



THE P(LOVER) PARADOX

A Fictocritical Poetics of Detection

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ABSTRACT	VII
DECLARATION.....	VIII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IX
AN EXEGETICAL ALPHABET.....	2
<i>Antipodean Artefacts.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>B is for BEING.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Clues and detours.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Detective.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Echo kiss is a poem.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Fragment.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Fictocriticism.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>For grief.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Hybrid.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Incest.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Journeys, jokes, journals.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>K.....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Land is memory.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Memory.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Nomadology.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>O is for the ordinary and the mundane.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>P is for photographic memory.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>P(lover).....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Queensland.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Recollection.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Story.....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>T is for text.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Uncertainty.....</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Visible traces, suggested invisibility and woven writing.....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>X/Y/Z.....</i>	<i>66</i>

IT STARTED WITH AN ANECDOTE	67
<i>Memorial Drive</i>	71
<i>Guilt Shame Fear</i>	76
<i>Clue # 1</i>	81
<i>On innocence</i>	84
<i>The Sky</i>	88
<i>Mud Map</i>	90
<i>Anecdotal Evidence</i>	94
<i>Sub-textual Plot</i>	98
<i>Here lies:</i>	99
<i>The Walk</i>	105
<i>Story is to memory as memory is to story</i>	108
POEMS OF MEMORY AND UNCERTAINTY.....	110
<i>Detective Fiction</i>	110
<i>Horizon Madness</i>	113
<i>Clue # 2 Lesbian Detective Biographical Details</i>	114
<i>Unspoken Knowledge</i>	125
<i>Love File</i>	127
<i>Sleepwalking</i>	130
<i>Manifesto of Love</i>	132
<i>Clue # 3</i>	136
<i>Clue # 4</i>	141
<i>Clue # 5 Resolution</i>	144
<i>Her house: the place of constructing identity</i>	150
<i>Song of the Shirt</i>	153
<i>Canoe Tree</i>	154
<i>Memory cannot be cloned</i>	155
<i>If there is an echo in me</i>	156
<i>Skin Types</i>	158
<i>Embroidery</i>	160
<i>The archetype is made up</i>	162

<i>Engram 1</i>	163
<i>She is a boat</i>	166
<i>On Memory</i>	168
<i>Little fishes swimming past</i>	171
<i>Lifting the skin</i>	172
<i>Records Office</i>	178
<i>Postcard: Kangaroo Island</i>	180
<i>In the botanical gardens</i>	184
<i>You give me your memory</i>	185
<i>Collage as Method</i>	186
<i>Echo Kiss</i>	188
<i>It's too late now for the manifesto of love</i>	190
<i>Return</i>	192
<i>Travelling</i>	194
<i>Mother makes gardens that become memorials</i>	195
<i>Engram 2</i>	196
<i>I want to know</i>	197
<i>Memorialising the thylacine</i>	199
<i>The story – almost extinct</i>	200
<i>Writing + Memory = Memory Writing</i>	202
INVENTORY OF CHILDHOOD	206
<i>Object Lessons</i>	208
<i>Vulcan Junior Sewing Machine Made in England</i>	209
<i>Idle Hands</i>	210
<i>13 Piece Porcelain Toy Tea Set</i>	211
<i>Small blue wooden piano with three legs and numbered keys</i>	213
<i>Ornament</i>	214
<i>Dolls for Christmas Every Year</i>	215
<i>Greeting Card</i>	216
<i>Child's Cane Chair</i>	217
<i>Music Box</i>	218

<i>Hair</i>	219
<i>Miniature glass birds</i>	220
<i>Success/failure</i>	221
<i>Expectation/disappointment</i>	222
BIBLIOGRAPHY	223

Errata

- P4 comma after *anekdota*, semi-colon after unpublished
- P5 comma after all, semi-colon after talking
- P6 shows should be show, comma after family home
- P7 comma after moving
- P8 replace comma with semi-colon after museum
- P8 delete 'a', 'Often' start of new sentence
- P9 semi-colon after out of order, comma after model
- P17 Full stop after specificity, capital He.
- P21 semi-colon after events
- P22 semi-colon after belonging
- P27 colon after Barthes, it's should read its last and second last lines
- P30 should be Barthes'
- P32 remove comma after prose, P32 remove venture – second last line
- P35 full-stop after constructs, semi-colon after chronologies
- P35 comma after end
- P40 comma after King
- P42 full stop after configurations, comma after official, semi-colon after identity
- P43 comma after lesbian
- P44 comma after discourses
- P49 semi-colon after life
- P63 full stop after value
- P84 comma after six
- P 96 remembrances should be remembrance
- P 98 new sentence after different, semi-colon before this is fair
- P100 comma after ideas
- P101 Barthes', comma after embroiders
- P102 semi-colon after room, after engagement
- P104 semi-colon after departures
- P107 full stop after somewhere, factory-built
- P108 comma after Queensland
- P114 dyes should be die
- P 115 full stop after scenery, mise en scene
- P 117 semi-colon in the photos, semi-colon after why not?
- P118 comma after gaze
- P120 everythingilt should be everything
- P 121 comma after together, comma after come
- P122 colon after bleaching, full stop after country
- P 123 semi-colon after other
- P 124 semi-colon after me, after romance
- P 126 semi-colon after spectacle
- P 132 semi-colon after terminology
- P136 Pavlov-like
- P 140 comma after missus, semi-colon after groom
- P178 semi-colon after grief
- P196 it's should be its
- P202 Wings'
- P206 comma after joy
- P211 it's should be its
- P214 semi-colon after child
- P215 semi-colon after femininity, semi-colon after casual
- P216 semi-colon after child

Abstract

This thesis is a work of fictocriticism.

The exegesis is both an alphabetical poem that works as an introduction and overview to the material, with further exegetical elements placed throughout the fictional, autobiographical and the poetic. It is not a factual or conventional historical or autobiographical account but rather takes up questions of the place of memory in the construction of subjectivity. It argues that the self is, in part, a product of discourse. The work is set in Queensland but ventures into parts of Australia to think about questions of travel and nomadology. It develops a notion of a domestic archive where the home is seen as a kind of museum of the self and family. The work is based around a mother and a daughter who is written as the persona of detective. One of the elements is the telling of an incest story. The mode of telling attempts to break from standard modes of writing in order to develop ideas of how memory structures lives and the ways in which the ordinary and the mundane become ways in which events can be read, as registers of pivotal moments. The work builds on ideas about place and landscape.

It works with anecdotes, stories and secrets in the construction of autobiography. It plays with the idea of a narrator through the use of poetry and fictocritical writing. In an attempt to disrupt the cohesion of dominant narrative modes the work moves between events and ideas, shifting perspectives are used as a way of achieving this. It uses the techniques of collage or montage in an effort to disrupt realist representation. In this way questions of subjectivity and history are put forward. These ficto-critical writing practices are made possible through recent developments in theory and practice. The work uses mixed genres producing a form of hybrid writing that interweaves poetry, prose and theory.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis being made available for photocopying and loan.

Signed: 

Date: 

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Will the collage/montage revolution in representation be admitted into the academic essay, into the discourse of knowledge, replacing the “realist” criticism based in the “notions” of truth as correspondence to or correct reproduction of a referent object of study?

(Ulmer 1983, p.86)

... there are surely (lesbian) readers who would find, say a Roland Barthes to be a far more “lesbian” autobiographer than some explicitly lesbian writers.

(Martin 1988, p.78)

...writing itself is a practice located at the intersection of subject and history - a literary practice that involves the knowledge (linguistically and ideological) of itself as such.

(Trinh 1989, p.6)

The ability to communicate certain realities can sometimes depend on the genre in which one writes.

(Young 1997, p.64)

Producing “things” always involves value – what to produce, what to name the productions, and what the relationship between the producers and the named things will be. Writing “things” is no exception. No textual staging is ever innocent. Styles of writing are neither fixed nor neutral but reflect historically shifting domination of particular schools or paradigms.

(Richardson 1994, p.518)

An Exegetical Alphabet

Antipodean Artefacts

as a summary of all that has gone before and is to come
200 plus years, invasion or discovery?

A is for Antipodes: diametrically opposed to Europe – Eporue Emoh Ruo

I think of the body in the landscape

but what I'm really trying to explain is

the landscape in the body

and the landscape on the body.

(You can take the girl out of Queensland but you can't take Queensland out of
the girl).

Each moment caught against the light

light fractured and disseminated.

In basic terms

parts of the body that might remember place.

Feet remember sand and grass, dirt.

Walking then, as an act of memory

as the point of soldering onto the body an experience.

Walking through the streets of Queensland country towns

it all comes back to me

I've been here before

remember clearly the step into your house

change from outside to inside

smell of humidity, taste of air

One Nation stickers on Toyota Hilux dual cabs

alongside stickers that say 'I shoot and I vote'.

How men walk

hand in pocket

stiff hips

shorter movements in the walk, in the wait.

The stopping gesture

how men wait

for distance

between them

a practice of autonomy, a certainty about memory.

And yet this memory is undermined where I lie with my head against the sound of your story. Again, over again.

It's not that we inhabit the landscape, it is the landscape that inhabits us, our psyche, our dreams. Our waking and consciousness, no, no, not the yes,

I'm awake style of consciousness but in that moment when you really see, when the body forgets and forgetting resistance and gravity is aware of itself as only matter and not ownership, matter that thinks and acts.

It started with an anecdote.

What will be produced when the anecdote is allowed to speak for itself, if possible, (which would disregard reader/audience relations), and be utilised within a collage? The collage is added to, more pieces applied, the story shifts and is fixed in the text, but meanings? Meanings shift. Gaps are mapped. Silences produce meaning and are interpreted in ways that fit the anecdote. Silence bears its own dark shadow. Keeping silent, sit in the shadow. How to represent shadows in the collage except through silence? How to represent the ideas of the work except through taking anecdote and making it yield meaning. Noel King makes the point that clichés are a "pervasive and productive form of discourse" (King 1994 p. 263). It is possible to think about anecdote instead of cliché using this idea, anecdote as a pervasive and productive form of discourse. Anecdotes are passed between bodies and circulated in ways that demonstrate their power as a form of governmentality. She wanted to say: 'don't believe it, don't believe everything you hear', but the waves drowned out

her voice.

And it is in the anecdotes that so much of the information about the characters of this work is known. They're not known through lengthy discussions of the state of the economy or the meaning of reconciliation but through anecdotes. And anecdotes can be productive of all kinds of actions and thought. Anecdote is drawn from *anekdota* meaning things unpublished, work must be done to the anecdote to make it respectable, to make it mean, and to make it publishable. To use the anecdote as material for research requires an understanding of the place of anecdote in the social sphere.

Discussing the "autobiographical turn of cultural studies" Anna Gibbs states, "the anecdote is not necessarily a confessional genre in any straightforward sense, but functions to orient or more properly to produce a particular pragmatics, providing a model of narrative point" (Gibbs 1997, p.1).

It started with an anecdote: 'I want to tell you something'.

Laurel Richardson argues that:

in post-modern mixed genre texts, we do not triangulate; we crystallize, [and suggests that] the central image for "validity" for postmodernist texts is not the triangle - a rigid, fixed, two dimensional object. Rather, the central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. Not triangulation, crystallization. In postmodern mixed genre texts, we have moved from plane geometry to light theory, where light can be both waves and particles.

(Richardson 1994, p.522)

Whichever way I turn the crystal it reveals only anecdote, story and story again.

She isn't able to think about this except as victim, except through the reproductive lens of guilt and shame. The story is found in a 'multiple of shapes'. It is my negotiation and distancing effect, to give to this story the techniques of fictocriticism and poetics. It's only one step away from my own cell structure, one step away, one step away from story.

Begin with a story, an anecdote. I write - my mother wants to tell me something. I want to tell you. It's a Queensland story - a story from out of the minor places. It's set in the bush, it's got a dirt floor, a rammed earth floor, this story. It has welfare workers bringing food and clothes and casting eyes over all but missing everything.

In the Queensland bush, the rich Southern Queensland bush of sixty years ago. Prior to development, prior to the scramble for land, the drift from the Southern states. Smell of soil. Smell of eucalypt.

Annette Kuhn says that:

a family without secrets is rare indeed. People who live in families make every effort to keep certain things concealed from the rest of the world, and at times from each other as well. Things will be lied about, or simply never mentioned. Sometimes family secrets are so deeply buried that they elude the conscious awareness even of those most closely involved. From the involuntary amnesias of repression to the wilful forgetting of matters it might be less than convenient to recall, secrets inhabit the borderlands of memory. Secrets, perhaps are a necessary condition of the stories we are prompted by memory to tell about our lives.

(Kuhn 1995, pp.1-2)

It was a time of talking, it came straight from the horse's mouth.

To the anecdote then and the possibility of its use in academic research.

Anecdote has a status inside these new forms of writing.

A point can be made about theory and fiction, about writing an academic thesis and about the demands of the academy. Questions of knowledge and

knowledge production are inherent in this, as are the kinds of values placed on different kinds of work which are historically and institutionally constructed. For autobiography then, which is only partial and registered through the use of a character who is a detective, or one who dreams of being detective. Where some autobiographies are constituted through chronological and factual accounts it is my desire to switch the register. To ask how it is that you live in the world?

As if by detection. Always working out the clues, is this how it works?

And for archive, in particular the domestic archive or personal museum. The term derives from a discussion I had with Professor Ann Laura Stoler. In a follow-up exchange of emails with two of her graduate students we discussed this and they use the term 'domestic archive'. I have borrowed the term from them

(Stoler, e-mail to the author, 1 August 2000).

This is the place where many women register themselves in relation to the outside world. I use it as a way of talking about the objects in the house and the ways that these come to symbolise events and little histories. A modern mnemonics is developed. The mnemonics user walks through the house and is drawn to remember, to keep active the events and occurrences of a life. To each object I attach a memory. To each object a story reaches out beyond its immediate register.

Several apparently disparate ideas come together in the domestic archive. To use the idea of the domestic archive or personal museum is to see it as a place for the representation of memory. Where the little artefacts that signify class, the sporting trophy, the objects that mean something to their owners, shows the ways in which these constitute a kind of museum. It is in the home, the family home where an attempt is made at demonstrating family connectedness when this is not a reality. The detective moves through these artefacts asking the

question 'who are you?' a question favoured by so many detectives, not 'who killed you?', where death is not the death of the body, cells finished, blood not moving but where death is the death of potential, of optimism, of imagination. Where the death becomes a living passivity and resignation. I will never go there, never walk the streets of Venice before they disappear under water, under water.

The artefacts display a warmth to the touch. The touch is fleeting, the remembrance long.

Death is something represented in museums, and the question is once again of representation. The representation of the death of cultures, death of individuals. The skulls of dead 'natives' in the glass cabinet represent the ways that the body of the other is represented after death.

I can look and look at your dead skull and see little more than the way it is interpreted for me by the device of the glass case, the label, the collector's ideal. He held, for a moment, the skull of a long dead primitive man.

I am dead to you. Dead to your eyes. Alive by degrees of fascination.

Discussing the museum and the ways in which displays are presented, Tony Bennett accounts for the use of the idea of:

... 'the backteller' [and presents] perhaps the most influential 'backteller' of all - Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. [He states] As a narrative form constructed around the provision of a trail of clues and their delayed decipherment the methods of detective fiction are - as Ginzburg has argued - similar to those sciences governed by the conjectural paradigm. Like the palaeontologist, the detective must re-construct a past event - the crime - on the basis of its remnants; and, just as for the palaeontologist, bones may well be 'all that remains' for this purpose.

(Bennett 1995, p.178)

The 'bones' of memory are brought out to study and reflect on as if they will tell the truth about an event. Because real, because material. Something that can be held in the hand, something that can be seen, that has a physical presence.

Not unlike the artefacts in the 'official' museum where interpretive devices instruct us in their meaning. As Bennett suggests "The museum was another 'backteller', a narrative machinery which conferred a public visibility on these objects of knowledge" (Bennett 1995, p.178).

It takes detective work to see through the machinery of the museum, the interpretation of events is powerful in its narrative strategies. Hard to develop a counter-discourse, a resistant reading, a negotiated position.

The persona/character of the detective allows for a distancing and a technology enabling her to speak at a fictional distance and to produce some kind of 'reading' of the events.

Fictocriticism is producing work which develops new narrative machinery. It is involved in a similar task of making visible through a range of textual strategies the ways that memory can be utilised in a narrative. This is an accounting of the ways in which memory structures and delimits the actions of others. It illuminates the paradox at the heart of the story.

