologies', 'writing' can be read as a verb i.e. our methodologies as well as our data emerge through the act of writing.

On yet another page, she has dashed off a note to herself, a quotation from Patti Lather

"Taking) testimony seriously enough not to tame its interruptive force into a philosophy of presence and the speaking subject (Derrida 1996)" (in Lather, 2001, p. 215) requites a textual aesthetics that refuses to naturalise the subjects of research and therapy...

She loves such unintended resonances of error, its power to destabilise that which reason apparently 'requires'. She prefers the practice and potential of 'just writing' to the proceedings and proceeds of writing justifications - would choose any day the poetics of a requiem over the politics of a requirement. And yet she recognises how poetics and politics cannot be separated in this way. She feels an obligation, a necessity to dwell, although not settle entirely, with the (at)tributes of this writing that would inscribe an ethics of otherness and uncertainty at the heart of her work.
The (im)possibility of poststructural research

How am I to write, and you to read, a thesis that is not a thesis? How does one ‘assess’ an attempt that asserts the inevitability of its own failure? That refuses to establish a separate object of research? That questions the autonomy of the researcher and the possibility of disinterested knowledge? What credibility belongs to an account that not only acknowledges the partiality and bias of narratives, but insists upon their productivity and indeterminacy? How can I offer my readers a convincing story of my particular research while suggesting that there are crucial limits to accountability and narrativity? How can I lay claim to making a significant ‘contribution’ to a field of knowledge while asserting that the production of such knowledge must be predicated on the ethical necessity of not-knowing?

In this thesis, poststructural, arts-based methodologies are engaged to open up an experiential/experimental space for the making of meaning, and the meaning of making, within and between the projects of writing, therapy and research. Yet, in also gesturing towards the limits of intention, knowledge and meaning, the thesis undoes its maker, as well as itself.

Problematising methodologies

There is a difficulty involved in dividing up the chapters that set out an intellectual framework for this thesis, since, within a poststructural framework, theory and methodology are not always usefully or easily separated. An abundance of methodological suggestions, many of them documented in the preceding chapters, arises from the theorists with whom I have so far engaged. Equally, the thinkers whose work I am about to introduce for its methodological relevance could and do offer a philosophical frame for this thesis. When and how I talk about various influences in my work is subjective and in part a matter of narrative trajectory, in part the deconstructive disruption of that trajectory. The storying of my research, together with thinking that research against the narrative grain, calls up different characters, and a different character to the writing itself, at different points of time.

According to Spivak, practice both norms and deviates from theory (Spivak, 1992/1996). The relationship between theory and practice, between the general and
the particular, between undecidability and the need to decide, is not in this view hierarchical or dialectical, and is not even captured in the phrase ‘mutually constituted/constituting’. A necessarily discomforting sense of the misfit of theory and practice is essential to a critical and deconstructive ethical positioning. Methodology, then, need not assume a mediating or normalising role of attempting to iron out this misfit, by, for instance, ‘solving’ the uncomfortable dilemma of one’s practice ‘examples’ failing to ‘illustrate’ one’s theoretical interests.

Since the work of this thesis engages me in the (im)possibility of deconstructing the theory/practice divide, deconstruction is crucial to my ‘methodology’. Thinking of deconstruction as methodology necessitates a deconstruction of methodology.

The excruciating difficulty of some poststructural writings makes it less likely that they can be coopted into a program of extracting, from increasingly unfashionable poststructuralisms, those methodological strategies that can reinvigorate a humanistic program and reconstitute a liberalised humanist subject. However it seems to me that anything called a ‘poststructural research methodology’ is somewhat vulnerable to such cooption. Poststructural research methodologies are in that category of endeavours that, as a poststructural researcher, ‘one cannot not want’ (c.f. Spivak, 1992/1996) but is obliged to simultaneously critique.1 Here I am in sympathy with James Scheurich, when he writes that he is

...deeply apprehensive about the resourcefulness of the Same to reappear with new masks that only seem to be Other. I am deeply troubled by the anonymous imperial violence that slips quietly and invisibly into our (my) best intentions and practices and, even, into our (my) transformational learnings. I fear our restless civilisational immodesty. Perhaps, instead, we (I) ought to be stunned into silence — literally into silence, into a space of emptiness, into the clarity of unknowing that appropriates no one or no thing to its

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1 As a beginning poststructural researcher, I am continually discovering that a great deal falls into that category, and hence I keep repeating some version of Spivak’s formulation.
sameness, that ‘which cannot be acquired or lost’ (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 76) [Scheurich, 1997, p. 90].

But of course Scheurich does not opt for silence, any more than I do. Nor does he entirely privilege, in his own writing, the multiplicity of marginalised voices, the play of difference in which, he says, since silence is not possible, the possibility of subverting the Same may best reside. Scheurich continues to write, albeit with the necessary humilities, disclaimers and reflexivity, for almost another hundred pages, towards the conclusion of which he offers an ‘archaeological perspective’ as an alternative to the ubiquity of ‘realism’.

I find myself responding to Scheurich with a curious kind of engaged ambivalence. I am in concert with the necessity to be permanently alert to the tendency of emergent research methodologies to reconstitute realism and positivism. In particular, I share Scheurich’s concern that ‘new methodologies’ may too easily reconstitute the individualistic perspectives, racist epistemologies and colonising practices of Western modernist research. At the same time, I am wary of a tendency for the ‘critique of critique’ to become a receding hierarchy, in which an account that claims to decentre subjectivity ironically leaves the authorising subject of that ‘decentred’ and reflexive account relatively intact.

According to Deborah Britzman,

Poststructural theories raise critical concerns about what it is that structures meanings, practices, and bodies, about why certain practices become intelligible, valorised or deemed as traditions, while other practices become discounted, impossible or unimaginable. For poststructuralists, representation is always in crisis, knowledge is constitutive of power, and agency is the constitutive effect, and not the originator, of situated practices and histories... (Britzman, 2000, p. 30).
Tensions circulate within and between poststructuralisms around methodological questions of how to carry forward these critical concerns. The methodologies of my thesis hover, uncomfortably at times, between a Foucauldian discourse analysis/genealogical approach and a deconstructive one. According to a genealogical perspective, a researcher cannot effectively critique the centering of the self in Western thought and practice from within theories of subjectivity and practices of subjective writing (see Rose, 1996/1998; Scheurich, 1997), because this move inevitably reconstitutes the centering of the subject. From a deconstructive perspective, however, it is not sufficient to elaborate a critique of the modern subject. The very possibility of a decisive critical agency, the authority of the researcher to practice genealogy or any other form of critique, must itself come under erasure.

In attempting to enact this dilemma in my thesis, I am hopefully not too far from the spirit of Foucault’s ethics of permanent critique, arts of self, and books of experiment/experience. While this is not a conventionally Foucauldian thesis, I suspect that being a ‘Foucauldian’ is not necessarily the only way to engage with the radical potential of Foucault. I cannot solve through argument, or dissolve through writing, the tensions within and between poststructuralisms. Neither can I ‘settle’ the differences between poststructuralisms and other critical approaches. I must opt for an ethic of discomfort, a practice of contradiction, an alarming uncertainty as to when and where ‘I’ am failing/falling.

She remembers her early experiences of PhD candidature. She had initially enjoyed the intellectual play of arguing with her first supervisor, a warm-hearted and brilliant critical theorist with a particular interest in aesthetics and psychodynamics. Although she could in no way match his knowledge or erudition, she had learned a great deal from their debates. She took seriously the challenge to consider the limitations of poststructuralism and to open herself to a consideration of another approach. Their argument turned on the issue of whether it was desirable or possible to put aside her theoretical framework for a while in order to better consider the object of research. But she
didn’t believe in the possibility of a separate object of research, or even in the benefits of acting as if there were such an object. She also felt that by now she couldn’t just ‘put her Foucauldian framework aside’ — wasn’t it in her bones?

Agonism turned to agony when she finally realised that her wayward passions for poststructural theories and transgressive writings were for this man unacceptable within the discipline of social science and the conventions of a dissertation. (At the time she thought this impasse might be all about her. Perhaps she had become pathologically wedded to poststructural theory? Yet later, when she told a colleague the story, Eva responded with Of course! Whether or not one can separate the subject and object of research — between poststructural and critical theory, this is always the sticking point.)

It all came to a head over the green tomato chutney. She had written a paragraph about experimenting with the inclusion of equal proportions of German and French mustard, as a metaphor for the possibility of taking up both Frankfurt School critical theory and French poststructural theory in her thesis. She knew well enough that it was provocative to include a recipe in her draft thesis outline, but at the time she was feeling pretty green, in a bit of a pickle, and in desperate need of some spicing up.

She really did make the green tomato chutney, as well as write about it, from tomatoes in her garden that had failed to ripen on the vine, although she stopped short of taking him a jar. She made the chutney on a day when she just could not bear to sit at the computer for a moment longer. Three times she had worked at length on a draft of what she wanted to do in her thesis, and three times her supervisor had sent her back to write something more acceptable. She felt that she could have embraced the discipline of multiple revisions if only it were bringing her closer to her passions rather than taking her further.

\[\text{The recipe is a variation inspired by similar recipes in Mollie Katzen’s (1977) Moosewood Cookbook and Stephanie Alexander’s (1996) The Cook’s Companion.}\]
away. As it was, she was beginning to despair of ever being able to write something that was acceptable to both herself and the academic realm.

After months of exruciating self-examinations, self-doubts and self-reerimations, she began the delicate process of negotiating for a change of supervisor, but she kept the revisions to her recipe for chutney. She still finds it delicious; in it, she ‘relishes’ the sweet, sharp taste of freedom.

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### Sheridan’s Green Tomato Relish

**Ingredients**

- 2kg green tomatoes, thinly sliced
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- 1 cup of apple cider vinegar
- 1 cup of honey or a little more to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon of fresh ginger, minced or finely chopped
- 1 flat dessertspoon each of Dijon mustard (smooth) and German mustard (with whole seeds)
- A good pinch of cayenne pepper
- Pinch of ground tumeric
- 1 teaspoon of carmin seeds, 1 teaspoon of coriander seeds,
- 1 teaspoon of mustard seeds and a few cloves, all coarsely crushed or pounded
- 1 flat dessertspoon of garam marsala powder
- 1/2 teaspoon of sea salt

**Method**

Combine all ingredients in a heavy-based saucepan. Bring slowly to boiling point, stirring well, and simmer gently without a lid for one and a half to two hours, continuing to stir from time to time. The mixture should reduce to a consistency part-way between a thick, chunky sauce and a jam – it will set a little more upon cooling. Spoon the mixture while still warm into hot, sterilised jars and seal at once. Wait at least a day for the flavours to blend before opening the first jar.
Writing methodologies

‘Writing methodologies’, once named as such, run a risk of becoming another under examined convention of qualitative research. Against this, the incitement to write, and the refusal of such methodologies to be turned into a set of instructions for how to conduct poststructural research, is potentially transformative. While I do not wish to give writing a status ‘outside’ of dominant discourse, I do think that what I learn and unlearn by responding to the incitement to write is at least as important as any attempt I make to ‘do’ discourse analysis or deconstruction.

Scheurich (1997) suggests that the emergence of transgressive writing methodologies within social science research does not necessarily escape the dominance of the realist paradigm. Noting that some of these methodologies claim to replace one form of ‘validity’ with another, Scheurich argues that a liberalisation of the discourse of validity does not in itself constitute a paradigm shift. When writing methodologies strategically attempt to appropriate the language of validity, this appropriation is fraught with the likelihood of reconstituting the ‘reality’ of research. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1998) have similarly argued that experimental writing methodologies largely serve as a form of validation for a renewed social science. Moreover, by laying claim to new forms of validity, experimental writing methodologies tend to draw attention away from the imbrication of such texts with “state power” (Denzin, 1998, p. 315) and governmentality.

In these critics’ own terms, one could scarcely declare the emergent ‘writing methodologies’ of the social sciences to be ‘invalid’. Rather, the critique is both cautionary and an incentive to reach beyond both versions and inversions of the discourse of validity, scientific or otherwise. I hope, in the pages that follow, to cautiously take up the critical and creative potentialities of transgressive writing in ways that extend beyond the binary of valid/invalid, keeping uncertainty alive. Rather than making a claim of ‘validity’ for my research, I would hope to touch upon the possibilities and limits of the truths of fiction and the fictions of truth, to find an ethical resource in unknowingness and relationality. In such research, ‘uncertainty’ itself can easily be romanticised and given a truth status. My thesis is haunted by the ironic dangers of becoming certain about uncertainty.
Having made my reservations about these methodologies and their claims, I will climb aboard a train of thought that takes transgressive writing as its point of departure, rather than as its destination. On this journey, I am grateful for the texts and the contexts, the companionships and the pedagogies, offered to me by other poststructural feminist writings and writers. In experimenting with the possibilities for writing (rather than ‘writing up’) this thesis, I have looked to the work of these women for inspiration, support and provocation.

Feminist poststructural writers seem particularly adept at subverting binaries in order to express the apparently inexpressible. The methodologies they have invented and explored verge on dismantling the opposition of philosophy and its applications. Their work extends the parameters of what can be taken as knowledge, while undermining discourses of disembodied knowing and/or knowing subjects. Often this writing involves ‘a double practice’ or ‘double gesture’ (c.f. Lather, 2001; Spivak, 1992/1996) around the (im)possibilities of creating new knowledges. For instance, Betty St Pierre urges that we “imagin(e) writing as a letting go of meaning even as meaning proliferates” (St Pierre, 2005). Patti Lather advocates ‘getting lost’ (Lather and Smithies, 1997) as well as ‘getting smart’ (Lather, 1991). Bronwyn Davies, reflecting on the part that writing can play “in the possibility of coming to know otherwise, against the grain of dominant discourses” (Davies, 2006, p. 1), insists upon transgressive writing as disciplined practice as well as upon such writing’s potential to undo a certain disciplinarity.

These writings engage with the ethics of representation while refusing to be paralysed by its dangers. They assert the value of autoethnography and memoir, while questioning the tendency of life writing to reconstitute a humanist subject. They insist that our own selves may be taken as the subject and object of research, while refusing to be confined to an autobiographical project by the impossibility of authentic representation. In this tradition, Susanne Gannon (2005, p. 626) “seek(s) writing practices that zigzag between categories, that produce knowledge in the gaps between analysis and creativity, reason and emotion, intellectual and aesthetic, mind and body, academic and everyday, us and them.” Taking up Roland Barthes’ (1989) suggestion
that literature ‘already knows’ what science ‘says’ or talks about, Gannon seeks to go beyond the dilemmas of representation in research through the specifics of imagining and writing (an)other.

St Pierre (2005; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) explains how she resisted the ethnographic imperative to analyse the older women who participated in her long-term research. She “became wary of the not-so-innocent assumption of interpretivism that the women should be drilled and mined for knowledge (who are they? what do they mean?) and then represented...this did not seem to be the kind of ethical relation these women who had taught me how to be a woman required of me” (St Pierre, 2005, p. 5). After all, says St. Pierre, it is not these women, but subjectivity itself, that is the focus of her research.

Lather similarly refuses to simply ‘deliver’ the women in her study to the reader. ³ Lather’s (2001) postscript to her co-authored ethnography (Lather and Smithies, 1997) suggests, following Derrida, that we might embrace doubled practices of writing, practices that enable us to respond vigorously to the imperative to make the experiences of others visible in their situatedness, specificity and urgency, while refusing to uncritically reconstitute either authorial presence or the authenticity of the subject’s voice. Lather (2001) takes up Visweswaran’s (1994) suggestion that feminist ethnography, ‘ ‘(g)iven the realisation of the limits of representation and the weight of research as surveillance and normalisation’ ‘ (in Lather, ibid, p. 203), needs to embrace its ‘failure’. Lather suggests that performing ethnography at the limits of representation necessitates a deconstructive move into writing:

(From) voice to inscription, from notions of the intrinsic to ideas of the frame. Refusing textual innocence and an untroubled realism, representation is practiced as a way to intervene, even while one’s confidence is troubled. Here the task becomes to operate from a

³ Scheurich’s (1997) critique of new methodologies pays particular attention to Lather’s attempts to establish different criteria for validity within the social sciences. While I acknowledge this criticism, I prefer to focus on those aspects of Lather’s research that exceed her search for new forms of validity.
textual rather than a referential notion of representation...(ibid p. 214).

Lather refuses the narrow competency of the reflective and reflexive researcher in favour of a necessarily awkward and jagged aesthetics of writing and an ethics of non-mastery.

Although I engage extensively in this thesis with practices of memoir and with an immanent critique of therapeutic cultures, I do not consider my writing to be precisely ‘autoethnographic’. The first part of that word, ‘auto’, suggests a reiteration of autonomy, a concept and practice of selfhood that I actively seek to avoid. The tendency to reconstitute the domain of the personal as shaped by autobiography is deeply embedded in therapy discourse and in my ethical constitution as a therapist, suggesting that these discursive/ethical themes at least to some extent traverse the distinctions between psychically and socially oriented therapies. Against this dominant therapeutic ethics, my poststructural research orientation insists that I draw attention to the discursive constitution of subjectivities and of ‘personal agency’. From a Foucauldian perspective, current socialities, discourses and relationships, the fertile everyday messiness of interactions and events, are constitutive of the domain of what it is possible, and impossible, for me to think, imagine, feel, be and do.

Nor, despite my appreciation of the critical and reflexive moves of contemporary ethnography (see, for instance, Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) am I exactly an ethnographer, either of self or other. I dispute the possibility that the structures or even the stories of a culture or a self, including my-self, can be charted and re-presented, however subversively, in a non-coercive approximation of the ‘real’.

I seek therapeutic and writing practices that open radically upon “the irreducible heterogeneity of the other” (Lather, ibid, p. 222), whether this is the otherness of others, of self, or of relationship. Such practices cannot be totally mapped out in

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4 See Gannon (2006) for a poststructural response to the limits and possibilities of autoethnography.
advance or kept on a tight leash of rational control. Consequently, while some of the research/ writing in this thesis is highly intentional, it inevitably exceeds and sometimes contradicts these intentions. At other times, the writing may from its beginnings be radically extrinsic or decentred, while much of the thesis falls somewhere in between intention and the unknown.

**Dreaming (of) research**

At the far borders of research that is unintended, I have on occasion stumbled somewhat reluctantly into that mysterious form of enquiry that engages me with and in spite of myself, in my other-than-waking hours. Dreams install an(O)ther as the driver of the text, instantiating a form of writing unbound by narrative conventions of time and place. Bringing the potential of dream writing together with the notion of writing as methodology suggests that dreams may be taken as ‘data’. While as a writer this possibility excites me, as a therapist I feel some ambivalence. In particular, I have reservations about the classical Freudian approach that dreams are the fulfilment of a secret wish to which they can be reduced; or alternatively the Jungian approach, which predicates the analysis of and receptivity to dreams upon a theory of a universal collective unconscious and a realm of archetypes. Yet despite my ambivalence, dream writing as a form of research has insinuated itself into this thesis project, through my unintended experience of dreaming of my research and my intentional writing of that dream.

For Cixous, there is a School of Dreams, which she positions between the School of the Dead and the School of ‘Roots’ (Cixous, 1993). She (re)commends, as one writer to another, our attendance at and attention to these schools, these three steps in the intolerable descent into writing. With her, we descend through an opening, the door of death. Our dreams transport us; we are travelling, unravelling, towards the uncertain births of our inconclusive beginnings. Dreams indenture us to mystery and unknowing, carrying us through regions of the unspeakable and the unthinkable, through endless substitutions and displacements with no fixed point of origin or

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5 This universalising tendency is mediated by an insistence on specificity and fragmentation in the post-Jungian analysis of James Hillman, which Stephen K. Levine (2005) claims is a post-modern psychology.
destination. Dream writing is an art of transport, of going with the dream and allowing its freedom, since interpretation spells death to the dream (ibid). The dream cannot reveal an original secret: rather, dreams acquaint us, in fear and in joy, with “the feeling of the secret” (ibid, p. 85).

She is attempting to ‘deepen her analysis’ of her therapeutic work with children but feels a tremendous resistance to this process. I don’t want to analyse these stories, she says to herself, after a long day and evening of working on a chapter that engages with a detailed account of therapy with a child. Telling herself that she is analysing a created text, and that the ‘real child’ is a humanist and Romantic notion, doesn’t seem to entirely alleviate her distress.

Strange phrases drift through her as she is falling asleep that night.

The stories of the children are not ‘my data’... they are children of flesh and word...

Next morning she wakes half choked by the disturbing tendrils of a dream. Untangling herself and pushing back the covers, she leans over to pick up the pen and the silver dream book from the bedside table, and begins to write.
in their hands

i don't find them until morning
half dreaming
fingers coiled around
a lump of offal in my chest

the flesh children's hands
are butter pale
or chocolate
with pink moons

the word children are
wearing gloves
of grey silk
over the bone

'put that down`
i say to them 'it's mine`
and 'go and wash those hands
— immediately`

they giggle
and fall about
as i prise their bloody
fingers from my heart
**The poetic as research methodology**

Poetry, an art with which I have a long-standing relationship and which moreover resonates with the significance of ‘the image’ in art therapies, has been a particularly important writing methodology in this thesis. Some of the poems I have included were initially written as part of an exchange with or response to my therapy clients and others were written for the thesis itself.

When I first began to bring together my practice of writing poetry with my practice of therapy by reflecting in poetic form on my clinical work, I saw this as related to an emerging technique in narrative therapy of the therapist recording the words of the people who come to therapy and offering these words back in the intensified form of poetry (Freedman and Combs, 2001; Behan, 2003; Speedy, 2003). My poetry is also strongly related to the research practice of presenting ‘data’ from interviews in poetic form (Richardson, 2002). Richardson offers a philosophical and practical discussion of the poetic form as a poststructural research methodology for the presentation of qualitative interviews. She draws on the potential of poetry to render the specificity of the subject’s voice without recourse to notions of authenticity. Richardson also contends that “the poetic form is a viable means for seeing beyond social scientific conventions and discursive practices” (p. 877), and may therefore be a preferred methodology when wishing to unmask truth claims and draw attention to the constitutive character of writing and reading research data.

Through poetic ways of figuring ‘experience’ ethics and aesthetics can come together in the shaping of therapeutic understanding and its limits, and also in the shaping of this thesis. As an unconventional form for the narration of therapy, poetry draws attention to how stories of the work are not ‘true representations’ but new productions, and to how the aesthetics of writing about therapy are inseparable from the ethics of the work.\(^6\) As a mode of imaging and resonating with the stories of the ‘clients’ of therapy, such poetry attempts an expansion of accountability to the clinical subject of therapy. I think it can be useful to think of accountability as just

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\(^6\) In taking a poststructural position on the impossibility of representation, I do not intend to negate the innovative and transformational work that has been undertaken in the name of capturing the authentic voices of interview subjects. See the description of the work of Daphne Patai, who rendered the voices of Brazilian women as poetry (Block, 1995).
that: account-ability, or the ability of certain modes of practice, including writing practice, to offer complex, situated and embodied, yet denaturalised, accounts. This suggestion goes some way towards a re-appropriation of the concept of ‘accountability’, which, along with ‘responsibility’, has been enlisted in therapy practice as a normalising technique of the neoliberal self.

Yet poetry also attempts to gesture beyond the accountable in everyday experiences, toward the mysterious and ineffable. Butler’s suggestion (2001, 2004a) that a responsibility to the Other emerges from our vulnerabilities and from the limits of our knowing suggests in turn that our ability to respond can exceed our ability to give an account. Thus ‘response-ability’ exceeds ‘account-ability’. In this vein, poetry might be thought of as a practice of apprenticeship and choreography in relation to the Other (c.f. Venn, 2002). To write a poem is to apprentice oneself to the semiotic (Kristeva, 1980), to those aural and kinaesthetic dimensions of language that are closest to embodiment and emotion. Apprenticed to rhythm, to assonance, to metaphor, metonymy, to the illogical logic of the line, ‘I’ do not decide the poem in advance of its writing. The poem, which is mine and not mine, begins to write/ right itself. The poem takes me in its arms, I follow, and together we dance. We sway, we hover, fainting into a syncope (Clement, 1992), stumbling against each other’s irreconcilable difference, or moving as one. The words on the page choreograph/record this mov(e)ment (c.f. Davies & Gannon, 2006). The words dance on the page.

Poetry, says Derrida, is to “learn by heart” (Derrida, 1988/1995, p. 291). This is neither the organic heart rendered knowable and analysable by Western science, nor the glitter-pink heart commodified and sentimentalised within the culture of late capitalism, nor the essentialised humanist heart, figured as the source of true emotion. Pumping in an autopoetic rhythm, the heart does not precede the poem; it is embodied through the poem. Engaged in a singular and unrepeatable economy of memory and desire, each poem is exactly that which we long to know ‘by heart’. The poem is not signed by, or the sign of, the author; it is signed by, and a sign of, the Other (Derrida, 1988/1995b).

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7 Toni Morrison (2000) has refigured responsibility as ‘response-ability’, in a searing address that responds to the question of how universities can teach ‘values’.
Then why not write therapy with as much passion and abandon as poetry, since therapy is arguably also, always, a process of learning by heart? In such a process, intentionality is not entirely lost, but it is radically decentralised. Poetic and ethical readings and writings of therapeutic practice can illuminate its liminal and irrational dimensions, so that narrative structure need not reconstitute a rational, ‘Enlightenment’ view of progress and the subject, and aesthetic practice need not foreclose upon the social and political. A ‘poethics’ of therapeutic practice is an art of making space for uncertainty: for the mysteries of the psyche, the indeterminacy of the social, and the ongoing elaboration of an infinite relation between the two.

**Genre and its limits**

Poetry is, of course, only one among many literary and dramatic genres of writing. Prose can be poetic, and poetry at times mimics the most ‘prosaic’ of voices. Laurel Richardson, while arguably the main advocate for the poetic as poststructural research methodology, does not always privilege poetry – a move that would set up a binary of poetry and prose. Richardson experiments with the particular methodological potentials of different literary genres. For instance, she takes up memoir and autoethnography in writing an academic life (Richardson, 1997). Within this text, she writes an ethnographic drama, a form that is generically suited to surfacing, rather than smoothing over, conflict, in response to a hostile reception to a particular aspect of Richardson’s research.

Writing of, and with, Cixous, Mereille Calle-Gruber suggests keeping genre as a question, as a site of textual emergence, rather than as an attribute of texts (Cixous and Calle–Gruber, 1993). In this thesis, I find myself moving between literary genres in an attempt to chart something of the intersubjectivities that constitute and are constituted by therapy and research conducted under the sign of the Other. I extend the notion of the poetic into my prose writing. At times, I have followed narrative therapy practices by shaping poetry from the words of people who have consulted me as a therapist. As a practicing poet, I have also experimented with writing poetry as a means of embodying my understandings and experiences of both therapy and of research. In this, I follow a tradition of the expressive arts therapies, where it is
regarded as crucial for a therapist to continue to practice her art form. I attempt to extend this tradition, which is practiced in the multiple spaces of the studio, the exhibition space, the performance, and the literary work of poetry or fiction, into the space of research.

**The necessity and impossibility of co-authorship and collaboration**

In the opening chapter of this thesis, I problematised the assumption that a co-authored therapeutic account could be produced through the decentering of therapeutic privilege and negotiation of shared meaning. Chapter 6 of this thesis, in which my accounts of narrative and art therapy with Indigenous children ‘in care’ are written in very close consultation with an Indigenous worker/carer, becomes something of a limit case for my sustained engagement with the necessity and impossibility of therapeutic co-authorship and research collaboration. I am not sure that the subaltern clinical subject (Swartz, 2005) ever speaks, or could ever speak, in the pages of this thesis. I am not even sure if the clinical subject of therapy speaks in those moments when memoir and clinical writing come together in a re-presentation of my own experiences as a client of therapy. However, I do hope to offer readers of this thesis an experience/experiment that gestures towards the possibilities of therapy and of writing about therapy, by bringing to life some traces of how I have attempted to listen to the otherness in others and in myself. I attempt to engage in a writing wherein a fragile and contingent ‘I’, a necessarily contested ‘we’, an irreducibly mysterious and compelling ‘you’, are variously formed and performed, through a careful and risky listening and speaking of each with the other.

**Collective biography**

In collective biography we catch ourselves in remembered acts of turning on ourselves, seeing how we take up forms of power and strategies of surveillance. We attend to the ambivalent processes of subjection. We develop and refine our capacity to reflexively turn our gaze on ourselves in remembered moments of turning, of constituting ourselves and being constituted (Davies and Gannon, 2006, p. 11).
Collective biography (Davies, 1994, 2000) is one such writing and research practice that interrupts binaries of self and other, questioning the autonomy of authorship and the subject, and yet refusing to reduce the wayward idiosyncrasies of situated and embodied texts to a co-authored sameness. Collective biography complexifies and moves beyond the dilemma of whether to take oneself or others as a research subject, both because it is a collective practice and because it encourages participants to approach the Other in themselves. Developed by Davies and her colleagues from the memory work of Frigga Haug and associates, collective biography is both an analysis of subjection and an enactment of discursive agency. The practice of collective biography fosters an aesthetics of writing that gestures toward the “mo(ve)ments” (Davies and Gannon, 2006, p. 7) of subjectivity in the making. This mutual and supportive interpellation of writing subjects is productive of vivid, situated and embodied texts and analyses.

Collective biography has assisted me to regard my own and others’ biographical stories and reworkings of these stories as a rich form of ‘data’ for this thesis. Some of the pieces of writing in this thesis began their specific lives in collective biography workshops, but the practice of an embodied and intersubjective writing-as-research can be informed by collective biography without necessarily being limited to the particular formal processes of a collective biography workshop. I have therefore drawn on my experience and knowledge of collective biography and other transgressive writing practices to give myself ‘poetic licence’, within a research context, to experimenting widely with creative ways of writing (inter)subjectivities and socialities.

Participants prepare for a collective biography workshop through reading extracts of relevant texts and workshop notes prepared by the workshop convenor. The workshop involves recollecting and writing the earliest memories for each participant provoked by cues associated with a workshop theme. Each participant then reads out her writing to the group, who reflect back on the immediacy and embodied character of this writing, noting points where the writer has veered into reification or explanation. Writings are reworked by their makers in the light of these reflections.
Critical visual methodologies

Visual art therapists, of whom I am one, have a history of protesting the dominance of written and spoken text and arguing for the critical and creative potential of the visual and plastic arts. Although most strongly influenced by the conventions of the individual clinical case study, art therapy has developed a minority tradition of art-based research (McNiff, 1998). Within this culture, I position myself, like John Henzell (2004), as an advocate for embracing the poetic and the imaginative across a range of discursive forms including words. In this, I sometimes feel I have more in common with the broad project of the expressive therapies (see Chapter 1) than with the specific profession of (visual) art therapy.

By now I imagine it must be apparent to my readers, as it is to myself, that a long and highly charged engagement with writing shapes my biographical narratives and my understandings of myself as a subject of pedagogy. My relationship with writing is of such an intimacy and intensity that it tends to marginalise a consideration of other arts-based research methodologies in the constitution of this thesis. In one sense this is not a problem, since I am engaging the art of writing alongside more traditional forms of rhetorical exposition, and since, within a broad understanding of the expressive arts therapies, fiction and poetry are therapeutic modalities. It may even be advantageous that I tend to privilege writing, given that a thesis is predominantly a written text, and that I do not want this text to appear to give transparent access to experience and meaning, or to use narrative coherence to knit together a coherent subject and/or object of research.

In the previous discussion of writing methodologies and through the experimental rhetorical structure of this thesis, I have drawn attention to how writing constitutes the ‘findings’ of the thesis rather than simply describes them. Similarly, the visual images in this thesis are not simply illustrative, of either the work of which this thesis gives an account or of the written text itself. These images are themselves text, themselves constitutive of a kind of reality.
Much of the artwork included in this thesis was made in a therapeutic context as part of an art therapy session. My artworks in Chapter 7 were variously made: as rapid art responses after facilitating an art therapy session, sometimes using the materials left over from the session, as ‘art responses’ during art therapy experiential workshops, as apparently unrelated works that have retrospectively taken on significance for me in the context of the thesis, and as forms of research for this thesis project. [These works were made as part of an endless interplay of my relations with others and (my)selves, rather than intended for ‘exhibition’. I have included them in this thesis knowing them to be both precious and flawed.] Having thought carefully about whether or not to intersperse the images throughout the written text, I have chosen instead to produce three ‘photo-essays’ or predominantly visual texts that punctuate the last three chapters of the thesis. I hope that this allows the artworks to resonate with each other, the written text and the readers/viewers, without the works being reduced to illustrations of therapy stories or eclipsed by clinical modes of interpretation. All of this underscores the well-established point that no pure reproduction of art is possible. At all stages of production, I am constructing both the artworks and a narrative of the artworks, whether or not the ‘originals’ are made by me. This process of production continues in multiple readings and audiencings, as does the production of the wider (visual, written and imagined) thesis text.

It seems important to think beyond the binary of either reducing visual art to an illustration of a verbal or written narrative, or romanticising art as a unique and universal means of access to that which is (assumed to be) beyond words. In this vein, Gilroy (2003) has begun to explore the relevance for art therapy of visual culture (Evans and Hall, 1999) and critical visual methodologies (G. Rose, 2001). These contemporary fields support a more critical and reflexive practice of research into the arts by locating art in relation to considerations of culture, discourse and the Other. Emerging visual research methodologies challenge the autonomy of both art and the

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9 I have documented the artwork using either an SLR or 5.5 mega pixel digital camera, often rapidly photographing a piece before the artist took it home. For Chapter 5, I scanned photocopies of electronic whiteboard printouts directly into the computer. I have worked with computer editing programs to prepare the images for inclusion in the thesis: making occasional and conservative changes to brightness and contrast to adjust for original lighting conditions, cropping to exclude background areas around the artworks and compensating for some odd photographic angles.
subject.\textsuperscript{10} The visceral and material character of the visual arts as methodology is a powerful reminder to take the work of this thesis as “the work of art”, which in the words of Marsha Meskimmon, is also “the work of embodiment, of bringing us to our senses...” (Meskimmon, 2003, p. 5).\textsuperscript{11}

For all that artwork has strong and shifting meanings in the narratives of therapy, I cannot tell you the truth of such artwork, and neither could the person who made it. This does not negate my attempts to paint for you an approximation of the specificities and multiplicities of an artwork, to dramatise for you the contexts and processes of its creation, and to narrate for you some of the stories of its meanings, its audiencing, and its effects. From a poststructural ethical positioning, the contingency of truth heightens, rather than relieves, my responsibility to try to ‘tell the truth’ as truthfully as I can, entering me into an indefinite and passionate obligation.

Derrida (1987/1978) writes an extended meditation upon Cézanne’s statement that “I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you” (Cézanne to Emile Bernard, 23 October 1905, in Derrida, ibid, p. 2). According to Derrida, Cézanne’s promise is a performative that promises another performative. Cézanne’s promise thus bears an infinite and deferred relation to the truth it promises. The ‘truth’ is that I am bound to tell or perform the truth. Painting thus becomes an infinite response to a debt to the Other, a debt that the promise of painting is always bringing into being.

\textsuperscript{10} My art therapy academic colleagues at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) and myself are engaged in an ongoing collaborative project of researching art therapy pedagogies through a contemporary art practice that embraces digital media, installation, performance, found objects, painting, drawing, mixed media and creative writing (Linnell, Westwood, Perry and Pretorius, 2005; Westwood, Linnell, Perry, and Pretorius, 2006; Westwood, Perry, Pretorius and Linnell, 2006; Westwood, Pretorius, Perry and Linnell, 2007). Responding to research that empirically and theoretically explores the importance of experiential art making in introducing art therapy to a general audience (Dudley, Gilroy and Skaife, 1998), in the training of art therapists (Waller, 1993) and in art therapists’ ongoing clinical supervision (Brown, Myerowitz-Katz and Ryde, 2003), we have turned from the conventions of clinical writing to an aesthetic process that questions the division between ‘doing’ art and ‘doing’ research.

\textsuperscript{11} Meskimmon’s phrase, written in the context of exploring an artwork that challenges the “gendered dichotomy of word and flesh” (2003, p. 5), actually reads “the work of art is the work of embodiment, of bringing us to our senses in cognition” (ibid, the second emphasis is my own). While I appreciate this attempt to interrupt a binary, I find the phrase more suggestive as I have quoted it above, where it does not terminate in the cognitive.
She and the other women meet with Andy Gilroy for two days of art making, discussion and diarising around their research experiences. They stay in a straw bale house in the Blue Mountains. Formal presentations of their research plans are juxtaposed with leisurely walks, and, in the evening, they share a delicious dinner followed with long soaks and theoretical conversations in a hot tub in the garden.

Andy mentions to her in conversation by the fireside that, as children, many of Andy’s colleagues in the art therapy world had wanted to be archaeologists. As a child, she (idan) too, for a time, had wanted to be an archaeologist.

The women are asked if, in the days following the workshop, they could each write something about it that complements their visual explorations. She wonders how she might attempt to catch the butterfly of her experience in a net of words, without damaging its wings.

archaeologist

setting out from the house of straw and mud she plans to walk all the way to the end of the road but just over the hill is an ugly ceremonial concrete bridge across a muddy creek on a vacant block she can’t work out if she’s trespassing but she crosses the bridge anyway a narrow track circles up through bush to where a house might have been razed to the ground but the gums aren’t scorched and there isn’t enough rubble for a recent fire or a demolition the ground is scattered with half buried broken wood masonry porcelain tin and glass and she can’t work out what happened here are they going to build (these new upright markers must be surveyors pegs) have they carted the old house away she kneels in wet earth on a
steeple slope held together with tangled roots and digs with her hands for the bones of old china
two glass bottles some shards of white porcelain almost all the pieces of a small chinese plate the worn heel of an old boot a curving piece of petrified wood carried back in her shirt tales (she relishes this slip of the pen) to the straw bale house her trouser knees wet and dirty grit under her nails she finds a cardboard box for her specimens the dirt encrusted porcelain and the bottles containing miniature hanging gardens of mud and fern she cannot bear to wash away
next morning she gets up early someone else is already rustling and scratching away like a bower bird in the courtyard she creeps downstairs to the kitchen washes each piece in hot soapy water scrubbing the earth from the web of fine cracks washing the sharp fragments back to white and blue she tips the little bottled gardens out into the weeping flowerbed soaks the dirt from the tall bottle uses her fingertip to clean the round one with its gleaning misfit of a lid
hot-tubbing

i have made a case of words
to hold these wordless things
fragile
of doubtful provenance
and irrational worth

dreams cracked
in the firing
desire erupting
along faultlines

so tonight i offer you
a rare viewing
the contours of fifty years
and shards rinsed clean

in a skytub of girlish laughter
A ‘telling’ obligation

I am aware that in addressing the textual methodologies of this thesis under separate headings of writing and the visual, I risk reinforcing a binary that already marks the theorisation of art therapy. In attempting to conceptualise how I might bring the visual and writing together while respecting their differences, I have found it useful to turn once more to Foucault. While Foucault’s work makes it possible to question the binary of visual and written language, he does not suggest that these two different discursive practices are interchangeable or that translation between the two is entirely possible. Foucault writes of the difficulty of writing about the visual, advocating for the specific and different discursive character of writing and painting. He suggests that it is necessary, when writing of painting, to eschew too literal an interpretation of what (or whom) a painting is ‘about’, in order that the artwork “may, little by little, release its illuminations” (Foucault, 1966/1994, p. 10):

The relation of language to painting is an infinite relation. It is not that words are inadequate, or that, when confronted by the visible, they prove insuperably inadequate. Neither can be reduced to the other’s terms: it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show ...what we are saying...

(I)f one wishes to keep the relation of language to vision open, if one wishes to treat their incompatibility as a starting point for speech instead of an obstacle to be avoided, so as to stay as close as possible to both, then one must erase those proper names and preserve the infinity of the task (Foucault, 1966/1994, pp. 9—10).

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12 The reference to ‘proper names’ relates to the limited usefulness of identifying the representational ‘content’ of a work, in this instance, the names and histories of the subjects who sat for Velasquez’s painting, *Las Meninas*. 
She is in Adelaide for the narrative therapy conference, where she and two colleagues are to present/perform their work together, her contribution to this presentation being in the form of a play. She wakes early, stretches, makes tea, and then sits up on the narrow bed under the window in the old nineteen forties North Adelaide apartment. She mouths the words of her script quietly to herself, very quietly, so that she will not wake the others. For the moment, she wants to inhabit a world that echoes her own early delight with narrative therapy and her love of the sublime space of art therapy.

She knows now that she will not give up any of this. She will not give up the lightness of wordplay or the leaden weight of words; or the viscosity and viscerality of paint; or the slow yielding of a body of clay; or the quickening and slowing of conversation; or the still, reflective spaciousness of one silence, the stiff awkwardness of a different silence, and the unbearably loud scream of yet another.

She will not give up the dance of stepping forward, stepping back, joining with, playing with, sitting with; or the art of listening intently, passionately, reluctantly, in outrage, in pleasure, in pain. She will not give up her patience with suffering or her “impatience for liberty” (Foucault, 1984/2000a, p. 319); nor will she relinquish the rustle of paper and words, the scratching of crayons and heads, the drumming of fingers and hearts.

She will inhabit this space that fills with anger and joy, with love and with fear. She will laugh with someone at absurdity or in happiness, and she will almost drown, like Alice, in a pool of her own/anOther’s tears. Touching and being touched, with a word, an image, a momentary glance, she and the other will swim together toward the shore, toward the unsure.
P.s.

These early chapters are not a prelude to the ‘real drama’ of her thesis. These words are not the torches of the usherettes of theory, guiding her to a more ‘enlightened’ form of practice. There is no proscenium, other than, perhaps, the permeable frame of her doctoral candidature; no curtain to be raised other than the cover of her thesis, bound, and unbound, to unknown and undetermined destinations. The work is in progress. The ‘play’ has already begun.
Chapter 5

Close to home

*The work we do is a work of love...*

*To understand the other, it is necessary to go into their language, to make the journey through the other’s imaginary. For you are strange to me. In the effort to understand, I bring you back to me, compare you to me. I translate you in me. And what I note is your difference, your strangeness. At that moment, perhaps through recognition of my own differences, I might perceive something of you.*

*This movement is like a voyage (Cixous, 1986/1988, p. 146).*
Of groovy grans, brave bananas, and much, much more

Remember that first day.
You thought that I might be a witch
or something.
You were wondering.

"Would this counsellor woman be the type
that acted nice while Groovy Gran was there
then turned out really mean when she was gone?
The sort that doesn’t let kids play
but makes them stand in corners."

Then you saw a smiling face.
You thought, “Mmmn. Not too bad....”

You drew what troubled you.
Alcohol had Mummy in its grip:
a monster with two thousand legs.
When Mummy wriggled free from one leg’s grip
the monster tried to catch her with another.

Banana Man was a good helper.
He wore a superbanana cloak.
He got his name because bananas are healthy
and taste really good.

Although Two Thousand-Legged-Man was very strong
Banana was braver.
Banana fought with Two Thousand Legged Man
and sometimes won.

Gran thought you were just as brave as Banana
pouring Mummy’s whisky down the sink
even though you knew
you’d be in trouble.

Gran said it was like being on a roller coaster.
You drew the roller coaster so I could see.
You couldn’t stop or climb off,
you both went up and down with Mummy and the drinking
until you felt “really really sick”.
Gran said she hoped counselling would help you both work out how to get off the roller coaster.
You said “I’d like Banana Man to win!”

You said that it surprised you when I asked you things you’d never really told to anyone, surprised you to find out that it felt good to “let your feelings go out towards someone you could really trust”.

But how did you work out whether you could trust me? “When you meet people you can work out straight away, either you can trust them or you can’t trust them.”

I thought this an amazing skill and wondered if you’d help me understand it.
You said “it’s about getting a feeling... Trusting is a safe feeling. Not trusting is horrible and icky down your spine.”

I want to know more, so you explain: “You know how people scrape their fingers down a chalkboard? Do you find that annoying?”
I say, “Yes, more than annoying it makes me go all brrrrrrrrrrrrrr”
and you say, “yeah that’s right it makes you go wohaowerwerohohohobrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr. Well, that’s the feeling.”

In the room where we meet there is a map. Women and children sail the painted seas past hungry sharks and jagged rocks. Past pirate ships and mer-men singing beautiful and dangerous songs the women guide their children and their boats to treasured islands.

One day you asked who made this map, and who could travel there.¹ And so I told you how some children and their mothers, escaping from the violence that had tried to steal their lives, had mapped their journeys, left them here for others, so they too might find their way through heavy seas ‘round obstacles that try to scuttle ships and capsize dreams.

¹ See White (2004d) on journey metaphors in narrative therapy
You asked about the island of mending and healing broken hearts, and wished aloud that you could go there with your mother. You wondered if your heart would ever heal and told me surgery might be the only answer.

At the heart hospital they would cut out your heart because it had been broken far too many times. Your new plastic heart would be unbreakable in order that you wouldn’t feel such dreadful pain.

The day your mother came to meet with us you asked her many questions. “Why did you stay with that man who made me sleep alone in the cold caravan?” (You knew at once he wasn’t to be trusted.) “Didn’t you know that I was lonely, hungry, frightened?”

You and Mummy hugged and cried and told each other many unknown and unspoken things. How the man had sent you to the van so that you could not hear Mum’s screams. How she was fearful for your lives but planned and carried out a brave escape.

Together you recalled past houses, dogs and friends, the favourite places, games and trips you’d shared, pizza and movies, how Mum spent her pregnancy dreaming up a beautiful girl’s name for you, stories of you as a baby, how every time you cried Mum’s own eyes filled with tears.

How she had never wanted you to suffer. Her great sorrow that her drinking came between you, made your lives unsafe. She told how much she loved you, how she wanted you to know this and remember. And this time no promises were made because Mum knew: broken promises can break your heart.

When Mum started drinking again and went away, you were very sad. You even wondered if you were to blame.
But then your old friend Banana came!
Instead of fighting Two Thousand Legged Man
and getting really tired
he came to help you off the roller coaster.

This time, Banana used his strength and bravery
to tell you Mummy’s drinking
was not, and had never been, your fault.

You told me what Banana Man had told you.
“Maybe you don’t have to work so hard
as a ‘detective’ anymore.
After all, you are a brave daughter
and have done all that any daughter could.”

It was then we all wondered:
Had the time come
for The Great Detective Inspector Leticia
to retire from full-time duty?
Early one evening, a devoted group of family, friends and associates of Detective Inspector Leticia gathered together in the meeting room of a community-based organization in a small Australian town. This gathering had been convened in order to honour the Inspector’s many years of dedicated and skilful service. D.I. Leticia, who had prepared her speech with great thoughtfulness, asked me to read it out on her behalf, because she knew her voice went wobbly at moments of public emotion. In the speech, the Inspector announced her intention to retire from full time detective duty. It would no longer be D.I. Leticia’s full time job to look out for the presence of alcohol in her Mummy’s life and to do battle with the sneaky and powerful Two Thousand Legged Man. However, Leticia reserved the right in her retirement to undertake detective duties from time to time on a casual basis, especially if she was with Mummy for a visit and was worried that Mummy might be in Two Thousand Legged Man’s grip. Leticia’s old friend Banana Man concurred that this provision for an occasional resumption of duties was a realistic and compassionate honouring of the great detective’s ethics and practices of care, in relation to others in general and her mother in particular. In her retirement, Leticia intended to focus on having fun with current friends and meeting new ones, making her home with Gran, Paul and Neil, school work, spending time with her chosen father, and spending time with Mummy, when Mummy was around and alcohol and drugs were not holding too much sway in her life. The coordinator of the community-based organization presented Leticia with a special Certificate of Commendation. Glasses were filled with juice and raised in her honour, followed by a round of hearty congratulations. D.I. Leticia cut the chocolate cake provided by her grandmother, and made a silent wish.

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2 All names including nicknames of persons in this story, other than the names of therapists, frogs and imaginary beings, have been changed for reasons of confidentiality. The young woman at the heart of this story chose the name Leticia for herself.

3 The form of this short piece is inspired by the work of Australian poet, Joanne Burns, who has written short, intense, narrative prose poems, which she calls ‘small stories’.

4 My colleague, Deanne Dale, participated in the introductory meeting with this family, and also attended the retirement ceremony to present Leticia with her Certificate of Commendation.
She(ridan) has recently begun to work as a part-time family therapist in a community based child protection centre, a place where she has previously provided some training and clinical supervision. This shift, from a ‘private’ to a ‘public’ practice, and from being one of the people responsible for supporting other workers to be effective in their work to being one of these workers herself, is inviting her to feel somewhat vulnerable and on display. It feels as if she has been ‘faking it’ and is about to be caught out after all these years.

This afternoon she is attending an ‘Introduction Meeting’ with a new family. The word ‘assessment’ has been dropped in this organisation in favour of something hopefully more reciprocal. Nevertheless, she is aware of the limits of collaboration and co-authorship, especially in a child protection context. She wonders if the word ‘introduction’ has a flavour of ‘induction’, and if so, what, as much as who, is being in(tro)duced.

At the Introduction Meeting, the family will be invited to tell s(her)idan and her colleague about whatever is troubling them. She will offer art materials and perhaps suggest possibilities for the family to depict their feelings and thoughts about their situation in a visual way. The two co-therapists will look and listen\(^5\), alert for stories of injustice, including possible histories of unhelpful and pathologising professional interventions. They will think about current ‘risks’\(^6\) to children and young people and of the possibility of the abuse of gender-power relations. Perhaps the therapists will suggest at some point that one of them spends time in another room listening to the children, or to one particular child or young person.

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\(^5\) Foucault (2005) describes how listening, as a Classical ascetic practice, makes ‘truth’ one’s own and one’s self the subject of this truth. Is therapeutic listening for a ‘truth’ (even if the truth in question is that of the discursive construction of truth) thus a practice that subjectifies the listener/therapist, creating an ethics?

\(^6\) See Rose (2005) for a Foucauldian analysis of the discourse of risk-management.
Quite often family members will hold different stories about what has brought them to the centre, and it may not be easy to speak about these with other and especially more ‘authoritative’ family members in the room. Sometimes the woman/mother in the family might be offered a separate conversation, if her story is being somehow marginalised or if she seems reluctant or afraid to speak. Here the ethics and practices of child protection and a feminist politic significantly mediate the idea that the family leads the session. The ‘family’ is after all both ‘real’ and ‘constructed’, and the ideas that a family has a an organic will, an unconscious and/or a functionality separate from that of its members, are viewed in this organisation as theoretical constructions.

The therapists have cultivated a consultative style and an ethics of collaboration. They will ask lots of questions about how this family is experiencing this meeting, what could make it work better for them. They will engage in many reflexive gestures, checking out the appropriateness of their questions and their choices of language. They will deftly pick up the delicate threads of personal and familial narratives, weaving understandings of the connections of these to the grand narratives of culture. They will invite the family to join them in unravelling tangles of frustration, disappointment, sorrow, anguish. In this, the therapists will not be purely instrumental. They are touched, moved by what they hear.

The therapists will wish to become attuned to the particular hopes, aspirations, ethics and preferred ways of being and relating of the people who comprise this family. They will want to understand how the people in this family have, for instance, kept loving and caring for each other, maintained hope, or whatever other themes arise, in the face of their difficulties. The therapists will be interested in specific, apparently small and incidental details ~ an event, even a thought, that might contradict the family’s dominant narratives. The therapists will slow down the process of conversation, searching out unattended
moments often unexpectedly suffused with feeling, that might be plotted into an alternative account. This painstaking process interrupts totalising accounts that tend to position the family’s problems as a stable, unitary history without fluctuations and exceptions, and challenges individualising accounts that tend to locate the family’s difficulties in the psychology of family members.

By the end of this meeting, the family may carry a more overt appreciation, even a centering, of their own and each other’s relational strengths and emotional and ethical resources, and this will hopefully be of assistance in taking responsibility, where necessary, for breaches of their preferred ways of parenting, without either minimising their responsibilities or succumbing to a totalisation of their identities. (This issue of responsibility is crucial because, while the organisation does not provide counselling for adult perpetrators of sexual abuse, it does see parents, often women living with domestic violence, whose children have suffered or are considered at risk of abuse and neglect, sometimes from these women themselves.)

Towards the end of this meeting, the therapists will ask what each family member would like to happen next, and also let them know about a variety of options inside and outside of this organisation.

At this point, the family will almost certainly request an ongoing service. This is what they have come here for, either of their own volition or because someone, possibly a doctor, a teacher, or in certain instances the Department of Community Services, told them it was necessary. Moreover, they have just been listened to, an experience that is more rare than one might think. The ‘team’ will then meet to decide whether, when and how to offer such a service, given that there is only the equivalent of two and a half full-time counsellors to serve a widespread regional community.
The diverse and compelling stories of these potential ‘clients’ are inevitably folded back into the organisation’s guiding narrative of its capacities, limits, ‘mission’, values and priorities. Power circulates back to the team, who, for all their consultative strategies, will still have to decide who and what to ‘prioritise’.

Was ‘assessment’ such an inaccurate description after all? she wonders.

And yet this word ‘assessment’, while it acknowledges the hierarchy of people and values that seek to ‘determine’ a situation and make a rational decision about the just distribution of a limited resource, does not capture the emotional intensities that overdetermine such an encounter, the wayward lines that flow across the grid of assessment criteria, in excess of rationalities. Thus a counsellor will sometimes argue vehemently, against the team and indeed contrary to her own avowed priorities, advocating for ‘her’ people to be ‘seen’. [This is in part what has prompted the institution of two therapists conducting an Introductory Meeting together, but then sometimes at the subsequent team meeting the voices of the two will join together in spirited opposition to the reason(s) of the rest.] The counsellor will not understand how her colleagues cannot see, as she sees, the face of someone whose need calls upon an urgent necessity to respond. Why can’t they hear, as she surely hears, the call of this other? The one(s) to whom, for an hour that opens upon lifetimes, the therapist has just listened, listening as though this one or ones were the most important people in the world, as, in that moment, they are.

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7 c.f. Butler’s taking up of Levinas (Butler, 2004a).
8 See Linnell, Bansel, Ellwood and Gannon (2008), for a collective response in art and writing, around the ethics and aesthetics of speaking and listening.
When I first met Leticia, she was not yet nine years old. Leticia came to the first appointment with her grandmother, who wanted Leticia to have the opportunity to talk with someone outside the family about how some recent changes in her life were affecting her, and also to talk about some of the difficulties of her previous life. At this first meeting, Leticia was smiling, bouncy, restless, and appeared apprehensive for reasons that her words only revealed many months later. While it is not unusual for children to feel nervous about 'seeing a counsellor', I came to understand that Leticia was particularly well-trained to be alert for danger, especially from adults who had been promoted by other adults as helpful or 'nice'. For much of her life, Leticia had lived either with her mother, or with her grandmother, her grandmother’s partner and their two sons. Sometimes Leticia’s mother, Emma, had asked her mother to look after Leticia because Emma was attempting to ‘detox’, and at other times Emma’s relation with alcohol and other drugs, and with other people, including several of Emma’s partners, who used such drugs, had made it unsafe for Leticia to be with her. When Leticia lived with her mother Emma, their lives were often unsettled, and sometimes Emma’s dependency on drugs and the lifestyle that revolved around accessing drugs had been dangerous for them both.

I remember being impressed, in this first meeting, with how this extended family had managed to work things out over the years in the face of enormous worry, trauma and chaos. It seemed to me that questions of ‘child protection’ were complex in this family, and that they had met this complexity with intelligence, courage and compassion. There was a sense that Emma brought Leticia to her grandmother because Emma did not want to put Leticia at risk, and there was also a sense that at times Emma was so much in the grip of a drug-dependent lifestyle and all its attendant disruption and risk that she found herself unable to prioritise her relationship with Leticia. Consequently, Leticia had come to live more and more frequently with her grandmother, her step-grandfather, Timothy, and their two teenaged sons (who, to Leticia’s amusement, were her uncles). Eventually, everyone had come to a tentative agreement that it would be preferable for Leticia to make her

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9 A shorter, less complex version of the stories of my meetings with Leticia and her family, including a brief introduction to the theoretical and therapeutic concepts informing this work, has been published in a professional journal (Linnell, 2004).
home with them for the foreseeable future. Leticia and her mother could still spend
time together at least when Emma wasn’t too much affected by drugs, because at
these times she would often go away and others would be uncertain of her
whereabouts. However, Leticia could have a consistent home, go regularly to the
same school, make long-term friends, and in general have an experience of a stable
environment where people could make and follow through with an ongoing
commitment to care for her.