Memory is not action yet is able to demand some actions. Story telling is not critique yet fictocriticism suggests that the two can be brought together in some way. The paradox at the heart of the fictocritical gives it a tension and liveliness which throws the reader around in uncertain ways.

What is memory – again?

Crimes of memory are produced through silencing memory. The crime at the heart of the story demands its own silence, creating layer upon layer of denial and cover-up. This crime and ensuing silence will produce a new set of relations.

We were there prior to today, and we are in memory and in the present, I have to think of you in memory, your image, your face and hands, to recall you there as I speak and write.

Memory is a force of rhetoric, the encounter of memory and stories of memory that shift emotion, instruct you in your morals, your behaviours, often it is the memory of someone else, used as representative and homogeneous. Memory is discontinuous, surfacing at particular times often surprising the remembered.

Memory is like collage with its randomness and unclear connections. Memories are out of order, they are not chronological and they contain seemingly disconnected images and ideas.

Fictocriticism utilises a discontinuous narrative, expecting you to fold back and follow the clues, sustain the investigation. Repetition and re-presenting the clues will lead you to something and then away. Each time you feel you are closing in on the meaning, it will be deflected for you and by you. There is no point in straining against the text, this text will not envelop you, has no comfort zone, no safe ending, no kiss, you will be left out in the ocean without the comfort of the boat or the line. It is only detective fiction that can see and make final comments. In the real I am left with a sense of empty longing. The clues accumulate and give rise to partial stories and remain disconnected. There is the occasional overlapping edge or corner struggling to make the map complete.

And for auto-theoretical texts, Stacey Young suggests that:

The power of the auto-theoretical texts lies, in part, in their situatedness and embodiedness, the writings' autobiographical nature clarifies the origins of their insights, and thus underscores the contingency of their claims (indeed, of claims about social reality in general). It also works as an invitation to the reader to examine her own multiple positions – in relation to the author/narrator (the relationship is not always one of identification), and by extension, to other readers and authors; and in relation to various aspects of the social structure.

(Young 1997, p.69)

Feminist writers have used the auto-theoretical as a way of situating personal narratives within an analytical framework. The analysis sees the autobiographical story through the lens of feminism. Elements of the fictocritical can be thought of in relation to this model however the fictocritical tends towards ways of articulating the self inside a wider range of discourses.

B is for BEING

hard to come by

BEING is suggested in times of crisis

Be Here Now

or Beer Now on the white t-shirts of the University 1st year students in orientation week.

And again for Bennett's back-teller, a narrative device:

The museum, as 'back-teller', was characterized by its capacity to bring together, within the same space, a number of different times and to arrange them in the form of a path whose direction might be traversed in the course of an afternoon. The museum visit thus functioned and was experienced as a form of organised walking through evolutionary time.

(Bennett 1995, p.178)

With her vacuum cleaner in hand she loves to tell the story of traversing the house in three hours and cleaning, dusting and polishing the floors and noting down the objects and artefacts representative of a life.

B is for Brisbane also, the detective has been known to live there. Has left little there except the night the graffiti: 'Social needs before private profits' and 'Lesbians are everywhere'.

She is historically juxtaposed. Saying goodbye to and at Roma Street railway station before they got rid of it.

For borderline also, that is never quite one thing or another.

Withholding all, withholding nothing.

You think you know, you think you've got it.

Understood. Clear.

And for border into New South Wales for women to get abortions, to get a life, to be caught by Sydney.

To return to Queensland, or never to return. Dispersed during the Joh Bjelke-Petersen years to other states, other states of being.

It's for burial too, we were not there, but later, came to that place of burial. There are flowers on the grave of the rapist. She steps back as if stung. A bouquet wrapped in shiny orange plastic. Plastic flowers in a glass vegemite jar, a child's handwritten note on white cardboard - Great Great Grandfather Jacob Hablutzel by Daniel. It was midday, hot and windy, difficult to stand out amongst the headstones.

But what really lies there?

Bones, last resting place. My mother wants to tell me something: your grandfather died in Boggo Road jail. True or false?

In a discussion of embroidery practices in the 1700s Rozsika Parker says:

In embroidery, ... the mourning woman is endowed with power and self-control. She stands beside the tomb, bravely and dutifully strewing flowers. She becomes the heroic survivor, dutiful in that she treasures the memory of the departed, but very active and alive.

(Parker 1984, p.135)

She stitches and sews and with each act of pushing the needle through material and creating idealised images she moves one step further away from the past, from the personal history that threatens to envelop and control her. She will spend a whole life in mourning yet able to go on. Now she embroiders and constructs idealised landscapes that show no human form.

B is a boy

She sometimes wishes she was

She puts on the suit, John Berger like, aware of the meaning.

Ties back her hair, walks like a boy, mistaken for a boy.

Boy in the detective, has to be boy, flirting with girl.

'To handle the secret and its attendant investigation'.

For bones

we found some

they told us so much but were incomplete remains.

Once I knew such certainty
Now my thoughts are like dust.
Bone handled knife in her hands
speaking of history.
Imperial handle, imperial cut.

She takes down from the table the bonehandled knife and shows how she
made the first cut.

She said she slept with a knife under her pillow.

Something born.

Me.

It started out with a glory box, at times we called it the hope chest.
Into the chest went objects made for the future. Linen, crocheted and
embroidered doilies, towels and napkins. Stored away as preparations for a
future unknown.

Into the glory box go ideas and beliefs. She sings to it. She talks to it. Closes
the lid and waits.

And then the repetition of story begins.

The mother speaks in clichés and warnings.

Warnings against all kinds of potential perils for the female child. The feminine
under pressure.

She says – ‘watch out for everything, it is all a danger, to your skin, to your
brain, to who you are, this dangerous wide country, never a woman saw the
edge of it and survived, watch out, watch your back, your neck, your flesh’.

For bodily.

Hers.

B is for body then.

I’m not sure if it possible to write the body.

The body is always mediated and represented through signs. What is enacted
on the body makes the story, is carried within as memory and memory
stimulants.

Anna Gibbs argues that:

ficto-criticism made its appearance here in the writing (mostly academic) of women very well aware of those strange, exciting and provocative texts emanating first of all from France and then later from Canada from the late seventies onwards - most influential were Hélène Cixous' manifesto 'The Laugh of the Medusa' and her polemical essay 'Castration or Decapitation', Luce Irigaray's first two books and in particular the collection of essays 'This Sex Which is Not One'.

(Gibbs 1997, p.1)

The influences of French feminism and the range of experimentations that have resulted from recent innovations is a point reiterated by Alison Bartlett in a discussion of Australian women writers and *écriture féminine* "it is a style of writing primarily marked by its disruption to conventional reading, writing and representational practices as produced through, and supported by, patriarchal values". She goes on to say:

As a counter-strategy, *écriture féminine*, it is argued, is theoretically sourced in the bodies of women, [and] texts, however, are produced through the lived practices of being socially positioned as (among other things) women, so these effects will be inscribed in what is written. 'Writing the body' therefore plays a significant part in actively inventing new ways for women to speak and write about ourselves as women, rather than through the narrative machinery of patriarchy.

(Bartlett 1998, pp.1-2)

B is also for boat, which appears on the horizon, mirage like, to deliver you from all of these possibilities.

The morning the sky was salmon pink, not red, filled with sailor's warning, we began to know something about time. It appears ordinarily as something to measure by but it is always more. Tell me more, they say, about time as a

measure.

Time heals all wounds.

Only time will tell.

How long does it take to sail around the world?

We are no longer sailing.

Sailing is a distant memory.

I'm always writing from memory. Shepherd's delight.

For Brewster who states that:

The personal turn can be seen as part of a trajectory, from the 1980s onwards, of the humanities and social sciences growing interest in experience and memory, especially that of minoritarian constituencies – such as working class subcultures, women, youth, and racial and ethnic minorities. During the 1980s and 1990s there was also an expansion of writing investigating renovated ethnographical methodologies, which sought to develop new ethical practices of embodied knowledge production. Some of the work in this broad field drew on personal narratives in an effort to deconstruct the binaries between public and private memory, between 'objective' and subjective modes of discourse and between specialized knowledges and everyday life.

(Brewster 2005, p.1)

Watch this space as it fills with personal narrative that attempts something different. Who am I when I am the writer of the structured narrative? I am pushed into a shape that is unrecognisable.

Clues and detours

And canoe and canoe tree.

A memorial to something misunderstood, memorialised in guilt and yet living,
branches out with new growth.

C is for crushing,

the evidence and attempting to make it deliver meaning.

For collage:

Modernist collage takes to its logical, or illogical conclusion the rhetorical device of quotation. The historian or orator sets his quotations like jewels in the crown of his discourse. They enliven his remarks; they lend his argument literary and historical authority. But as Walter Benjamin understood, quotations also signify the passage of memory from the oral to the written: they revive a historical event, but they also bear witness to the fact that the event has passed out of living memory. Seizing on this paradox, the modernists aimed to prise quotations from their historical matrix, to display the jewels without the historical crown. The very absence of a linear discourse linking them would revitalize these texts, revealing their metonymic potential so that they resonated with intimations of the whole in a way that was impossible when they were buried beneath later layers of language.

(Carter 1992, p.187)

And for class.

We don't talk about class it makes us uncomfortable.

Lynette Finch suggests that 'incest was used to demonstrate that a particular class was depraved' (Finch 1993, p.50).

This will be the class of people who belong on the dirt farm, the poorest house in the street.

She cares about the way that the washing is hung on the line, it needs to be tidy and orderly. She cares about what the neighbours will say. She will never be released from impending shame.

Tracing the development of new forms of criticism, Gregory Ulmer makes a similar claim to that of Laurel Richardson suggesting that:

The issue is “representation” - specifically, the representation of the object of study in a critical text [and that] Criticism now is being transformed in the same way that literature and the arts were transformed by the avant-garde movements in the early decades of this century.

(Ulmer 1983, p.83)

And Ulmer uses Hayden White to develop this idea:

White suggests instead that historians of literature (or of any discipline, for that matter) should use contemporary scientific and artistic insights and methods as the basis for their work, pursuing ‘the possibility of using impressionistic, expressionistic, surrealist, and (perhaps) even actionist modes of representation for dramatising the significance of data which they have uncovered but which all too frequently they are prohibited from seriously contemplating as evidence’. [He suggests that] the principal device taken over by the critics and theorists is the compositional pair collage/montage.

(Ulmer 1983, p.83)

These techniques are found in a range of critical and theoretical texts and the use of such techniques produces various effects. Laurel Richardson includes in her essay a substantial list of works demonstrating these (Richardson 1994, pp.517-527).

Paul Carter's use of the notion of collage is helpful in thinking through Australian specificity, he suggests that:

In a post-colonial society (which means in Australia a migrant society), it is quite different. Here collage is the normal mode of constructing meaning [and that] To re-invigorate collage it is necessary to place the emphasis, not on its synthetic power, but on the logic of its fragmentation. Stylistically, post-colonial collage fragments the semiotic field exactly as a commercial radio station does or the front page of a newspaper or a car journey downtown. The difference lies in its attention to the fissures, its interest in mapping the gaps, the inter-zones where discontinuities are suppressed, [and] Rather than recompose disparate realities, the goal of this collage is to decompose them further, to relocate and sound the spaces in-between.

(Carter 1992, pp.186-187)

Creative/Academic

The work here posits the question: what might it mean to think through Trinh's statement of 'writing being located' and develop a response that constantly works toward itself in these terms and is a demonstration of the linguistic and the ideological asking. What kind of subject am I and what kind of history and writing is made possible and locates me in this work?

It is to this recognition of subjects being positioned historically linguistically and ideologically that I work through my own position as a writer. I return to it constantly and ask what it means. To consider writing as a practice rather than as a creative gift, to consider myself as located at a particular intersection, what kind of subject am I, what are the historical circumstances I find myself in, what does it mean to be aware of oneself linguistically and ideologically or to have one's writing be a demonstration of these factors? I have attempted to keep these questions in mind and consider Trinh's location of the writing subject to be the perfect capsule for thinking about a range of ideas.

The hybrid mixing of genres that constitutes fictocriticism embodies – at the level of its formlessness—a critique of traditional interpretative acts in the academy, acts which rely on the essay as a neutral frame to validate the authority of their rhetoric and to objectify the subject of their criticism.

Fictocriticism, however, acknowledges the effect of the Other on the self—on the interplay between the two poles—constructed as opposite. As Ania Walwicz has written: “This is fictocriticism. I combine an idea with me now and I write me. I do not separate one from the other.” It is this emphasis in fictocriticism on the necessity of self, of “me,” of “I,” in relation to its Other, its object of criticism, that marks it from traditional critical interpretative acts.

(Flavell 1998, p.203)

I see what I do as fictocritical, an area of textual production which demonstrates a particular kind of nexus between theory and creative writing. This nexus can be both productive and problematic. My interest in this area takes the form of working with and in, both the creative and the academic.

Creative writing programmes have sprung up in English and other related areas of universities in recent years in Australia, (see Dawson 1999, 2003, Kroll 2002, Krauth 2002, Brewster 1996), in some countries these programmes have been running for many years, in some cases it is English Literature academics equipped with the techniques of literary theory and textual analysis who are involved in teaching creative writing.

My creative writing is informed by theory, and this is wide ranging, from thinking about place/landscape in Australia and the self as a product of discourses, to producing collage, collage which is made up of the blending of the creative and the academic.

In the teaching situation it is an approach that asks students to think about themselves in their creative writing as subjects of a range of discourses on the popular. The genres of science fiction and romance provide ways of talking about discourses. The opportunity to see themselves as products of discourses of science or romance evokes productive responses. Understanding

the techniques that comprise romance, science or detective fiction is an attempt to develop in students of creative writing an awareness and critical response to the works of others.

Or it could be thinking about writing/creative writing positioned in the ways that teaching in art schools is carried out, where the emphasis is on the particular skills and the production of work that develops those skills. This is a crucial and divergent point. Developed over a long period, the art school emphasises techniques and the essential mastery of those for continuation, it also emphasises the learning of art theory and history.

Can writing be taught? More importantly can experimental modes or ficto modes be taught?

How to teach fictocriticism?

These questions arise from the fairly firmly entrenched notion that the writer and even the artist is born with a special gift. It is taken for granted that artists learn techniques from others and from experimentation, and observation. Artists visit galleries, writing students could do a similar activity and it is called reading or watching - plays/films/television/ and listening – to radio for instance. Whilst there are informal learning processes - the 'absorption method' for instance, the attention of a teacher working with a student on a manuscript can be very productive.

However all forms of writing can be taught. Scriptwriting is an appropriate example here and provides a great opportunity to teach both the analysis of the script and the construction of the script using a range of techniques.

A relatively recent development in academic writing has been the use of the self as a position to write from.

This kind of work asks questions of culture and to this end works with James Clifford's explanation of his methodology, he states:

My levers for prying open the culture idea were expanded concepts of writing and collage, the former seen as interactive, open-ended and processed, the latter as a way of making space for heterogeneity, for historical and political, not simply aesthetic juxtapositions. Ethnographic practices of making and unmaking cultural meanings were discussed in a historical context of Euro-American colonial expansion and the unfinished contestations which, since 1945, have gone under the name of 'decolonization'.

(Clifford 1997, p.3)

It is these notions of the 'historical and political' that mark possible shifts in the production of texts.

Texts can engage with the shifts in knowledge and meaning making.

Being born into this era and being enabled in technologies of the self that impact on academic writing is acknowledged by Hermione Lee discussing the changes in knowledge making and the impact of feminism and post-modern theories in an interview about her biography of Virginia Woolf:

We talk so much about Woolf that we don't get around to talking much about Hermione Lee, but that's not so surprising: Lee says she is only just learning to write personally, to use the word "I". When I started writing in my 20s, I was in a generation when to be a proper scholar, you had to suppress your personal emotions, and write with formal objectivity, [she says] with the changes in academic and feminist writing, it's now possible to move between the personal and critical in a much more flexible way.

(Sullivan 2000 p.24)

Sometimes this work can be thought of as auto-theoretical where the writer uses autobiography or discussion of the self whilst theorising out of experience,

a common technique in early feminist writing where women used their experiences to think through a range of social, historical, political and cultural circumstance.

Stacey Young suggests that this is a:

new genre of feminist writing: autobiographical works which are also explicitly theoretical in nature, [and that these] suggest a different approach – one which acknowledges and studies the multiplicity and diversity of social reality, as well as the importance of subjectivity and its construction through language.

(Young 1997, p.64)

The auto/biographical is bound up with questions of truth and one of the ways in which fictocriticism works is to de-stabilise the strength of one account as the truth. I will be using poetry and prose combined with elements of the autobiographical – producing what I have started to think about as poeto-criticism.