Leticia’s grandmother was an articulate, deep-voiced, and remarkably composed
woman of around my own age from a European immigrant family. The
grandmother’s heritage was important to her, but it is also, in the service of
confidentiality, important not to mention her country and her culture of origin. Her
family struggled with racism and disadvantage, as families from backgrounds other
than English speaking generally do upon coming to Australia. However, it was not
until much later that she told me of how her experience of cultural disadvantage and
the effects of gender, and a very particular family story, had together conspired to
make her feel unworthy and plagued with maternal guilt. Leticia’s grandmother is
known in this narrative, by her choice and in affection for the similar (but disguised)
name bestowed upon her by Leticia, as Groovy Gran. And indeed she was ‘groovy’,
not in an obvious or superficial way, but in her quietly radical attitudes, her superb
intellect, mature wisdom, great-heartedness, honesty and indefatigable sense of
humour.

After the initial meeting, the counselling team considered Groovy Gran’s request that
someone provide counselling for her granddaughter, with involvement from other
family members where that seemed helpful. I had the time and a strong inclination to
keep meeting with this family, and it was decided that I would do so. The work was
well within the compass of a single therapist, although in accordance with narrative
therapy practice I asked the family if we could call upon my co-worker from the
initial meeting at times when it seemed useful to bring in someone as an external
‘witness’ to the work.
As she writes of their work together, calling this woman ‘Groovy Gran’ feels awkward. It is how she (ridan) would speak of Leticia’s grandmother to Leticia, or how she would address the grandmother in Leticia’s hearing when speaking of a matter that concerned Leticia, as in ‘Well, Groovy Gran, it sounds like Leticia has been doing a lot of thinking about such and such since we last met...what do you think?’

But this is not how they addressed each other woman to woman, a relation that necessarily occurred on a ‘first name’ basis. For all that they acknowledged that, in the context of their meetings, one was the therapist and the other the grandmother to this child, they did attempt to recognise each other beyond these identity categories. In fleeting acknowledgement of the powers of contingency and connection, they sensed how each was only a whisper away from being in the other’s place. They honoured their connections and their irreducible differences. They could not ‘truly’ know each other, any more than any ‘one’ can ever know the other. Yet she (ridan) does not think they knew each other any the less, at least in the more subtle reaches of recognition and its limits, because of the constraints placed on social familiarities by the ethics of a professional relation. Indeed, these limits are, for (s)her (idan), both a condition of a particular form of knowledge and connection, and a reminder of the ethics of unknowability.

A major legacy for Leticia, one that she shared in many ways with her grandmother, of living with a mother in the grip of alcohol and other drug dependency, was Leticia’s vigilance and sense of responsibility toward her mother Emma. As our meetings progressed, Leticia’s descriptions of the lengths to which she would sometimes go to find out whether or not her mother was beginning to drink again, and some of the actions she had taken to attempt to keep her mother and the drinking apart, reminded me irresistibly of the work of a detective. I told Leticia about my thoughts and while she hadn’t thought of things this way before, she seemed
interested in the idea. Leticia’s reference point for detective work was ‘Columbo’ — she and her Mum had sometimes spent time watching daytime reruns of the series together, and this memory seemed to have given Leticia an affection for the shambolic, humorous and insightful (anti)hero detective in his trademark raincoat. So we began to use a metaphor of detection as way to appreciate the detailed work that Leticia had undertaken in her attempts to keep her mother and the drinking apart (and thus her mother and herself together).

As time went on, I came to an appreciation of the complexity of the relations between Leticia and her mother and the legacies of this in Leticia’s life. In attempting to conceptualise this complexity, I have taken up metaphors through which Venn (2002) illuminates the becoming of a subject as a relational and embodied process (see Chapter 3). The metaphor of ‘apprenticeship’ to the other invokes longevity, repetition and the graduated acquisition of skills, within a socially ‘indentured’ relation of power, loyalty and indebtedness. The metaphor of ‘choreography’ invokes the trace of an intimate dance of self and other: steps and ‘moves’ that are learned in response to the (m)other. The dance of anticipating and responding to the rhythm, timing, coming and going and so forth of an(Other) becomes embodied and enfolded as ‘self’, then played out in other social relations that in turn deepen the enfolding of self and enfoldment in the social. It seems to me that Leticia had learnt her ‘detective’ skills through just such a complex apprenticeship and choreography (Venn, 2002): she had come to regard and embody her-self as subject both to an ethics of care and hope, inspired by the intimate and companionable dimensions of her relationship with her mother, and to the watchfulness necessitated by her mother’s abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Thus Leticia had come to understand and to enact her-self as obliged to care for others, and to understand/feel her own well being and that of her mother as dependent on Leticia’s alertness to the presence of alcohol in her mother’s life. She had even come to consider and to enact herself as morally responsible for her mother’s relation to alcohol and drugs.

If power is conceptualised as “a mode of action upon the actions of others” (Foucault, 1982/2000a, p. 341), then perhaps Leticia’s unravelling and refusal of, and eventual retirement from, the dominance of these detective duties could be understood as
forms of resistance to certain disciplinary and normalising strategies of modern power. Such a refusal is not a negation of the skills and ethics constituted in relation to this modern power. The skills and ethics learned and practiced by Leticia in relation to living with a carer in the grip of an alcohol and other drug dominated lifestyle are ‘situated’ knowledges (Haraway 1991), but Leticia’s situation had changed since she came to live with her grandmother. Some of these skills and ethics were of service to Leticia in these changed circumstances, and others were not. For instance, stringent practices of surveillance of self and other, often attendant on the lifestyles of family members of people struggling with alcohol and other drugs, were filling Leticia’s life with impossible responsibilities and leading her into self-recriminations. These were full-time duties from which she became willing to retire in favour of a more relaxed and playful existence.

On the other hand, Leticia had learnt to read her embodied responses to others in a very skilled and useful way, and she had much to offer others when it came to an understanding of whom to trust. She also had an ethics of care towards others that was a valued and ongoing commitment in her life. The process of narrative and art-based therapy has in part been an unhinging of self-limiting and self-blaming practices of surveillance from preferred practices of observation and care. At the same time, a refusal to ‘trade’ in that to which one has been apprenticed may nevertheless continue to be haunted by the ghostly counter-steps of an early choreography.

Leticia’s apprenticeship to the lifestyle and wisdom of Groovy Gran provided an alternative to her previous life of surveillance, one which created the possibility for Leticia to go ‘off-duty’ in favour of play, regular attendance at school, a stable home, consistent carers, predictable bedtimes, regular nourishing meals, safety from verbal abuse and many other taken-for-granted entitlements according to the modern historical construct of the rights/rites and roots/routes of childhood. In a sense this was a ‘normalisation’ of Leticia’s childhood, one that created new possibilities and capacities but also initially limited some of the pleasures as well as the pains of her previous life.
Some of our work together, particularly when both Leticia and Groovy Gran came along to sessions, was around this contradiction. Groovy Gran’s lively responses to Leticia’s sense of humour, her patience with the ‘ups and downs’ of Leticia ‘settling in’ to the household, together with their mutual and non-normative appreciation of life’s eccentricities, mediated the difficulties of becoming accustomed to more customary ways of ‘doing’ one’s girlhood.

Working within the context of a child protection service and being an heir to the interactive traditions of family and narrative therapies, I did not simply ‘sit with what came up’ for Leticia. I was actively curious, and I engaged in a process of enquiry. In this respect, my meetings with Leticia and her family ‘look’ more like narrative therapy than they do like art psychotherapy, but our connection is informed by the sometimes contradictory possibilities of both. Notions of ‘transference’ are marginal in family therapy, suspect in narrative therapy, and complicated or diffused by practices of working with a person in the context of their family/significant others. Nevertheless, at least one thread of my relations with both Leticia and Groovy Gran is spun from the psychodynamic tradition of transference, in that I tentatively regarded my feelings, imaginings, lateral thinkings and associations in relation to the stories, artworks, silences, movements and stillnesses that inhabit the space of therapy as relevant to the emergent shape of our work together.

Moreover, our engagement with visual art and the imaginative and metaphorical dimensions of story emphasised excessive, lateral, and subtle qualities and resonances that were not reducible to clear outcomes or entirely captured within alternate storylines. Playing together with images and words, we found a space of imagination and connection where (im)possibilities could be played out. Folding these (im)possibilities back into the conventions of life, thereby creating instances of subjective and relational change, left a non-narrativisable remainder — a feeling, perhaps, of having been transported, of returning from somewhere indescribable.
She(ridan) had set up a space for ‘art therapy’ with a drop sheet, paints, crayons, papers, card, glue, magazines and modelling clays, but from their very first meeting, Leticia enacted her preference for drawing her responses on the electronic whiteboard. Leticia worked on the board with coloured markers, in a quick, quirky and free-flowing cartoon style, inventing monsters and superheroes, personifying abstractions, animating inanimate objects and writing dialogue in bubbles. Leticia and (she)ridan would talk about the image, then Leticia would print out her work, clean the board and start another drawing. At the end of the session Sheridan would make two sets of photocopies, one for Leticia (because the initial printouts would fade) and another for the records of the session.

At first, she(ridan) asked herself the question her students are always asking her ~ is this Art Therapy? ~ as though art/therapy is not (re)invented with/in each gesture, each moment.

During our meetings together, Leticia brought her concerns vividly into focus, ‘drawing’ on popular cultures and the works of her imagination (see, for example, figs. 1—6, pp. 175—177.) The externalised and fictionalised identities and narratives of Two Thousand Legged Man, the roller coaster, Banana Man and Detective Leticia were active participants in the therapy. This had the effect of exoticising the everyday (White, 2004b) thereby rendering that which had previously been accepted as ‘normal, natural and true’ open to the ‘work of thought’10. Whereas commonplace ‘expert’ descriptions such as ‘insecurely attached’ and ‘the parentified child’ would negate the skills and commitments of Leticia’s life, the description of Leticia as a Detective allowed for an appreciation and honouring of these skills and commitments. The figure of Two Thousand Legged Man was met with recognition by all those affected by his grip on Leticia’s mother Emma, including Emma herself. The personification made it possible to talk about these effects in a non-blaming way.

10 ‘Thought’ is taken here in Foucault’s sense of “freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem” (1984/2000a, p117). See also Chapter 2.
The roller coaster enabled Leticia, Groovy Gran, myself and other family members to take positions that were less subject to the ups and downs of the alcohol and drug dominated lifestyle. Banana Man was a great ally and a very responsive ‘outsider witness’ to the changes in Leticia’s life. 11

Leticia and Emma became ‘apprenticed’, via the map and its attendant stories, to the lives of other women and children who had attended the community based service where this work took place. Though an engagement with the stories of these other women and children, Leticia and Emma were able to acknowledge the effects of domestic violence in their own lives and relationships. The recognition that they had lived with the experience and legacy of domestic violence also provided a basis for an understanding of the family’s difficulties that enabled them to separate from dominant practices of intergenerational mother blaming. Leticia had a clear stance about how stepfathers should and shouldn’t act. She was prepared to make a recommendation on this: “Stepfathers shouldn’t beat their (stepchildren’s) mothers up when they’re only really, really little. Or ever, really.” This acknowledgement of the effects of domestic violence opened a space for the remembrance and renewal of the connectedness between Emma and Leticia. In meeting with her daughter and myself, Emma expressed her sorrow for the ongoing effects of an alcohol and drug-related lifestyle, particularly for her relationship to Leticia, and took steps towards naming her responsibility as a carer. This seemed to help free Leticia from a misplaced sense of

11 Given that Leticia is a girl and that she has had strong primary relationships with women, I was somewhat curious that Leticia’s personifications were routinely ascribed a male gender. I did not find an appropriate opening to ask her about this in our conversations. Perhaps the gender of these imaginary beings was the effect of media representations of male heroes. A psychoanalytic reading might see these male characters as compensatory fantasies, but in fact there were strong and loving men present in Leticia’s life. Her step-grandfather, Timothy, did much of the day-to-day caring for both Leticia and the two boys, especially since Groovy Gran worked long hours outside of the home. Also amongst Leticia’s loved ones was a man named Rick, who lived with Leticia and Emma for some time before realising that he needed to leave in order to ‘get off the roller coaster’. Towards the end of my meetings with this family, Rick made a decision that he wanted to play an active caring part in Leticia’s life. Following much careful checking out by Groovy Gran and Timothy, Leticia began to spend some time with Rick. Eventually Leticia decided she would like to adopt Rick as her father, an invitation he was delighted to accept. He then made a decision to move into the local community so that he could be an everyday part of Leticia’s family network and more fully take up the obligations and joys of elective fatherhood. Rick subsequently lived in the local community for several years. He returned to his home ‘up north’ once Leticia was old enough to spend extended holidays with him.
responsibility. Within weeks of this meeting Emma had left the community with someone she had met in the rehabilitation centre and resumed an alcohol and other drug dominated lifestyle. At first this eventuality invited Leticia back into responsibility, but in the longer term the effects of the conversation between Leticia, her mother and I endured in Leticia’s increased sense of being loved by, and decreased sense of being responsible for, her mother.

Dis-closures and dis-solutions
As a therapist, I have learned a great deal from Leticia and her story, particularly in relation to my responsibilities and obligations when working with people who are gripped by the influences of alcohol and other drugs and with the families of these people. Leticia and I are in very different positions in relation to privilege and dominance, and I am not suggesting that, as an adult and a therapist, I have the same obligations and responsibilities as a child, especially a child who is positioned as my ‘client’. However, there are huge invitations for therapists working in the areas of alcohol and other drugs to engage in surveillance of their clients. Leticia’s retirement raised questions about how I too might make finer and more useful distinctions around complex issues of responsibility, watchfulness and care. Moreover, my apprenticeship to the ethics of care within this family had effects well beyond the professional.

Groovy Gran, along with several generations of Western mothers of the modern age including myself, had undergone training in the ethics of sole maternal responsibility. In the face of her daughter’s struggles, this training had consequences of guilt and self-blame. In common with Leticia, Groovy Gran repeatedly asked herself if

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12 At the time that she came to meet with Leticia and myself, Emma was involved in a residential rehabilitation program. The coordinator of this program approved Emma’s participation in the meeting on the understanding that Emma would not engage in any further therapeutic conversations with me because this was thought to interfere with the rehabilitation centre’s particular approach to ‘treatment’. I acted in accordance with this condition and with respect for the rehabilitation program, in which Emma and the family had currently invested their hopes. I did wonder about the effects of this privatisation (which is not uncommon in such ‘treatment’ situations) on Emma and on her ability to sustain a refusal of an alcohol and other drug-dominated lifestyle.

13 Similarly, there are strong invitations for therapists working in the area of child protection to blame themselves if children remain ‘at risk’.
something she had done had resulted in the dominance of alcohol and other drugs in the life of her daughter, Leticia’s mother, Emma. She also held an enduring hope that her daughter might escape the influence of alcohol and other drugs.

For many years, I too had struggled with the spectres of maternal guilt in relation to the life difficulties of my own daughter. I found that meeting with this family assisted me to resist the twin, paralysing dictates of modern motherhood, which simultaneously insisted that I was responsible for all of my daughter’s difficulties in life, and that if I reached out to her in her adulthood I would compound my guilt by failing to allow her to ‘stand on her own two feet’. During this period, I took some very strong action in support of my daughter and grandchildren. Without revealing too much of my daughter’s story, I was able to let Groovy Gran know that some of my life narrative had paralleled hers.

When I asked my daughter’s permission to speak of our family’s struggles with Leticia’s family, my daughter said that if her story could help anyone else to not go through what she had been through, she would willingly share it. I was nevertheless very selective in what I told Groovy Gran. In this, I was perhaps influenced by the dominant ethic of therapeutic abstinence, and I was also cognisant that anonymity would not be possible for my daughter and myself in our small community. In this, I was less brave than my daughter. I feared the double judgement that can be inflicted on a therapist who not only lives a less than exemplary life, but has the indiscretion to talk of it in any but her own therapy. I also did not want to position those who came to consult me as a therapist as keepers of my personal and familial secrets. I had a strong sense of the ethics and practices of discretion and care in this family, and that these would be extended to me without me needing to ask, but I decided that it was only appropriate to tell them things that I was prepared to have publicly known.

Ironically, within the small community where I live and work, I am much more disclosing of myself as a poet than as a therapist. What might be regarded as excess in a therapist is often viewed as honesty and ‘authenticity in a poet – even when these

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14 I would like to acknowledge that my actions also rested on the support of my partner, Anita.
identities converge within the same embodied individual, and when the audiences for these different genres of confession overlap. With the publication of a small book of my poetry (Linnell, 2001), much of it fictional but some of it in the lyric tradition, and its subsequent launch at a nearby regional writer’s centre, many of the events and themes of my personal life, as well as my ethical and political convictions, had already become accessible to others in our local community. To enter my own stories into a therapeutic relation is, however, very different to entering them into the lives of those who choose to read a poem or attend a poetry reading. Despite the influence of feminist and narrative (re)constructions of therapeutic disclosure (see Wright, Linnell & Dale, 2001), it remains, for me, a potent but fraught event that can either open radically upon the possibility of connection and understanding from an other, or foreclose upon the possibility of greater understanding and connection that comes from maintaining a symbolic position as the Other.

At any rate, having considered all of this, I felt moved to tell Groovy Gran that I had found her stand in support of her daughter and granddaughter to be an effective source of inspiration in my current life and relationships. Since one of the powerful effects for me of meeting Groovy Gran was to dissolve the edges of some of my own excessive tendencies to blame myself,¹⁵ I wondered if this ‘taking back’¹⁶ of how I had been ‘moved’ to action in my own life might also help to facilitate some dissolution of self-blame for Groovy Gran. Actually, although she avowed comfort in a certain solidarity between us, Groovy Gran told me that the immediate effect of my disclosure was, not a reduction of self-blame, but rather a normalisation of maternal habits of self-blame. Such a realisation of the commonality and cultural constitution of our personal ways of being is, I think (and others trained in feminist counselling might well concur), a necessary but insufficient condition for the transformation of deeply held and embodied feelings and convictions.

¹⁵ I do consider myself to be responsible for my daughter as a child and young person, and responsible for my conduct as a parent. At the same time, I would wish, against dominant constructions of maternal power/powerlessness, to take account of the discursive construction of maternal agency and responsibility, and to mediate its subjective effects.

¹⁶ See White (1997) for an account of ‘taking it back’ practices as part of a two way, decentred therapy.
To appropriate another of Venn’s formulations, the politics of change is more potent when in concert with the poetics of transfiguration (Venn, 2000). Thus it was only much later, when Groovy Gran read the draft of a journal paper (Linnell, 2004) based on an early version of this chapter, that a hoped-for dissolution began its work. I remain unsure how this was made possible, exactly — whether by the distancing of time, or by a differing positioning of Groovy Gran in her own life as well as in relation to how her life stories were reflected back to her in my writing, or by the authority of a written text, or the amplification and audiencing of the family’s stories entailed in writing for publication, or by the transformative potentiality of the arts. A change became possible in relation to all or some of these conditions, or others beyond my knowledge or consideration.

For all my attempts at theorisation, even to the extent of writing this thesis, subjective transformation is ultimately something unaccountable. When she read the paper that is the predecessor of this chapter, Groovy Gran, in a move that was to become powerfully transformative, began to understand how the narrative of self-blame related to personal stories of her childhood and adolescence, as well as to the grand narratives of culture that train girls to look after others, hold women responsible for maintaining relationships, and blame mothers for the problems that beset their children. Thus Groovy Gran began to make a profoundly different sense of her tendency to blame herself, and also began to renegotiate her sense of worthiness within the world.

A question of ethics: what shall we do with the drunken sailor?

Towards the conclusion of our sessions, Groovy Gran and Leticia, who no longer felt the need to meet with me on a regular basis, organised a time for Leticia and I to talk

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17These stories had been touched on in the therapy, but we had predominantly focussed on Leticia in the context of her family. Within the child protection brief of the counselling agency, we invited exploration of the childhood stories of carers when those themes impinged on parenting abilities and the safety of children. This was not the situation with Groovy Gran, and both she and her partner Tim felt strongly about the need for the agency to keep its appointments primarily for children. Ironically, Groovy Gran told me that she had been considering seeing a therapist for herself and that someone had given her my name in independent practice, which we both realised would have been a conflict of interest. I subsequently made some suggestions of other therapists in the private sector.
about something that had happened at school that Leticia had found deeply troubling. Her class had been learning a new song, the old Anglo Saxon sea shanty, *What shall we do with a drunken sailor?* The song’s traditional answers to this question include punishments that range from humiliation through imprisonment and torture to a painful death. They include being locked up, hosed down, whipped, put in the longboat with the plug pulled out so the boat sinks, and ‘keel-hauled’ or dragged by ropes behind the ship, a practice that frequently resulted in drowning.

‘What Shall We Do with a Drunken Sailor?’

What'll we do with a drunken sailor,
What'll we do with a drunken sailor,
What'll we do with a drunken sailor,
What'll we do with a drunken sailor,
Earl-aye in the morning?

Chorus:
Way hay and up she rises
Patent blocks o' different sizes,
Way hay and up she rises
Earl-aye in the morning

1. Sling him in the long boat till he's sober,
2. Keep him there and make 'im bale 'er.
3. Pull out the plug and wet him all over,
4. Take 'im and shake 'im, try an' wake 'im.
5. Trice him up in a runnin' bowline.
6. Give 'im a taste of the bosun's rope-end.
7. Give 'im a dose of salt and water.
8. Stick on 'is back a mustard plaster.
9. Shave his belly with a rusty razor.
10. Send him up the crow's nest till he falls down,
11. Tie him to the taffrail when she's yardarm under,
13. Soak 'im in oil till he sprouts flippers.
14. Put him in the guard room till he's sober.
15. Put him in bed with the captain's daughter*.
16. Take the Baby and call it Bo'sun.
17. Turn him over and drive him windward.
18. Put him in the scuffs until the horse bites on him.
19. Heave him by the leg and with a rung console him.
20. That's what we'll do with the drunken sailor.

* A relative of the cat-o-nine-tails

(http://ingeb.org/songs/whatshal.html)

Presumably the class did not learn the entire litany of consequences for drunkenness at sea listed in traditional variations of the song. However, I have included them here to underline the sheer brutality of what in contemporary times has come to be regarded as a quaint and amusing ditty, easily taught to school children. I am not usually an advocate of sanitising or watering down traditional children’s stories, and find that children often relish the uncensored violence of fairy tales and the mordant themes of nursery rhymes: in the British tradition we sing babies to sleep to the rhythms of falling cradles, and teach toddlers to dance to the rhythms of falling heads. Moreover, many a detested head has fallen, metaphorically speaking, in the make-belief territories of therapy. Perhaps this song is in a particular discursive category because it records and reinforces the brutal disciplinary hierarchy of a sailor’s life. At any rate, the words resonated with an aspect of Leticia’s life and relationships, inciting in her both distress and a desire for justice and compassion, and making her experiences, beliefs and feelings available for a further therapeutic conversation.

During the session, Leticia rewrote the song in accordance with her own ethics and aesthetics of existence. She decided to call her version The kind version of the drunken sailor.
The Kind Version of the Drunken Sailor

What shall we do with the drunken sailor (x3)
Ear-ly in the morning?
Put him in a rehab ’til he’s sober (x3)
Ear-ly in the morning.

Chorus

Hey-ho and up she rises (x3)
Ear-ly in the morning.

2. Visit him in the rehab when he’s sober

3. We are happy now he’s sober

The earlier versions of this song give explicit accounts of public punishment reminiscent of Foucault’s (1975/1991) account of sovereign power in the opening of Discipline and punish. According to Foucault, although sovereign power did not disappear, the dominance of this form of power was superceded by the emergence of disciplinary power in institutions such as prisons, hospitals and schools. Leticia’s version of the song rejects the emblematic violence of sovereign power and also the involuntary containment and regulation that marked the emergence of the disciplinary power of the prison. The drunken sailor in Leticia’s song is to be ‘rehabilitated’. For Leticia this is a heartfelt wish based on the narrative of her experience. At the same time, it is interesting to note that ‘rehabilitation’ is a process which necessitates engagement with a hermeneutics of self in which the subject must recognise themselves as an addict in order to be re-formed as a sober and normal member of society. The sailor will be brought back to social normality through technologies of surveillance and self-regulation, by connection with others, and perhaps by the realisation that not only his own wellbeing, but also the happiness of those to whom
he is connected, depends on his sobriety. Yet while this transformation is often strongly desired by those surrounding the drunken sailor, the sailor’s own desire for sobriety may not be easily sustained. In this reading, love and care are not separate from the operations of power. Similarly, even the most collaborative and decentred of therapies can be a means for ‘the conduct of conduct’ (Foucault, 1982/2000; Rose 2000a, 2000b).

I found Leticia’s rewriting of possibilities for the drunken sailor particularly poignant in light of how the metaphor of women and children sailing to safety had been significant for Leticia and her mother Emma. With this song, Leticia could simultaneously displace her fears for her mother, and broaden her concerns into a position on how society might best respond to people who are struggling with alcohol and other drug related problems. Leticia’s song draws attention to the multi-storied character of this work and to the indeterminate character of stories, including the meta-narratives of therapy, which I believe do not need to be reduced to a search for repressed desires, authentic feelings and true meaning. Smooth and unitary accounts of the ‘progress’ of therapy do not do justice to the contradictions and complexities of ‘living narratives’. Attention to the multistoried character of lives served as a reminder that Leticia might possibly be vulnerable to a ‘resumption of full-time detective duties’ with their accompanying burden of responsibility and self-blame.18 During my meetings with Leticia, I was closely attuned to possible invitations to self-blame. For instance, when Emma said that when baby Leticia cried it brought tears to Emma’s own eyes, I checked out the meaning of this for both of them in terms of that ambiguous territory between responsibility and care. When Leticia told me about looking after some rescued tadpoles (see below), I felt concerned that she might blame herself if some of them died. I therefore enquired as to whether she had considered this possibility, and whether she knew that some tadpoles might not survive even in their usual habitat.

18 I became particularly attuned to the production of self-blame and over-responsibility when working in an agency that focussed on the effects of childhood sexual abuse (Linnell & Cora, 1993), some of which can be generalised to other situations of childhood abuse and neglect.
When Leticia’s mother Emma had a ‘relapse’ only weeks after a joint meeting with Leticia and myself that Emma had found particularly confronting, I found it hard to resist blaming myself for this turn of events. On the basis of this, together with my knowledge of Leticia’s training in responsibility for others, I could enquire if Leticia was also feeling responsible for the ‘relapse’. We could then link this current situation with past histories of Leticia blaming herself and attempting to take responsibility for the drinking, and we could also call upon the support and wisdom of Groovy Gran, who knew a lot about the ravages of self-blame and the difficulty and necessity of refusing its invitations. We could also call on Banana Man, whose struggle against alcohol in the embodied form of the Two Thousand Legged Man was by now legendary.

Therapy is a matter of complexities and contradictions, and its end is never, in my experience, ‘conclusive’. Thus Leticia continued to hold ongoing hopes for the rehabilitation of those (most notably, her mother) in the grip of alcohol and drug dependency, and to intimate that the happiness of ‘others’ (and hence, of herself) might rest upon the success of such rehabilitation. These hopes co-existed alongside her decision to retire from full-time detective duty and her claim that assisting tadpoles to grow into frogs had brought happiness into her heart.

Since she first used the word ‘happy’ in conversation with Leticia, a wave, indeed a veritable tsunami of ‘happiness’ has swept over S(her)idan’s known cultural world. An onslaught of self-help books, courses, research, even institutes of ‘happiness studies’, has threatened to drown out the singularity of happy moments. Some critics have strategically taken up ‘happiness’ in order to challenge the economic rationalist agenda, but she is worried by the current outbreak of happiness. She wonders, is this the new ethical substance? She wants to refuse this joyless glut of happiness, along with its implicit pathology for those who ‘fail’ to achieve the requisite state, but she suspects a media stereotype is ready to ambush her with the accusation that she is turning into a ‘grumpy old woman’. Nevertheless, she will not board the pleasure-boat, which reduces the play of jouissance to a huge one-liner. She will continue to insist
on the specificity of pleasures. Then she catches herself, laughing. What a passionately humanistic gesture this ‘refusal’ is! Perhaps her exchange with Leticia about happiness was already a discursive droplet that with myriad other droplets are forming the vast ‘savoir’ of the ‘happiness’ about to immerse us all. But she can still navigate an alternative course of sorts, not in a futile struggle against the prevailing winds, but tacking with and across them, as small sailing boats do.

A matter of heart

When Leticia and I met to review our work together, an aspect of the therapy that Leticia nominated as of particular significance was hearing about the journeys of women and children escaping from domestic violence, and subsequently making the drawing of her heart being surgically removed and replaced with plastic. I was disturbed at the violence of this metaphor and by Leticia wanting a plastic heart. I was very moved to witness such a profound expression of pain. As the following transcript shows, I was also susceptible to some essentialist and humanist notions that locate the heart as the natural seat of human feeling.

S. Do you still think that would be the best thing – to have a plastic (heart)?

L. Yes and no.

S. What’s the ‘yes’ bit?

L. That it wouldn’t feel so much pain. (Anticipating my next question) And the ‘no’ bit is I’d rather have my real heart – Hearty, I call him.

S. And what can Hearty feel, as well as pain?

L. Umm...happiness!

S. What makes Hearty happy?
L. Lots of blood! Pumping!

S. Lots of fresh blood pumping in…

L. Not hurting.

S. So how has your heart been lately...hurting...not hurting?

L. I’ll ask Hearty!...it’s been hurting a bit
(L. consults Hearty by peering into her school jumper.)

S. Do you mind me asking what Hearty said when you asked?

L. He hurt a little bit, but he felt happy most of the time because he’s doing something
good for Leticia’s tadpoles!

S. Oh your tadpoles! I meant to ask, how are they?

L. They’re good.

During one of our meetings, Leticia had told me how she and her best friend had
found some frogspawn in a shallow pool of water cut off from the ‘mainstream’.
Caring about all creatures, however marginalised, and knowing frogs in particular to
be a vulnerable and endangered species, Leticia and her friend had run home for jars.
They had set most of the spawn free upstream, and also taken a small sample home
with them to see what happened. In the ensuing week, the tadpoles had hatched.
Leticia and her friend were now looking after the tadpoles until they grew up into
frogs and could be safely returned to the waterways. Leticia had taken great care to
name each of her six tadpoles — Lucy, Ascha, Sasha, Putzi, Mitzi and Chrissy —
only it was very difficult to tell who was who! As the following dialogue suggests, I
was interested in how this practice of caring for tadpoles might link with Leticia’s
sense of herself as an ethical subject.
S. What do you think it says about you that you’ve rescued these tadpoles?
(As the answer shows, this was an inappropriate way to ask this question!)

L. It hasn’t said anything.

S. What do you think someone else would say if they heard a story about a little girl who rescued some tadpoles and took them home and gave them all names and looked after them?

L. They’d put it in the newspaper and then I’d be famous! “Leticia the Frog Rescuer!”

S. What else would it say in the newspaper article?

L. A girl named Leticia, aged nine, saved three million tadpoles that turned into frogs in the stream at the back of her village!

S. Yay! So what sort of special things does someone need to be a Frog Rescuer?

L. A heart. And they like frogs!

I leapt on this statement with rather too much enthusiasm, assuming that Leticia was indicating a need or desire for a ‘real’ rather than a ‘plastic’ heart. My essentialist assumptions were quickly ‘set straight’ by Leticia’s response:

If the (plastic) heart was a good heart, if it didn’t think bad things, then it would probably say “Rescue, rescue!” But my brain would certainly say “Rescue, rescue!”

Here it no longer matters whether Leticia’s heart is plastic or real. What ‘matters’ is not so much the ‘authenticity’, as the capacities, of the heart. Leticia supports neither a hierarchised or inverted binary of cognition and emotionality; rather, she offers a thoughtful and heartfelt expression, a situated and embodied ethics of thinking and feeling that can (in)form ethical action. Her statement can be understood as both an
intentional ethics and as a choreographed response. Binary divisions between the natural and the cultural, between thought and feeling, are disorganised by the suggestion of a fabricated heart that thinks, and an organic brain that urges a compassionate response.

**A poetics of practice**

Throughout this chapter, as in my thesis as a whole, I have drawn attention to the mutual constitution of aesthetics and ethics in therapeutic and research practice. I have done this as an extension of my theoretical engagements with poststructural theory, through an ethics of account-ability and its limits, in relation to my practice as a narrative therapist and art psychotherapist. This chapter involves a practical engagement with poetry, story telling, art making and song, yet while I believe that art can work to enhance therapy, I do not believe that it is always necessary to draw a picture, write a poem or sing a song, in order to take up what might be thought of as a ‘poethics’ of therapeutic practice.

If, as Rose (2000a) suggests, the most interesting way to conceptualise therapy is as “a shaping of how human beings enact their freedom” (p. 3), then therapists and those who consult with them are engaged in the work of freedom (Foucault, 1984/2000b). While we are inevitably implicated in (re)constituting the individualising and totalising discourse of the ‘freedom’ to find ourselves, we can also ‘refuse what we are’. Stories, poems, artworks and conversations in which bananas fly and talk, women and children sail across painted seas in search of treasured islands, and small girls with plastic hearts help their therapists to become other-than-they-were, are experimental texts that reach towards (im)possible futures. Such work can open a space, however fleetingly, beyond modernity.

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19 The neologism ‘poethics’ came to my mind during an orientation to outsider witness responses that was part of an intensive workshop with Michael White at the Dulwich Centre, Adelaide, in September 2003.

20 Julie Brownlie (2004) suggests that the ‘witches brew’ of therapeutic practices is connected with, but not ultimately determined by, broader programs of conduct, and that while Foucault focussed on such programs of conduct, his ideas are helpful in analysing therapeutic governance together with the normalising and transformative possibilities within therapeutic interaction. Guilfoyle (2005) explores the interconnections of therapeutic micro-practice and systems of domination, asking if a ‘therapy of resistance’ can contribute to social transformation.
She remembers a moment when she is sharing a story of her meetings with this family (thanks to Leticia and her grandmother’s generosity in allowing her to speak and write about their work together) with a group of art therapy trainees, as part of an introduction to narrative approaches. She is attempting to explain her thinking about how the ethics and practices of people who come to therapy are often eclipsed by pathologising accounts of ‘disorder’ and ‘damage’ – for instance, how Leticia’s concern for her mother would be folded into and invalidated by the narrative of the parentified child. She is saying it does not have to be one or the other. Leticia’s care and concern could be thought to arise out of both fear and love – that it can be storied as both the legacy of trauma and a commitment to an ethical position. Strangely, in the company of these other art psychotherapy practitioners, a submerged psychodynamic reading of Leticia’s story of rescuing the frogs comes to the fore. Catching the eye of one of her students who has a strong interest in the intersection of poststructuralism, narrative and psychoanalysis, she finds herself saying

The psychodynamic therapist in me finds herself wondering if the tadpole story can also be taken as a metaphor of Leticia’s life. I think it important to hold such notions very lightly, not as a truth, yet nevertheless allowing them to inform or form the emotional sensitivity of one’s response. To me this is what is meant by the ‘countertransference’.

She reflects to herself on this meta-story, which she has previously touched on but given very little discursive space. Such an ‘interpretation’ is, in general, disallowed by the ethics of narrative therapy. She knows the interpretation itself to be a ‘speculative fiction’ (Butler, 2001), created within and by the grand meta-narrative of psychoanalysis. Moreover, this psychoanalytic meta-narrative is re-produced and brought into focus within the inevitably disciplinary and ethicalising environment of the art therapy
training course, wherein lecturing staff such as herself become ethically obliged to ‘profess’ the truths that the Others of therapy are obliged to ‘confess’, whether in image or in word.

Yet how could she, of all people, foreclose on a possibility simply because it is a fiction? Perhaps a gentle spirit of inquiry will help her toward a sense of what, in this fiction, is helpful in extending a range of intersubjective and subjective possibilities, and what narrows the field. So, she allows herself to play with the different metaphorical and metonymic dimensions of the story, metaphor and metonymy being, after all, the lifeblood of poetry and fictional narrative.

She thinks of how Leticia herself was also somewhat ‘cut off from the mainstream’ and endangered, until taken home and cared for. She considers the fears that have sometimes circulated around Leticia, fears of how the past might have affected her, fears that not all endangered children ‘survive’ the experience. Some of the fears that have at times been articulated to (S)her(idan) by other family members (although not to Leticia), as to whether Leticia may have been affected by trauma in ways that will only be revealed as she grows older, might have indirectly permeated Leticia’s sense of herself and her world. She thinks too of Leticia’s sense of wanting to extend to others what has been extended to her in terms of help to survive. She wonders if the therapy itself might be glancingly referenced in this amphibian metaphor of birth, development, risk, survival, loss and transformation. She wonders too what Leticia might have wondered about (S)her(idan). Through the counselling centre’s recent process of consulting a number of children, including Leticia, about what advice they would like to give to other therapists working with children, Leticia’s attention has been drawn to the situation that she is not the only child who comes here meet with to (S)her(idan). Of course Leticia has known this all along, but perhaps it has been foregrounded that she is not the only
tadpole in this particular pond? Might she fear that tadpoles/children all ‘look
the same’ to a busy therapist?

She(ridan) does not know, and cannot know, if the wild proliferations of this
metaphor have any raison d’etre beyond her own imagination. She is probably
taking it too far. (She remembers a joke she has made in the past ~ that
psychotherapists all seem to suffer from one of the main diagnostic criteria for
schizophrenia ~ ‘ideas of reference’, or notions that unrelated phenomena have
something to do with them.) Accepting that this is her story, a metaphorical
reading made possible by a psychoanalytically informed account of the subject
and relationship, and that the relation of her reading to Leticia’s story is
uncertain and indeterminate, what are the implications? Since all such
responses are both subjectively and theoretically informed, isn’t it more a
question of what a particular reading opens up, than of validity? Are her
imaginings, in this instance, in the service of the person she is meeting with,
or do they just privilege a mystified version of therapeutic expertise?

Leclerc (2006), drawing on postmodern, aesthetic and psychoanalytic theory, expresses
the paradox of unconscious ‘knowing’, privileged within the realm of the visual, and
suggests the cultivation of a particular epistemological stance:

I am suggesting that the art therapist is both the subject and object of
knowledge: the art therapist is the object of unconscious
transmissions and the subject of deep intersubjective processes; and
mostly, the art therapist is subjected to making them
intelligible...This, in my view, accounts for the epistemological
position of the art therapist, the “experienced other” in Bion’s
terminology (1962). The word experience comes from the Latin ex-
perire, and perire means danger or peril. Thus, the experienced other
refers to “someone who has encountered a peril, physical or mental,
and has survived” (Da Silva, 1997, p. 5) — a view that is accurate as
it is moving.

Leclerc, 2006, p. 133

This is a formulation that compels but that I would want to place ‘under erasure’, so that
knowing is crossed with not-knowing, lest therapeutic certainty re-emerges in the guise of
‘experience’. 
A meta-reading of the frog story might serve to sensitise her, in a specific rather than in a general way, towards the sometimes excruciating imbalance of therapy. She knows that as a therapist she becomes a unique person in the life of her ‘client’. Each client is also a unique and special person for her, but it is nevertheless her profession to conduct this particular kind of relationship with several persons, in a circumscribed manner, and for a limited duration. If thinking about the metaphorical possibilities of tadpoles and frogs alerts her to the possibility that a child who has experienced much abandonment and confusion, and whose needs have at times been radically marginalised by other concerns, might fear further abandonment or marginalisation, is that so very reprehensible? Must she always eschew such speculative philosophising, or is it more a matter of considering its discursive effects?

She cannot overemphasise here, to herself and to her students, the importance of a lightness of touch ~ a wondering, an inconclusiveness, a refusal to either dismiss her associations and imaginings or to give them an authoritative status. Sometimes it becomes possible to give a tentative and speculative voice to her thoughts and feelings within the therapy as she has able to do, in this therapeutic context, in relation to themes of self-blame and surveillance. At other times this route appears insensitive and even dominating.

It would not be helpful if she concluded, for instance, on the basis of such considerations, that she must set up a boundaried and exclusive therapeutic relation with Leticia, a frame in which regression and strong transference would be the healing modalities, when so much of their work together has been the work of facilitating and enhancing the meaning of a wider set of relations in Leticia’s life. The process that led up to Leticia’s decision to ‘retire’ from her full-time detective duties has emerged out of careful and intricate narrative and arts-based work over many months, informed by the family’s stories and sustained by loved ones and companions, in particular Leticia’s grandmother.
The process has also been (in)formed by she(ridan)'s consideration of how her own feelings might be tentative ‘clues’ to what others might be feeling, or perhaps more accurately to a present/absent subtext of discursively disallowed and/or psychically disavowed thoughts and emotions. Her responses, associations and imaginings are significant (un)knowings that warrant further ‘investigation’. Perhaps she, as much as Leticia, wishes to reserve the right to be a part-time detective? Less obviously, her (un)knowings (in)form a delicate underwater dance of therapy ‘under erasure’, a therapy in which the trace of the Other — of Other times, events, fictions, relations, memories, forgettings, imaginings — is always-already deferring the possibility of ‘Presence’, always dissolving the threat and promise of the same in the uncharted waters of difference.

Then she(ridan) remembers how that particular consultation — the one where she asked Leticia what in their conversations had been important for her and Leticia talked about her heart and her frogs — actually concluded. Having cooperated patiently for most of the session with this therapist agenda of ‘review’, Leticia had found the opportunity to get to the important issue of her week.

Sheridan, can I ask you a question now? I’ve been wondering what I should call Timothy. He doesn’t want me to call him Grandpa, but I want to give him a special name, like I did for Groovy Gran, because he is special too. So I’ve been thinking, should I call him Timmy Whimmy, or should I call him Tim Tam? Which do you think he would like best?22

22 Again people’s names, whether given at birth or later on, and whether actual or contemplated, have been changed.
(She)ridan had tried to imagine Timothy, a serious and sensitive man whose ongoing support of both Groovy Gran and Leticia has been backgrounded in an account of events which nevertheless depend on his commitment, answering to either of these appellations. She(ridan) had wondered if she was being asked (for)something here in excess of the spoken words, but she could not on this occasion call up the ghost of an (im)possible question, let alone compose a response.

Stumped, she had tentatively offered, “Have you thought of asking him what he’d like to be called?”

“He’ll just say ‘Timothy’ ”, Leticia had replied. And at that moment she had looked, to s(her)idan at least, a little younger and smaller, her hair hanging forward around her face, crestfallen.
Figure 1
‘Worrying and dreaming’
Leticia

Figure 2
‘The roller coaster’
Leticia

¹ Figures 1—7 were drawn in whiteboard marker on a large electronic whiteboard of approx. 180cm x 100cm, printed out, then photocopied onto A4 paper.
Figure 3\textsuperscript{2}

‘Two Thousand Legged Man gloating’

Leticia

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Figure 4

‘At the heart hospital’

Leticia

\textsuperscript{2} Leticia printed this image of Two Thousand Legged Man from the whiteboard, before circling and crossing it out with a marker.
Figure 5

‘Banana Man – winner number 1’
Leticia

Figure 6

‘Banana Man tells Leticia she is not to blame’
Leticia
Figure 7

‘D.I. Leticia’s invitations to her retirement party’

Leticia
Figure 8

‘Certificate of commendation’

(Design and layout by Deanne Dale)
Chapter 6

Joining the dots

with a commentary by and in consultation with Galiindurra

The line of analysis of subjective transformation that I have been elaborating, while it makes visible notions of historicity, debt, ethical responsibility — especially in the sense of responsibility for the Other and of historical responsibility — has introduced an additional element. That element is the standpoint indicated by aesthetics, that is to say, the forms and the experience which express the (un)representable or unaccountable or sublime aspects of beingness which the problematic of subjectivity must recognise in order to encompass the complexity of the process of the constitution and reconstitution of subjectivity. The implied inadequacy of one-dimensional approaches alone in addressing this complexity, for instance the reliance on the cognitive viewpoint in psychology or on an unreconstituted, egocentric psychoanalytic discourse, is revealed when one has to deal with cases that refer to people traumatised by a violence which strikes at the core of ontological security, for instance, concerning victims of ethnic cleansing, or working through the legacy of the Aboriginal ‘stolen children’, or that of the disappeared and tortured, or involving consequences of modern forms of slavery in many industries and practices globally. In other words, the urge to rethink the theorisation of subjectivity is driven by the recognition that there are widespread problems today, affecting individuals and whole communities that exhaust the resources of ‘orthodox’ theorisations of subjectivity (Venn, 2001, p. 65).

1 Galiindurra is a Wiradjuri woman. She has chosen to be known here by her Wiradjuri name, rather than by her commonly used European name, in honour of her heritage and to ensure confidentiality for the children in her care. Galiindurra means, appropriately, ‘peaceful waters’.
Galiindurra

You know, Sheridan, we’re working with third generation removed people.

You look at the little faces of the little ones, say, in my care, and you think, oh God, her grandmother was in an institution, and she didn’t get to parent her children, and now the third generation of these kids are in care.

Little Maree said something to me the other day. She said “How come all my Mum’s kids end up in care?”

And I said ‘Why do you think?’

And she said, “I think it’s because of the drugs.”

I mean, what do you say to an eight year old?

Can you say “It’s transgenerational grief and separation?”

There isn’t one person in that family who hasn’t been affected, who isn’t grieving; yeah, it makes you sad.
Joining the dots

For Galiindurra and the girls

‘This child will be in therapy for the rest of her life.’
‘Separation anxiety.’ ‘Uncontained anger.’
‘Manipulation and lies.’
‘She’s ADHD and oppositional.’
‘Her mother is disordered.’
‘Her foster mother needs to provide more boundaries.’
‘This child is insecurely attached.’
‘She has no empathy.’
‘She’s damaged and you’ll have to contain her.’
‘Keep her in the room.’
‘Keep it to an hour.’
Keep her in a box.
We’ll provide the labels.

my Ashley can be a shy one
she needs to get to know you
she did wreck the doctor’s room
she was scared
she hates white rooms and hospital gowns
she’s terrified of sirens
she tried to run home from school
so they locked her in a room
she screamed and screamed
they called that ‘seeking attention’
told me not to give in to her ‘manipulation’
that’s not the Koori way
we love honour and cherish our children
she worries when I leave her
but slowly she’s understanding that I always come back

when she came to me she was tiny
she sat all day in a corner and didn’t speak
she’d been starved and hurt and abused
now she loves to run and play and shout and grow tall
making up for lost time

I’ve had too much of therapists and their assessments
people telling me what to do when it’s not my culture
but people I trust say I can trust you
so maybe we could meet in the park near the lake
we can talk and she and her sister can play²

so we meet in the park and we talk
Ashley and Maree are laughing and running back and forth
between Mum and the edge of the water
past the big white geese who have colonised the lake
the sisters are careful and courageous
they are strong and radiant and happy

i learn that Ashley needs time and open spaces
she is also a netball star with her name in the local paper
we meet in the park, then at home, then at school,
we catch the school bus together until she brings herself
to my home-based studio with its bright paints and pastels

² The words in this poem in italic script are Galiindurra’s words, which I transcribed from notations and recordings of our conversations, and offered back to her in free verse form.
we eat our after-school snacks in the kitchen
sharing our love of olives and ripe tomatoes
we have competitions to see
who is the quietest drinker of tea
and Ashley usually wins

my cattle dog in the backyard
is excited by all the new developments in Ashley’s life
when Ashley rings the doorbell
Moonam Chomper bounces and woofs with joy
she even adds her paw prints
to Ashley’s big paintings drying on the grass
if she could she’d tell us how she can see
Ashley out-tricking lies and making friends
practicing kindness and bravery
she’d tell us her sense of who Ashley can be
in sisterhood and community

some days just Ashley comes and other days she brings Maree
because some days as Mum says the sisters are inseparable
we paint and glue and write stories on the ‘puter’
afterwards we walk back round to Mum’s ‘s work
for a cuppa and a chat and to show her what we’ve made

the sisters are Koories and live in a Koori family
they have the same mum and different mums
they live together with one mum and dad and other sisters and brothers
near to grandparents aunties uncles and cousins
and visit their birth mums dads and families
at home or in hospital or prison
Ashley’s birth Mum has another baby
taken from her and put in a white home
a white expert says the baby must ‘attach’ to her new white carer
Ashley cries and rages and cuddles the photograph they send
she tells stories of accidents and deaths by hanging
she paints a butterfly with heart-shaped wings
for the sister she is not allowed to see

phone calls letters meetings and reports
to challenge this latest violation
we talk of the stolen generations
of legacies of loss and separation

it’s still happening today
now the minister wants to adopt out kids in care
adoption doesn’t exist in our culture
they are using their attachment theories and their diagnoses
to steal another generation
and no-one’s looking out for the white kids either

i’m appalled that my mob has done this yet again
i won’t let it happen in my own back yard
yet Western art and therapy can be forms of colonisation
so one day Mum teaches me how to paint
how to map our relationships to family, culture and place
how to make dots with the other end of the brush³
how to choose colours and patterns
to give meaning to connection and feeling

³ ‘Dot-painting’ is, of course, only one technique, and by no means a universal one, within the rich and diverse traditions and practices of Australian Indigenous painting.
as a witness to separation and loss
as reconnecting and remembering
she gives me permission to paint with her kids
as ceremony, culture and healing

When I first read this poem aloud to Galiindurra in the garden at the Aboriginal community organisation where she works, we cried together. Galiindurra asked me to read it again to Sandra, another Indigenous community worker, and then Galiindurra took it home to share with her family. Galiindurra has since read the poem to other Indigenous families as part of her work with the stolen generations. Galiindurra was not able to accompany me to Mexico to present our work at the International Conference of Narrative Therapy, so on that occasion I presented a formal paper on a different topic. However, with Galiindurra’s blessing and some negotiation with the conference convenors, I read the poem and showed photographs of the girls’ artwork to a small, informal gathering of international narrative therapists and community workers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous attending the conference, who agreed to meet as a listening group early one morning between breakfast and the daily plenary. This meeting was particularly important because Ashley and Maree were expecting to hear back from the conference about what other counsellors thought of their stories and their artwork. These conference participants then sent their responses back for Galiindurra and her family. On these and similar occasions it seems our accounts of this collaborative work have resonated with the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia and elsewhere. Tears and stories have flowed and continue to flow, embraces and emails have continued to be exchanged.

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4 This poem and my comments are included with permission of the sisters and their carers.
5 While informal, this meeting was oriented by the metaphor of definitional ceremony (Meyerhoff, 1986; White, 1995, 2000a, 2003) and occasioned powerful retellings that brought together responses from Indigenous and non-Indigenous practitioners from countries beyond Australia. These responses and their meanings for Galiindurra and the girls are not included here, because I am concerned with the possible appropriations involved unless the account was clearly co-authored. I would like to acknowledge the thoughtfulness of the participants, and the particular generosity of Indigenous people sharing their own stories of grief in such a context.
This chapter is a further iteration or re-telling of these stories, one in which I investigate what has flowed in my own life from an involvement with this work, and from writing about the work. At the same time, my stories are inevitably intertwined with the stories of others, in particular with the stories of Galiindurra’s mob, as well as with broader social and cultural narratives.

**Considerations of power, representation and subjectivity**

This poem tells a story of my engagement, as a non-Indigenous practitioner of art and narrative therapies, with finding ways to meet with and learn from a particular Indigenous Australian child, her sister, and her mother/carer. It focusses on the implications of this work for my sense of my self, my practices, my relationships, and for my (intentional and implicit) ways of being-in-the-world. The poem could therefore be considered as a means of enquiry into the effects of this work for my subjectivity.

I believe, with Waldegrave, Tamesese, Tuhaka & Campbell (2003), that Indigenous people are best positioned to work with their own. Since such a person was not available within our local community, I have worked in close collaboration with Galiindurra, whose words frame this chapter, in her dual role as an Indigenous community worker and as a carer and other mother to Indigenous children ‘in care’. To have attempted this work without extensive collaboration and consultation would perpetuate major aspects of the colonisation that I am seeking to resist. Good intentions, as Ashley’s story so powerfully illustrates, are not by themselves enough to minimise the neo-colonial reproduction of dominant power/knowledge.

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6 An earlier version of this poem and commentary was my contribution to a joint presentation on collaborative work between Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers when working with Indigenous children ‘in care’ (Stubbs & Linnell, 2004).

7 Whereas autobiographical accounts in art therapy tend to focus on the therapist’s story of undertaking their own therapy and/or their art practice in relation to themselves, narrative therapy has engaged fairly extensively with the significance of working with the stories of others for the therapist’s narratives of her life (White, 1997).

8 See Laurel Richardson (2002) for an account of the poetic as poststructural research methodology. See Chris Behan (2003) and Jane Speedy (2003) for accounts of engaging poetry as a form of documentation in narrative therapeutic practice.

9 Had Galiindurra not herself been multiply positioned as a worker and carer, and such a central person working in her own community, I believe it would have been vital for another Aboriginal community worker to be a close partner and consultant in the work.
I do not think it is possible for me, as a non-Indigenous person, to entirely avoid the ways I am caught up with the histories and current practices of colonising power, since even my positioning as part of the ‘helping professions’ is in part a citation of past and current abuses conducted in the name of welfare. As a white practitioner of narrative and art therapy working with Indigenous children who have been removed from their families of origin, I am involved in both reproducing and challenging dominant discourse. I hope that in performing ‘therapy’ with the guidance of and in concert with Indigenous workers, I/we may not simply re-cite, but also discursively re-shape, in small and specific ways, the possible relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together to address and redress the legacies of colonisation.

Given the fraught and ongoing histories of European colonisation, I am particularly concerned to problematise ‘representation’ in this poem and in the chapter as a whole. I have worked with Galiindurra as my consultant and companion, not only for the ‘therapy’ of which this chapter gives a partial account, but in the writing of the account itself. The decision to write in consultation with and response to Galiindurra, not as a fabricated ‘we’ that invisibilises power and difference, but in a manner that keeps our voices distinct, is influenced by these concerns of ‘representation’ and also by the practice of definitional ceremony (Meyerhoff, 1986), as it has been taken up and developed within narrative therapies (White 1995, 2000a). Within the metaphor of definitional ceremony, I am an audience for the stories of Galiindurra, Ashley and Maree. Galiindurra becomes an audience (and you as the reader as well as various others are a further audience) for a poetic and discursive account of how the stories of Galiindurra and the girls, and their wider families and cultures, have ‘moved’ me – to emotion, to action, to subjective and social change. In attempting to chart and to reflect upon this movement, I am influenced by narrative therapy’s ethics of acknowledging and ‘taking back’, to those who consult with us, an account of how they have influenced and enriched our lives (see White, 1997; also previous chapter).

Practices of telling, retelling and audiencing in narrative therapy engage the indeterminacy and productivity of narratives together with the transformational possibilities of how we are always already connected with others. A beautifully
reflexive and recursive interplay of stories intensifies connections between and
widens possibilities for all of the participants. The positions of storyteller and witness
become interchangeable as meaning and emotion amplify and resonate in widening
circles; yet there is always an accountability back to the persons whose story is, for
this time, at the centre of the circle. In this sense, this poem and chapter are
‘retellings’ that rest on and are framed by stories that have been told to me by
Galiindurra and the girls and are therefore accountable back to them. Although I am
focussing on my own story in an attempt not to ‘represent’ the stories of marginalised
others in defining or capturing ways, at the same time I must acknowledge that ‘my’
story (like all stories) is interrelated with and conditioned by countless other stories,
and is specifically a response to these stories told by Galiindurra and the girls. This
attempted ‘double act’ highlights some of the complexities and tensions that circulate
around this work.

While I want to acknowledge the complexities of writing about this work, my aim in
this chapter is not so much to find ‘clarity’ within this complexity, as to perform an
ethics of therapeutic relationship and writing within a neo-colonial context. Just as
poststructural subjectivities are not simply achieved but are ‘worked’ in relation and
resistance to the continual reconstitution of the Western modern subject, so
‘postcolonialism’ is an ongoing work in relation and resistance to the reconstitution of
(neo)colonial discourse. I would like to disrupt for a moment the disembodied,
universalising and colonising character of both dominant therapy and the dominant
cultures of research and academic writing. I hope to make a few ripples in the
smooth, mirror surface of these invisible powers through tellings and retellings of a
small and openly subjective story, one of many that might be told, about what it has
been like for myself as a non-Indigenous therapist, working with and in response to
an Indigenous family.\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Reading over this chapter after seeing the wonderful film, *Ten canoes* (2006) it occurred to
me that one of the things this work is teaching me is patience, particularly the patience to
challenge my desire to hotly pursue a narrative trajectory to its conclusion. The work
rambles a little, as indeed this chapter rambles. The byways are not at all insignificant, they
are the story, and the work still gets done...
At the same time that the metaphor and practices of tellings and retellings encompass much of the richness and complexity of this work, I am also interested, in this chapter as well as in my thesis as a whole, in the discursive limits of narrativity, and in whether art, poetry, and the embodied mo(ve)ments of therapeutic relations, gesture beyond these limits. I am committed to this work as the work of (inter)subjectivity, and thus the work commits me to becoming-Otherwise.