It has been the bringing together of a range of ways of thinking and doing to attempt to understand the position that Paul Carter speaks of in a post-colonial society with post-colonialisms allowing the surfacing of voices previously limited or controlled, even patrolled. Post-colonialism can be seen as a condition of possibility, alongside the ideas of place and the space of Australia, island continent, fragile environment and a zone of contestation. In this place I speak and write.

It is an attempt to bridge creative and academic writing. It is not factual nor is it a conventional historical or autobiographical accounting of events, it does not delve into the official archive, but presents a possibility for another kind of archive. This is outside of the official archive and the known and recognisable. It is more interested in the production of a poetic representation, in the production of something that might look like a collage or a poetics.

Ulmer suggests:

It turns out that it is possible to learn to write a theory of poetics in the same way that one learns to write interpretations or critiques [and] In an experimental humanities, students (and teachers) learn to write original poetics. The value of these poetics may then be tested by using them to see what sorts of work they help the student (or any investigator) to generate. In the heuritic classroom, students become producers as well as consumers of theory.

(Ulmer 1994, p. xiii)

If biography is a technology of the self then what to do with this technology?

Being born doesn't ensure belonging, what is it that you might belong to?

A family, a town, a state, a country, a world?

All demand the recognition of the self in one or all of these.

And when the self is only ever partially recognised or mirrored back you might begin to think of yourself merely as a set of clues.

And in the set of clues you will find the following:

a memory of the smell of the receding ocean on rocks

a night in Amsterdam

a lost set of keys in a shopping centre

a birthday dinner of course

a jacket

a love letter

a yearning for sleep

some things tangible, some remembered only.

Detective

In this work the detective is the narrator, the device for telling stories.

Once she heard a story.

Detection is ultimately about following clues, about acknowledging the rise of the feminist, the lesbian feminist detective, the forensic expert. Acknowledging that she is in the background and waiting to be given the clues. It is also an ordinary story filled with elements of the day to day and unspoken details. The detective allows for a play of ideas and genre recognition. Is she a detective poet? Is she a detective busily deciphering memory? The detective proposes a way to think about lesbian memory.

She records some of the details in the poetics and creates a little memory archive that accounts for minor details of a life.

D is for Degilbo. If you go there, you will find a cemetery, a wooden hall where you might see shell buttons on the ground outside. You will see a woman sitting on the steps at the entrance to the hall.

She says 'I want to tell you something'.

On the Queensland ground marked with rain indentations where the rusted out gutters have leaked water after heavy rain. Gutters that mark where the roof comes to its end, the gutters of the town hall with its wide verandah. On the ground under the gutters I find the shell buttons. She danced inside the hall, tongue and groove, torrential downpour and leaking gutters.

Unknown places, small towns, that grew for whatever reason, outposts, train stops, never stops, passes through to somewhere else.

In what order do residents leave after train services are suspended, towns left to their own devices and becoming tourist destinations with their 'historic buildings'?

Clustering around an idea or a mineral find, or testing the distance between bigger or smaller towns. In this small non-incidental place things happened, however there are no stark reminders, no scars on the landscape, no memorial scribing. No hand prints.

There are no signs here carrying the ideas of the past, signs that are more

evident in the crease of a brow, some lodged in memory recesses never to be spoken.

D is for dress. On the day I imagined the dress you once wore I understood something about the need to make one's own clothes. In the fast food, fast cash, fast clothed world of now, hard to imagine saving for materials to make a new dress.

Echo kiss is a poem

in this work. A memory is an echo to be listened to. To me one or more echoes are the sound equivalent of memory, they return after they are sent out, they fall away in the air, they require a physical action, yelling, whispering, and particular kinds of spaces in which to be successful. 'It is an echo of ...', someone says.

The echo has an inbuilt sense of return and a description as a scientific event - "the repetition of a sound by the reflection of sound waves" (OERD 1995, p.445) and as myth: "Echo - a nymph deprived of speech to stop her chatter, and left only to repeat what others had said".

In some senses repetition through quotation and reference in the academic thesis and essay in its endless repetition of what others have to say is like an echo. Being left only with a voice as an identity is like the voice created through writing or texts. However, the voice of fictocriticism is not unlike the fragments left after Echo is torn to pieces, the fragments of writing that imitate other sounds.

The other sounds in this case being all that surrounds and makes the discourses on Australia, but also coming back as distortion in response. I can agree, disagree or resist and make my own small position known.

This work asks you to think about the self as a place or a site where meanings coalesce rather than as the story of me/she/her.

Australia is a land of echoes. Echoes of other places and echoes of itself, it doesn't take much to find in the eucalypt, the wollemi pine, the echidna and the finch, traces and echoes. Whiteness has echoes that it refuses to see at times.

E is for exegesis an essay of about 15,000 words which works to orient the creative in an academic field. There is a great need to talk about the exegesis, generating whole conferences, articles, and journal issues. The best title so far - Nigel Krauth - 'The Preface as Exegesis'.

A preface provides a way into understanding a book: by stating its subject and scope, by commenting on techniques employed or themes addressed, or by focussing on a central or contentious issue. Prefacing involves an explicatory introduction to a reading of a work.

(Krauth 2002, p.1)

In conclusion Krauth quotes Jeannette Winterson who says "It is a strange time; the writer is expected to be able to explain his or her work as though it were a perplexing machine supplied without an instruction manual" (Krauth 2002, p.1).

The work could be experimental, could be an assembly of ideas that don't take hold as linear narrative.

Experimental writing is dedicated to changing the ways in which texts generate meanings, to transforming the signifying process itself. This enterprise is obviously and intrinsically open to misinterpretation. It is founded on ambiguity, irony, contradiction, shifting positions (including the inscription of gender) in writing and reading.

(Gunew 1988, p.6)

And before fictocritical as a term was available, experimental writing was used. Be reminded then that the experimental was a place for trying out new modes of writing.

These new forms of writing have their own instruction manuals, difficult to follow at times and oriented towards particular audiences.

Fragment

Are you the self of this or that advertisement,
soap opera, memory?

Are you the self styled? Are you the fragment? I find small pieces or remnants
of your presence, a torn photograph, a jacket no longer worn.

King describes the fragment and its uses in the following way: "One of the main reasons for utilising the fragment form is precisely the way it enables the writer to resist some habitual conceptions of coherence and pattern", and he quotes Barthes as saying

that the fragment's appeal is - a propensity for division: fragments, miniatures, partitions, glittering details, and the fragment is said to approximate the art, graphic and photographic processes of collage, the cinematic and video practice of montage, and the musical form of the song cycle and enables him to write 'more openly, more unprotectedly' without the guarding and comfort provided by marxism, semiology, or some other 'great system'.

(King 1994, p271)

Fragments of text, remnants of memory, bones of a story. The use of the fragment asks that you remember from word to word, that the accumulation of images and stories, allows you to construct and formulate, to become the detective, and if by chance you become the lesbian detective, passing for a moment into some imagined subjectivity where kindly only your personal safety is jeopardised, at heart you are still the reader of the text and able to remember who you once were; it isn't a very big jump to make. You are always fragmented. A sense of solidity is disrupted when you look away and remember an event which happened years before. Fragmentation occurs with memory and memory produces it's own story fragments.

The detective has a long tradition, it is it's own genre, with the more recent

manifestation in lesbian detective, sometimes feminist, sometimes closeted, sometimes right out there and sometimes apolitical. I'll be courting danger to suggest that this is detective fiction. I'm merely giving my protagonist some features and in naming her as The Lesbian Detective signalling something other than the norm. I wanted to name her Detective Fiction. She is conveniently a fantasy in this work because it gives her the right to inquire, to stand disengaged and outside of the machinations of the world around her. She is there to observe and yes, there is a crime that she is investigating. She is caught up in the plover paradox, at home in different sites, able to move without notice. At times in dreams, at times in references to other texts. With the plover translated to different sites and able to belong in many and more, strutting and calling, on a vacant allotment, on a seaside front yard, across the road on the concrete footpath, watch yourself between these spaces.

She will report these dreams and references to you in the form of poetry, as a remembered single line of conversation or song.

Detectives describe space in such a way that you will be made aware of politics, or class or gender relations. The plover exists outside of all of these frameworks, yet fills the background with its display of ubiquitousness.

The lesbian detective is particularly interested in Australia because this is the place of her birth and because it is still a place unfolding, still being made in the firmament of change. A place where questions of arrival strain at the seams of the present threatening to pull all apart.

Whilst some of its characteristics are known and accepted there are many stories and interpretations of this country.

You are all of those but enact only one or two; reducing yourself to minimal impact and fuss, not wanting to be noticed, not wanting to draw attention. The detective needs to pass un-detected. The story asks you to become, to come with me into the black and white of memory. The detective is always fragmented, moving as she does through a range of subjectivities.

In post-modern textual forms and also in the fragment it is possible to think of

the uses of metonymy. Metonymy can be thought of as a kind of fragment. The detective can read from the smallest fragment. A body lay here, I give you the part, you fill in the whole. Is it possible to write a fragmentary narrative that doesn't seal itself up, and provides just enough information for the reader to construct their own version of events?

Whilst in creative work it is possible to produce texts made up of collage, montage, fragments, disjointed and discontinuous stories, and to rely on the uses of intertextuality, why not in academic writing? Is it only playing with text that lets the theoretical venture move between and amongst the fragments of the creative, will it be taken seriously? To really indicate the connections it is necessary to understand the overlapping nature and interconnectedness of Australia, a relatively small island continent where overlaps of knowledge occur.

Fictocriticism

Contingent and circumstantial. Have I met the demands of true fictocriticism? Here and there perhaps, and if failure, then call it something else. A poetics? On Taussig the following has been written:

He is the innovator and most extreme practitioner of what he calls fictocriticism and what might fairly be described as gonzo anthropology. Blending fact and fiction, ethnographic observation, archival history, literary theory and memoir, his books read more like beatnik novels than sober analyses of other cultures.

(Eakin 2001, p.2)

A definition? In the introduction to the space between: Australian women writing fictocriticism, Amanda Nettelbeck states:

Fictocriticism might most usefully be defined as hybridised writing that moves between the poles of fiction ('invention'/'speculation') and criticism ('deduction'/'explication'), of subjectivity ('interiority') and objectivity ('exteriority'). It is writing that brings the 'creative' and the 'critical' together – not simply in the sense of placing them side by side, but in the sense of mutating both, of bringing a spotlight to bear upon the known forms in order to make them 'say' something else.

(Nettelbeck 1998, pp.3-4)

In Australia the term fictocriticism has a particular currency. The kind of writing I find myself engaged in has been called fictocriticism. However, I think of myself as writing poeto-critical texts rather than fictocritical.

Whilst gaining pleasure from some fictocritical texts and seeing some of the fictocritical practitioners as writers I hold as important, I find myself writing a blend of poetry and prose and commentary. The exegesis asks that I think about my practice and find words to describe it.

It is the notion of 'perpetual interweaving' in Barthes notion of 'text' that helps

make sense of the ficto-critical text. (Barthes 1975, p.64) See also T is for Text. Where Barthes makes us aware of the processes of writing, and the relation of the subject to that writing, the ficto-critical works to alert the reader to the processes of meaning making, through the shifting of genres, the technique of placing one writing technique against another in the text being among some of the techniques involved in this kind of work. In fictocritical work the subject is asked not so much to unmake themselves in the reading process but to re-consider the meanings which these forms of writing address. The idea of utilising different discourses, genres, artefacts or facts within the one text allows a shift to occur which affects the product itself, the fictocritical text and the meanings contained within the text. Fictocritical texts can be historically placed within what can generally be called postmodernism.

In a significant essay on new writing in the Humanities, Laurel Richardson writes about the relation of postmodernism to critical writing practices stating:

The core of postmodernism is the doubt that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the "right" or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism suspects all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural and political struggles. But postmodernism does not automatically reject conventional methods of knowing and telling as false or archaic. Rather, it opens those standard methods and introduces new methods, which are also, then subject to critique.

(Richardson 1994, pp.520-522).

In a discussion of experimental writing she calls these new forms:

experimental representations [where] experimental writers raise and display postmodern issues [with questions of] how the author positions the Self as a knower and teller [with this leading to] the intertwined problems of subjectivity /authorship/reflexivity, on the one hand, and representational form, on the other.

(Richardson 1994, pp.520-522)

She suggests a range of possible writing techniques which can be summarised as “Evocative experimental forms, narrative of the self, ethnographic fictional representations, poetic representation, ethnographic drama and mixed genres” (Richardson 1994, pp.520-522).

It is in this last method of mixed genres that I see my own work situated. The genres I use are autobiography, biography, poetry, prose, and theory. When faced with the problem of the fictocritical or creative thesis being an object for assessment it is worth thinking about the ways in which it fits in current theoretical debates. As King states:

Given the degree of theoretical dispute that attaches to the use of postmodernism as a critical category, it seems to me that the most appropriate way of thinking about the whole debate surrounding the term is to first regard it as a discursive field or discursive formation whose contours can be mapped, and second to construe it as the latest name given to the gap which opens between particular practices of cultural criticism and the cultural objects they purport to describe.

(King 1994, p. 263)

This is a more useful way of thinking about textual products, rather than developing a reactive or negative stance.

Always attempting to make yourself in some kind of acceptability, never quite achieving that venture move between and amongst the fragments of the creative?

For grief

Her grief over mine
she could say
grief lives in me
strapped on
tied down.

Barbwire grip lives in me
like golden staph
creeping undetected grief lives in me
On and on.

Undoable and undoing, to find a way to write, fictocriticism provides a framework, a way to bring together writing and thinking about writing.

Anna Gibbs says that "Fictocriticism is a way of writing for which there is no blueprint and which must be constantly invented anew in the face of the singular problems that arise in the course of engagement with what is researched" (Gibbs 2005 p.2).

Hybrid

Noel King sees hybrid writing as:

the blurring of distinction between literature and literary-critical commentary. To the extent that this hybrid form of writing has come to prominence, it is a form of writing termed either paraliterary or fictocritical. Jameson's description of fictocriticism comes when he says that it is very clear that there has been a flowing together of theory and criticism. It seems that theory can't exist without telling little narrative stories and then, at this point of criticism, criticism seems very close to simply telling stories.

(King 1994, p. 270)

The exegetical alphabet constructs its own hybrid form using the quotation and the poetics to construct an introduction to the material.

Anne Brewster works with the idea of hybridization, saying:

Ficto-criticism is one practice which enables the interrogation and the shifting of the boundaries of the essay (or any other genre). In defamiliarising genre, fictocriticism interrogates the ways in which academic knowledges are constructed [she notes that] Fictocriticism, as an alternative model of knowledge production foregrounds issues of relativity, hybridisation, contradiction, and uncertainty by defamiliarising the conventions of genre, enacts the process of thought, of learning, of writing and reading, and the 'digestion' (or non-digestion) of knowledge.

(Brewster 1996, p.90)

H is for house as museum and example of hybridity. I see the house as a museum, things suspended in time and place.

Returning to the family home with all of its memories intact and stored for examination until disrupted.

I see it as the site of femininity. It is the place where some women exercise their creativity and energy. Making, making over, doing all until there is a

representation completed, one of style, history, functionality and sometimes absurdity.

Writing the self, but the self is only ever partial, known through this or that lens. Always unfinished, always seeking to reflect, on itself. Asked of by so many, do you see your self in this or that?

Linda Hutcheon uses the term “historiographic metafiction” to describe “the theoretical self awareness of history and fiction as human constructs” she asks – “from what position can one theorise (even self consciously) a disparate, contradictory, multivalent, current cultural phenomena?” (Hutcheon 1984, pp.xi-xix).

Writing poems and stories she knew that she was involved in the production of a poetics, what Hutcheon defines as “an open, ever-changing theoretical structure by which to order our cultural knowledge and our critical procedures” (Hutcheon 1984, *ibid.*).

The uses of memory and in particular the speaking of memories of incest are the motivations for this work.

I won't be giving detail or chronologies, suffice it to say that disruption in the real occurred, the story carries its own disruption. It does not need techniques of narrative, beginning-middle-end to carry it forward. The disruption is well known and can be imagined from the popular discourses of family incest. The work here is a droplet, a fragment, a museum object asked to speak. You will have your own story, or one that you can recall, have heard, can speak of.

Incest

Lynette Finch points out that incest was psychologised and “the mention of incest signalled an attendant problem; the problem of the unnatural. This is how depraved these people are. This is the level of sickness and irredeemability that is present among this class” (Finch 1993, p.69).