A walk through the poem

In the opening stanza of this poem, I have created a brief drama of colonising and pathologising ‘voices’ from a range of diagnoses and predictions, most of which came my way before I met Ashley herself.

The various professionals who provided these labels were not, as I understand it, lacking in good intentions, or the skills of their professions, and indeed several of them expressed empathy and a sense of responsibility in relation to the historical and current situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. These professionals were doing their jobs. What this ‘doing’ actually ‘did’ was, on the one hand, to provide a supposed basis in ‘evidence’ to obtain access to assistance for Ashley, but at the same time these labels produced a pathological and impoverishing description of her, indicting her past and present life and making gloomy predictions for her future.

This version of Ashley and her life relies on Western psychological theories that assume autonomous selfhood and the nuclear family structure are universally normal and healthy, rather than the rather odd and largely unworkable product of a particular moment in European history. These theories are also implicitly mother-blaming (see Burt 1997). Through the lens of these theories, Ashley is assumed to have difficulties in forming ‘attachments’ because of the alleged inadequacy of her first experience of mothering\(^1\).

\(^1\) Bowlby (1960) developed a currently influential theory of mother-infant attachment and its influence on development that was elaborated into a description of ‘attachment styles’ by Ainsworth (1985).
Moreover Galiindurra, as Ashley’s current carer, is subjected to perceptions of having ‘failed’ to implement the practices of another dominant 20th century psychological discourse, that of ‘behaviour’ and its management (Rose, 2000).

In contrast with such assessments and prognoses, Galiindurra herself offers a very different telling of Ashley’s actions, a very different account of the possible meanings of these actions, and consequently a very different notion of who Ashley is and can be. Rather than attachment-disordered, Ashley is sometimes shy. Rather than being generally ‘out of control’, Ashley wrecks the doctor’s office because of specific fears that are a legacy of past medical abuses. Rather than being Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disordered, Ashley is expanding her capacities to give voice and to move, to play and to grow. She is making up for lost time, for a past life of severe difficulty and deprivation, and for the legacies of the loss and dispossession inflicted on generations of her birth family including her mother and grandparents.

Remembering some of the words spoken to me by Galiindurra (who asked to be known as Mum in the poem) during our initial meetings, I have shaped these words into lines of poetry. I initially wrote down these lines to give back to Galiindurra herself, in appreciation of the intellectual rigour, political skill and great-heartedness of her words/work. The words/work of carers are often marginalised within the hierarchy of relations set up in the professional discourse of ‘care’ and I think it is crucial, if a description of ‘therapy’ with Ashley and Maree is not to reproduce a relation of dominance, to acknowledge and honour their carer’s alternative practices of care. I also want to invite readers of this chapter to feel something of what is being extended to me here as a non-Indigenous person, on what social bases this tentative trust and hope is being extended, and to what responsibilities I am committed in response.

Galiindurra’s words place both Ashley’s difficulties and the responses of Western psychologies within a socio-political context that acknowledges the continuing effects of colonisation. Galiindurra expresses her understanding of the cultural and ethical practices of caring for children that are kept in circulation within Aboriginal cultures, practices that are marginalised by and often counter to the discourses and discursive
practices of ‘behaviour management’ and ‘child management’. I am a member of the psychologically related disciplines that perpetuate these ideas, but on the say-so of other local community workers with whom Galiindurra has existing relationships of trust, she nevertheless decided to ‘give me a go’. This was a very limited ‘choice’ given that Galiindurra as a foster carer was subject to various official and ‘expert’ opinions and to associated demands for Ashley to ‘see someone’.

**Galiindurra**

*As an Aboriginal person, when they said to me, you know, we'll get this kid into therapy, I thought “Oh, God, I'm going to be judged again, I won't be doing something right.”*

I had these fears, and I have to be honest, I did have fears. The fact is, Ashley has been dreadfully affected, and this makes for one of the most difficult situations anyone has ever had to work with. So it was 'Oh Lordy, here we go again! This kid can't go to school unless she goes to therapy....”

And then we met and there was this instant 'I like her'. And that doesn't happen very often. I usually have this wall around me for protection. And you've supported me not just in the therapy sessions but by coming to meetings and being the voice they'll listen to.
I have wondered whether, in writing this chapter, I am once more being “the voice they’ll listen to”. Is such speech and writing irreducibly paternalistic, a further act of colonisation, even though Galiindurra and I both understand such acts as ‘strategic’, and furthermore we each understand that the other understands this? There is something deeply uncomfortable in advocating for someone who is such a consummate advocate herself, but whom the system in this instance marginalises as insufficiently ‘objective’. I take a position for Galiindurra’s perspective as the best possible ‘assessment’ of these children’s needs, and for Galiindurra’s care as the best possible therapy for these kids. I hope that this to some extent mediates the reproduction of colonising power inherent in the discourses of therapy and child protection.

Ashley and her foster sister Maree, together with their other siblings ‘in care’, are part of a current stolen generation. Contemporary government policy has been implemented, in this instance, by placing Ashley and Maree with an Aboriginal family, who are dedicated to maintaining their connections with their families of origin and cultures.

Galiindurra in particular works hard to mediate the effects of wardship, and the girls are to all accounts safer, happier and more in touch with her cultural heritage than they were in their families of origin, where, sadly, due to the severe ongoing and intergenerational effects of colonisation and dispossession, they could not be physically and emotionally sustained. Ultimately though, decisions about the welfare of these Aboriginal children rests with a European government which has never apologised for the violent decimation of Indigenous cultures, which is heir to the systematic practice of taking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children away from their homes and communities, and which is implicated in stealing a current generation of these children (Link-up NSW & Wilson, 1997). This is also the system that has contracted me to meet with Ashley.
Galiindurra

When we have more than a third of our kids in care, you know, there are all sorts of questions that need to be asked. Actually that figure’s gone up since the Bringing Them Home report\textsuperscript{12} and it’s rising every year.

Now you’d think when people are well educated and well informed the rate would be going down, that would be your hope, but that hasn’t been the case.

The story of my meetings with Ashley is a story of being continually challenged to go with the practices that fit for Ashley and her family, sometimes in opposition to what others have recommended. There was a strong professional view, for instance, that Ashley needed ‘containment’\textsuperscript{13}, one of the taken-for-granted assumptions that have leached from psychoanalysis into more general understandings of therapy, and should therefore be ‘seen’ within the boundaries of a therapy room. In refusing this recommendation and meeting with Ashley outside of the assumed ‘containment’ of the therapy room, I was following the guidance of Ashley’s carer. I did not want to reproduce the tactics of governance and control by which colonisation of Aboriginal people continues into the present day. I did not want to be implicated in furthering the production of this child’s identity as a problem through trafficking in pathologising categories, and still less did I wish to encourage Ashley’s carers and herself to embrace such categories as modes of existence. This more insidious form of governance (Foucault, 1978a/2000), which Foucault calls normalising power, is one

\textsuperscript{12} The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families was established in May 1995. The report \textit{Bringing them home} was tabled in Federal Parliament on 26 May 1997. A detailed guide to the background, process, findings and recommendations of the Inquiry and links to the report itself can be found on the website of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission at \url{http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/stolen_children/}

\textsuperscript{13} The notion of containment was developed by Wilfred Bion as an extension of the theories of Melanie Klein, and is also related to Winnicott’s notion of the holding environment (Britton, 1992).
which we are routinely subjected to/ participate in within contemporary Western cultures, and it has arguably been one of our most dangerous exports in the name of processes of so-called civilisation.

Moreover, the recommendation to keep Ashley 'within the room' is to my mind an overly literal version of 'containment’, which in psychodynamic understanding refers, not to an enclosed physical space, but rather to a therapist’s ability to be intellectually and emotionally sensitive to, and provide a consistent and reliable space of understanding and support for, a person’s emotional and psychic experience, in particular for very distressing feelings and experiences. From the perspective of a non-normative and culturally sensitive psychodynamics, I might therefore consider a lakeside meeting to be a ‘containing’ response to this particular child and family, for all that lakeside meetings do not fit within the codified practices of normative psychotherapy. However, even this more metaphysical and inclusive understanding of ‘containment’ meets its limits in this work, since it behoves me to regard my position as that of an ‘apprentice’ to the custodial wisdom of this family, rather than as that of an ‘expert’ responding to an unconscious need.

While the individual psychotherapy approach advocated by the referring psychiatrist and paediatrician seemed culturally and situationally inappropriate, family therapy (conventionally understood) seemed almost equally inappropriate, since this family clearly was the best therapy that Ashley had ever had. On Galiindurra’s recommendation, I decided to start meeting with Ashley within the context of close communication and frequent ‘catch-ups’ with Galiindurra, and see what happened from there. As the poem suggests, I met Ashley very much on her own terms, in places and ways for which, with Galiindurra’s support, Ashley expressed a preference. Her desires and capacities to visit and work with me in my art therapy studio developed from a platform of careful consultation and relationship building. This included a period of collecting her from the school, initially by car, then travelling with her on the school bus. In time, Ashley was able to catch the bus herself. At first I met her at the bus stop; then she began to walk from the bus stop on the corner of my street to my studio. We would talk about the steps Ashley had undertaken and enquire into the effects of these steps for her current life and her sense
of herself and her abilities. This graduated process had an affinity with and was broadly informed by cognitive behavioural notions such as desensitisation, as well as by narrative therapy. However these therapy ideas took second place to Galiindurra’s suggestions and to a process of experimentation, and were certainly never formalised into a ‘treatment plan’.

As Galiindurra explained to me, there were some days when Ashley was “just not separable from her sister”. Maree, a slightly older foster sibling, kept a lookout for Ashley at school, shared a room with her at home, and would let Galiindurra know whenever things were getting a bit out of hand. So it developed that the sisters would sometimes come together to paint and draw in my studio after school on Wednesday afternoons. Maree became very fond of these visits, and Galiindurra was of the opinion that Maree herself could benefit from joining the art therapy, since Maree’s own family of origin story was also marked with distress, loss and confusion.

After each session we would walk round the corner to meet Galiindurra for a cup of tea at her place of work, she would catch me up on some of the developments in their lives, and the girls and I would catch her up on what we’d been doing that afternoon. The sight of me running along the streets in the wake of two girls and a dog, wet paintings flapping in the breeze, has occasioned much good-humoured laughter from some of the other Indigenous community workers at Galiindurra’s workplace.

Additionally, I have had an invaluable therapeutic assistant, albeit a very hairy and lively one, in the form of my blue cattle dog, Moonam Chomper. In the tradition of narrative therapy, Moonam Chomper14 became an outsider witness (White, 1995, 2000a) to preferred developments in Ashley’s life and relationships, and to her sense of her-self and her capacities. The importance to Ashley of Moonam Chomper’s regular participation in our meetings only really became apparent when Galiindurra and I met with Ashley to ask her whether it would be OK for me to include this poem,

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14 Moonam Chomper was named Moonam in honour of the first words spoken by my brother’s child. When Gemma was a baby she sometimes cried at night, so my brother Andre would carry her out into the garden and point out the brightness of the moon and the stars. This vision of the night sky so amazed and soothed Gemma that her first utterance was ‘moonam and tars, moonam and tars!’ I think I can safely leave the etymology of Chomper to readers’ imaginations, especially if you have ever lived with a puppy.
her artwork and some stories of her coming to see me in my studio, in my writings about art therapy and narrative therapy. When I asked Ashley what name she would like to be known by in these writings, she at first nominated to be called Moonam. Galiindurra and I nodded towards each other at this, both noticing just how important a four-legged friend can be. We agreed that Moonam would be very honoured to share her name with Ashley, but that it could be a bit confusing to have two Moonams in the poem. Ashley could see the difficulty this might create for other people, so she elected to be known instead by the name of her best two-legged friend.

Therapy, like art, is as much invention as it is citation. While some of what constituted ‘therapy’ in this situation is encompassed by theorisations and descriptions of the arts therapies and narrative therapies, other aspects of this particular therapy would not necessarily make an appearance in the textbooks. The following list reiterates and expands upon the poem to give a flavour of the sort of things that Ashley, Maree and I found to be ‘therapeutic’ during and around our meetings:

- hand-printing
- making houses from cardboard boxes for sisters to live in together
- writing stories about girls and geese
- dot painting
- making cards and writing letters for Mums and Dads
- making presents for baby sisters
- painting as an expression of being sorry
- making up songs and singing them, for instance the one that goes “there was a little girl who loved to play in the garden, in the garden.”
- working out who sat in the front of my car last time around

15 The practice of ‘painting to say sorry’ emerged as a specific response to a therapeutic meeting with some of the children of this family that took place on National Sorry Day. As I thought befitted the spirit of the occasion, I made a formal apology to Ashley and her siblings — since this was a visit to the family home her brothers were also present — for what white people had inflicted on her people. Ashley and her siblings were at first curious about this, and then, it seemed to me, quite solemnly accepting. I began to make a drawing that I hoped would add to this expression of sorrow. Ashley spontaneously joined me in this work, which became, I felt, one small, aesthetic movement in the ongoing process of reconciliation.
• laughing at jokes
• falling over in the grass
• being the artist’s assistant
• playing noughts and crosses and losing
• cuppas and chats
• looking for netball results in the local paper
• throwing the frisbee for Moonam Chomper
• talking to Moonam and guessing what she would say to us if she spoke English or we spoke dog
• surprising Mum with what we’ve made
• asking questions when that’s OK, but not too many
• writing and responding to this poem

I have attempted, in this poem, to find words for a multiplicity of family and community relations around Ashley and Maree. In retrospect, I suspect that I have not made sufficiently visible the work that Galiindurra constantly does in order to keep the children connected with their birth mothers and families of origin, given how profoundly disadvantaged both girls’ birth families have been by legacies of loss, dispossession and racial violence, how they continue to be subjected to racialised injustices, and how this context of disadvantage is rarely foregrounded as such by white support services. Galiindurra herself says she understands her ongoing capacity to provide for these children as made possible and sustainable within a broader familial circle.

**Galiindurra**

*I have great support. I have a whole family who have taken these kids on. Everyone just loves them to pieces, which is really lovely. I have the support of my Mum and Dad next door and my daughter and her fiancé, and all of my big kids. I have your support, Sheridan, which has been a mountain of support.*
Sadly, given the legacies of past colonial practices of ‘removal’, this poem also tells a story of the present-day removal of an Aboriginal child into a white family. This is supposed to be illegal, but as Galiindurra says,

_There’s a whole school of people who believe in the Act and then others who say “Bugger it, I’ve got a nice little white placement for that kid and that’s where it’s going.”_

During the time of my meetings with Ashley, her baby sister was taken from her mother at the hospital where the child was born and placed in care with a non-Indigenous family. Ashley and her brother were forbidden to see their new sibling, a decision based on advice from a psychological expert on ‘attachment’. The local DOCS worker and manager were outraged at this decision, taken by another area of the Department. Thus a theory of attachment was invoked to support tearing a family and culture apart. Through a serious of assumptions about the need to mimic primary maternal care, ‘attachment’ to a new carer was deemed to be in conflict with this Indigenous child’s ‘attachment’ with her birth mother, her siblings, her family and her culture. In the poem I remember Ashley, who has been so anguished and angry, at this redoubled loss, that she has cried and raged and broken things and brought her carers almost to their wits’ end. I remember how she sits thoughtfully at the bench in the art therapy studio and slowly and carefully creates a painting to send to the baby sister she has never seen.

After more than two years of protest, a slow process of negotiating access, and some specific and immediate, as well as longer term concerns for the well-being of the child within her foster placement, Ashley’s little sister eventually came to live with Galiindurra, Ashley, Ashley’s younger brother and the rest of Galiindurra’s family.

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16 The Child Care and Protection Act specifies that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in long term care must be placed with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family, by preference their own extended family.
At such times, what is inadequately called therapy must become part of a platform for collective political action, if anything ‘therapeutic’ is to happen at all. We — because, for all that I am a non-Indigenous person imbricated with neo-colonial privilege, I believe that a ‘we’ of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people acting together can and must be constituted in response to such an outrage — ‘we’ are moved to action by these injustices. These actions can flow in more directions than one. It moves me deeply that, in the midst of an ongoing cultural genocide, Galiindurra has room for compassion for the effect of government policies and practices on white kids in care, as well as on Indigenous kids and families.

**Galiindurra**

*Now the minister wants to adopt out kids after two years in care. We have no concept of adoption in our culture. That was the main thrust of our parliamentary submission on the Permanency Placement Bill*, but we were also concerned that no one seemed to be looking out for the white kids.

The idea of adopting out kids in care, of whom over a third are Indigenous, a statistic vastly out of proportion with the numbers of Indigenous people living in Australia, was vaunted years ago, at the time that Ashley’s sister was first taken away. Ashley’s sister is home, now, but a revamped version of the permanency placement legislation is back on the agenda. Even as I write, legislation is going before the parliament in this state to legalise the adoption of children in care.

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17 The specific political actions called forth by the injustices of this situation, and further developments from this situation, are too sensitive to detail here and are ongoing at the time of writing.

18 The Permanency Placement Bill was drafted in 2002 by the minister responsible for Community Services. Had it been passed, the bill would have allowed children removed from their biological families to be legally adopted by foster families after two years in care. A similar piece of legislation is currently before the New South Wales state parliament (October, 2006).
Galiindurra emails her a copy of the proposed legislation about the new bill, with a suggestion that if she and like-minded people feel concerned about this latest bill, they could email their concerns to her so that she can pass them on to the office of the Minister for Community Services. Sheridan drops what she was doing — or does she? Perhaps this is another way of taking up what she is doing — and dashes off a reply. The legislation is being tabled in parliament today, so she has no time to ‘polish’ or to reconsider her words, but she tries to keep her language fairly formal so that Galiindurra can cut and paste from the email into an unsubmitting ‘submission’. Sheridan scans what she has written, hesitates, adds her formal qualifications, and presses ‘reply’.

Dear Galiindurra,

Yes, this proposed legislation does concern me greatly, on the following grounds:

1. The high incidence of Indigenous children in care is a situation which is itself a legacy of past colonial practices, including the removal of such children from their families, and has been exacerbated by the failure of our governments and institutions to redress these injustices. Some ‘postcolonial’ policies and practices have unfortunately perpetuated removal and separation, and the suggested legislation would do just this. Adoption (in my understanding) is not traditionally practiced by Indigenous peoples, who have other more family and community based systems and practices for the care and support of children. It behoves our government and society to legislate and to act in ways that support and learn from, rather than undermine, these cultural practices. ‘Care’ should be provided in a way that is as consistent as possible with these cultural practices.

2. Within the legislation, which is in itself inappropriate for Indigenous children, the measures suggested for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are grossly inadequate. The suggested legislation is retrograde in that it does not include the same safeguards as the Child Care and Protection Act. The Act specifies that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child in long term care must be placed with (respectively) an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family, by preference their own extended family, or if that is not possible then by preference within their community, as well as having continuing regular contact and connections with their family and culture, all of which it is government’s ongoing responsibility to ensure. Even if such safeguards were implemented, it is unclear if and how an adoptive family would be monitored and supported to put them into practice.

To put it bluntly, the legislation facilitates the modern day removal of Indigenous children from their families, cultures and identities. The devastating effects of such policies are by now well documented.

3. The legislation is also deeply flawed in terms of the ‘best interests’ of all children in care.

The language of “investment” in these children’s futures is misleading when in fact the suggested adoption practices actually remove governmental responsibility to invest morally
and financially in the well-being and future of these children. In this sense, adoption of children in care fits with an agenda of privatisation, de-regulation and small government, rather than with progressive notions of welfare, community responsibility and human rights.

The proposed legislation is based on an assumption that biological parents with long-term problems are unable to change their capacities to parent, whereas they often lack the support and resources to make these changes. Service cuts are making this situation worse, and adopting out the children of such parents simply papers over the cracks in the system.

Adoption is usually a practice that relies on strict assessment of adoptive families, stricter than that for foster carers, whereas the legislation bypasses these safeguards.

Children who are placed in foster care are usually by definition vulnerable and often continue to need specialist support. The continuing monitoring provided by the appropriate government department can support these children and their long-term carers, and is a means of minimising the possibility of further abuse in care. These safeguards and supports would not apply to an adoptive family.

Care systems already provide a great deal of permanency and security for children in long term stable care. Thus an established stable care relationship does not depend on adoption for its continuity.

The onus is strongly on biological parents whose children have been removed to show their fitness as parents, and the wishes of children are considered paramount in any considerations of restoration. Perhaps this system needs some adjustment to ensure the child's best interests are being met, but a radical change toward adoption is unwarranted.

Adoption is not necessary to ensure connection between children and their long-term carers, since obviously families would only consider adoption if connection already existed.

We need to challenge the idea that children cannot handle multiple relationships and to promote more community acceptance and support of the numerous situations in which children have affiliation to more than one domestic family unit. Children of almost every culture and generation have been raised in a variety of ways, supported by extended family and community. The notion that the nuclear family is the best form of care is not scientific or sustainable.

The history of adoption is troubled by numerous examples of children feeling displaced from their identities and suffering as a consequence, usually because their connection to their family of origin, and in particular to their mother, has been severed. While modern adoption practice modifies this, birth certificates and letters are scarcely an adequate substitute for living contact with the people who brought you into the world.

There are many instances where birth mothers and fathers are unable to provide primary care but, with support, can still maintain a relationship with their children.

In the minority of cases where even supervised contact with a particular parent is physically or emotionally unsafe for the child, child protection provisions should be sufficient to allow for those children not to have to see that parent. Some clarification of the blurred jurisdictions of the various courts would be useful in such instances.

The ‘best interests’ of children are notoriously difficult to assess. Life situations and developmental theories change, whereas adoption is permanent. Let's put more intellectual, emotional and financial resources into the problem of how so many of our children come to be ‘in care’, rather than perpetuating social and cultural hierarchies and injustices through ‘adopting’ this legislation.
Please could you pass on my concerns.

Yours sincerely,
Sheridan Linnell
(AATR)

A message comes back promptly

Go girl please pass the message on we need all the support we can...can I email this to the minister Galiindurra

She(ridan) forwards the email to her ‘list’.  As an afterthought, she pastes it into her thesis, as well.

She is spreading the word(s).

The possibilities and limits of ‘art therapy’
The poem concludes with an ethical/ aesthetic dilemma that attends upon art therapy in this particular context. While, I take a position of seeking to disrupt the ongoing colonisation effected by white psychologies and therapies, I also acknowledge that there is no position to stand outside of discursive relations of power. I neither wish to perpetuate European art practices as the norm, or to appropriate Indigenous Australian cultural practices (Johnson, 2005). Nor, for that matter, do I wish to insist that Indigenous children who are growing up within a complexity of cultures must practice their art in traditional ways so that I can feel less guilty about the effects of colonisation.

At one point in our work together, Galiindurra taught me how to paint as a contemporary ceremony, and gave me a very specific and contextual permission to do so with her children. This is not proposed as general solution to the dilemmas of the work, since this work relies for its effectiveness on the ongoing negotiation of complexity and contradiction. Rather, Galiindurra’s action in teaching me to paint performed a temporary ‘dissolution’ (c.f. White, 2004d) of a particular dilemma.
When she made art in the studio, Ashley worked in a vivid, lateral aesthetic style, incorporating many handprints and vigorous brushmarks (see Figs 1—7, pp. 209—215, for selected photographs of Ashley’s artwork\(^1\)). For the first few months it was difficult for her to keep the paint and the glue within the artwork, and at times she was immersed elbow deep in paint. I set up a series of buckets of soapy water and towels outside on the grass, to minimise the messiness spreading to her clothes and to other surfaces around the studio. On one occasion when I was not quick enough, she made handprints over a wall. We talked about this and agreed to work with Maree to convert these prints into a permanent mural, on the understanding that in future Ashley would not paint on the walls or desks. Ashley kept her part of this bargain. As time went on she was able to direct her energy more and more into art making, only returning to the earlier generalised mess-making at times of severe distress.

Sometimes Ashley painted in a gestural and semi-figurative style that approximated something like Western expressionism. Often she made cards for her birth mother or for Galiindurra Mum, or other relations. With so many in her extended family, there was usually a birthday imminent. At other times she made Aboriginal flags in numerous sizes out of paint, pastel, pen, pencil, paper, cardboard, felt and clay. During the period of time when she was not allowed to see her baby sister, Ashley worked intensely on the construction of cardboard houses from shoeboxes, often painted in the colours of the Aboriginal flag, furnished them with felt, card and matchsticks. These cardboard houses became something like sets for a play of her life. She inhabited them with a pair of multi-coloured pipe cleaner and tissue-paper dolls, whom on several occasions she called ‘the sisters’ (fig. 7, p. 216).

At times Ashley would be deeply involved in her own style of work and at other times, especially if something was worrying her, she would compare herself to Maree, attempt to imitate Maree’s productions, and then get frustrated when she could not do so. Sometimes Ashley and I would work together, with me in the role of an ‘artist’s assistant’, carefully following her direction, or sometimes we would evolve a more collaborative and ‘conversational’ style (c.f. Eisdell, 2005). I found Ashley’s

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\(^1\) Ashley and Maree often chose to take their work home, so some works are photographed in situ and many others are not photographically recorded.
artworks, both her paintings and her 3-D constructions, very aesthetically satisfying, but she herself was often disappointed with her difficulties in achieving neatness and realism, especially when she was comparing herself to Maree. As ever, I was struck by the unforced metaphorical resonance between how people, especially children, ‘are’ in their artwork and ‘are’ in the other aspects of their lives.

Meanwhile, Maree was in general a more ‘intentional’ artist, whose practice I had so far understood to be an expression of her experiences within multiple cultures and her understandings of her Aboriginality as a living category. Maree usually worked in the studio with great enjoyment, in a vibrant and skilled engagement with the traditions and conventions of contemporary Aboriginal painting. She would move confidently between and hybridise Indigenous and Western art forms, as indeed do many urban Indigenous artists. As she worked, she would sometimes explain to me what she was doing, and where her ideas had come from. Her work was much appreciated by other members of her family and community for its skill, joyfulness and incorporation of traditional processes and motifs (see figs. 8, 9, 10, 14 & 15, pp. 217—224).

Of course there is always limits to intentionality and rationality in artwork and some of Maree’s most compelling works resonate with feeling in excess of her intentions. Her painting ‘Boat’ (fig. 12, p. 220), with its odd, emotionally suggestive use of negative space, is somehow echoed in two of my own art responses (See Chapter 7, figs. 1 & 2, pp. 242—43). Maree’s watercolour painting of ‘Mum’ (fig. 12, p. 221) — which could evoke either/ both Galiindurra Mum and Maree’s birth mum, although Maree hesitantly said the painting was of Galiindurra — has dribbles of glitter glue, like tears, on a watery face, eyes that appear closed, an open mouth full of silver glitter. Whether the sadness this painting provokes in me arises from the painting, from my relationship with Maree and her stories, from my own stories, or from all of these is a question that remains necessarily open. ‘Madness is short... ‘(Figure 13, p. 222) seems to me to be an extraordinary synthesis of traditional imagery with written text, and of a conscious articulation of thoughtfulness and emotional complexity with an unspeakable, perhaps unthinkable, excess. Maree said little of this painting, but she read the text aloud during our meeting.
One day, while I was with the girls in my studio, I noticed that Maree had abruptly, and with a notable absence of pleasure, begun to work in another style. This latter form of mark making consisted of repeated, laborious attempts to ‘correctly’ represent figures in a perspectivised landscape according to the traditions and conventions of European realism. This invoked for me a colonial norm of representation, and also led me to reflect on the influence of primary schooling with its production of developmental norms and educational standards about ‘how to draw’. Neither of the girls wanted to talk much during this particular meeting, and I was reluctant to persist with questions that might be experienced as intrusive. I found myself feeling something of a weight in relation to Maree’s attempt to ‘get it right’. Reflecting on this, I wondered if, in its sudden appearance and intensity, this form of art making might be overdetermined with broader emotional and social struggles to ‘get it right’. These signs in turn alerted me to a sense that something might be ‘wrong’.

In this session Ashley attempted to copy Maree’s work, as she often did, expressing some frustration at the difficulty of imitating this exacting task. Ashley’s image, in which the figures on the swing are painted out, seems to hold a distorting mirror up to her sister’s work (fig. 6, p. 215).²⁰

After the session, I checked out with Galiindurra how she thought things were going for Maree, and Galiindurra responded with stories of some very painful and difficult recent events in Maree’s life. This in turn opened a space for conversations with Maree about her troubles and concerns.

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²⁰ Maree took her painting home with her, and I felt it would be therapeutically tactless to take a photograph ‘on the spot’. Ashley left her painting in the studio where I later photographed her work, in accordance with a negotiated practice of documentation. The girls each have albums of their photographed artworks. Ashley keeps hers at home and Maree keep hers in the studio.
Galiindurra

Something that sticks in my head is what happened with Maree and her beautiful Aboriginal art — bright colours, and suns, and spectacular art that looked like Ken Done eat your heart out!

And the fact that I hadn't yet had the chance to discuss with you the significant things that had just been happening in Maree's life, and you just sort of said to me "What's happened with Maree lately?"

And I said "Well...!" And I went on to tell you about the traumatic things that had happened between her and her mum. And that she felt quite insecure about her place with me because of things her new granddad who had come into her life, her white granddad, had said to her.

And it all just was portrayed in her art.

From this beautiful free flowing art, her artwork turned into these people on swings with their hair perfect, and she got distressed when it wasn't perfect.

And it showed just how she felt in her life.

One minute she's this free spirit and everything's going fine and we're just cruising along, 'I can do what I like and it's
all acceptable' to the next minute ‘Oh my goodness, what if I don’t do it right, what if it’s not perfect, what if it doesn’t fit into the picture I should be painting? Will I still be as loved and honoured and treasured as the child I am?’

Ironically, art therapy, understood on the one hand as a means of imag(in)ing the psychically and/or socially unspeakable, and on the other hand as a practice embedded in dominant Eurocentric assumptions about the ‘nature’ of aesthetic and intrapsychic phenomena, both uncovered a potential and met a limit in this situation. Art therapy (as it is generally understood) allowed for the emergence of traces of distress and uncertainty that were yet to find words. These traces emerged in the discursive field of painting though variations in gesture and style, rather than through content or direct representation of a ‘story’. In a subsequent meeting, Galiindurra taught all of us how to paint, in a contemporary and eclectic version of Indigenous cultural practice, our relationships to people, places and other significant aspects of our lives.

This move was not about a simple inversion of cultural norms, since inversion would only reproduce a necessity to ‘get it right’. Rather, Galiindurra’s teaching extended the discursive and aesthetic range of art therapy in this therapeutic context, through an enactment and documentation of the safety, love and connection that had recently been threatened for Maree, a threat that was part of greater Indigenous histories of dispossession and loss. We could then ongoingly include what Galiindurra had taught us in our repertoire of studio approaches, and I was at least partly freed from the double bind of either marginalising or appropriating the traditions of Indigenous mark-making.
Galiindurra

The thing that’s come to me about art therapy is that it’s so in tune with our culture, about how important art is to everyone in our culture. And Aboriginal art is so unfailing; you can’t do a thing wrong. It doesn’t matter what you do, whether you splash a bit of paint in the middle and that’s coming from you, and you can call it Mother Earth or whatever you like. And you can’t do a thing wrong; put a few dots and that’s your masterpiece, you know.
Figure 1
‘Hands’
Ashley
Acrylic paints on paper 30cm x 42cm
Figure 2
‘Untitled’
Ashley
Acrylic paints on paper 42cm x 59cm
Figure 3
‘Untitled’
Ashley
Acrylic paints on paper 38cm x 59cm
Figure 4

‘Flag’
Ashley
Acrylic on canvas board 20cm x 26cm
Figure 5
‘Dad’
Ashley
Watercolour and coloured marker on paper 59cm x 42cm
Figure 6

‘Swings’
(Ashley’s response to Maree’s painting of children on swings)
Ashley
Acrylic on paper 30cm x 42cm
Figure 7

‘Sisters’
Ashley
3D construction, mixed media approx. 22cm x 35cm x 12cm
Figure 8

‘Untitled’
Maree
Acrylic on canvas board 20cm x 26cm
Figure 9
‘Landscape’
Maree
Acrylic paints on paper 59cm x 42cm
Figure 10

‘Untitled’ (detail)

Maree

Acrylic paints on paper 59cm x 86cm
Figure 11

‘Boat’

Maree

Acrylic paints on paper 42cm x 59cm

(cropped photograph of original)
Figure 12
Maree
‘Mum’
Watercolour and glitter-pen on paper 59cm x 42cm
Figure 13
Maree
‘Madness is short...’
Pastel and coloured marker on paper 30cm x 42cm
Figure 14

Maree

‘Self-portrait’

Acrylic paints, glue and glitter on paper 42cm x 59cm

(Artwork on studio table)
Figure 15

‘Me, my place’
Maree
Acrylic paints on paper 42cm x 59cm
Questioning practices and constituting ethics

This work has engaged me in ‘questioning practices’ in relation to my conduct and identity as a narrative and art therapist. Rather than assuming I am an intrinsically ‘ethical person’ and will therefore behave appropriately, it has been necessary to ask myself what ways of being and relating I could aspire to in this work, and what kinds of ethical practices I could embrace in order to move towards these ways of being and relating. If what I aspire to in this work is a mode of being and relating that minimises the possibility of reproducing the power relations of colonisation, what is called for is far more than a set of guidelines for non-Indigenous therapists working in partnership with Indigenous people. It could be said that the aspect of myself that is the ethical focus — or the ethical substance of this subjective work — is my inscription with Eurocentric modes of being and relating so habitual, embodied and culturally dominant that they have become invisible.

I had been introduced long before I began meeting with this particular family to an understanding that I occupy a position of cultural privilege, that this privilege is systematically produced and reproduced at the expense of others, and that crimes of violence and dispossession, have been and continued to be perpetuated by my people against the traditional inhabitants of Australia. Since there is no position available to me ‘outside’ these relations of power, I have come to understand myself as ethically obliged to be actively anti-racist and anti-colonialist. This includes an obligation to familiarise myself with the stories of the Indigenous people, whom my own people have slaughtered, raped, imprisoned and robbed of their children and land, and an obligation to engage in negotiated practices of apology, restitution and reconciliation.
One summer, she holidays at Myall Lakes. The lakes and beaches are lined with tents, caravans, and combi vans. As she sits outside her tent beside the lake, she recalls that one of the worst recorded massacres of Indigenous people had happened at the similarly named location of Myall Creek (Elder, 1988). Myall Creek is not actually in the Great Lakes area, and her current campsite is related to the murders only in name. The site of the Myall Creek Massacre is actually over five hundred kilometres away, inland and to the northwest.

The name ‘Myall’ has invited her, as by now it invites many contemporary Australians, to remember an event distant in time and space, yet close to the bone. After the European perpetrators of the Myall Creek massacre were hanged, killings of Indigenous people apparently became, not less brutal or less common, but secretive and unreported (Elder, 1988). Massacres reputedly happened in the late 19th century on the coastline just south of where she is sitting right now, between Myall Lake and Hawk’s Nest, at a place called Dark Point. These deaths are part of local lore but went formally unrecorded.

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21 “In early May 1838 a group of about 40 Aboriginal people set up camp on Henry Dangar’s Myall Creek station. A posse of blood thirsty stockmen and squatters arrived one day seeking revenge for cattle losses. The Aboriginal people at the property had no involvement in these attacks on stock. Despite this knowledge the men cold bloodedly killed 28 old men, women and children and later another three. Children were decapitated and people hacked to death. A young women was forced to witness her people being killed and was then repeatedly raped. Governor Gipps ordered an investigation into the massacre with a view to prosecution. There was a great deal of public antagonism towards the government over this decision. In the initial trial the 11 men were found not guilty, in the retrial 7 men were charged with murder and sentenced to be hung. The intended message of this trial and hanging from the government was that Aboriginal people could not be treated in this way. The message that was received was that if you did kill Aboriginal people, don’t tell the authorities and cover up any evidence. The result was that nearly all further massacres went unrecorded” (http://www.cat.org.au/forgottenwar/myall.html, accessed Sept 2006.)

22 “On the beach between Hawkes Nest and Myall Lakes there’s a rocky outcrop with a sad history that few people know about — it’s called Dark Point. There are reports that in the late 19th century groups of aboriginal people were herded onto the rocks and pushed off. Very little is known about the massacre, for example, no one knows who committed the crime or how many people died” (http://www.abc.net.au/newcastle/stories/s1172287.html, accessed October, 2006.)
Smells of sun lotion, mosquito coils and barbecued meat float on the warm evening breeze, effacing the more subtle scent of tea-tree rising from the impregnated waters. She continues to sit on a folding chair outside her tent, writing in her little book, the sky turning red and darkening, curling with parchment clouds.

Each vacation brings more of us.

Unconscious caravans of summer pilgrims come to bathe in the melaleuca waters of the lake. At sunset, a whine and sting, as small atonements puncture our skins.

The sky is a raging document of all that we disavow.

Many years ago, she had been one of a group of Indigenous people and non-Indigenous supporters working together to mark the bicentenary of the invasion and appropriation of Aboriginal lands by the British, an occasion that much of Australia saw as a celebration of nationhood, rather than a call for mourning. In the group’s meetings, priority was given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers. Major decisions were made by a consensus of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the group, in the light of discussion by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members. She remembers having felt, at a bodily level, the strangeness and anxiety of stepping back from the taken-for-granted position of influence that often came her way in other meetings, presumably from being articulate and university educated, although she had always felt her privilege to be mediated, within the terms of a

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23 This was the Bicentennial Protest Group, who organised a nation-wide march in 1988.
prevalent politics of identity, by gender, sexuality and a working-class background.

The moving complexities of gender, culture and race were not resolved by the group’s strategy, which led to some complex and heated debate within the group as to whether, for example, a group of immigrant women (including Black women) had been marginalised in the group by being positioned as part of the category ‘non-Indigenous’. Identity politics met its limits in the endless entanglement of narratives and subject positions that make up the indeterminacy of any ‘identity’. Yet there was a pragmatic and powerful sense in which a temporary and partial suspension of privilege had shaped her imagination of marginalised realities, and thus shaped in her an ethics of relation to marginalised ‘others’. ²⁴

**Difference and connectedness — becoming-other in the work**

This therapeutic work has had a profound influence, not only on my practices as a therapist, but also on my sense of my-self. I have a sense of ‘becoming-other’ in this work, perhaps becoming a category of person for whom I have yet to find a name. I am not Indigenous to this country, so while I have much to learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, I know it is important to avoid any move that would be an appropriation of another’s identity, another theft in a litany of thefts that have so far included land, children, identity and culture, including what Western culture calls ‘art’. Our partnership is an attempt to embrace difference rather than efface it, and to acknowledge relations of power rather than to render them invisible.

²⁴ Dominant culture easily becomes invisible and read as universal. David Denborough (1996) gives an autobiographical account of how persons from dominant cultures may become aware of their whiteness and middle-classness through working closely with persons subjugated within these dominant cultures. Yet an equally potent problem arises when “the term white privilege is treated as if it were monolithic, ahistoric and unambivalent in experience” (Britzman, 1998, p. 103), since dominance, hatred and racialised hierarchies are also produced by eliding the differences within, and ignoring the limitations of, identity categories.
Working with Galiindurra and the girls has continually offered me opportunities to address my (often subtle) imbrication in the historical and continuing practices and effects of colonisation. Yet at the same time that this work draws attention to my difference and privilege, distinctions between binary or dividing categories such as ‘worker’ and ‘client’ and ‘professional’ and ‘personal’ are continually coming into question. The dividing categories of worker and client are challenged by my ongoing apprenticeship to Galiindurra, by whom I am guided as to what is an appropriate response to her family and culture. I actively position myself as the junior partner in our collaboration, against systems and practices that seek to render me ‘expert’.

In responding to the generosity and trust extended to me by people who historically and currently have many strong reasons to distrust someone of my cultural and professional background, I am called upon to become other than who the dominant narratives of my profession and culture suppose me to be. Not long after I had met Galiindurra, she told me of the potential to become an ‘aunty’ in the life of these girls. This is a possibility that, as I initially understood it, would enter someone into ongoing familial/social relationships and their accompanying obligations. I have responded to this deferred possibility of aunthood with an ongoing commitment, the character of which changes depending on what is happening in all our lives. At the same time, I am invested in modern Western notions and practices, some of which I do not want to relinquish: practices of separating work to a large extent from other parts of my social and family life, of prioritising issues in my immediate or nuclear family and friendships, and of needing ‘time for myself’ – for instance the time that it has taken to write this chapter. In practice, I have not felt ‘pressure’ from Galiindurra to ‘be there’ for the family in ways that were incommensurate with other aspects of my life, although, as the emphasis of my work has moved from therapy toward education and research, I have been concerned with the limits this places on my availability as a therapist, and sometimes, gripped with ambivalence, I ‘pressure’ myself. A sense of ‘relatedness’ gives a quality of warmth to our connections and interactions. Galiindurra lets me know what is happening for the girls, and through this I am ‘moved’, rather than compelled, to respond. This usually consists in an offer to meet with one or more person in my studio, or to drop by Galiindurra’s workplace for a cuppa, or occasionally to write a letter or attend a meeting. Galiindurra and I
keep in touch by email and I am sometimes included in group emails messages about sorry business (or the death of someone in the community), and about the politics of reconciliation. Galiindurra has also let me know that my family has become a “connected part” of her extended family. I am deeply touched by this inclusiveness, both because I and my family have been embraced in this way, and also because it reminds me how ‘I’, despite dominant modern constructions of separateness, am composed through my ‘relations’.

I am aware that it is problematic to adapt Foucault’s ‘ethics’ – surely intended as an analytical tool for understanding how we come to constitute ourselves as particular kinds of subjects – as a moral prescription for an aesthetics or art of self. One of the dangers of such intentional ‘ethicalisation’ is that of substituting solemnity for seriousness, and of becoming paralysed with self-consciousness. If I consciously shape myself as a subject of anti-racism, as indeed I am committed to do, how can I minimise the likelihood of reproducing the tactics of self-surveillance that typify modern power and prescribe multiple versions of failure (White, 2002)? Will I feel obliged to ‘convert’ myself and other non-Indigenous therapists through exemplary stories of my shortcomings and partial redemption? Is that what I am doing in this chapter? Wasn’t such missionary zeal one mode by which the colonisation of what is now known as Australia took place? How can I take responsibility alongside other non-Indigenous people (particularly those who like myself come from a colonising nation) for arguably the most heinous of injustices, the genocide of Indigenous peoples, while at the same time acknowledging the marginalisations of non-dominant gender, class and sexuality, and the effects of these in my life? How can I figure de-humanising injustices as linked to each other, without diminishing them or appropriating /colonising one discourse in terms of another?

An intentional ethics is a necessary but insufficient move toward transformation, especially in relation to expressing and countering how taken-for-granted racisms are embedded and embodied. When, for all my efforts to the contrary, the ghosts of an imperial heritage reappear, through the cracks of my own conscious commitment to the politics of apology and reconciliation, to haunt the narrative therapist, the art
therapist and the poststructural researcher\textsuperscript{25}, how can I challenge these powerful remains in ways that do not fully reproduce modern forms of confession and judgement (Foucault, 1980)? What would constitute a poetics, as well as a politics, of transformation, in relation to racial identity as an ethical and social substance?\textsuperscript{26} How can ‘I’ become ‘Otherwise’? (Venn, 2001).

She attends a workshop on writing methodologies in which she and other members of the Narrative, Discourse and Pedagogy Research Concentration are excited to have the opportunity to meet with Laurel Richardson. They have each been asked to bring some research material that they want to work with, so she has brought a large self-portrait in charcoal and pastel, and a few paragraphs that she thinks are sounding a bit stiff. She unrolls her picture and begins to read out some words about what her ancestors have done to the Indigenous people of the land.

After the first couple of sentences, she is crying — not just a few discreet/discrete tears, but an uncontrollable flood of grief. She can feel her ‘self’ unravelling, right here, in front of her colleagues and an overseas guest. She cannot bear to look at Laurel, whose unwavering expression of gentle and respectful concern might precipitate a further deluge. [Even as she is sobbing, she hopes she is not diluting the possibility of critique in what Lather (2001, p. 211) “has come to call the validity of tears”.]

When all of the participants have shared their data, they take some time to write that material differently, drawing on the resources of poetry, fiction and

\textsuperscript{25} Batha (2006) asks what might constitute an ethical form of curiosity/investigation within narrative therapies. She cites Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), who wrote that ‘the word itself, “research”, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary’ (p. 1).

\textsuperscript{26} Deborah Britzman (1998, p. 103) suggests that “identity is not the sum of a singular and conscious acts, but rather a social relation and a psychical event caught up — even as it catches itself — in the unconscious detours of history, memory, and communities”.
memoir. Red-eyed and shaky, she takes a sentence about her own inscription with racism, and follows it down an unexpected rabbit hole of memory.

The unthinkable

For some reason Mum seemed preoccupied that summer with the possibility that I might marry a Black man. "Sheri", she’d muse, as she washed and I dried, "I just don’t know what I’d do if you brought home a black boyfriend. As for your father, he wouldn’t have him in the house."

Dad added, trying to be helpful, "On the other hand, you could do worse than marry a Jew. They are a very clean people."

I didn’t know why they were so worried. I was yet to bring home any kind of boyfriend.

And after all, we’d moved out of a predominantly Black neighbourhood of London to the fringes of pale, middle class Surrey, then half-way around the world to take up residence in a suburban, white brick veneer house on an AV Jennings housing estate, surrounded by other ten-pound-a-passage, white, working class British migrants who sailed here in the wake of the White Australia Policy to ‘make a better life’. Frankston was scarcely Brixton. Where were all these Black and Coloured boys I wasn’t supposed to marry?

I was intrigued to find out that Terry, who was directing the local pantomime in which I played a very clumsy bear, had a younger,
adopted Aboriginal brother called Tim. Compared to my parents’ attitudes, I thought this progressive. Although I was taking Australian History for my HSC, I had never heard of the Stolen Generation. Tim and I painted some of the set for the play together. He seemed like a nice, quiet, usual kind of boy, except that he was unusually polite. I wanted to know what had happened to his Aboriginal family but thought it would be rude to ask. His skin was the colour of honey. He didn’t show even the slightest inclination to ravish me. I suppose I was a bit disappointed, really.

Years later, when I told Mum – thinking that while she would find it difficult she must surely have guessed by now – that my partner of five years was a woman, Mum went deadly pale.

"Oh, Sheridan," she sighed. She only ever called me Sheridan when I had done something wrong. "I would have found it easier if you had told me you’d murdered someone. You’d better leave the house before your father gets home."

"But Mum," I protested rather obviously, "Murder kills people." My mother went into the bedroom and stayed there for a very long time.

Even in all my distress at her distress, at how badly I had misjudged her likely reaction, a wicked thought went through my head: "So, Mum," I said silently to the closed bedroom door. "Obviously you
didn’t know. And you used to worry that I might marry a Black man…”

The extension to me of an inclusiveness, generosity and forgiveness, so different from the dominant exclusionary practices of many modern Western families, including my own family of origin, engages me in the ethics of a necessary indebtedness to those whom my dominant culture and family of origin have constituted and abjected as ‘Other’. How can I respond sufficiently to these obligations? What is an appropriate ethical relation to my (necessary) vulnerability to the ‘good opinion’ of others, particularly to the opinions of those others who are ‘othered’ by dominant culture? Here I find myself echoing and learning from Galiindurra’s empathic rendering of the imagined thoughts of Maree. There is no moral or emotional equivalence between the experience of an Indigenous child, with a legacy of removal and dispossession, and the self-doubt of a privileged white adult therapist; yet at the same time, modern Western power renders us all ‘subject’. Hence I find myself asking, or more likely acting on the unarticulated basis of, questions such as ‘What if I don’t get it right? Will I still be loved and honoured as the person and therapist I aspire to be?

Galiindurra herself is exquisitely attuned to the pain of non-Indigenous people realising and wishing to find a response to the ongoing effects of colonisation. When I first met her, she periodically gave me publications containing commentaries, poems, histories and life stories, written by Aboriginal people, many of whom who had been taken from their families. In this gesture as in many others, ‘gift-giving’ and ‘education’ were seamlessly linked.

The emphasis in this chapter on my own ethical and subjective transformations in relation to the work described, is in itself an ethical decision. I wish to counter a dominant and taken-for-granted focus in therapy, and writings about therapy, on subjective transformations for the ‘client’. I also want to avoid as much as possible the danger of reproducing the politics of assimilation through the techniques and assumptions of therapy – for instance the implication that the participants in this particular therapy were in need of being normalised/transformed according to a
Western psychological agenda. Consequently, the trajectory of this chapter tends toward the transformation of the therapist herself – even to the limit of breaking open ‘therapy’ as a category of work and ‘therapist’ as mode of existence.

However, this is not simply the story of the ‘consciousness raising’ of a white therapist. The ethics and aesthetics of writing from a subjective viewpoint are not based in an idea that I ‘change’ through a rational process in the course of this story. My apprenticeship to Galiindurra’s knowledge has been intertwined with the choreography of our developing intimacy, engaging me in a poetics, as well as a politics, of subjective transformation. Nor are these ethics and aesthetics based in the idea that I alone am the subject of change. Firstly, I would not be any kind of therapist at all if those who consult me did not also benefit from the location or creation of significant difference in their lives, their relationships, and/or their sense of who, and for whom, they might be(come). Moreover, if subjectivity is fluid and social, then relationships are mutually conditioning and transformative, a dance of contradictions and connections, rather than unidirectional. The girls, as Galiindurra’s transcribed words attest, have also experienced changes through this therapeutic relation. Galiindurra, too, is changed through our connection — as, indeed, we all change all of the time in relation to each other — although I believe it is for Galiindurra, rather than for me, to speak (or not) of the specificity and significance of how this relation has affected her.

Such a ‘mutuality’ of relations and transformations becomes almost impossible to speak of when one of the parties to the ‘mutuality’ is a descendant and beneficiary of those who invaded the lands of, and committed genocide against, the other party, and when the legacies and ongoing practice of these injustices currently shape many of the realities of and relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.\textsuperscript{27} Nevertheless, I believe the suggestion that only ‘I’ change in the process of this story...

\textsuperscript{27} Foucault (1997/2003) makes chilling connections between colonisation, racism and genocide. He argues that “Racism develops with colonisation, or in other words, with colonising genocide” (p. 257). Normalising power/ biopower must become racist in order to exercise the old sovereign ‘right’ to kill: to murder people, populations and civilisations, both directly and also through “every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on” (p. 256).
of therapy would reproduce the ‘othering’ of racialised others, through an inverted hierarchy in which these others must be static, in order for me to be transformed. This would not only be theoretically flawed — it would be ethically flawed as well. An acknowledgement of the radical and mutual vulnerability and openness of each to the other has been suggested as a possible basis for a poststructural ethics (Butler, 2004a). These ethics do not, in my opinion, exclude a consideration of historical and current practices of domination and the responsibilities that can be taken up, by people who have perpetrated or benefited from such practices, in order to attempt some redress of hurt and injustice. Indeed these ethics both underline the urgent need for such responsibilities and suggest that these responsibilities can only be taken up in helpful and non-dominating ways by listening and responding to a call from those others whom we have harmed.

A necessary tension, then, plays out in and around this work, and in writing about this work. From a poststructural position, I understand subjectivities as multiple and mutually constituted through power, and so I am interested in a dissolution of binaries, a transformation of fixed categories and a production of more fluid subjectivities, relationships and social and cultural realities. As Venn (2000) has cogently pointed out, this poststructural break with “the idea of a self-sufficient, self-centred subject, doubling as the autonomous, objective agent of history...is in solidarity with the rejection of occidentalism” (pp. 51—2), or of dominant Eurocentric ways of thinking and being. However, while poststructural and postcolonial politics can and frequently do inform each other, the latter may strategically take up a more ‘fixed’ notion of identities and cultures as a basis to challenge racisms and to rehabilitate marginalised and subjugated histories, identities and cultures. As someone engaged with both poststructuralist and anti-racist ethics and practices, it becomes necessary to conceptualise how racialised categories are ongoingly produced and embodied, become dominant or subjugated, centred or marginalised, through operations of power. At the same time, such politics demand respect for how subjugated categories — even those categories produced as an effect of dominant colonial power — can themselves become a strategic basis of resistance. An instance of this, highly relevant to this chapter, is how colonial power has sought to erase the multiple histories, cultures, languages and practices of the Indigenous peoples of the
continent now known as Australia, and how Indigenous people have reclaimed this multiplicity and diversity at the same time as making a strategically and experientially unified ‘Aboriginality’ the basis for resisting/ responding to the legacies and ongoing practices of colonisation.

The stories told in this chapter could be perhaps be thought, not as exemplary, but as moments in the emerging shape of a post colonial politics and poetics (Venn, 2002), the trajectory of which might move beyond the strategic reversals of identity politics into a critical consideration of the politics of the very notion of identity. This is not to suggest that ‘we’ should reject consideration of the subjugation of particular persons or cultures as a basis for political action, or that we should turn away from rich accounts of identity and culture as a mode of redress and ‘self-determination’ for individuals and communities. Any such move would be another reversal — one that re-institutes dominant power and seeks to eradicate difference through the tyranny of the same. Rather, it seems necessary to think about and challenge the continuing marginalisation of non-dominant identities and cultures together with making a critique of essentialised and bounded notions of identity and self. Western and modern notions of identity tend to rest on binary oppositions and deadly hierarchies that split the self from the other, the individual from the social, the doing from the telling, and then exile those who challenge such distinctions from the very notion of the ‘human’ (Butler, 2004a). Through the dissolution rather than the inversion of such binaries, poststructural practice can contribute to effective acts of ‘reconciliation’.

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28 I once again acknowledge that the use of ‘we’ is fraught in this context, but I am unwilling to give it up. ‘We’ is often a mode of exclusion and/or assimilation, but it can also be an expression of inclusiveness, and of a post-humanist re-visioning of ‘humanity’ (c.f. Butler, 2004a).
**Galiindurra**

What would I say to them? 29

I'd say to be non-judgemental. To be honest, and vice versa that the family need to be able to be honest about their fears and expectations and any other issues.

I just think we're always judged. Often, we're told, “you are too outspoken”. Or perhaps we are too ‘not spoken’ — you know.

I would try to say to them, 'This is how I am. I can modify my behaviour but I can't parent like a whitefella'.

I'd say to them, “Chill out, take it easy, because if you feel uptight, you probably are!”

Being told that Ashley had to see you felt like a judgement of my parenting, but it has worked out really well. Ashley has grown, your whole family is part of my connected family, there’s a real spiritual connection and the kids feel really honoured and loved.

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29 With these words, Galiindurra was initially responding to an invitation to advise the art therapy trainees at the University of Western Sydney — advice that was framed in the teaching situation with an underlining of the need for non-Indigenous therapists to refer on to and/or consult with Indigenous workers. In the context of this chapter, Galiindurra’s address resonates more widely.
...Often the enigma is in the other’s face, the page of the face. On their body-face. I’m trying to name that which promises itself, what escapes me. What speaks mutely to my eyes (Cixous, 2004, p. 109).

Ashley is about to open the fridge to see if there are any more olives, when she notices a school photograph that (s)her (idan’s) youngest grandchild has attached to the fridge door with a magnet. She (idan) usually prepares for these meetings by putting aside the more portable manifestations of her daily living, but she didn’t want to remove the photograph, placed there with her granddaughter’s own hands.

Ashley touches Louella’s pale Irish forehead and pink cheeks, tracing her black curls and the outline of her smile.

“Who’s that?” Ashley asks, seemingly suspended between a kind of tender curiosity, and a hint of bristling pique that some other child has intruded into her space.

“That’s my granddaughter, Louella,” Sheridan replies.

“How many grandchildren do you have?”

“Two.”

“‘What do they call you?’

“‘Nana. I said I’d like them to just call me ‘Sheridan’, but they wanted to call me ‘Nana’. What do you call your grandmothers?’”
“Nan and Nanna. And Grandma. Sheridan, could I call you ‘Grandmother’?”

Sheridan begins to say carefully, “Ashley, I’m very touched that you would like to call me ‘Grandmother’ ~ perhaps you want to have a special name for me, too...?” but, at the sight of Ashley’s face, drops the momentary attempt to be a proper psychotherapist and touches the child lightly on the arm.

“Of course you can call me Grandmother, my dear.”

Ashley nods in satisfaction.