She discusses ways in which incest laws and other laws of sexuality breaches were used to regulate particular classes. Importantly for this work, however, Finch says that the “long silence in commentaries from this time (the 1920s) until the 1970s, when feminists put it back on the agenda, mirrors the long silence about the non-respectable working classes” (Finch 1993, p.69).

Whilst it is a powerful word, for all of the connotations and realities attached to it, it is the very mundane ways in which it is often exercised both as act and word that illuminates it as a field of power relations.

It is at the heart of the investigation here but I want to write about it without the over-arching sense making of particular kinds of narrative.

The investigation becomes about memory and the distortions of re-making personal history. How was memory made a secret? What are the ways in which the secret becomes the origin point for a range of actions, ways of behaving, stories that get told, don't get told, concealments, and avoidances? Questions of effect, questions of affect. How is it possible to restore to narrative the multiple pathways of a secret? Incest produces secrets. Secrets create lies and fabrications. Secrets make the bearer sick, having an impact on bodies, on your body. Secrets can also be productive of other ways of telling. Secrets lie in darkness, their pursuit a tentative shining of light. Secrets go into memory as blood moves through the body. A fixed and fluid, fragmented and solid settling into action and stillness, memory will reduce you to minor details and anecdotes.

The impulse to continue to maintain the secret is strong. And this is what I think I have done. Given part but not the whole, alluded to and not given detail, suggested that this may have happened, and then again maybe it didn't.

Secrets are contained in letters, cards, photographs, they are in code and one must read between the lines, seeking out moments of clarity. Secrets make their own trajectory and have their own characteristics. Secrets are paradoxical, coming into being as secrets after an event or story, they are then made into fragile containers of meaning. They are the unidentified relatives in the photograph, the torn off corners of others, where a head is severed from the image.

... *woman*, the other-from-man (nature and Mother, site of sexuality and masculine desire, sign and object of men's social exchange) is the term that designates at once the vanishing point of our culture's fictions of itself and the condition of the discourses in which the fictions are represented. For there would be no myth without a princess to be wedded or a sorceress to be vanquished, no cinema without the attraction of the image to be looked at, no desire without an object, no kinship without incest, no science without nature, no society without sexual difference.

(De Lauretis 1984, p.5)

Incest was once the vanishing point. Speaking discourses of confession that open the point out, making it valid yet always problematic. Enacted on the body, left on the skin and mind.

I is for the inventory of childhood.

The inventory of childhood allows the work to end at the beginning.

It is in childhood that the world is made with its stories, anecdotes, diversions and digressions. To avoid at all costs. To avoid a telling and to create a suspicion. The inventory of childhood seeks to appear as invention. Around the objects of childhood hover partial remembrances and ways of knowing. There is such surety always tinged with uncertainty. Feet appear firmly placed on the ground and yet it is always a possibility that a light breeze will lift you away. The inventory tells the story of the ways in which the girl is infused with longing and absence. What she didn't have the girl will have. She will sweat and sacrifice to

provide, to make way for, to construct. She always wished that there would be a polished finished product. She buys a gem stone tumbler to wash and polish the rough stones. Acts of discovery turned into final products, prepared for scrutiny and held up to the light they reveal flaws. Flaws that can never be taken out of the final product.

Journeys, jokes, journals

In a leather suitcase the journals and diaries contain the miseries and happiness of a life.

The work here is an itinerant's journey.

My father was a supervisor on large dam projects throughout Queensland.

Growing up, we moved every two or three years. We were called itinerants by the people of the nearby towns. Whilst for some the idea of nomadology and itinerancy is a novel practice, when I read about nomadology I feel as though I'm being directly addressed. I think that the state of being itinerant suited the mother, she never had to reveal herself, the ties that bind to a community were constantly being broken.

Suitcase packed, boxes meticulously labelled and transported. Disruption as a way of life. Packing and unpacking the domestic archive was a constant act of moving and removing. Staying still invites surveillance and consideration. Who are you? Where are you from?

K

Noel King discussing the paraliterary and the fictocritical says that:

Most recently it is the work of Barthes and Derrida that has enacted a practice of writing which deliberately blurs the distinction between literature and literary-critical commentary. To the extent that this hybrid form of writing has come to prominence, it is a form of writing termed either paraliterary or fictocritical. The former term has been used by Rosalind Krauss and the latter by Jameson.

(King 1994, p.270)

Land is memory

Footsteps receding

blown out by wind or stuck in the mud.

Will an archaeologist, will an archaeologist walking
along a well used path

take boot measurements and casts and track details?

Processes of sedimentation and fossilisation

a boot print

a gum leaf, in the future.

Veins or slices, cut the thunder egg in two

blue white advanced cataract formation

crystalline hard from fluidity.

Or repeats of cop shows archived

that is the thing

all things existing beside

side by side

contiguously.

And L is for lesbian of course. Coming out of an era when claiming the word lesbian was symbolic and material, this word is now usurped and a small zone of contestation. I fall back, I fall back on this word against the backdrop of queer. The detective cannot deny her identity. Part of the work here deals with the memory of the detective and the ways in which she handles memory. She files it in a portable file case, taking out small memory cards to remind herself of love's disease.

To make the detective lesbian is to acknowledge the importance of the lesbian detectives who have come into being in the last thirty or so years.

The 'making' of the lesbian throughout the twentieth century is a fine instance of how provisional, how context dependent, are ideas of identity, authenticity, the 'natural'. These categories are constantly in the process of being made, of being discursively constructed, in an ongoing social process of contest, struggle and change. The social is unmade and remade, disarticulated and rearticulated as meanings circulate, become vulnerable to appropriation, transformation and reincorporation into new configurations

(Whitlock 1994, p.109)

Making a lesbian subjectivity borrows from the lesbian detective. It attempts to unsettle notions of autobiography, and to give only a partial, collage like account. I locate my desiring subject in the lesbian detective because of her archetypal need to know everything. I wanted her to unravel but also to participate in the type of activity found in Finola Moorhead's novel *Still Murder* which Gillian Whitlock claims "foregrounds the discursive construction of text, and the provisionality of character. Here one is confronted with 'subjectivities partial and inconclusive constructions of self'" (Whitlock 1994, p.104). The detective is a device and a character, partial though she is, for the handling of memory and its distortions.

The work deals with memory and the ways in which memory is spoken and is always a force in inter-personal relations. The uses of memory as instructive and regulatory, as guiding the behaviours of others, located often in the conversational, and not in the written and the official is difficult to chart and relies on the uses of fiction and poetry. To imagine, to document some of what might pass between us.

The lesbian detective gives rise to a range of possibilities textually. She can be investigative, pursuing the clues of place and identity, she is also asked to originate from particular kinds of sexual politics.

How much do I love you?

More than you'll ever know.

Once she wrote love poems. Wanted to write about being lesbian now it hardly seems to matter at all, except to those becoming, wanting to become, dreaming of becoming. I can tell that becoming won't be enough. It's the bruising on the inner thigh that matters, that reads like tragic love, yet is ordinary, so ordinary.

Memory

“Memory comes from the Nile, the river of longevity, of memory” (Schama 1996, p. 259).

Here is the flowing idea of memory, the idea that memory comes naturally, is not something trained or embedded in discourses of nationalism or ideologies of romance. For memory, like all discourses is constructed and made, where some would have it that memory is a natural and sacred thing. Schama likens memory to a river with its vagaries of dependence on rain or good flows and even on the uses made of the river.

And memory places are like water traces.

Sometimes damaging and sometimes generating stories that are made for the lesson, made for the remembrance.

Edward Said has suggested that:

Memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, and nationalism, of power and authority [and] Because the world has shrunk – for example, communications have been speeded up fantastically – and people find themselves undergoing the most rapid social transformations in history, ours has become an era of a search for roots, of people trying to discover in the collective memory of their race, religion, community, and family a past that is entirely their own, secure from the ravages of history and a turbulent time. But this too has provoked very sharp debate and even bloodshed.

(Said 2000, pp.176-177)

To work with memory or to think about memory is to be aware of the ways in which memory infuses everything. Taught to walk and talk, these everyday acts rely on memory. My memory of you is infused with happiness, joy, fear, revulsion, and the list, the list goes on.

Memory becomes strongest around death. You can have a week of sadness, a week of tears, that’s your leave taking. There is little time left for sorrow. We

move on, that is what we do. However, I still see you moving and crossing the ground, feet hitting the surface. Life is that tenuous. I do not think of my own death, cradled by the pretence of the safety of life as if I can move about freely without thinking of mortality.

Nomadology

One of the contours that can be mapped in fictocriticism as described by Stephen Muecke, is the use of nomadism/nomadology, and is not unlike James Clifford's use of travelling theory (Clifford 1997).

nomadology is not a general theory, a summary of observations. It is rather a way of looking which is specific (to a place like Roebuck Plains), a way of representing things (in discontinuous fragments, stopping and starting). It is an aesthetic/political stance and is constantly in flight from ideas or practices associated with the singular, the original, the uniform, the central authority, the hierarchy ... without for all that ascribing to any form of anarchy. It is descriptive, but also analytical and creative. While it might talk about things people do in their travels, it can also be about abstract journeys taking place while one is sitting down: trips in intensity which involve working with a kind of avidity to keep words and images on the move.

(Muecke 1984, p.15)

I am persuaded by and in myself the state of nomadology is a description of the soul of diaspora, where appearing to belong, I have managed to virtually erase all belonging outside of the continent, to erase all ideas of having come from elsewhere, which gives Australia its own inflections.

It is the appearance of belonging that becomes the representation.

Escape is possible in landscapes that are right outside your door, right inside your head.

Nostalgia, resist it. These could be nostalgic times, caught in the melancholy of ordinariness. For memory is selective and requires interpretation when it does arise. Moving on supplies me with the appearance of forgetting.

Highway

Strapping down the handmade leather back pack, a sinewy arm grabs at the buckles, she wanted to be Jack, to be Kerouac, where romance of the road is a

respect for the move.

It's an absence of a certain kind of routine, the routine is now. Across shifting landscapes. To be one with the grey highway, to lie down in its white stripes and watch the wheels. At Pinnaroo a man and woman in early breakfast, sit at the table, big mugs of black tea, big shoulders hunched in down filled checked jackets. They act like husband and wife, eggs chip and sausages, silent eating. Outside I see their big truck loaded with timber. Two by fours. There's something else. Maybe it's the woman. The distance from the other truckies in the café. A silence of wheels hitting dust, movement in a Slim Dusty sound track.

"We were delighted, we all realized we were leaving confusion and nonsense behind and performing our one and noble function of the time – move" (Muecke 1997, p127).

O is for the ordinary and the mundane

What I consider ordinary and mundane is someone else's idea of moral bankruptcy.

If only it were an economic metaphor and not a judgement.

For an open text that doesn't close off meaning.

That is something to strive for.

P is for photographic memory

It's how you are produced, how she produces her life, she is the product of the whole story, she is a production.

Once I heard a story, and in this story I recognised the opportunity to think through a range of associated meanings, interpretations, available discourses, and ways of thinking about the material. To some this story is anecdotal and can only be made to mean when certain sociological or psychological questions are asked of it.

The story telling reveals much, a construction of meaning occurs whereby the events and the way that they are interpreted by the audience are all contingent on historically produced ways of thinking about the activity at the centre of the story. This will be a story about incest. The event will occur in 1940s Australia and the telling will occur in 1990s Australia. A time when speaking is made possible by the naming of and speaking about incest. Lynette Finch says that "in the 1970s feminists put incest back on the agenda" (Finch 1993, p.69).

I will tell you that the teller is a mother and the audience is a daughter. You will understand something about this relationship. Not that you will know this particular relationship, rather that there is an abundance of literature filled with accounts of and ways of thinking about mothers and daughters.

That could be the story. The history of how mothers and daughters have been thought of in an Australian context. That history is always going to rely on the anecdote or the reading of the photograph or the text of history to understand how it was made, to understand what claims are being made for and on behalf of these characters.

Memory is not of the past but is of the present.

P(lover)

Outside my window, wherever I have worked in Australia, plovers with their distinctive calls fly past. They land and strut around with authority. Plover, which is now called lapwing. We change the names of everything now. Or make them up.

This bird is nomadic, and can be seen in median strips, on roadsides, beaches, and front yards. Anywhere really. I've seen them and heard them. They call at night. An eerie call that takes me outside to see what they see. It is always the weather. Like cockatoos they tell the weather to those who know the code. The plover call is a register and reminder. The call pulls me back into remembrance, of ocean, of suburbia, dreaming, hills and laughter. The plover call taps into the sensorium and makes it plummet and soar, fills the space of longing and desire before recognition in the body. The plover call is not lost nor is it endangered, for now at least.

Paradox

Linda Hutcheon has said in relation to the forms and implications of meta-fiction that there are:

parallels drawn by self-conscious texts themselves between the acts of writing and reading, that of the subsequent paradox of the reader (drawn into yet out of the text), that of the responsibility of freedom demanded of the reader.

(Hutcheon 1984, p.36)

Being drawn into and thrown out, watching the plover as both bird of the sea and sand and bird of the median strip, both dancing and screeching.

In their beating wings I see itineraries of simplistic flight.

Place

This Australian specificity has produced work that is concerned with place, with

a re-defining of 'Australia' and 'Australianness'.

Many fictocritical works deal with place and the shifting meanings of place. Stephen Muecke calls this a 'politics of place' and is concerned with developing a 'theory of place', he is interested in constructing a theory of place which aims: "to find a method of charting the meanings of those specific places in which people must find a way to live" (Muecke 1982, p.12).

Muecke suggests that this concern for place:

...also displaces other dominant meanings which have been elevated by social ideologies to privileged positions. Categories like the individual, the Family, Order, Democracy, Freedom and Authority are the taken-for-granted base terms around which other meanings cluster as if they lie at the origin of everything else. But these words are only signs which have emerged in the landscape of Western philosophy.

(Muecke1982, p.13)

I have attempted to think about place, how places are re-made and re-fashioned and the ways in which place makes the human subject and contributes to the making of stories and encounters available for reproduction, the ways in which place is inscribed in memory and in story. Place looks like the backdrop. It is more than that, providing stimulus for story, details which need to be read more closely for their part in the action.

Queensland

Women have a unique perspective on the world as a result of their position “on the edge of the map” of knowledge. Queensland women have lived, not only on the edge of the map of knowledge but also on the edge of Australian culture and history.

(Reekie 1994, p.8)

Woman of Queensland

I'm always thinking of you.

Made of rock and spit and sinew

out of night life, screams

punctuating pleasures

out of sadness and mountain

dirt and sea.

Made of silence and laughter

wooden table

rusted lock

made of mud and crab

sand and rainforest

made of scrapings and dust

sob/laugh

throughout

woman of Queensland.

Buried in neck

up to it

up to her, had it.

Of Queensland,

stride.

And something in you

cynic yet believing

hard, something enlightened.

Woman in a landscape

sometimes I feel like the woman in the landscape

the landscape overpowering me

as I stand, historical subject

established as nothing

but looking for something.

We have this brief moment

and events precede and dovetail

with all that you know and endure.

Occasionally it feels like simplicity.

It is kookaburra urbanity

broken by occasional sounds of laughter

and constant return to silence.

Questionable evidence, a letter to the everyday, where anecdote and gossip rule. Some things have occurred in the making of this work that influence the lesbian detective, all things come together and find meaning somewhere.

Remember it is no longer possible to ignore context.

Letters travel through space, handled by strangers and thrown around from mail bag to mail bag, vehicle to vehicle. I send you a letter then.

Dear Boy,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. I have now returned from Queensland. Your descriptions of living with security guards and alarm systems is very much in stark contrast to how we live here. We have recently taken to locking the security screen door when watching CSI and Cold Case, this is the closest we might come to fear. It's probably nothing more than simulated fear, however. As you have probably heard this is the city of the home invasion, though I'm sure the invaders are looking for the legal dope plants allowed here in South Australia. I had hoped that the main female character in Cold Case was more

than simply the pretty and the strong. They have her kissing the D.A. now and gone is the potential for her as lesbian detective, chic and all.

With the current tidal wave of fear and loathing inhabiting the news and current affairs, where the everyday is a place of uncertainty and trepidation, I feel we have retreated from any involvement in external happenings. Lately I've been angry and filled with another kind of fear. The use of gay marriage as a voting tool in the US and Australian election campaigns has allowed a degree or many degrees of intolerance and hatred to be virtually sanctioned. Even though feminism has given me the ways of thinking that questions marriage – all that ownership and historically constructed notions of patriarchy and male dominance hard to separate from the word marriage - I would still stand up for those who think that they need to acknowledge their relationship in that way but not without reservation – it seems like a conservative move – especially when right wing commentators see it as a good way to get rid of lust and 'bad' sexual behaviours as if that doesn't exist in other spheres of sexuality. Get married and settle down!

So, if you want to get married that's okay with me, my biggest problem would be deciding between the tuxedo and the dress. Do you see yourself in the white dress or in the suit? Or completely outside of that, dressed within the regimes that you are comfortable with currently?

The marriage desire works well with the idea of adaptation. I read about 'Lesbian Idol' in Lesbians on the Loose (Dec. 2004) an Australia wide competition for 'Sydney's premiere lesbian karaoke night', where 'Dikes on mikes proved a hit with Sydney's lesbian scene but it's current lesbian Idol competition is drawing in women from right across Australia'. Their own interests are certainly served 'Its provided a monthly night out where you can meet, drink, dance and have a great time with other lesbians'. So you might think that you cannot sing, even in karaoke terms but if the audience is the right one you will be applauded.

Last year while we were in Bundaberg a young male colleague told me that the bohemian index had increased by two since our arrival.

I called the ABS and asked them if they had any statistics on homosexuality from the most recent census but no, not readily available and a consultant could extract them for me. I asked the phone consultant if she had heard of a bohemian index, no, she had not. It seems that a bohemian index is a measure of artists, writers, craft-workers, filmmakers and others, and gay and lesbian people. The index suggests that these people bring social and cultural capital to an area helping to make that community a better place to live. I like the idea of the bohemian index as oxymoronic – the measurement of the bohemian who probably wants to be immeasurable.

In that place – Bundaberg, of the floral dresses and knee length white socks and shorts, where the breath of the past can still be felt on your cheek in the main street, where memory spills out into your everyday, it's hard to imagine being bohemian – when everything comes down to the statement – 'would you like pineapple with that?' Oh my boho friend I hope I never have to go back to increase the index by two.

Remember when we used to play spot the dyke in films and on television? And we used to read into these our own desire, seeing masked characters as lesbian or gay or even identifying with the male protagonist. Well the work of unmasking is over in some ways, and sure this is very productive of all kinds of texts – an explosion of films and cultural products as they say in the introduction to Bent Lens a "frenzy of films with a queer bent". By the way thanks for giving me that book after you won it at the queer quiz night – it has come in very handy as an everyday film and television guide:

"There are over 1000 new titles featured in the new edition of Bent Lens".

Thank goodness for the online video store 'OUT' and gay and lesbian film festivals because they're not being shown at Megaplex Westfield

Shoppingtown. Mostly I see these films in the midday movie slot where the issue films get shown, domestic violence, incest, rape, gambling problems, alcoholism and drug abuse and that other great issue – homosexuality.

At the Feast picnic this year a whole stall was dedicated to Queensland Government tourism. On the front of the Pink pocket guide to Queensland, two

men walk arm in arm, two women walk arm in arm, on the beach, the beautiful Queensland beach. Maybe that's a part of Queensland we didn't get to because where we lived the local council rejected an application for development for a resort aimed at the Pink market, they were worried children might accidentally wander in.

There goes the bohemian index again. I've found the idea of shifting sets of subjectivity to be an appropriate way to think about being out. Or out in some circumstances. I hadn't even thought about being out until we were outed on the front page of the News Mail, the newspaper famed for such headlines as 'Drowned man dies.' These things impinge on us and are the anecdotes and stories that might give you a glimpse of autobiography when you are trying to think about the identity of this author. How to live in this place, Australia, or in the micro – Bundaberg. In the end we went swimming like everyone else. So, I've been thinking about what is different in the spaces of lesbian lives.

That is after all one of the bases upon which much work is written.

This letter has been my little narrative, along with the many throughout this work. We live, we eat, vote, believe, walk, and what is different? We write letters, an older technology or as claimed by Deborah Staines when discussing Lindy Chamberlain 'in a minor history letters are an event too' (Staines, 2004).

Different is in some of the poetics

her hand over mine

the looks passed between and across

the subtle gestures of love in potentially phobic places

her eyes and her eyes.

Desire writ large in a world where space is captured and functional and is located in the dominant heterosexual economy where the design is often pre-determined. Being lesbian is often very ordinary and very mundane, the spectacle is really often only outside this everyday.

Drag kings make for spectacular moments. Spectacular moments may happen in the space of your own home or where you work.

Could it be simply breathing and when breathing, remembering events that

have contributed to your everyday, memory infects the everyday, photographs, letters, artefacts, and even memories of shame, of name calling, of loves mistakes and success.

A longer anecdote about Bundaberg awaits for personal telling however the punch line delivered by the steel, tough as nails woman at the fruit and vegetable market was 'you're lucky to have lemons' without a moments hesitation or sense of any other meaning.

I must end here,

I hope you are well

Much love

x

Recollection

Something is going on in the empty landscape,
National narratives are made in such things as funeral services.
When a footballer dies, the fans paint their faces in team colours,
a warrior mask for now.

'Invention must occur if there is recollection' (Said 2000, p.182)
and Made in China colonial style fittings for the house, collect, recollect.
Leave behind artefacts and objects for what purpose?

Recollection?

Out of the bakelite radio – nostalgia.

Road and other signs.

The council workers are busy putting up signs that are complete quotations
from singers, poets, artists, philosophers, and all kinds of quotable types.

Remembered in the same breath:

"contrary to John Berger, small communities are dangerous," Pamela Brown
Back of Beyond –
put that on a road sign and see what happens.

Departure lounge:

Her plains are red.

Detour Ahead:

She used to think that knowing how things worked would save her from the
endless dark spaces of the future.

Butcher Shop:

In Degilbo the butcher shop is still standing. The slab and wattle daub one
room building. The sign still says butcher shop though the building is long
abandoned.

Free from genetic modification:

Her story is tainted by the replay. She replays it, she tells it over, over again.

She is removed from the family and placed in another home at thirteen. Degilbo the benign site of shell buttons and cemetery visits, she will never again know the connection of family. Her mother dies and she will not be told until after the event.

Conceal, fracture, fragment, and conceal again.

Story

Carolyn Steedman observed that:

Personal interpretations of past time – the stories that people tell themselves in order to explain how they got to the place they currently inhabit – are often in deep and ambiguous conflict with the official interpretative devices of a culture.

(Steedman 1986, p.6)

What kinds of institutional apparatus have produced discourses about the figures in this work?

What are the ways of knowing that divide different kinds of mothers and daughters along class, race and sexuality lines?

In developing this work I came up against a block which is in part about taking someone else's story, even though genetically and socially the effects of the story make it mine. As a way of dealing with this I have developed the idea of the self as a narrator enabling me to think about the material in particular ways. There are crimes involved. Research and writing can be forms of detection connecting incest as a crime made into a story and the telling and passing on of the story as sensed, not known.

This can only be recognised in retrospect.

It's that 'I knew there was something', a suspicion, an unspoken knowledge, felt in the body, felt in the silences. A photograph is evidence, supposedly the truth. Where his hand lies across hers.

Subjectivity is at the core of this and it is developed in the lesbian detective. The detective gives rise to a range of textual possibilities, she can be investigative, pursuing the clues of place and identity, she is also asked to originate from particular kinds of sexual politics.

Edward Said suggests that "people now look to this re-fashioned memory, especially in its collective forms, to give themselves a coherent identity, a

national narrative, a place in the world" (Said 2000, p.179).

There is something in the 'I was one too' as being part of a wave of speaking, as a way of becoming part of a larger voice in the incest story told by the character of the mother in this work.

Whilst Said is talking about national memory making and Palestine, the stories of women taking a place in the 'national' as victims have become prevalent and repeated. One of the conditions of possibility for this speaking is feminism.

This is my story.

'Is it', you say?

With my hand on my heart, it could be lies or the stories of strangers. Could be a myth or a story, I'll never know. I'll let you in on one story though. This is my story.

Whole stories get told from small shards. Shards that have once been part of a larger object and now lie strewn about waiting to be found.

T is for text

Roland Barthes describes text in the following way:

Text means Tissue; but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden meaning (truth), we are now emphasising, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue-this texture-the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web. Were we fond of neologisms, we might define the theory of the text as an hyphology (hyphos is the tissue and the spider's web).

(Barthes 1975, p.64)

Taussig said "the goal of fictocriticism was to duplicate in the writing something about the culture itself" (Eakin 2002, p.1).

What you live up against, what you write against.

For telling. She feels she must tell, must eliminate from her own mind, reveal and gain closure, but in telling she opens and begins. What does this beginning mean? In the transfer of story freedom is not gained.

Uncertainty

It is with great uncertainty that the narrative unfolds. How to take seemingly disparate elements of story and attempt to make them into a work that wants incoherence yet demands coherence? There is a desire for closure that is never met, and there is a need to give it a use value, of what use is this work? I ask myself this and know that it falls in between some place known as fictocriticism and experimental, and there I have to leave uncertainty in the text and know that it is a possible state of being which is textual and non-textual.

Visible traces, suggested invisibility and woven writing

Start with the proposition that:

At some time in your life you will be handed information that will throw you out of your belief systems and ask you to re-make yourself.

It will have branches and threads that spread out and into many parts of your life.

You will find whole geographies in the information and emotional blackmail that will recur and squeeze at your heart.

Nothing will ready you
nor make it easier.

It is only information after all
but it is filled with crevasses and points of difference
theoretical ideas and poetics are woven through your story.

Witnessing whiteness:

As seemingly invisible subjects of forgotten diasporas, white in Australia says it is mine, it is mine. There are complete ruptures without memory, no stories, but when I hear Welsh male choirs?

When a rupture happens in a family it echoes the rupture and forgetting of diaspora. The partial is retained and circulated, it is easier you see than looking closely.

It is my very whiteness that allows me to play in the text, to produce an incoherent narrative.

For I am in the privileged moment where these things are allowable and reified.

Walking was an open and shut case.

Walking out.

Walking.

It was discovering the gene for funambulism.

Out of the woodwork, out of the past, out of the silence, out of hidden personal

histories, characters appear telling stories, asking questions, wanting to know who they are. They are interested in family history, they are searching, they are attempting to assemble family trees. The places where they felt safe, the sense of themselves as Australian has been shaken. They are now looking to stories that will help them to understand:

Who, what, why, when, where.

Although the universally colonised “woman” might be a limiting concept, a concept of colonization too carefully circumscribed, too narrowly applied to specific historical processes and geographical venues has its limitations. Certainly the work of historians, sociologists, political theorists, anthropologists, and literary critics must be grounded in the locales and temporalities of specific colonial, postcolonial and neo colonial experiences.

(Smith and Watson 1992, p. xv)

To be specific, it is in this very story that the detective is able to see a range of ways of thinking about the idea of ‘woman’.

It is in the making of a kind of “outlaw genre of autobiography” (Smith and Watson 1992, p.xxviii) that appeals to the detective.

She sees herself and the subject matter of this work as being outside of any instantly recognisable genre. It is an attempt to capture the sense of fragmentation, of loss and of distance. It is an attempt to write my way out of the specific and yet, to stay within detail.

X/Y/Z

These three letters are often problematic.

I will pose questions rather than provide any answers.

“And x is the signature of a person who cannot write. In algebra x is the first unknown quantity, and x symbolises a kiss” (O.E.R.D. 1995).

Flatteringly, he fell in love with Yokos' work before he'd even met her. 'But there was another piece which really decided me for-or-against the artist: a ladder which led to a painting which was hung on the ceiling. It looked like black canvas with a chain with a spyglass hanging on the end of it ... I climbed the ladder, you look through the spyglass and in tiny letters it says 'yes'. So it was positive. I felt relieved. It's a great relief when you get up a ladder and you look through a spyglass and it doesn't say 'no' or 'fuck you' or something, it said 'yes'.

(Prose 2002, p.331)

It started with an anecdote

And this is your trajectory:

Where poems appear

places as women's names

Katherine, Alice Springs, Julia, Adelaide

Australia as towns

in these towns

Adelaide is a woman.

Where poems appear

down through the country

driving highway

driving theory.

Where poems appear

in public places

on a street corner on a plaque

on the pavement set in concrete beside the footprints,

not Marilyn in Hollywood.

A poem appears

as a dream

a beam of light

Scurrying figures dressed in black and white

she's driving down that country road.

Outside fences, sheep, occasional letter box, converted milk churn, wooden box, letters of poems, love poems.

Old gas fridge without a door leans against a wooden post, cracked and weathered, rusting, wire nails, chains, horse shoes, luck dripping out, the wrong way up. Someone loved here.

Where poems appear wedged in the pages
of a novel, in the *Golden Notebook*.

Postcard from Auckland

Poem.

In journals, letters, diaries
and lastly the filing cabinet
where poems appear.

Throughout the whole text
the detective knows where poems appear
the detective mistakenly thinks that they can't be known.

Now known as poem, not fiction
the detective has left clues everywhere
and it is where poems appear.

She sends poetry on a postcard
one word sometimes

Generically SORRY.

You think you can pass, pass through weather patterns, a cloud off the Bight, a
low across the strait, it's those small details that crowd your day, imposing
something that you accept, a daily occurrence like changing seasons.

Ruse red tree and poisonous
Autumn a passage to somewhere else.

The things you might do to cover up really knowing.

Before an idea of suspects and truth telling
two things, truth and versions.

You seem to forget you were being followed, your walk commented
like a deficit that you won't acknowledge
a space that opens briefly revealing some instance of clarity.

Before closing over before going away
withdrawn from the evidence.

Lost or derailed
she is completing your sentences
your passage was guaranteed
but you wanted out.

Out was not possible so I waited before
setting you up and near.

Detail evades you
surface is your satisfaction.

Does it occur, did it ever occur to you that distance could create possibilities?
Frozen desires and you can't ever know, you're in denial remember, those
conversations that you hold in your head. Born into this place then, this strange
continent, drift, shaped by place as sacred and lived on place as penal colony.
Oh no, not South Australia they like to say, a surface tour will take you on lines,
grid lines and patterns, overlays of control.

Order and control, attempting perfection, denying chaos. Attempting to throw it
over, surface eruptions tell something about the patterns of the grid.

Adelaide was a woman.

As the boat is, she is a boat, a boat is she.

How can you know her, inhabit her decks,
really, unless as grids and lines.

Or find her like the under currents
beneath the curve of the foothills.

Tracing the pattern like silk, difficult to stitch down, slippery.

South Australian efforts to promote rationality in the design of human life achieved conspicuous success with town planning. The colony's founders believed township design was basic to colonisation, and the elements of Adelaide's design – a central core of rectangular blocks designated for shops, an encircling belt of parklands reserved for public use and a perimeter of suburban residential blocks sub-divided by a radial pattern of straight roads leading from the central district – provided a model for over 200 South Australian townships. Colonel Light's grid division of Adelaide into rational, equal, purchasable blocks of land formed an essential precondition of capitalist settlement...

(Lines 1991, p.98)

Attempting to disrupt and write a crooked line, I fall for the ruse of the colonisers. I walk in straight lines daily and with clear purpose. But the city is full of jay-walkers.

Where poems appear as deliberate and filled with intent, intentionality and design.

Memorial Drive

When walking, falling.

I thought it was you walking towards me this morning
as I crossed Memorial Drive
to the University gates.

It was a way of walking, a short woman's walk.

Memorial Drive.

And yet in memorial
is where I find myself now.

Making a kind of memorial, a text to evoke memory, to speak about memory.

'What mean ye by these stones' in Mt Gambier
a memorial asks.

Far from 'home'

far from history,

And yet closer than ever to some place called home.

Too comfortable perhaps.

Surrounded by naming that bears no resonances in the present,
memorial to what?

To soldiers, to Queen and country, to Colonel Light?

The grids of Adelaide make it the perfect tidy city.

A city for Virgoans a friend says.

It constrains itself with tight lines that bend outwards
in sometimes outrageous events.

Once I called it tiny town.

Walking because in walking we cross the landscape,
outside of Toyota dreaming
into the body

where walking inhabits space and consciousness and allows the body
to produce and release endorphins and adrenalin and pleasure.

Let me walk you through this.

Along the Torrens River which is lying in its claim to river,
more like Creek.

Along the Torrens at the back of the Zoo, where the smell overtakes your walk
and constructs your body into a quick, fast walk, and the roars of the lions and
the screams of the primates appear out of nowhere to alert you to Zoo. Walking
you find evidence of other life, fluorescent green condom, McDonalds drink
carton, fighting lovers, he sulks, she cries.