“Let’s go to the studio now, Sheridan,” she says.
Chapter 7

Inconclusions

What is the agency of the one who registers the imprints from the other? This is not the agency of the ego, and neither is it the agency of one who is presumed to know. It is a registering and a transmutation that takes place in a largely, though not fully, preverbal sphere, an autistic relay of loss and desire received from elsewhere, and only and always ambiguously made one’s own. Indeed they are never fully made one’s own, for the claim of autonomy would involve the losing of the trace, and the trace, the sign of loss, the remnant of loss, is understood as the link, the occasional and nearly impossible connection, between trauma and beauty itself (Butler, 2004b, p. 5).
Figure 1

‘The art therapy boat’
Sheridan
Collage and glitter-paint on paper 30cm x 42cm
Figure 2

‘Wreck’
Sheridan
Oil pastel on paper 42cm x 59cm
Figure 3

‘Omelette’
Sheridan
Acrylic paints on paper 42cm x 59cm
Figure 4

‘Behind the gate’
Sheridan
Black and white photography, photocopying and hand-colouring 30cm x 24cm
Figure 5

‘An archaeological find’

Sheridan

Cardboard, tissue paper, collage, oil pastel and found objects
42cm x 34cm x 22cm

(Interior of 3D construction, photographed by Clare Dash)
Figure 6

‘Dreaming (of) research’
Sheridan
Charcoal and crayon on paper 48cm x 76cm
Figure 7

‘Crooked self-portrait, with dog’
Sheridan
Charcoal and graphite on paper 86cm x 59cm
Figure 8

‘Grand Daddy’
Sheridan
Charcoal on paper 86cm x 59cm
Figure 9
‘Grandmother’
Sheridan
Charcoal on paper 86cm x 59cm
Figure 10
My grandmother’s flowers’
Sheridan
Detail of drawing, dry pastel on paper
Figure 11
‘S(her)idan silhouette’
Sheridan
Charcoal on paper 76cm x 56cm
Figure 12

‘What happens to all the unspeakable things?’

Sheridan

Charcoal and pastel on paper, large irregular size, approx 170cm x 120cm
She is sitting again in the consulting room at the back of the narrow inner city terrace, recalling the previous session. The white walls of the therapy room had become the hospital bed where her mother laboured, an unmarried mother in the fifties. She had felt the hush, the shame, the prohibition under which she herself had entered this world. She knew she couldn’t possibly have remembered this. It was a physiological and developmental impossibility. And yet she remembers herself remembering, composing herself at that imaginary point of origin, pulling the bits and pieces together into a tentative, stammering confession.

She is beginning to find words to tell the other how, following their last meeting, an exquisite and tortuous sadness had seeped into the texture of her week, when out of the blue her therapist says This is difficult but I have to stop seeing you. This will be our last session. I’m sorry but this is not something I could have anticipated. She is shocked of course, stunned into an initial and very awkward silence, but, somewhere almost inaccessible, she is not really surprised. A confirmation of something deeply held, though always held at a distance. She becomes solicitous, asks if the therapist is all right ~ she has noticed the other looking a little pale of late ~ knowing though that she will get no answer. She asks if this sudden ending applies to everyone the therapist sees or only to her, knowing that it must apply to everyone, and knowing that it applies only to her. The therapist suggests that she sees someone else and tries to give her a list of names. She won’t take them. Thinks, recoiling simultaneously from the ugliness of the thought. Fuck you ~ don’t expect me to say yes just so that you can feel better. She is feeling huge and distorted, a woman with grossly ballooning arms and legs, a huge distorted belly and head, features stretched into monstrous unrecognisability. She floats towards the ceiling, looking down on the tiny therapist doll who is mouthing something.
She forces herself to hear it. I wonder if you feel you have been too much for me. She’s back in her chair with a thud, deflated to a dense fiery coil. Patronising bitch. She’d been wondering anyway whether to continue. Where had it got her. She hands over the ninety dollars, thinking how next week she’ll be able to buy that new book on Deleuze she hadn’t been able to afford. As she walks out she’s suddenly very sorry; has she been rude, has she made it harder? She wonders fleetingly if the therapist is sick and going to die. Touches even more fleetingly on something comforting in that possibility. At the door, she leans towards the therapist and hugs her. Immediately she feels embarrassed, knowing she has breached some code even at the moment when such rules surely should have ceased to concern her. She feels how the other receives her embrace with equanimity, just as one who had practiced forbearance might receive a blow.

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She must have this particular colour. The red that comes in the tiny metal tube has the viscosity and hue of fresh blood. She spills it onto the white paper, into a white porcelain basin, onto white tiles, a white cotton sheet. The clawing inside, the incessant chatter of voices, the rope coiled in her stomach and pulling tight around her throat. She watches one hand take the blade and pull it across the other wrist. At first the line is bloodless like the scar it will leave behind. Then blood wells and spreads, becomes an outpouring. The little metal tube shines like a knife in her hand. At first she bleeds incontinently onto the page, week after week, the flow not so much lessening as finding the contours of a life, her life, running into crevices and gullies and pooling in the bottom of craters. She begins to spread it with the large brush, dragging the red across planes of luminous blues, blending to a purple starved of the oxygen of immediacy but pleasing in its sovereign dignity. Or pushes it into a wet glistening yellow so that a promise of something begins to rise orange at the far edge of the page.
Just behind her there is someone of whom she is barely aware, who slides fresh sheets of paper before her, who keeps the little tube knives full and flowing with lifeblood. And slowly, over months, as the blood is staunched on the page, the words begin to flow out of her and towards this other, in trickles and splashes and outpourings. Sometimes the other seems far from her, inaccessible, and she must try to soothe her hurt through a liberal application of paint. At other times she shrinks in fear or shame from an intrusive presence, retreating into the space of the paper, cupping her hand around the work so the other cannot see. Sometimes they feel so close it is almost unbearable. Their words and their silence flow into an intangible space stretched out between them, a valley, a fold of skin, warm, diffuse, there. No wonder she says, almost to herself, no wonder, no wonder. She whispers this refrain only to herself and wonders how the other can hear it. No wonder I have felt, no wonder I have done, no wonder I could not.... Her tears drop clear onto a page thick enough to hold them. It's different from the chemical shock when she dabs her fingers in the red paint and takes them carelessly to her mouth, breaching the fiction. Her tears taste like her own blood, her own body, salty but without the red. Exosence of her own impossible being. On her tongue.

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If the assumption of responsibility for one’s discourse leads to the conclusion that all conclusions are genuinely provisional and therefore inconclusive, that all origins are similarly unoriginal, that responsibility itself must cohabit with frivolity, this need not be cause for gloom (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 1974/1988, p. xiii).

Looking back, she(ridan) notices that she has concluded each of the previous chapters with a vignette, a story of naming and of the unnameable, which shows her in a somewhat bumbling and stuttering mode, trying a bit too hard, missing cues, stuffing it up. Now, in the penultimate moments of this monstrous thesis, she has exposed her-self/anOther as the monstrous subject of therapy, as she who becomes too large for the room, the frame, the page.

Where will it all end...
Butler (2004c) has claimed that her texts are addressed to those of us who are ‘besides ourselves’ with rage, grief and passion, and indeed I did write the fictionalised accounts of therapy that open this (in)concluding chapter in a condition of being ‘beside myself’. Such writings are counterpoint to the painstakingly negotiated accounts of therapy in the two preceding chapters. They expose the limits of co-authorship through a radical resort to fiction and memoir. There is a kind of unspeakability in such stories, particularly for a therapist committed to undoing the notion of an unconscious, ‘abnormal’ and/or ‘monstrous’ subject of therapy (c.f. Foucault, 1999/2003).

I am strongly inscribed within a narrative approach to therapy, and have taken myself up more passionately within this approach than any other. Yet I could not write the stories of therapy that begin this chapter within narrative therapy’s conventions of co-authorship and frank accountability back to the client. In this sense, the writing of such stories, confabulated from some of my experiences and imaginings as both client and practitioner, may mark a limit in the ethical self-constitution of my-self as a narrative therapist. ¹

If my current practice as a narrative therapist meets its limits in accordance with what Butler figures as the limits of narrative itself, perhaps a turn, or in my case return, to the (im)possibility of psychoanalysis becomes a necessary fiction. In such a (re)turn, I know of course that it, that I, cannot be the same as I was, but then perhaps I have only lost what I never had (Butler 2001, 2004a).

Yet, while these stories touch upon the limits of narrative coherence, they also engage in a questioning of normative psychoanalysis. The first two stories attempt to picture how psychoanalysis may test subjective and narrative coherence and rationality, and

¹ However I did write these stories in a manner that I hope is consistent with the ethical considerations usually followed in narrative therapeutic practice. I have drawn substantially on my memories of having been a ‘patient’ in psychoanalytic therapy — a situation that I believe produced certain effects of transference — and also more generally upon my work with people who have experienced severe childhood trauma. The stories are fictionalised, but in the very few instances where it became apparent to me that I had drawn details directly from my work as a therapist, I either deleted that detail or negotiated closely with the relevant person as to whether and how I might include this material in the paper.
the second of these stories touches upon the terrible vulnerability of the ‘patient’ to a rupture of the analytic frame. In the third story, art ‘matters’, and this mattering of art reinstates a sight/site of embodiment, disrupting the Cartesian hierarchy within psychoanalysis that would relegate the making of art to a metaphor of the metaphysical.

Such stories as these can only be produced, I think, at some (dis)juncture of narrativity, a non-normative (or perhaps a differently normative) psychoanalysis (c.f. Butler 2000, 2004a, 2004b; Ettinger 2004) and a poststructural poetics/aesthetics. This is not to say that such stories are more poetically ‘true’ than the stories in the last chapters, just as those stories are not more discursively ‘true’ than these confabulations. All these accounts, however carefully negotiated, are fictions. In the accounts I have offered of therapy with Leticia, Ashley, and their families, I have attempted to respond to others, who constitute who I am/becoming, and yet who can never be ‘captured’ by my attempts to tell the stories of our relations. In the accounts that open this chapter, by mingling memories of my experiences of being ‘in therapy’ with memories and fictions of being an art psychotherapist for others, I have attempted to respond to my-self, as a subject, and as anOther who constitutes and exceeds my-self.

The inclusion, in this thesis, of both imaginative flights and carefully located co-productions speaks to a necessity to bring all the resources of imagining and writing that I can to the (im)possible task of re-presenting and producing the work of therapy. I aspire towards a practice that honours, questions and exceeds the modes of discourse and the styles of existence that constitute the theories and practices of therapy, and the ethical self-constitution of the professional, pedagogical and clinical subjects of therapy.

I work ‘narratively’ in my persistent questioning of dominant discourses and narratives, my fascination with the rich discursive possibilities of peoples’ lives and relationships, and my attention to those moments at the margins that might otherwise be considered ‘below notice’. I dissent from the reconstitution of the humanist subject within versions of discursive therapy that emphasise ‘agency’ and ‘intention’, and
from the deadening production of templates for narrative practice (Bird, 2004) that limit the potential to invent and research the relations of therapy in the moment.

I attempt to pay attention to, rather than to abject and disavow, those constellations of feelings, thoughts and sensations, often insistent or overdetermined, slightly syncopated or ‘out of time’, that constitute what in analytic terms is called a countertransference. Allowing these constellations to (in)form, and noticing how they are already (in)forming, my therapeutic responses, troubles the tendency to construct lives as temporal linearities and selves as narrative coherence. Those who criticise the notion of transference usually do so by disputing its rationality and verifiability, missing the salience of the approximate and risky character of transference for the unfolding of a therapeutic relation. Counter to this, Winnicott routinely celebrates mistakes as opportunities for therapeutic restitution. Foucault asks, “Should not the whole theory of the subject be reformulated, seeing that knowledge, rather than opening onto the truth of the world, is deeply rooted in the ‘errors’ of life?” (1985/2000, p. 477).

A more compelling argument holds that the transference is constructed by and reinforces relations of power. I agree with this critique, but I would also suggest that all forms of knowledge construct and re-cite the ‘truth’ of the subject within relations of power. The problem is rather that the powers of psychoanalytic interpretation tend towards totalisation and domination, re-siting resistance to this power/knowledge as pathology. My response to the dilemma of how I might take up the potential of psychoanalytic notions of transference, while refusing these notions the status of truth and the tactics of dominant power, is admittedly somewhat idiosyncratic. I attempt to take account of my ‘countertransference’ responses while refusing to ‘analyse’ another person’s ‘transference’ toward me. I am more reluctant still to categorise that person’s ways of being and relating on the basis of such an analysis. I see this as a compensatory move that restores ‘reason’ and re-territorialises the psyche by substituting a coherent theoretical and psychological narrative for the ‘lost’ coherence/incoherence of the subject. My bias towards countertransference is to some extent supported by some contemporary moves in psychoanalytic theory and practice (e.g. Casement, 1985/1990, 1990) and by art therapy’s tradition of refusing to
reductively interpret the client’s artwork. But then what do you call a counter-transference that is no longer counter? I suspect that this orientation makes me always an imperfect therapist, but then therapy is necessarily imperfect, and this is an imperfection I am willing to embrace.

The metaphors and practices of the arts are critical, I believe, to an ongoing opening to the possibilities of difference. Dominant discourse, in its persistence and vulnerability, is made visible and revisable through the critical capacities of art and writing. The difficulties and possibilities of transformation (despite the co-option of that term within the narrative of the neoliberal subject) are continually being constituted through writings and visualities that trouble distinctions between theory and practice, representation and production, research and therapy, self and Other.

A narrative art therapy ‘makes illustrious’ the narratives of the subjects of therapy. A psychoanalytic art therapy gestures, through semiosis, to a mythical, pre-symbolic realm of connection and loss, triangulating transference through displacement and containment. These are compelling fictions of how art ‘works’ in a therapeutic context, but separately, they are not enough. The embodied and visceral processes of the plastic arts do not simply ‘materialise’ the social and the subjective, or the intrapsychic and the intersubjective dimensions of ‘being’. Art in therapy can interrupt the body/psyche binary, suggesting both a body in excess of its imprisonment within the soul and a soul/psyche in excess of the subject. Art in therapy extends the being of bodies, selves and relations into unexpected becomings. The subjects of art therapy are not only practitioners of an aesthetics of self and of a psychodynamics of relationality. The subjects of art therapy are themselves becoming-artworks; they are inscriptions, installations and performances of the art of becoming Other-wise.

The enactment of a poststructural ethics and aesthetics in this thesis makes ending necessarily difficult. To insist on a narrative resolution or conclusiveness to the account(s) given in this document would be to foreclose upon the ethical resources that inhere in unknowability (c.f. Butler, 2004a). Rather than attempting in this work to reconcile art psychotherapy and narrative practice, artistic practice and theoretical
analysis, therapy and research, I have struggled to allow the tensions and connections between these approaches [and the philosophies and histories that (in)form them] to play themselves out and be shaped through my writing, my art making, my stories of therapeutic practice, my relationships with others, and even in my embodied and psychic sense of who, and for whom, I might be. The task has been that of refusing to choose between or force a resolution of contradictions: of experimenting with what arises and might yet arise from a refusal to foreclose on the radical and transformative possibilities of either/both.

At the limits of narrative coherence, one can perhaps ‘enact’ or ‘write’ (but scarcely ‘write about’) openness to the Other. It is this radical vulnerability that institutes/constitutes the psychic and the social as mutually imbricated, and which also confounds attempts at disembodied, conclusive or ‘once-and-for-all’ knowledge. Sometimes the exigencies of therapeutic practice (as of any practice) demand that I ‘take a position’, and I do so with passion and conviction. At the same time, I attempt to resist the tendencies for ethics to solidify into moral prescription, theory to become a normalising means for the judgement of practice, and practice to become exemplary rather than exploratory.

Therapy, like writing, is at best experimentation and performance, earnestly and playfully pursuing the fiction of truth while tolerating and even embracing indeterminacy and uncertainty. And writing, like therapy, is incomplete, faulty, fragile, dangerous, longing to love and to be loved, given over to the other, forever opening on an-Other possibility...
‘What have I done?’

The question could belong to the opening of a retrospective or the script of a lover’s quarrel, to the site of a confession or the scene of a crime.

How is the subject of therapy, or of postgraduate pedagogy, to tell her story? If each life and its interrelations precedes and exceeds the subject, where does the narrative begin? What account can she give of herself to another that is adequate to the beginning of an unknown relation, always already sketched in by the traces of the Other, washed in a faint hope of trust and renewal, and marked by the inevitability of delusion?

How do the questions of, and the questioning of, poststructural philosophies (in)form the stuttering moments of meeting and missing, the dancing and duelling, the forms of silence and the forms of speech, the making and the unravelling, that constitute a moment of therapy or research in all its complexity?

How does what we see relate to what we don’t see, what we say relate to what we don’t say, what we hear relate to what we don’t hear? How are seeing and saying, not seeing and not saying, hearing and not hearing, related each to the other? How is what we think related to the unthinkable, and what we feel related to that which it might be unbearable to feel?

Is discourse conditioned by a constitutive ‘outside’, or is that notion itself an effect of discourse? Does the soul/psyche imprison the body, or is the psyche a site of resistance (intrapsychic, political and discursive) to the disciplining of bodies and the ethicalisation of subjects? Are those binary choices themselves an effect of the binaries of self and other, psychic and social? If an ethical resource inheres in uncertainty, what ‘method’ pertains to the art of uncertainty?
She wonders if she should hold her early induction into the arts of narrative therapy, which is after all par excellence a therapy of questions, responsible for her apparently endless production of more and more questioning. Not entirely, she decides, since the questions of narrative therapy, while they have a multiplicity of possible replies, do tend to be answerable, at least.

Alongside the posing of questions that invite unexpected replies, her research has invited a different order of questions. These are the questions that open space for enquiry, for connection, and for innumerable becomings, precisely because such questions cannot be adequately ‘answered’, even while they demand an ethical and aesthetic response.

She asks herself what she has made of this thesis, and what this thesis has made of her. As she looks back through the passages of her dissertation, she notices how its shape both mimics and digresses from the shape of therapy, and both mimics and digresses from the broader contours of her life as therapist, artist, researcher, and all the rest. The practice of art is continually teaching her about its capacities, reliable and wayward, for mimesis and transformation, for materialising the weight of ‘reality’ and opening up (im)possible lines of flight.

If art ‘matters’, as she believes it must, then perhaps her thesis of experience, in which ethics and aesthetics are intertwined, does ‘make sense’.

She thinks, also, how important theory is for her practice as a therapist – how Foucault’s theories in particular have revolutionised her ways of conceptualising the words and actions of people in therapy. The notions of the positivity of power, of power’s capacities to form the subjects and objects of power, and of the ubiquity of resistances to power, have shaped her understandings of the ethics of therapy.
When she began her doctorate, she was in some ways intent upon legitimating a ‘Foucauldian’ view within art therapy and strengthening that perspective in the theoretical framing and ethical practices of her own therapeutic work. However, she soon realised that this was not a very interesting thing to do. There is no point in researching something for which you already think you have most of the answers. That would be at best frustrating and at worst deadening. She does not want to relegate Foucault to the status of a ‘savoir’ within her therapy, research and writing, an implicit and assumptive ‘basis’ that only becomes exposed as discursive practice when it clashes with more dominant ‘realities’. Neither does she want to proceed with a Foucauldian ‘template’ for these practices, disciplining her work according to a new set of norms. She wishes to engage with and against Foucault, as his apprentice and dance partner, but she will not be docile. She will sometimes tread on his toes, and she will dance with many others as well. (Moreover, she suspects he would approve of this, but she refuses to depend on an assumption of approval.)

What has been transformative in the process of this doctorate has been the cultivation of a poststructural research ethics of creativity and uncertainty, of a highly articulate incoherence, a wondering and a wandering. She wants to go on practicing a writing that can argue passionately and provocatively, while knowing such writing cannot ever get it right. She wants to publicly declare her love for the ineffable and uncertain qualities of both therapy and writing, for its bumbling and stumblings, its stammers and stutters, its failures, even.

She wants to go on writing therapy’s disjunctions and contradictions and unexpected trajectories, rather than to shape a narrative of therapy that brings it to order within a ‘regime’ of proper poststructuralism, or even of properly improper poststructuralisms.
What is th(es)is she has written?

Th(es)is is telling. It approximates, and fails to approximate, a fractured and imperfect story of her-self and her becomings within and through relations with theories, practices, experiences, fictions, dreams, persons, socialities, cultures, and moments. It gathers the force of narrative and yet is impossibly, improperly lateral.

Th(es)is is a work of art. It begins with the wide sweep of histories, theories and philosophies and comes to bear upon the particularities and idiosyncrasies of persons, situations and relations. It aspires to mystery and to the moment, to paint the sky and to concentrate an angel on the head of a pin.

Th(es)is is a performance. It enacts the giddy (im)possibilites of deterritorialisation and embodies a longing for home. It performs her relations to others ~ the apparent contradiction between the necessity to produce her own ‘original’ research, and the inevitability, which she hopes she has played up rather than effaced, that any such work is an ensemble piece, and that she, her-self, is also in many ways an ensemble.

Th(es)is re-cites, inevitably, much of that which it seeks to challenge or undo, in ways of which she can only be partly aware. Thus it embodies, painfully, her own vulnerability and fallibility, since readers will sometimes see what she does not see, not only those subtleties and complexities that more experienced researchers might pick up, but the obvious that is not obvious to her.

Perhaps th(es)is is in this sense also a confession and an atonement. It gives balance to therapeutic privilege, since in her writing she is exposed, as those who come to her for therapy are exposed, in ways beyond her knowing.
She writes th(es)is and th(es) is writes her. Together she and the Other constitute a poethics of practice, between and beyond an aesthetics of the self and an aesthetics of becoming Other-wise, between and beyond passionate and permanent critique and an ethics of uncertainty.

Th(es)is has given her pause. Spun from her body, thoughts and emotions, it has unravelled her. It is Other to her. Woven from threads of discourse longer and more enduring than her-self, it reminds her of mortality².

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She slips the memory stick into the pocket of her favourite jacket, wondering, as she has wondered many times before, how all these memories can possibly fit into such a slender wand. She turns off the computer screen and looks around her studio. It is night now, after a morning of providing clinical supervision, an afternoon of art therapy, and an evening of working on the final chapter of her dissertation. The paint has dried on the children’s artworks and their images are already sleeping in the wide drawers of the silver cabinet, under the racks of paints and brushes.

In these last months, such days have become less frequent. Most of her time has been dedicated to writing. She has slowly overtaken the long wooden bench, beautifully situated under three north-facing windows, with sheets of white paper in overlapping piles. The expression ‘a nest of paper’ drifts into her mind, a warm bed for the hatching of words.

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² Davies (2000) plays upon morality/mortality to figure a poststructural ethics of writing.
She feels oddly maternal. So much paper suggests that she must be going to hatch a massive chick of a thesis. An eaglet perhaps, but no, it is bigger than that ~ a teradactyl, or even a dodo. Should she be concerned? Will her offspring be extinct before it is born? Will the monster devour its maker and destroy what it loves? Will it tear the flesh of its readers; or, worse, perch awkwardly on the edge of their desks, nodding at them in sleepy-eyed inanity? Will her creation be earthbound or will it be able to fly?

It is almost time. She tucks the sheets of white paper around all the words and phrases and sentences and paragraphs and chapters and kisses them ‘goodnight’. She pull the curtains, extinguishes the light. A yellow light is shining in the back window of the house as she walks towards home across cool grass.

‘Where are you this evening?’ Her partner says to her, perhaps a little jealously, as they sit before the fire. Reaching out, she takes the other’s hand in both of her own, feeling the warmth of blood, the smooth fragile skin, bones fine like those of a bird. The rough pads of long fingers, smooth, moon-grey ovals of fingernails, their pale crescents and creamy sharp rinds. A strong narrow wrist and its tender underside, marbled with veins. Deepening lines of head and heart crossing in the crinkled hollow of a palm.

Late that night, as she closes her eyes, she can hear a rustling ~ not the scuttle of bush rats or flutter of mice, or the thundering of possums across the roof, but a rustle of feathers, or silks. The sound becomes stronger and more rhythmic, a beating of wings, or hearts. A trillion milk-white pages, embossed with midnight text, imprinted with the rich hues of drawings and paintings and sculptures caught in a magical projection of reflected light, are stirring and rising from their places.
They circle the studio, swooping over the silver cabinet, where the originary artworks stir in turn, safely contained in their orderly folders and trays.

Layers of imaginary worlds, of memories and dreams. Traces of that which cannot be recalled, and of that which was never quite there. Marks and gestures, signs and symbols, textures, tonalities; the viscerality of paint and clay; the weight of displaced trauma and the vivid realisations of embodied pain. Fine art papers enfolding sublime presences of absence and loss, an exquisite and ineffable lightness of touching and being touched.

The images are held in the cool metallic frame of the silver cabinet within the sturdy and graceful structure of the rustic timber studio, a place for the encirclement of nightmares and the embodiment of dreams. An indeterminate space and a chamber of echoes ~ coffin, house and crib, cell of tortures, bush bower and desert camp, a place of refuge, a room of one's own. The site of a meeting place and of a massacre. A charnelhouse and dance hall, the cellar below the stair/stare. House of worship and a house of disrepute. A temple of wisdom and a ship of fools.

The dark grows brighter. In the theatre of the unthinkable, the images in their bounded and infinite beauty and terror are awakening to a flight of words.

Behind her dreaming eyelids, the fonts in all their absurd and vivacious finery are throwing a party. Most of the Handwriting family are here. Clear-eyed Lucida dances a two-step with bold Bradley. Another Handwriting ~ Dakota is her name ~ slouches in wearing a cowgirl hat and braces, watched with suspicion by Times New Roman, who stands stiffly to attention by the door. Chalkboard holds up a list of the evening’s entertainment. American typewriter, wearing a fedora and smoking a big Havana cigar, is drinking bourbon and rye at the bar and secretly taking notes on everything.
Two pale men are waltzing together as if their bodies are one, all the time arguing vehemently in a voluble and difficult French. One of the men appears to be wearing her favourite Experience jacket, which to her chagrin fits him better than it will ever fit her, and the other looks entirely comfortable in that shirt she never could quite decide about. As she looks around the room she notices how a dress here, a scarf there, a certain material, pattern or cut, seems strangely familiar. Some of the guests at this celebration seem to have raided her wardrobe, or did she borrow the fabric of her dreams from them?

Outside, where the sounds of the festivities are muted, two women are walking arm in arm, laughing softly and murmuring the passionate endearments of friendship under a tracery of branches, beneath the pen-and-ink wash of a night sky punctuated with the steely points of stars. They murmur of certain passions and of passionate uncertainties, of their love of knowledges and their knowledges of love. One of them begins to sing and then the other — a light, syncopated duet, a wordless and lilting overlapping of oohs and aahs. They pause, swaying, and in that momentary silence, a door swings gently open in their song, and the dreamer passes through...
‘Grace occurred at exactly 2.55 P.M., five minutes earlier than expected; the kin and witnesses were deeply moved, while the barber-violinist showed us from a distance the hands of his clock to invite our verification of the absolute accuracy of his predictions...

‘Then the orchestra lit into a tarantella of thanksgiving to the saint...’

She is cured... but the celebration is over (Cixous & Clement, 1975/1986, p. 21—22).

How can she end, when she feels as though she has barely begun?

“(I)t is that last word, I think, that is most important to forestall (Butler, 1997, p. 126).

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3 Cixous and Clement are quoting here from de Martino, La terre du remords.
Appendix 1

A Further Introduction to Art Therapy

Histories and connections

Art therapy can be broadly understood as a combination of visual art and psychotherapy (or more rarely family therapy) offered in the context of a therapeutic relationship by an appropriately trained and qualified specialist practitioner. Within this broad understanding, art therapies, springing from a multiplicity of historical and theoretical antecedents, are diversely practiced in a range of countries, cultures and contexts.

Professional art therapy has been attributed beginnings, influences and connections in humanistic, child centred art education, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, analytic psychology, anti-psychiatry, existentialist groupwork, the hospital arts movement, the therapeutic community movement, Art Brut and outsider art, child art, naïve art, ‘primitive’ art, surrealism, and eighteenth century ‘moral treatment’ regimes. Early practitioners were often artists who worked either alongside of, or as, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, teachers and occupational therapists in hospitals, asylums, therapeutic communities and schools (Waller, 1991; Case and Dalley, 1992; Hogan, 2000). Practice situations also vary enormously: artists’ studios, hospital wards, private clinics, prisons, therapeutic communities, even a makeshift studio amongst the temporary city of tents and tarpaulins and the rubble of destroyed homes, for people traumatised, displaced and dispossessed by war.