Walking you establish aloneness, detection comes to the fore. You make up
stories and reasons for being, fall back on the problems of the day, GST, aged
care facilities, detention centres, same sex marriage, but located there and able
to name political and historical events doesn't necessarily mean involvement.
Walking makes for observation, step over the dog shit, E.coli in transit, walk
against the oncoming joggers, walk until blistered and finished.

Lives that use public space differently to my uses, for sex, for exhibitionism,
jogging and argument. Surrounding the heterosexual lovers in Botanic Park, a
man with a video camera. Lone men sit in cars, at safe and polite distances,
watching, always watching.

Walking to embody space, to capture air, to manufacture so-called fitness,
walking the dog. Is there a lesbian walk, a lesbian detective walk?

Immediately she is outside the law and yet inside the law. She investigates self,
identity and family.

Her shoes establish her in an older definition, as dyke, keep that in mind,
Blundstones, Doc Martens and then Italian CFM boots, worn in, walking and
causing some to imagine, the best is yet to come.

This is the frame of reference for you reader, follow that walker.

It varies and is distinct and felt as a performance of this or that sexuality, of this
or that sensibility, shoes that make the walk, high heels versus sensible shoes,
walking out, walking in. Oppositionally – walking versus motorised modes of
transport. To avoid the effects of long haul travel, wiggle your toes and walk up
and down the cabin.

Falling into. Falling on. Falling out of. Falling leaves. Falling in love. Falling

when walking. Falling.

Whilst walking has a whole range of discourses attached to it, a whole range of meanings, from street walker to sleep walker, the act of embodying the landscape, seeing through walking has currency in this way.

The guide book to bush walking in Australia states quite clearly that: "one of the best ways to see Australia is by foot".

I walk and walk.

Walk with me.

Settled on radical celibacy, detective alone.

Sleeps in a shack at the beach. Minimal, soundtrack to this is Bartok, where everything seems to happen. Here then is an expectation. The life of an Australian tourist, visiting the everyday with its normalcy and frequency, where calling up memory will only take you so far, to Gallipoli perhaps, soldier memorial.

The new traveller, the young Australian seeking memories and adventure does the following –"Mr Versace finished high school last year, but deferred his university studies in commerce and sports marketing to see the world. His first stop was the Soccer World Cup in Seoul, Korea, then the tennis at Wimbledon, and finally the bull-run in Spain. Spain's Running of the Bulls Festival, held each July, is a rite of passage for Australians on the European backpacking trail that leads them to work in London, across to Germany to swill copious amounts of beer during the two-week Oktoberfest, and on to Turkey to shed tears of patriotism at Gallipoli.

(*The Australian*, Wed. July 10, 2002)

I stop when I hear you telling me stories of memory, waiting for the sting, the moral tale.

So it is just that, you walk, encouraged by the light against your skin, pale in the moonlight, the half light. Picasso faced, eyes running together, personal extrapolation from the West, I cannot tell you. That is my story of the day, not yours. Some things remain silent. Egg shell vulnerability.

Read these like signs of a country in transition. Like skeletons on the landscape with the flesh of their presence gone they become mute symbols of the attempt to control and create. Where agriculture in this form leaves much in ruin and salinated beyond repair.

Salt.

Salt is the background of this story.

A substance that gives some flavour for their food and is considered a problem for the heart and blood pressure.

A little more salt?

As salt is decreased in the diet of humans, it rises to the surface of the soil threatening to turn Australia into a desert of salt plains.

From the air white salt encrusted circles are visible as we fly over the interior.

From East to West. Australia.

Salt water encircles this island.

Oceans and seas

Island continent.

Salt is used to clean out, to preserve things,
dissolved in warm water and poured on the wound.

Swimming in the salt water, Pacific Ocean.

We washed it off under the fresh water shower at the beach.

Working in the time of global warming when the weather reports and the visible signs of climate change impinge on us with heat, unbearable heat.

In Bangladesh, in China whole villages are washed away to oblivion.

Do you know if I am telling any truth?

My truth or sense of truth might be a reconstruction, I borrow heavily, according to my own designs and random selections, I imagine truth as coloured by my own position, my own need to communicate what I think of these events, they are the backdrop to the story, how can I not acknowledge them?

There is a partial and momentary indication of one kind of truth. I was never a

detective. Did you ever believe that I was?

Watch what happens next.

For convenience and for the sake of the narrative you might have thought so.

Perhaps you didn't. How will I convince you either way?

Let me take you by the hand, take you by the eyes in your reading and show you, because it's there, because it seems fair and reasonable, within the realms of possibility.

Guilt Shame Fear

My character will be made of tough stuff, cool and well cut.

My skin is melanoma prone.

White, fair even.

In this country with its 'wide brown land for me' and searing sun, escape is almost impossible.

White must protect itself from the sun and white often runs from this and from its past.

White will not wear hats,

'Where's your hat?'

White sweeps under the carpet.

The condition of 'coming to terms' with a past is productive of all kinds of stories, denials and acceptances.

White burns in the midday sun.

White turns out for events that memorialise itself.

The individual personal story can be read for its belonging to a time for its connection to ideologies and discourses.

White is not a primary colour.

It means something to be white.

Black makes white visible.

I am guilt

I am shame.

Guilt and shame and fear.

I am the dog, the blue heeler, out of the dingo, cowering under the tank stand, the half tank, the dust road, the gate, 'shut the bloody thing', thrown a bone.

Chained and cursed. Leaping uselessly in the air at strangers.

Blue heeler.

Blue who is really red.

I will be recycled, dispersed and felt in your generations.

I am.

I will be your operating principle, your modus operandi
your bottom line, your end of the day.

Your striped shirt in all of the photographs of all the stock exchange workers
the world over.

I will be your new age look in the mirror, your personal growth book.

Trust me.

I will inhabit your hours before dawn, your spoken words.

Will attach myself like unspoken grief, leeches in the wet forest creek.

Salt will not ease, nor staunch the flow

your blood will flow like feathers on the wind

your wasteland, your toxic spill

inescapable corruption and deceit

Find me here,

find me there.

I will work to invade your every thought

your dress will be read in this way

you will not leave,

this space is let to you.

Your troubling eczema, your balding spot, your knee problems.

Guilt, your shame, your fear.

You will go white before grey

Denial, your sporting achievements, keep busy, busy, very busy.

Your lizard's tail falling off will not distract me

I know you are still alive, I know where you are hiding.

Your institutional blindness will not deter

formalin, formaldehyde and storage cabinets may keep your artefacts intact
and isolated

but the stench of mastery will soon cloud their beauty.

Buy masterpieces, keep profits, be photographed for the social pages
your skin keeps telling the story
the pure signifier of your semiotic self
Botox will not help.
Do not disturb may sit across your doorways
Limousines at the ready

Now that guilt, shame, and fear lead you to forget
or remember in certain ways
a melanoma style of remembrance
long in the making
made in the soft skin of childhood
the evidence is everywhere strewn about.
Thick with marks of life
you may dress to conceal.
Throughout we knew something about the fence,
the barb wire concealment, the dingo length of your world
things leak out
Calici like, jumping fences.
The stranger in the wide brimmed hat, the night train to the coast,
the kangaroo down under the front wheels of the car.
Father says 'Don't worry about it'.
My waist size, the cost of a sewing machine
the black and white photograph 'family group on verandah'
shuffled away under other photographs
a blind woman on a sugar cane farm, smell of the sea.
Family will prevail.
Blood flows on hospital tiles.
Fingermarks on mirrors.
I will be your little girl dancer, tutu-ed and shy.
Bogey man outside under the street light with toads

chopped into a thousand pieces and fed to the puppy dogs.
 A black man with a sugar bag, you slip the lid open a little.

Inside buttons.

Bible stories reduced to small sentences.

'Be not Afraid' Mark 6.50

Little stories in the dark

mother is white Australia

colonising with shame, guilt and fear.

Unspoken detail and distorted memory.

Mother is singing with Hank Williams Rolf Harris and Johnny Cash

Australia is mother.

Leaving it all cowed, quaking quivering.

a slide guitar opening.

Hide in the desert.

Red desert. Red desert, giant sky

exposed by the skin of our teeth, could be gone troppo.

The sign says – 'Parking Aria'

core shifts. And shifts again.

All clichés for open, rush into my mouth

better to stay gob-smacked.

And here I am

fate of birth, accident of placement

we came out here at the same time but your verse is different

synchronous but inflected against some other system.

European wasp like you invade my drinking cup

listless in your wake

I cannot find breath in this heat.

Mother is desert

this harsh, nothing there landscape

but filled with secrets to another eye

a life sustaining barrenness

an uncomfortable place to live

constant gaps allow the history of someone else to seep to the surface,

salinity like

to bother the crust.

Skin scrapings reveal stories and factions,

I measure my life by the radio

I will not wear pashmina

I will not enter a shop where pashmina is sold

I don't own a Turkish rug.

This will tell you nothing

these are not clear indicators

life is something filled with contradictions.

Once I owned Nike shoes

because I am a narrator in my own time

I told you I was a lesbian detective, trained to notice everything through the act
of being outside looking in.

However the list of clues, the dream, is still to come.

One in five.

As a modern way of nation knowing it is estimated that one in five Australian
children have been subject to child abuse, either in or outside of the family.

These kinds of figures leak into the stories of lives.

Clue # 1

Stories remembered. Stories told over.

Every time he sees her, every time I see you

she is the reminder, the symbol, she must be eliminated, he must eliminate her.

Her freedom must be stemmed.

He doesn't need to find a wife, he can simply move on down through the family.

How close, how close we were.

The year my mother was born Phar Lap won the Melbourne Cup in 3 minutes
27 seconds.

My name is Jacob Hablutzel. I am the father of my wife's children and I am the father of my children's, children's children. Well, almost. I stopped right there, that first wife went to the police. They came out, surly buggers. I reckon they already knew, of course they knew. How else could a man have fifteen children at the same place, they must have known. Oh, we tried to hide it, making up their ages so they weren't at school in the same years. Sending some of them into the bush whenever anyone came to visit, poking their noses around. They would hide behind the big gums, some of them down further, down at the creek. I don't want to see your face here or anywhere, get!

Get down to the creek, run, whenever anyone comes I want you kids to disappear, they'll take you away, you'll never see your mother again. Well that bit came true didn't it? Be careful what you wish for. It was my going that made everyone else get gone in the end. The police came out and stopped me right there in my tracks. What crime? It's a crime against nature sir. How did you get away with it?

Yes, there was some talk, but talk doesn't account for much, it runs like little rivulets through the town, through the local area but it doesn't do much to have the police come out, we need evidence. Your wife came in, it seems you've moved on to your granddaughter now. Your daughter, your daughter's

daughter, your own child. You've taken her innocence at thirteen. You'd better come with us, and it's all over. That part anyway. Then there is another place for you.

Because of this I'm to die in prison. To die from age and neglect. No longer surrounded by women and girls and worthy sons but by men and guards. Not far from here overlooking the Brisbane River is Dutton Park Cemetery. I saw it as I was driven in from the courts, and through the gates of Boggo Road. My crime I do admit to and have no idea of the repercussions of, the crime of loving my children and my children's children.

In his mind he sees great tall trees, the presence of them as clear as when he first saw them. He commits the trees to memory, a song of wood and leaf. Called upon to speak of the memory of trees he breathes deeply and descends into a place of mind and brings out great trees of the past.

And this is always piled up with the memory of body violation, the smell of trees burning for days, piled up along the roadside. Embers blowing up red in the night, smoke smelt from a distance.

Driving past sawmills, piles of timber and sawdust, laid to waste and usage, everything seen through a sepia lens, all browns and greys and blacks, the whole site marked out by the lack of colour, occasionally the blue of a worker's shirt, the red of an enamel mug. The sepia sawmill, reduced to memorial, a place of smell and noise. The saws and hand movements take up all available space. This is the background and the setting of the story. At the back of the farm, wood is cut and shaped into building material, tongue and groove, shaped into the Queenslander, the ubiquitous house on stilts, the circle of cut and shape and build gives the house a constant reminder of origins.

Do you think the memory might not have been so strong if it had been spoken earlier? So filled with the potential for bigger story. Small filters allowing for release of value at particular times.

Was that you I heard crying in the dark night?

Was that you wearing white on the tennis court and cheerfully handing out the best scones in town?

Released on the keyboard the whole story could be true could be false, it is elements of biography after all. Fictional and poetic, see this scar, that is only from sliding down a rock into a creek, the warm north of Queensland. Now I am telling memory truth but it is inflected as always by the problem of not seeing it as hopeful and triumphant. It is simply this, the card for a seven year old girl decorated with silver glitter. 'For a girl who is seven'. Good, so good. What emphasis to place and where to place it? Is it in the clearly stated principle of mother love?

It is more problematic than this of course. You are getting warmer, now cold, warm, warm, hot, you are nearly there.

On innocence

What's the matter asked the girl?

What's the matter asked the mother?

Incest is an act that potentially produces something, not only children in some instances but a potential criminal subject, a potential victim with all of the stories, feelings, guilt, shame and fear that might go with it, in some cases the eroticisation of the incest relationship. Incest also produces laws, legislation, moral statements and acts of an institutional nature. Because incest has been said to be about power not sex whereby an adult, or a related family member uses an act of sexual power over a child in a range of circumstances. Because in the family, secrecy, secrecy and privacy takes hold. What is the act of secrecy and what is its outcome? These are not official secrets but secrets bound around with fear and intimidation and sealed with a particular kind of attention, where daddy's or mummy's special relationship is sealed into place with sexuality.

Did you know?

You knew that the products of these relationships would be children, especially in that tie.

You had two houses of children who were the product of that incest, alongside the children in the real marriage.

House No 1 has six children in it.

House No 2 has nine children.

There is a problem of kinship representation, when the family tree has been layered. We tried to draw the lines that made connections to the members of this family but they would not meet.

I read in the Yates Garden Guide that "the layer is not completely cut from the parent plant and continues to draw nourishment from it" (Yates 1987 p.60).

What nourishment I ask? The story it gives me is one of random connections and collage as if they might all fit together in the frame, but never will.

Nourishment comes from elsewhere but there is always a connection to the

parent plant.

His salt tears fall onto the prison clothes. Before modern punishment facilities and the possibility of partial humanity being thought about for someone like him, the food was the same every day, no fruit, no more than potatoes as vegetables. Dying he saw the green of the valley fading with him. Alone with the priest falling toward him, last rites drawn on his forehead. Across the paddock, left on a cold night, a wreath of irises and roses.

I ask you to look at this from another angle.

She says 'I want to tell you something. Sit down here. I want to tell you something'.

This story is set in the bush. It is a story with a dirt floor, a rammed earth floor. A house made of slabs and salvaged timber. Two rooms maybe three, the bush house, the hut, the endlessly imaged Australian house lodged in memory. It has visitors in the narrative, welfare workers bringing clothes and food. Children watching from behind gum trees. Hiding the second family from the welfare, from the police, from the authorities. Scatter.

In the bush, the Queensland bush, the smell of rich, thick, humid, hot Queensland bush. I ask you to imagine what it was like. I cannot give you imaginative exposition. Suffice to say, flies and poverty were all about. In the depression a man with two families must struggle. And the women?

This is prior to the Queensland of now, the glossy one you know and have been to, the sparkling white, perfect one day. Prior to the scramble for land, the drift from the South, into the bush that overlays the whole story. Yes, you can take all of your assumptions to this story, Queensland as backwater, as backwards, as backward glancing, flowers of now grow from seeds sown then. And yet, and yet, there are moments there where it was not all like that. I hasten to reassure you.

I have to tell you, you must know, the bird life images flicker, the music settles in, she is sitting beside me, intent I now realise on not stopping, on delivering

the story.

And this is my mother's memory archive, the one structuring principle that has made her and affected her actions and beliefs.

She keeps it bottled up. In the shed lids nailed to the underside of shelving, glass bottles screwed in, bottled up little lines on paper, story, a few words.

Father, incest, jail, family.

In this family a great disjunction, a great scattering, in geographical and emotional terms. This is what happened to her, she tells me more.

The whole family is sent away. Scattered. Re-distributed.

Her grandmother on seeing, on seeing the repetition of her husband's behaviour calls the police.

Well, perhaps not calls, she makes her way to town, by horse or foot, goes into town, in her best, her Sunday best.

To the Police station, or is it further? She tells, she tells something of betrayal, she reports, she puts her husband in jail.

Scattered. The family is sent. Sent away. Some with the grandmother, some with the mother. Some to orphanages. My mother at thirteen is sent to keep house for the local policeman and his wife. She is guilt and shame and fear.

No family, no family anywhere, anymore.

We do not talk to each other, some great distance is struck early between us, bearing down on us like a wedge. It is the effect of silence, of keeping it down. The geographical distance marks out the emotional distance, the further away the better. Because the unspoken will take hold of you at any moment and hold you back, throw you, even tip you out of your chair and leave you stranded with not much but the sensation of loss, defeat, fear.

She knows about that, she knows about the constant murmur, the sense of shame that works its way across the skin and lodges itself in memory. She hears its voice in the gum leaves as they rustle, walking through the afternoon.

I thought I saw a face, a hard lined face, etched with memory, shaped by pain.

It's in the eyes, no it's in the hands, and then some who show nothing.

Digging up a paddock, emptying out a shed, working your way through a

second hand shop, moisture of the past clinging to your hands, you stop and breathe. There is a voice that will tell you to let go, let go and you can go, but in your going, leave the physical space of your life. I can only read you through these frameworks, it helps to have heard about the real circumstance of history, to place you within that field of the economic and the social, those circumstances that shaped you to some extent, that made certain things possible, a line drawn around your experience, a line of poverty, shame, loss, fear and confusion.

But there you were ivy like clinging to the walls of future making, when optimism allowed circumstance to work together to produce movement to the next thing. You did not go down the dependence path, you went down the sport path, down the over-achieving and busy line, the keeping yourself at bay, from thinking and feeling the worst.

She exhorts us to 'say nothing, keep silent'. The best way to handle conflict, to sit quietly and let it bellow all about you. Until it blows itself out.

We keep silent. Sometimes it works. But it is not always the powerful position.

At the entrance to this archive, the interface, what is between me and the archive is the sense of myself as a child. The archive holds its mysteries and pleasures, it is familiar yet unknowable, except to the one who constructs it. I see that girl running.

The Sky

The night sky will tell you more and more.

The sky has so much certainty about it, it is always there. Like a great resonance of reassurance on waking and yet, it is forever changing, filled with seasonal variations, sometimes emptied of promise, at other times, thick with expectation, of storms, of things to come. It is easy to see how it becomes a site to be read for all sorts of signs. Each night I go outside to look at the sky and it is always different. Because there is no room in the house the telescope sits in the original box in the shed, wrapped in newspaper. In the shed, in the dark and the dust.

The telescope. Instead I look through binoculars. An eclipse of the moon, the palm tree against the darkening light, cars going by on the top road, you see, life goes on while the eclipse threatens to turn all to dark. We lie out in the paddock with a feather doona under us to stop the cold and wet and watch the full moon eclipse. At the point of total eclipse a train comes out of the dark night, bright light bolting through the moment.

On a visit to the Queensland Museum a friend buys *The Book of the Sky*. Filled with myths and secrets and scientific stories. Did you know...?

On the television news a scientist says 'we were once all stars, after they explode the particles end up as part of us all', this is not fiction, not magical realism.

Incest, which always frequently bears the responsibility for diseases, is sometimes associated with eclipses. The Eskimos for example believe that the sun and the moon are two children from a coastal village. The girl who is being molested by her brother, escapes, climbs up a long ladder and becomes the sun. Her brother, without even stopping to get dressed, rushes off in pursuit of her and becomes the moon, which will never catch up with the sun. Eventually, weak from hunger, the boy-moon faints; in order to keep him alive but still unable to catch up the girl-sun continually feeds the boy-moon and then deprives him of food until he faints again.

(Verdet 1992, pp.56-57)

It is these small stories of incest that elevate it out of the personal or the close story. To see it as myth, is to stretch it out to a universal meaning rather than being caught on the lines of your face only. Through myth the closeness of personal experience can be confounded.

Silence is multiplied in its intensity with each day, week, month, and year. So intense does it become that when it is broken the need for a popular song is produced.

Mud Map

In *A Gap in the Records*, Jan McKemmish writes "... memory contained that which culture, the institutions, the necessities of ideology, would manage in a decade to erode. And unless something happened, they would collaborate" (McKemmish 1985, p.9).

This can be read as a gesture towards the collaboration between the main characters in the novel and the possibility of collaboration between theory/academic writing and creativity, to attempt a new kind of memory writing, a memory recording practice that takes into account the official and the unofficial, the anecdotal and the archival. She looks to memory and its recording to fill in the gaps.

And she said "I am here today to tell you a story".

The characters in *A Gap in the Records* are involved in an undercover activity and it is the use of femininity and feminine activity that provides the cover for the subversion. Working with recognisable feminist ideas McKemmish writes about the gap in history, the gap where women might have been, but have gone un-recorded. To fill this gap Bird and Walker argue that "the reader explicitly assumes the role of detective" (Bird 1993, p.42).

In this work I use a character whose function is loosely that of a detective, adjectivally she is a lesbian detective. As much as she is the narrator she propels the narrative forward, investigating the Australian landscape, and the story she is told by the mother. In the process producing writing which is poetic. This is a textual strategy. Lesbian detective fiction has been a popular and relatively recent development and has been used to fictionalise politics and the personal.

The lesbian detective has brought together two ideas, that of the detective with the investigation of the social and the investigation of the place of women as victims and as actors/protagonists. She also produces a new character in literature, one for whom sexuality is paramount.

In this work the persona/character of the detective allows for a distancing and a technology enabling her to speak at a fictional distance and to produce some kind of 'reading' of events. There is an audience of readers who understand the conventions of lesbian and detective fiction, and these readers also know how to understand landscape and place. They can see a clue coming off the page and can dissect a writer's intentions. They walk alongside a writer, breathing shared historical breath.

I was yearning for the real Australia, something prior to the mini series. I would be Smiley in a country town with the reassuring figure of Chips Rafferty in a khaki uniform on a horse. My sole modernist wish would be for a red bike, and the worst thing that could happen would be snakebite. And the best? - my mother looking pretty in a floral cotton dress.

(Muecke 1997, p.78)

The detective clings to the mother's floral dress but recognises in the figure of Chips Rafferty, her own desire.

It is to the masculine figure that she leans, has always leaned. Because therein lies the potential for escape, for action.

Riding off with the beautiful woman in tow, the gaze male.

At the matinee in the afternoon in the tobacco town of Mareeba waiting while the cut and thrust of tennis happened elsewhere, the mother dressed in whites, no florals on this court, I would be shrouded by the darkness and the wonder of men as they charged and acted.

It was them that I wanted to be. And sure enough the mother, the woman waiting in the pretty floral dress would always be my object of desire.

I am concerned with memory, and the ways in which memory is spoken and produced. Memories are something worth keeping if we believe the advertisements for cameras and film products - the uses of the snapshot, the school photo, the digital image, the post-card, the artefacts of travel.

A snow dome that says: Australia. Memory is always related to emotion and

often to the suspension of intellectual work.

Can it be called a poetics of memory? This bringing together of the work of emotional and intellectual work.

Can biography/auto-biography be non-realist and partial, experimental and aware of itself as a product of particular textual strategies. Fictocriticism appeals because of the provision of a lens through which to see.

When I hear a story I am struck by the emotions it evokes. I can look at it from a range of angles; the place of the story in terms of memory and how memory is used, the language used in the story, the method of telling. The gesture, the wave of the hand, the corners of the mouth down turned.

I see the subjectivity of the protagonist, the thinly disguised self as the detective, split between a range of possible subject positions and available actions. She is not a fixed entity, the possibility of this is not desirable, the patchwork nature of the text like the laying down of clues providing work for the reader, providing a network of possible connections.

Edward Said discusses place and memory and suggests that:

memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority [and that] To this whole matter of memory as a social, political, and historical enterprise has been added a complication, namely, the role of invention. [He cites 'The Invention of Tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger) using the example of the ways in which] rulers - social and political authorities in the period since about 1850 - set about creating such age-old traditions as the Scottish kilt, or in India the durbar, thereby providing a false, that is invented memory of the past as a way of creating a new sense of identity for ruler and ruled. [He suggests that] people now look to this re-fashioned memory, especially in its collective forms, to give themselves a coherent identity, a national narrative, a place in the world.

(Said 2000, pp.178-179)

Memory is uninhabited by grace
but laid over by ideology
and the cost, the cost of life
the cost of framing memories?

Anecdotal Evidence

The work here is part invention, part based on fact. To call something a fact, however, covers over the ways in which the 'fact' is produced. As story, as anecdote, as real. The minute it is passed on it becomes something other than the act or the event. It is re-interpreted, re-presented and most importantly spoken in the discourses of a time. Stories that were once kept as secrets, as skeletons in the closet, can be aired, can be told to an audience who hear them differently, not fully as stories but as stories of injustice only. It is the partial selection in the telling that emphasises the moments of rupture.

The story sees the passing of time and the passing and changing of meaning. In the poetic is registered the voice of the mother and the detective. These voices become a mode of speaking and address, enabling more than the use of description or fact, enabling the psychic or the unconscious to surface in a dreamlike fashion.

Events happen in space/in country
and what is this country?

It is the country of Australia
where the meaning of the place is argued over
and re-created, re-interpreted.

It is an unsettled relationship between place and self. On the one hand the lesbian detective inhabits a particular mythologised and negotiated space. Family comes to represent space as fixed and has the position of non-negotiated clichéd Australian-ness. The museum of the house attempts fixity and control. She can't help but look at the objects as kitsch, as having built in redundancy of meaning.

The mother speaks in clichés and warnings. Warnings against all kinds of potential perils for the female child, the feminine under pressure. She says, 'watch out, watch out for everything, it is all a danger, to your skin, to

your brain, to who you are, this dangerous wide brown country, never a woman saw the edge of it and survived, watch out, watch your back, your neck, your flesh'.

She said.

But in this position she also articulates the contradiction at the heart of ownership, the contradiction of claiming a name and being carved out in an earlier time, always having to watch out.

For the horizon, for the thief, stealing away your body, for the land. Better to fence the whole lot in.

And this is my modus operandi
to tell the story that was told to me.

It happens to be my mother's story and in this story all kinds of meanings and ways of interpreting the story come to bear on the story itself.

So that it is never only 'the story', it is never simply the recollection of an event but comes to mean in very particular ways and to belong to a whole set of discourses about the self.

You will immediately see that it is 'truth', it really happened, it is an authentic story. But it is in the very claim to authenticity that problems arise, for the telling will be made for dragging out sympathy, nostalgia, and creating affect.

And this story takes place in Australia, which is a place and an idea, and the idea of the geography of Australia and the landscape captures me and is at once the site and the backdrop for the telling of the story and the story itself.

Placing oneself in the story as a kind of autobiographical turn and attempting to think about the story through a version of feminist analysis is the challenge.

Memories are always re-arranged - stories are told in particular ways, for particular purposes.

I want to tell you a story,

a story that at first is victimless, with the victim unable to speak. The crime slips away into the place that it emanated from. She becomes another kind of victim through speaking, through taking up a position that becomes untenable. Once spoken she is fixed forever in that position.

Speaking brings it to life and speaking explains every moment of the life of the victim.

Living every day with a silence that permeates out and is so loud in its manifestations that the energy released in denial is palpable. One possibility for dealing with this is to work with memory writing.

Layers and intricacies are revealed through acknowledging the place of memory, the presence of memory, and the poetics of memory.

I smell the humid air and retreat into a place that is physical and I'm dropped into a memory that rests in the cells of my body.

I feel sensations familiar from childhood and see faces and hear voices forgotten. The body when dead can be called a body and a corpse. Alive it can only be a body.

It is in the living body that these sensations remain.

Sensations of memory are imprinted on cells and absent from a corpse. Ask the question of the body. In which cell will we find the story of falling from a rocky ledge and into deep water?

They call out, this is the structure of memory.

Memory writing produces particular effects and these allow for the personal, individual story to inhabit the wider and official historical stories and accounts which have previously been dominant forms of story making tied to nation making.

Memory is a complex process of fragments of stories without end, coincidences and fatal landings. Memory is made new in each remembrances. Versions of events and stories that could be true, could be false. They all contribute to an account and become a way of thinking about events. They are all versions.

Think about boats and trees, how they are differently thought of. Embedded in historical narratives about boats are arrival stories. As examples of discourse matters, depending on speaker positions – invasion discourses. The invasion story is beginning to be heard more widely. We are all of us arriving or being arrived at.

On the way to Victor Harbor in South Australia, the Aboriginal canoe tree is wrapped in a black shroud to protect it from vandalism and cars. Canoes were once made from these trees.

And boats were also once made from these trees.

Great swathes of timber bent and manipulated,
or boats were made to carry trees, great river red gums felled and carted down the Murray River,
the other side of the invention.

Producing a land stripped.

I looked for directions on navigation as plot or methodology and ended up with plotlessness.

Sub-textual Plot

I am pinned on the noticeboard of your life, I would like to be somewhere outside of known discourse in an effort to be different, you try to summarise me in poetry however, this is fair enough but can you keep up with that categorising?

Like butterfly wings attempting to describe, once a moving, flying, landing thing, sure the colours are strong, but when glass encased and held by two small pins you classify and collect and know something, for what purpose?

Design the glass cases so that they appear to reflect, enlarge, enhance the object. How can I transmit collectibility to you?

Shrinkage will occur, you see me less and less but that memory of me stays strong, made denser and more defined by time passages. Time passages that force you to remember, and live in the glass case of preservation. That's it, although there is a constant movement forward, you can no longer say – 'when I knew you then you had the softest skin and the best dancing shoes'. But it's over now, has been for some time, the detective will remind you, show you strips of super-8 and spread out materials, remnants of your body.

Remnants of your movement, a shredded piece of silk, worn but soft, so soft, around your neck, I still smell perfume, embedded there at your throat, the indentation where clavicle bones reach together, this I press my lips to, where bones define you, the flesh is a well for my mouth.

Memory writing produces an intimacy with the reader/with the writer. Memory has many layers. Simple stories of space/place and then go deeper down. The grave is an obvious site of memory. And the museum is a kind of grave.

Here lies:

In thinking about autobiography an older usage sees it as:

... the story of a person's life, written by himself [and] connected narrative, with a coherence and unity lacking in the others that is in (confessions, diaries, journals, letters, memoirs and personal records) ... all writings which allow us to look into the lives of others have value, because they add to the sum of our knowledge of human nature. Those written by notables eg (Winston Churchill) have, of course the added attraction of putting the reader into close contact with important events with which the writer was associated.

(Yelland et.al. 1972, p.15)

She wants to resist the connected narrative and unity. Are there ways to show the fragmentation of human life and the range of events that cannot be accounted for by any attempt at coherence? This is not the story of a famous or notable person. The 'incident' is the determining factor that is the driving force in the discontinuous narrative. The important event is not one but many. Life is fragmented, subjectivity is always shifting, we are differently produced in different sites.

Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton argue that in recent historical writing:

memories link us to place, to time and to nation: they enable us to place value on our individual and our social experiences ... [and that] authors are an autobiographical presence in their work. Their subjectivity is recognised as central to historical research and writing, with individual memories shaping the questions about national memory making.

(Darian-Smith and Hamilton 1994, pp.1-6)

This kind of autobiographical presence in historical writing is emulated in some fictocriticism where the author's subjectivity or place in the text is recognised and worked with.

Annette Kuhn uses the photograph as artefact and the circumstances of the photograph's existence to discuss the disjuncture between the photographic image and what lies outside of the photographic image. This can be likened to language and the ways in which the language of memory constructs an object, the historical times or feelings differently to the actual event. Through reconstruction and re-interpretation memory becomes not the record of the event itself but the act of repeating and entering into a speech of memory. The writing I do in this work also becomes part of the re-creating of memory. Photographs are evidence and can provide material for re-interpretation, material to be read and decoded. The reader brings to the image whole sets of assumptions and pre-conceived ideas. In the same way that I bring to the story told to me whole sets of ideas and ways of re-interpreting the material.

Memories evoked by a photo do not simply spring out of the image itself but are generated in a network, an intertext, of discourses that shift between past and present, spectator and image, and between all these and cultural contexts, historical moments.

(Kuhn 1995, p.12)

Whilst Kuhn is discussing the photographic image this concept of the intertext could be applied to many other texts, including for the purposes of this work, the verbal texts of memory and anecdote.

What are the conventions of the family photograph or the photograph of children, and more so what is done with the photo in language, in the story told around it? In thinking about the use of photos in memory work, a central question arises - does the work rely on the family snapshot to tell the family story? Tears well up in my eyes, I break into hysterical laughter, I'm ashamed, I'm embarrassed, when you produce that photo, that text. It is not only the reading of a cultural text or artefact that is historically produced and changing, it is the availability of the photograph or the image due to the nature of photographic technologies and techniques enabling mass production through cheaper and widely available development techniques.