Within this diversity, a hierarchy of knowledges has tended to emphasise the roles of psychoanalysis and visual art as the ‘parent disciplines’ of art therapy. The profession’s first historians viewed psychoanalysis as the main intellectual precursor of art therapy (Waller, 1991; Junge, 1994), although Hogan’s (2000) account of the
history of art therapy in the UK has challenged this perspective. A recent handbook from the USA (Malchiodi, 2003a) recasts this developmental metaphor to include psychology more broadly, claiming that “(a)rt therapy is a hybrid discipline based primarily on the fields of art and psychology, drawing characteristics from both parents to evolve a unique new identity” (Vick, 2003, p. 5).

It has not been possible to encompass this large and complex range of praxis in the thesis, and I have primarily focussed on my practice of art therapy within an Australian context. A consideration of UK and USA art therapies in the UK and the USA (and, to a lesser extent, Canada) also has relevance for my project because Australian art therapy (amongst others) has been substantially influenced by the art therapy cultures, literatures, theories, clinical practices and pedagogies of these countries (Campanelli and Kaplan, 1996; Gilroy and Hanna, 1998).

**Art therapy in Australia**

In Australia, the artist Guy Grey Smith worked as an art therapist in a Perth hospital during the 1940’s with people suffering from tuberculosis. Smith had contracted tuberculosis as a soldier during WWII and subsequently engaged in art making as part of his treatment for the disease, under the guidance of the first, self-identified British art therapist, Adrian Hill (Henzell, 1997). Australian psychiatrist, Ainslie Meares (1957, 1958, 1960), who made extensive use of painting and modelling in his clinical work and theorised visual symbolisation as an expression of unconscious conflicts, has been identified as a forerunner of art therapy (Junge, 1994). When a trainee in the Master of Art Therapy at UWS contacted veteran Australian art therapist, John Henzell, for information about early Australian practitioners, Henzell suggested that Meares was 'probably the first Australian art therapist’ (pers. com., May, 2003).

At the point of writing there is only a small body of published literature on Australian art therapy. This literature consists of the newsletters of The Australian National Association of Art Therapy (ANATA), several journal articles and book chapters, and a recent book on art therapy with people in aged care (Dennes & Gilchrist, 2005). Of this literature, two articles in particular, both by overseas art therapists who taught in
Australia, seek to provide an overview of the history, status and potential of Australian art therapy. There have clearly been developments in Australian art therapy in the eight to ten years since these papers were written, but these papers nevertheless offer a perspective both on Australian art therapy and how it is perceived by senior art therapists from countries with well-established professional and pedagogical institutions and substantial bodies of professional literature. The first of these articles (Campanelli & Kaplan, 1996) was written by USA art therapist, Michael Campanelli, the previous Coordinator of the Master of Art Therapy at Edith Cowan University (ECU) in Perth and Frances Kaplan, another art therapy educator from the USA, who taught in the same course for ten months. The other article (Gilroy & Hanna, 1998) was written by Gilroy, a British art therapist who was Coordinator of the Master of Art Therapy at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) Nepean, and Margo Hanna, a Canadian art therapist who lectured alongside Gilroy and succeeded her as the coordinator of the UWS course. Gilroy and Hanna’s article is based on a paper that they presented prior to the publication of Campanelli and Kaplan’s work, and despite a two year gap in publication, there is a sense of dialogue and reciprocity between the two articles. The articles also have in common a sensitivity to the authors’ positions as influential ‘outsiders’ attempting to offer an overview and recommendations about Australian art therapy.

In ‘Conflict and Culture in Australian Art Therapy’, Gilroy and Hanna discuss Australian art therapy comparatively, in the context of their knowledge of the histories of art therapy in the UK, USA and Canada. From this they conclude that art therapy, while manifesting differently in different cultures, survives and flourishes as a profession to the extent that it is able to recognise and tolerate conflict within its own ranks. Campanelli and Kaplan focus more on how Australian art therapy might challenge what the authors identify as the dominant Eurocentric tendencies of British and North American art therapies, by cultivating relationships with the diverse cultural traditions that are present in Australia by virtue of its indigenous population and its location in Asia. They note a potential in the critical perspectives that students bring with them to the course, attributing these to both the maturity and life experience of students, and to Australian cultural scepticism about the influence of more powerful Western nations.
Theoretical frameworks of art therapy
Not surprisingly, the main theoretical perspectives in art therapy reflect the major paradigms within psychology: psychodynamic, humanistic, positivist, and (in the case of family art therapy) systemic. However, the relative importance of these paradigms differs between psychology and art therapy, and within art therapy as well. Art therapy generally gives more credence to psychodynamic approaches (particularly object relations theory and Jungian analytical psychology) than can be found in modernist psychology. Positivist approaches such as cognitive behavioralism are relatively marginal in UK art therapy when compared to their growing influence in psychology and psychiatry. On the other hand, a preliminary review of professional journals suggests that art therapy in the USA has increasingly strong tendencies towards positivism. Vigorous feminist (Hogan, 1997, Halifax, 1997, Marstine, 2002) and anti-racist (Hiscox & Calisch, 1998; Campbell, 1999) positions exist within art therapy alongside, and arguably marginalised by, appeals to ‘the universal’. Family art therapy has been influenced in the last ten years by social constructionism (e.g. Riley, 1994, 1999, 2001). Recently a focus on the biological has emerged within American art therapy (Malchiodi, 2003b).

Art therapy and poststructural theory
Over the last twenty or thirty years, poststructuralism has opened possibilities and posed challenges within many disciplines, including those which are generally acknowledged to be closely related to art therapy. Contemporary visual arts have engaged strongly with the implications of poststructuralism for artistic theory and practice (Adams, 1996). Historically and currently, psychoanalysis has a complex and mutually constitutive relationship with poststructuralism: there are poststructuralist explorations within psychoanalysis (Kavanaugh, 1996) poststructuralist critiques of

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1 This difference in emphasis may in part be related to the different training backgrounds of UK and USA art therapists. Whereas British training standards insist that art therapy trainees should generally be trained and practicing artists with a first degree in the visual arts, this is not the case in the USA, where many come from the health disciplines. In Australia, students are admitted into postgraduate training in clinical art therapy from art, education and psychology undergraduate backgrounds, so long as they can provide evidence of sustained practice as a visual artist.
psychoanalysis (Milchman & Rosenberg, 2000; Sondergard, 2002) and poststructuralist appropriations of psychoanalytic concepts (Davies, 2003a). Some key poststructural theorists such as Lacan, Kristeva and Irigaray are trained in clinical psychoanalysis. A ‘critical psychology’ (Henriques et. al., 1984/1998) continues to be articulated within a broadly poststructural framework. Education has engaged with the implications of poststructuralism for pedagogy (eg Walkerdine, 1984/1998). Some existing psychotherapies have responded reflexively to poststructuralism, and self-identified ‘poststructuralist’ approaches to therapy have emerged (Andersen & Goolishian, 1988; White and Epston, 1990), particularly from family therapy.

Despite a wide-ranging engagement with poststructural theory in disciplines that historically and currently inform art therapy, relatively little poststructuralist inquiry has occurred within the otherwise burgeoning literature of art therapy itself.\(^2\) Perhaps the strength and longevity of the art therapy professions in the UK and the USA (Waller, 1991; Junge, 1994) explain the dominance of Anglo-American perspectives in the literature. Moreover, ‘discourse’ in its general sense is often equated with verbal and written language, and poststructural theory therefore seen as reinforcing the dominance of verbal and written language over non-verbal and embodied forms of communication — a dominance which art therapy seeks to redress. However, the language/body binary is effectively challenged within poststructuralism by the emphasis on embodiment and the materiality of discourses in the work of Foucault and a number of poststructural feminists.


\(^2\) I have mostly limited this brief review to references in major art therapy texts to the poststructural theorists I have taken up in this thesis. I have not attempted to engage with the influence upon art therapy or psychotherapy of ‘postmodernism’ more generally. The influence of postmodernism on the field of the expressive therapies is briefly considered in Chapter 1.
and elsewhere sits somewhat uneasily with her extensive engagement with Jung, tending to marginalise the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of art therapy. Schaverien (1995) also touches upon the work of Kristeva, but, rather than engaging with the subversive potential of Kristeva’s analytics and aesthetics, Schaverien seems to use Kristeva to cement a reductive psychoanalytic reading of symbolisation in the artwork of Schaverien’s patients. The theories of Lacan and Kristeva, which have opened space to subvert and complicate the conceptualisation of both art and subjectivity in much contemporary art theory, become, in Schaverien’s writing, a means of reading the symbolic content of artwork as regression to, and repetition of, the psychoanalytic drama of desire for the lost mother. At times this form of interpretation takes on a sort of normative zeal which, bizarrely enough, is only matched in the most diagnostic and positivist manifestations of American art therapy, such as the Silver drawing test (e.g. Silver, 2003). In Schaverien’s inaugural address at the University of Sheffield (2001/2003), a complex theorization of the gazes of therapist and client is juxtaposed with a hunt for images of foetuses and children to ‘prove’ the author’s point. It is strange to find this kind of decontextualised interpretation in the work of someone who contributed the notion of the ‘embodied image’ (Schaverien, 1992) to psychodynamically oriented art therapy.

In contrast, Aldridge (1998) engages with something very like Kristeva’s notion of the abject, by relating the aesthetics of therapeutic artwork made by children living in poverty to the signifying practices of contemporary artists such as Cindy Sherman, Rachael Whiteread, and Gilbert and George. Through this methodology, the writer approaches an edge between the desirable and the abjected, between “chocolate” and “shit” (Aldridge, 1998, p. 2). At a meta-level, Aldridge’s paper might be viewed as reconciling the ‘abject’ poverty of her clients with the desirable subject position of the artist/art therapist. Although Aldridge may have made a political choice not to theorise her approach in this paper, it might nevertheless be interesting to extend its range through a consideration of Kristeva’s concept of abjection.

In an article on the ‘deconstruction’ of gender in art therapy, art therapist Susan Hogan makes a brief mention of Derrida as a “deconstructionist philosopher” (Hogan, 1997, p. 21) whose work has influenced what Hogan regards as an unhelpful tendency
in French feminism (see later in this chapter). Hogan conflates the writing of Cixous with the practice of l’écriture feminine, which Hogan then dismisses as “not so helpful to art therapy practice…a move towards essentialism.” (Hogan, 1997, p. 21) This negates distinctions between French feminist writers, of whom Cixous is the only one to be named in Hogan’s article. Hogan does not note the parallel between l’écriture feminine and some of the contemporary feminist visual art practices which Hogan herself draws on to destabilise gendered assumptions within art therapy. She seems to miss the subversion of essentialism — and the equally subversive potential for art therapy — which resides in the performative quality of poststructural feminist writing practice. The generalisation and simplification upon which Hogan bases her critique extends to excluding Cixous (as well as Derrida, Barthes and Lacan, on whose work Hogan states that this feminine writing is based) from her list of references.

Conversely, Stephen K. Levine takes up Derrida (particularly in his relation to Heidegger) to expand the theoretical conception of the expressive therapies (Levine & Levine, 1999; Knill, Levine & Levine, 2005; see also chapter 1).

In selectively reviewing the art therapy literature, I came across several references to Foucault’s work, the vast majority of them being to *Madness and civilisation: A history of insanity in the age of reason* (Foucault, 1961/2001). In this early book, Foucault traces the problematisation and transformations of madness in relation to reason. He tells how madness became divided off and established as the ‘other’ of reason, a limit by which reason can justify itself to itself. The Cartesian ‘cogito’ is established at the price of the exclusion of madness, which becomes the condition of reason’s ongoing existence. Madness is divided off from mainstream society and from other marginalised categories; it becomes talked about, objectified and classified rather than dialogued with.

I wonder if *Madness and civilisation* became known to British art therapists via its retrospective inclusion in the cannon of anti-psychiatry. Moreover, ‘madness’ connects with art therapy from multiple perspectives: the profession’s historical origins in the work of artists in studios within asylums (Waller, 1991; Hogan, 2001;
Vick, 2003), the continuing role for art therapists in settings with people with a diagnosis of major mental illness (Killick and Schaverien, 1997), and the interest of early modernists such as the surrealists, whose work was co-emergent with early twentieth century precursors of art therapy, in the possible connections between art and madness (Hogan, 2001).

Foucault (1961/2001) himself considers the relation between art and madness at the same time as he refuses to valorise this connection. The great confinement shapes, not only our understanding of madness, but our assumption of forms of rationality that are in a sense ‘madder’ than madness. As though in protest, madness returns through art at the limit of rationality. There is no simple correlation, though, between art and madness. While Foucault suggests that artists and their art have a privileged relationship to madness, actually ‘being mad’ is, for Foucault, a state antithetical to work, including the work of making art. Foucault does not set up a reverse-hierarchy in which both madness and art are romanticised as the other of reason. He problematises madness’s emergence as the ‘other’ of reason, and suggests that art has a critical potential to disturb this binary. In a Foucauldian perspective of art therapy, the ‘art part’ might similarly hold a critical potential to disturb binaries of madness and reason, normality and the abnormality, clinical and creative, and even of therapist and ‘client’ or ‘patient’.

Hogan (1997, 2001) and Ian Mclagan (2001) cite Foucault in support of their critical engagement with art therapy’s historic and current relationship with psychiatric and psychoanalytic practice. Hogan (2000) engages broadly with the Foucauldian influence in historiography in her alternative history of art therapy in the UK, drawing on aspects of his analysis while disputing its historical accuracy. [In what could be seen as an un-Foucauldian move, Hogan claims that her version of history is “likely to remain the definitive text on the history of art therapy for many years to come” (Hogan, 2001, p. 17).] Hogan takes up Foucault’s themes of (self-)surveillance and the gaze in relation to the 19th Century practice of inciting ‘mad’ patients to recognise their madness in photographic portraits of themselves in order to be cured. She suggests that this practice shapes the assumption, in contemporary art therapy, that a person is ‘mirrored’ in their artwork and can therefore develop therapeutic insight into
her nature through understanding her own art. Hogan (1997) enlists a Foucauldian notion of the clinical gaze in a feminist deconstruction of gender in art therapy. Also writing from a feminist perspective, Rosy Martins and Jo Spence draw on Foucauldian theory in their lively explorations of ‘returning the gaze’ in phototherapy (e.g. Martin & Spence, 1986; Martin, 1997).

Waldman suggests that “(s)ocial deconstructionist debates which have taken place in the 1990s point to the influence of Foucault’s writings about the power of language and visual imagery to shape and constitute social subjectivity (Foucault, 1967)” (Waldman, 1999, p.10). However, Waldman’s own theorisation of the psychosocial is eclectically feminist rather than poststructural. In attempting to “create a synthesis of ‘social art therapy’ and feminist psychotherapy” (ibid), her writing seems to reconstitute the binary of social and psyche through a notion of internalisation.

Jamie Lofts (2002) has used Foucauldian discourse analysis together with a social constructionist framework in his exploration of art therapy with people with learning difficulties. Within family art therapy, Shirley Riley (1994, 1999) has for many years incorporated social constructionist and narrative therapy ideas into her ‘integrative’ approach to working with families and young people. Riley’s work embraces a more relational, social and contingent understanding of people’s lives and the issues that bring them to therapy. Both Riley and Lofts are interested in challenging conventional relations of power and knowledge in therapy and in privileging clients’ stories over professional psychological constructions. By emphasising social constructionism, these two authors expand the possibilities for the subject at the risk of reducing art to illustration of the client’s or family’s story. In his continuing research into the assessment of children diagnosed with disabilities, Robin Tipple (2003) engages a Foucauldian analytic of disciplinary power in his discussion of the production of the clinical subjects of art therapy and their artwork. Tipple’s approach is a significant political and theoretical intervention that challenges many of the normative clinical and interpretative assumptions of art therapy.

Some Black and other culturally diverse art therapists, engaging with the many resonances of ‘colour’, have explored the embodied and constructed experiences and
meanings of colour and race in art therapy from a narrative and poststructural perspective (Campbell and Abra-Gaga, 1997; Barber and Campbell, 1999). They propose that a “narrative/co-constructionist...position of not-knowing whereby the client is viewed as the expert” contributes to the ‘empowerment’ of Black clients and “gives the implications of ‘inferiority’ inherent to racism less of a foothold” (Campbell and Abra-Gaga, 1997, pp 220). These writers also notice that the therapies associated with this position make “a profusion of references to art forms” and, “sanction the generation of multiple meaning” (Campbell and Abra-Gaga, 1997, pp 220—221). This seems to suggest that narrative theory and practice has the potential to expand, rather than reduce, the significance of aesthetics within art therapy.

Foucauldian perspectives have been taken up in the broader field of the psychotherapies. Lisa Blackman (2001) has engaged a Foucauldian perspective in order to explore and challenge the binary that is often set up between discourse and embodiment in therapeutic approaches with voice-hearers. Rose (1994, 1998) theorises the role of psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis in producing the self-regulating subjects of Western neoliberal democracies. Narrative therapy (eg White & Epston, 1990; Epston & White, 1994) has a strong, although disputed, relation to aspects of Foucault’s work. Like art therapy, narrative therapeutic work shifts the emphasis from a psychological to an aesthetic metaphor for therapy, suggesting that these two approaches can be mutually enhancing (Freeman, Epston and Lobovits 1997; Linnell, 2004). Malchiodi (2003) acknowledges the existence of ‘narrative art therapy’ by including it for the first time in a handbook of art therapy; although grouping narrative and solution-focussed therapies together (Riley and Malchiodi, in Malchiodi, 2003) gives a potentially poststructural approach a humanistic and positivist inflection. However, I do not wish to reproduce, in this thesis, a derivative tendency in art therapy theory (Rubin, 2000) by simply ‘translating’ narrative therapy ideas and practices into art therapy theories and practices. I would prefer to extend and to problematise various aspects of both art therapy and narrative therapy in the process of an enquiry into a poststructural ethics and aesthetics of art-based therapy.
Creative arts therapists writing from a narrative perspective have often taken up the externalising potential of the arts, particularly in relation to working with children, and have proposed an aesthetic metaphor for therapy (Freeman, Lobovits and Epston, 1997). In their account of visual and verbal narratives of colour and race in art therapy groups, Vicky Barber and Jean Campbell draw attention to some common ceremonial and performative aspects of narrative and art therapy:

The rituals of art therapy, such as time for making images followed by discussion, often in a circular group; the display of work, shifting focus from one image to another or holding the group image in view, echo what White (1990), drawing on the work of Myerhoff (1982) refers to as ‘Definitional Ceremonies’ (p. 191) and so art therapy becomes a ‘ceremony of redefinition’ (Barber and Campbell, 1999, p. 30).

The aesthetic turn in art therapy
A turn (or return) to aesthetics in recent art therapy literature responds to what is perceived by some as the increasing ‘clinification’ of art therapy (Allen, 2001). This has manifested in theoretical publications and in a renewed interest in ‘the studio tradition’. Mclagan (2001) contributes to the field of aesthetics, as well as art therapy, by theorising a synthesis of the psychological and the aesthetic. Sally Skaife (2001) challenges the dialectical proposition of her own, earlier work (Skaife, 1995, 2000) and questions the psychoanalytic construction of the subject, by engaging with the possibilities for conceptualising the relation between art making and verbal discourse in art psychotherapy groups through Merleau-Ponty’s theory of intersubjectivity. Christine Woods (2000) restores and extends the significance of the studio tradition within UK art therapy, and Pat Allen (2001) advocates open studio work in terms of the post-Jungian concept of ‘soul-making’. Janet Marstine (2002) engages contemporary feminist art and theory to question the gendered binary of art and art therapy.

Catherine Hyland Moon (2002) reinvents art therapy as collaborative installation, making space for the realisation of the client’s aesthetic by re-infusing the space of
therapy (and the art therapist’s identity) with an arts-based perspective. Hyland Moon suggests that art therapists could conceptualise their work in artistic terms rather than be limited by a psychological paradigm, thereby developing an alternative ‘vision’ of art therapy practice. Contemporary art, rather than narrative therapy, is Moon’s inspiration for this vision, but given that both these areas of practice draw on poststructural theory to question essentialist notions of truth, power and subjectivity, it is perhaps not surprising that Moon’s suggestions resonate with some of the ethics and skills of narrative therapy. She urges art therapists to rediscover “the stories stuffed in the cracks of our lives” (p. 34), to attend closely and respond to the ‘poetry’ of the lives of those who come to meet with us, and to engage in a passionate ‘profession’ by speaking and taking action, artfully and intimately weaving together “work, love and life” (p. 35). While Hyland Moon’s theoretical orientation to therapy is predominantly humanistic and liberatory (rather than poststructural and deconstructive), her engagement with contemporary art suffuses her approach with a questioning of the taken-for-granted assumptions of the psychological disciplines. By opening up the aesthetic potential of art therapy, Moon’s work exceeds the terms of its own humanistic psychology and philosophy, taking art therapy into new territories.

Hyland Moon pays considerable attention to the idea that we could approach our studios, therapy rooms and even shifting temporary locations such as the family’s kitchen table as “installation spaces” (pp. 83—89). Moon also discusses the importance in art therapy of both words and ‘enactments’. I would like to extend this further to suggest that ‘performance art’ is a powerful and evocative metaphor for art therapy. Both installation and performance strongly characterise contemporary western art practice and may provide alternatives and/or extensions to classical psychological and/or classical aesthetic paradigms of art therapy practice. The metaphors of installation and performance draw attention to the constructed, situated and time-based character of artwork, troubling the divisions between the artist and her audience, and deconstructing or breaking out of ‘the frame’. Together with Moon’s suggestion that art therapists might regard the places where art therapy happens as
installation spaces, the metaphor of art therapy practice as performance art invokes the dramatic and aesthetic character of therapeutic interaction in time and space.\(^3\)

**Directive and non-directive approaches to art therapy**

In art therapy literature and pedagogy, there is often a binary proposed between ‘directive’ and ‘non-directive’ art therapy. A directive approach demands a certain pedagogical genre of speech from the therapist. This kind of speech is often abjected in art therapy, and a professional and even moral superiority may be ascribed to non-directive approaches. This preference for non-direction over direction has its basis in both psychological and aesthetic theory and practice. From a psychodynamic perspective, making the art materials available within a consistent therapy time and space for the client to use as s/he wishes parallels and accompanies the abstinence of the talking (and more significantly the not-talking) psychoanalyst, facilitating the work of transference and the emergence of symbolic expression under the sign of the unconscious. From a humanistic perspective, the counsellor’s non-directive stance in relation to both images and words (together with respect and ‘non-judgement’) allows the client to experiment with the responsibility of freedom and to discover their own truth. From an aesthetic perspective, the encouragement or ‘permission’ to experiment freely with materials in a space of companionable silence parallels the conditions of the modern or contemporary studio and embodies a post romantic assumption about creativity (exemplified in 19th century poet, John Keat’s, notion of ‘negative capability’\(^4\)). By comparison, ‘directive’ art therapy is seen as a derivative of a conservative template for art education, or as a mapping of the assumptions of positivist and psychoeducational approaches into art therapy. Art directives are often seen as the recourse of the untrained, inexperienced or overly anxious therapist, the one who cannot tolerate uncertainty and silence.

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\(^3\) See the recent paper by art therapist, John Henzell (2006), for another suggestion about the trope of performance in relation to art therapy.  
\(^4\) Kleinian psychotherapist, Joanna Barnes, who provides supervision for the art therapy teaching staff of whom I am one, first invited me to consider how the poetic concept of negative capability might parallel the capacity for imaginative scope and emotional holding in the habitus of a psychodynamic therapist.
However, there is no simple division of art therapy into categories of non-directive/psychotherapeutic versus directive/psycho-educational. For instance, rather than delivering a pre-planned ‘directive’, an art therapist might make a suggestion that arises from the conversation or from a previous artwork.

While some styles of family therapy, in particular strategic and structural approaches, are directive in an obvious sense, they are more likely to be dialogical. In contemporary family therapy it is common to regard the therapist (in post systemic work) as an active part of the family’s conscious and unconscious systems, or (in narrative family therapy) as a co-author of family stories. When art is integrated into these latter approaches, the art is not a simple response to a directive but becomes an alternative means of the family telling or making visible, to the therapist and themselves, that family’s (conscious and unconscious, dominant and subjugated) systems and/or stories.

**The languages of art therapy**

Art therapy is predominantly a therapy that gives a secondary, although significant, role to the (verbal) speech of the therapist and the client, but this does not remove the assumption of signification. Art therapy tends to follow modernist assumptions in regarding the client’s artwork as a kind of language. Whereas in art psychotherapy, the client’s art is usually viewed as a form of free association, in family art therapy such artwork is usually understood as a contribution to a therapeutic conversation. The therapist’s predominant abstinence from art making in psychodynamic art therapy parallels the psychoanalyst’s partial abstinence from speech. In other approaches to art therapy it may sometimes be more theoretically consistent, and therapeutically effective, if the therapist and client make art together. A co-authoring of art as well as of conversation can break the implicit hierarchy of the client responding with art to the therapist’s verbal questions. Some styles of psychodynamic

Oddly enough, the psychoanalytically inspired family therapies seem to have embraced a more active and interventionist role for the therapist, whereas those family therapies influenced by the interpretive social sciences are tempered by an ethnographer’s desire to leave the smallest possible footprint in the culture of the family. Perhaps this makes apparent the usually veiled power of the psychoanalytic therapist, who is after all paradoxically centred in individual psychotherapeutic work by their practices of abstinence and relative silence.
therapy also lend themselves to a conversation in art. Nicolette Eisdel (2005), drawing on the ideas and practices of Russell Meares, offers a very sensitive account of reciprocal art making in a psychodynamic, self-psychology frame.  

Silence also signifies. According to Foucault, who was in many ways an advocate of listening and a student of silence, there are many kinds of silences, each of them with different signifying qualities (Foucault, 1982/2000c). The silences within art therapy might variously be inscribed with the therapist’s theoretical assumptions about the client, with the discursive weight of (theories of) transference and countertransference, with a sense of the unthinkable or unspeakable, with an excess of pain, or joy, or with the client’s ‘resistance’ to dominant power, intrapsychic anxiety or the mutual imbrication of these (see Butler, 1993a).

Associated with the balance of silence and speech, and of art making and conversation, in art therapy is the problem of whether the artwork is reduced to or exceeds ‘illustration’. For instance, Shirley Riley describes the artwork in family art therapy as “illustrating the family story” and “offering a window to (the client’s invented reality) through the visual illustration” (Riley, 1997, p. 17) — a possibly reductive move given that illustration is only one genre within the visual arts and that representation has been problematised in both poststructural theory and contemporary art practice. Riley’s use of art is thus a citation of common family therapy practices in which clients, especially children, are asked to draw the narrative of the family, or the problem, or a behavioural sequence, depending on the dominant psychological or systemic theory at work in the therapy.

However, while it is relatively easy to critique the notion of illustration in Riley’s work, other art therapy approaches may reduce art to an illustrative function in less obvious ways. Those approaches to art therapy that do not reduce the artwork to an

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6 An affinity has previously been noted between Meares’ project within psychoanalysis and White’s project within family therapy, both of which draw on narrative metaphors and conversational practices (White, 2004a).

7 Although more intriguingly, Riley (1997) echoes Bateson’s well-known formulation of reflexive systemic practice and the undoing of restraint when she calls the art in family art therapy “the difference that makes a difference” (p. 132).
‘illustration’ of the client’s stories may nevertheless reduce the artwork to an illustration of the art therapist’s theories. This raises the question as to whether the art in art therapy offers something in excess of these experiential and theoretical narratives. If restored to its earlier associations with illuminated texts and illustrious lives, perhaps ‘illustration’ could be a metaphor for how art can light up alternative possibilities, thus exceeding the terms of verbal representation. Art can tell many stories, yet perhaps in the making of art there is always a trace of something in excess of narration.

Further questions
Like the ‘main body’ of the thesis, this appendix generates questions, rather than offers answers. Does silence speak? Is there anything beyond the ‘speech’ of silence? Is silence purely a discursive space, or can it gesture to a ‘constitutive outside’ to discourse (Butler, 1997a; see also Chapter 3)? If the visual is not unitary or innocent, what are the ethics pertaining to a therapy of multiple visualities? How can therapy be critiqued from the space of the aesthetic, from that paradoxical connection of the irrational and the sensible? What is ‘held’ in an artwork through and beyond our intentions and attributions? How can one listen to one’s visceral, emotional and embodied responses, without giving these a privileged status? If, as practising artists, art therapists ‘know’ about ‘not knowing’, what are the ethics pertaining to that paradox?
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