The photograph, however, is held in a place of importance as being an essential part of family recording - 'here we are, posed at the beach, we had a lovely time', outside the waves are crashing, on the sand - prints of your feet, walking. We never took photographs of footprints.

"A photograph bearing a huge burden of meaning and of feeling, this one - to use Roland Barthes term - pierces me" (Kuhn, 1995, p16).

My mother at the age of thirteen kneeling on one knee in a newly ploughed paddock holding a rifle preparing to shoot into the distance. Photographs as a document hold more meaning than simply a record of childhood. One black and white photograph in a limited collection. It's the gun, the long plait, it's the girl in the country. It's before victim and before the entrenching of the rupture as pivotal moment. She is able to be that action girl throughout life, carrying with her a solidity and drive that defines her.

She wanted to theorise footsteps but found no theoretical precedent.

She noted that the transient nature of the footprint was recorded through hierarchies of remembrance.

"Photos are used in the never-ending process of making, re-making, making sense of ourselves, now" (Kuhn 1995, p.16).

I have attached to that girl in the paddock with the rifle aimed, a sense of strength. The other side of this coin, penny if you like, is to tell the story of her time as the woman as victim. She embellishes and embroiders constructing in her mind museum a sense of self that belongs to the moment of rupture, the moment of family dissolution.

The story rests on a savage moment of intervention.

An intervention that disrupts and sends all flying into thousands of pieces.

The knife under the pillow, threat to her movement.

Here I was at fourteen and in a witness box, swearing on a bible to tell the truth. I didn't know what a bible was. And the questions, I didn't know what they were talking about. The case went on for ten days. He was sentenced to seven years in prison, only because of what he had been doing for years. Living with two families one his wife and the other his step-daughter and now his daughter by his step-daughter.

(Prosser, I, Personal Journal)

In this family story, where family is the site of power relations, power over the body, in this case male power over the young female body, the way that the story gets told amplifies these relations and makes them extraordinary and inescapable. Warnings and admonishments about MEN circulate and have currency in particular ways. They are to be battled against, fought with and not trusted. This becomes a generational lesson, you really do feel it in your genetic make-up.

The material circumstances demonstrate the lesson - 'girls must have their own room' older men/women are potential violators.

My subjectivity is a riddle and a simplistic airing of laundry.

The self can be thought of as a place or site where meanings coalesce rather than containing a story about me/she/her.

The self is the product of discourses and rules of engagement, I am never speaking except through these. Through the fictocritical and poetic then, I'm interested in the ways in which these discourses can be uncovered and shown to 'make' the subject. I see the main subjects as constructed out of a range of speaking positions and non-narrativised stories. It is the bringing together of how to think about the story and the way it is told and re-constructed as a memory story. It is thinking about the place we find ourselves in now and the available ways of thinking about the material through the critical devices that may be available at any time. This creates an ideal opportunity for fictocritical work - the ficto - the story or the poem - or the structure of the telling and the backdrop – and the current understandings of memory and its uses in nation/person making, making it possible to think about the material through a

critical kaleidoscope rather than simply writing a story. It is also a way of displaying the problematic of simply constructing a linear narrative when this subject – this writer works in the disconnected, the collage, the poetic, and with an understanding of the meaning of texts and textual strategies.

Carolyn Steedman suggests certain kinds of histories and sociological studies have excluded and not accounted for women like her mother. She suggests that “interpretation – the place where we rework what has already happened to give current events meaning” (Steedman 1986, p.5) – how we make sense of a past – and the place we inhabit now – can be informed by a range of political and theoretical positions.

“But the point doesn’t lie there. Back in the past, back in the lost time at which they happened, the only point lies in its interpretation” (Steedman 1986, p.5).

A girl is born in 1930s Queensland.

In 1930 what music was not heard on this strange hillside?

A no-place.

A place close to some other places, some other towns, some towns with halls and churches where music was heard, is still heard.

Known in the little story of this family.

No music, no make-up, no dancing.

But singing.

The Lord’s praises.

Memory.

The ways in which I interpret or think about the events that shaped my mother and the ways she responded to them in raw and ordinary ways are influenced by this idea of a past pre-supposing a present.

I have tried to think of my mother as a woman first and then as my mother. A woman whose subjectivity is created in a particular historical time, subject of a range of discourses of femininity and self. When thinking about her as a woman first I am persuaded by some of the older feminist ways of knowing. In this work I have attempted to shift her into someone who is an active subject,

constructing a personal museum. To work with the meanings that can be made from the personal museum and the home as site for constructing the self, the maker of gardens as representative of the ways in which little acts of colonising Australian space begin to connect up and make one continuous and collage-like garden where the Indigenous is incorporated and assimilated. Making and re-making the landscapes she inhabits, colonising space and wielding control over bush places. She was busy making gardens in the bush. These are not places to be appreciated for what they are but places to be bulldozed and re-planted, filled with greenery, tamed.

It is a need for perfection and control.

The perpetual rhythm of this is disrupted by children growing up, arrival and departures, now she cooks for one and so much falls away, and is no longer needed. The dust develops staying power on the ornaments and the glassware and is a record of finished uses.

And as they become memorialised in their stillness and lose the power of utilitarianism these objects of culture become clues to a story.

This is the story of a life.

Listen, in between the large events, small accretions gather and take hold, memories that are located in the air more than in the real. In particular the smell of personal memory.

What must it be like to not speak about something?

When the cells of living memory turn in on themselves.

So that when the speaking appears, it bursts out.

So that on reflection, everything done, remembered, felt, seen, imagined is coloured by, made by what is revealed.

So that all action, all purpose, is coloured by – the event.

The Walk

What is it that produces different kinds of walking?

In walking, the curve of a back, the slump of a shoulder, the strength of a neck, the detail of the walking gives away a little.

Where I walked.

Where I walked is not remembered by footfall, or legwork but by incident. There are mysteries surrounding the directions East and West. Mysteries which writing will not cure. Explorers once set out for remote inland spaces hoping to inscribe them into ownership. The remote inland spaces of mind and memory are not so easily inscribed or owned. A huge embrace for memory then, the single defining moment when I knew with certainty, about your skin, your wide open spaces, in the desert, the parchment dryness of your touch, I find you in a grain of sand.

In the kitchen of my mother's house, wedged between the sliding glass doors of the crockery cupboard, a photograph.

The photograph is of a sister she knew only as a child. At first I thought it was her, the likeness was astounding.

Visiting the Country Fire Service opportunity shop I find a hand made knitting bag filled with knitting needles. The collection is wide ranging and includes Patons, Milward, Aero amongst other brands.

What hands held these and fashioned knitted clothing?

Carried the floral bag from place to place with balls of wool ready for the moment, the opportunity for knitting? Embedded into each finished product the joy and anger of a life.

Left in the opportunity shop for a potential knitter or perhaps a potential collector of the items of femininity.

Have they been taken there after the death of the user?

A bag of knitting needles no longer needed.

These things can be read and are part of the domestic archive, they are

representative of particular histories and generations of women. Could we find that sister and discover her making the same gardens, constructing a personal museum out of the same artefacts?

My mother knitted and embroidered, sewed, crocheted, decorated, cooked, cleaned and was a domestically competent woman. This is a site of contestation, no longer believers but trained carriers of techniques and notions that you think you have forgotten. A recipe you once taught me, a clothes washing tip no longer needed.

How to cream butter and sugar.

My mother was a 'pale lady' after childbirth at forty, white and washed out, a long and difficult labour, at a time when it was thought that birth at forty was a risk and dangerous, not like now when my friends give birth at forty, forty three, she looked like she was dying.

Years later she tells me that the grandmother who was never mentioned, never spoken of, her mother, died in childbirth at forty.

Hers was the grave we went to in Degilbo.

Once I heard a story.

This is the bush track part of the story.

Winding itself about the central narrative.

My secret grandmother, unspoken and unknown until that moment. This is no television report with weeping relatives coming to the fore, this is the mundane and the ordinary, the remaining in the background, the deliberate concealment that becomes habitual, to call on it, to bring it to the surface requires little. The secrecy has its own face and acts with its own coherence. It's the turn of the head, the small detail missing from the story.

She died in childbirth. She died in childbirth giving birth to the first 'legitimate' child of her new and recent marriage. Her heart stopped, her heart gave way, her heart bled out.

The other children, my mother one of them, all born inside the cloud of concealment.

My mother and I go to the grave of Hablutzel and others in the country town of

Degilbo. This is the first time she has been here. A cemetery that is somewhere, but nowhere, an Australian bush cemetery, outside of the town, under gum trees. In the middle of nowhere. You can get good bacon and egg sandwiches at the service station close by. No town left now, though I take a photograph of her sitting on the wooden stairs of the tongue and groove hall.

A cemetery that was nowhere but somewhere

No town left now, a few new pioneers with their factory built houses on dirt blocks, the most un-productive land.

Some remnants of the place she knew. The tongue and groove wooden hall, the butcher's shop still standing, slab roof and walls intact.

Unknown places, small towns, that grew for what reason, in what order? Left to their own devices, clustering around an idea or a mineral find or testing the distance between bigger towns. Somewhere to stop on the road to somewhere.

In this small non-incidental place, things happened that affected a family for generations, there are no stark reminders, the landscape has simply covered them over. No scars. It's a sign to others that you are coping, to be able to carry the objects of your past forward. Some of these are more evident, an object on a mantle piece, and some are only ever lodged in memory recesses.

Story is to memory as memory is to story

We live in history and memory but the oldest house we might live in – a white house - might be a lot less than two hundred years old.

There is always a sense in the landscape of something coming before, of footsteps walking or leaving clear. Of animals wheeling free without fences to stop them. I brake on the freeway as an echidna trundles over the bitumen. I drag a giant wombat off the road on a Sunday morning, Saturday night carnage. Erasure is impossible.

Little pieces of geography that have whole lives embedded in them.

How does space inscribe memory?

Each place that stimulates memory against forgetting.

That document that marks birth and signals the beginning of a new story, but remains connected to stories of the past.

She calculates a way to tell. It is like a scene from an advice column. Sit them down in a chair and make them feel comfortable.

'I have something to tell you'.

She sets up the video player with a wild life video, New Age soundtrack in the background.

'Sit down. I have something to say'.

Hopefully I am distracted. How to tell?

This kind of story requires a distraction, a nature video, where birds wheel and turn, diving for fish and returning to their chicks. In this setting permeated by the New Age enterprise of linking documentary to ideas of serenity and calm, the story gets played over and over. New Age videos as a commercial enterprise are placed in shops and airports, alongside relaxation tapes.

How old is the point of memory?

When walking, falling.

Specificities of place and politics are important to making accounts of lives.

The specificities of Australia, in particular Queensland are part of what helps in the construction of representations of place.

Memory writing produces particular effects - and these are to allow for the personal, individual story to inhabit the greater, wider historical stories which have previously been the dominant forms of story making.

I am not seeing and when I'm not seeing I'm inventing. I'm inventing a past that has some semblance to events as they may have happened, but these events have only been told to me, yes from the horse's mouth and yes in times when telling was necessary and essential, but does it matter? A sense of origins, of circuits accounted for and histories cleared up.

Space. I'm talking into space. That space that I inhabit is not real but imagined, it exists in the interstices of memory, easily called up.

The maps stand in between the site mapped and the cartographer.

Cartographers like all text makers are bound by culture, history, society and gender. What map I might make here is bound by the same markers. The memory I might attribute to each artefact is also bound. Deane Fergie, writing about a trip to Marree, has the following to say about mapping:

While this account of Australian interiors is exploratory, it is not a chartered account of exploration. This journey lacks the imperial direction, surveying and measurement usually associated with exploration. It does not seek to blaze a trail for possession and settlement. To the contrary, this is mud map, which seeks to unsettle. Its lines are as propositional, repositionable, and orienting as are the contours of culture and of self that it explores.

(Fergie 1998, p.174)

Poems of Memory and Uncertainty

The difference between the detective's abduction and the philosopher's induction and deduction is that the detective reasons with memory rather than argument.

(Ulmer 1994 p.215-216)

Detective Fiction

She is a detective without rules; she makes borrowings and allusions and creates a character called Detective Fiction.

She is the safest character around which to construct a narrative. The detective is the one who investigates. She can speak as narrator and observer. She can think about her activities as detection and be distanced from any responsibility or care. Distanced and safe.

Detection with all of its mysteries and problems to be solved is occasionally like life. She is someone who looks good on paper.

In the detective is disguise.

Poised over a cliff

looking down

see Australia, covered, unclear what it is.

Made in Australia

beach road corrugations

throw you around

looking for perfect environmental protection.

4 wheel drive deepens the loss

she walks on that road

acclimatised by Queensland breeding

it does not surprise then that these deep lines

are carved on your brow by the sea and the sorrow.

The detective, clue driven
wanders around song crazed seeking clear passage.
Driving through all weathers
leaning and rusted sheds reverting to ground shapes
chain like fences smashed
Australia, this is.
Layers of waiting, great moments of hysteria reflected in
the lone telegraph pole.

The detective's map and modus operandi are within and without. The recognition of elements of a particular historical period when people really did write 'Export Romance Not Live Sheep'. This is her backdrop. Her script and her lines. Departure from this brings critique. She will be an outsider yet inside, allowed access to whispers and gossip but never taken to the heart of it all. Graffiti and gossip were her maps and identifiers. She recognised the suburbs that were clung to, by the words overlaid on concrete and the sides of buildings.
'Masturbate and Sink the State'.

While working with a real story told by the mother, the detective feels distanced from it. The nature of the telling and the story itself, with no visible holds in reality, makes it hard to believe.

There was a real crime and there are real effects but they are hard to quantify. Yes, there are the facts but they are hard to come by, encased as they are in the emotional re-telling. They are not facts but merely memory distortions and re-evaluations. Yes, there are terms of telling. After all it is only ever a story retold after the event. Scar tissue remains but is not visible to the naked eye.

I'm especially interested in memory as one of the body's practices of knowledge. The relationship of the body to language and memory is complex. Memory is a source of resistance for minority constituents and, as the site of memory; the body is a vehicle of resistance. As such it often contests history ...

(Brewster 1995, p.92)

Her memory. Her memory aches in their bodies. Like molten lead they are contaminated by her sorrow. Made into something else through the process of pouring. Pouring out, pouring into. Memory sorrow flows into all available spaces and crevasses. There is always a potential for lightness in flow. She grasps at this, hoping to be carried over the divisions between self and other. Every act relies on memory. The memory of consequence, the trained memory. It is remembering that stops you falling into bad manners, memory at the base of all. It is memory at the core of writing, yet it is disengaged. Writing is always relying on the future, the read document, the finished product, the turning from one thing into another. Outside of the mundane and the general it is memory that motivates hostilities and revenge. Memory motivates. Memory resides in you and stays with you. The loss of memory sees the loss of all. A shell is left. A shell that carries the sea wind when placed next to the ear. She can't hear it, doesn't know to call it sea wind. Says 'it murmurs to me in the night.'

Horizon Madness

You might start with the horizon, eyes cast outward, horizons close in, horizons further out. As a point of reference, a place to begin, the horizon will always tell you where you are. Dust storm on the horizon in South Australia vanishes in red, Indian Ocean in Fremantle, dip your toes in, Africa across the way, in Queensland the horizon is always a line against the self, Tasmanian horizon of blue and green, scarred in places, other places have many horizons. Are you always able to look at the horizon?

Take good note of the horizon.

It's your mark and your measure,
out that way, always trying to get to it.

Out this way, receding from it, a small thing stuck on the rear vision mirror each time I look.

Take note of the horizon, with each step of your hip style of walking; keep an eye on the distant line.

Differently organised in different places,
that horizon.

For some it is simply not there, for others,
the mark of your being.

That is the horizon of your life, your expectation, something expanding ever outwards, always there but a mark taken for granted. It appears to cut through the frame of your drawing, your writing.

You need the horizon.

The horizon in a city like Sydney is the horizon,
forever changing.

Somewhere there is a spot where you can stand and look at the horizon, a line undisturbed, but not here, it is always filled with a 'Significant Landmark'.

It's not really the horizon that you look at. Onwards, forever forward. But look in closer. The horizon is always the future.

Clue # 2 Lesbian Detective Biographical Details

What doesn't go into the personal archive?

She was a left handed killer, you can tell by the angle of the blow.

I see left-handers on screen in historical films and know that this is not right.

Unlike the wristwatch errors in these films, it is a sign of a subversive moment when left-handedness goes unnoticed as a marker of historical inaccuracy.

These are points of definition, where dyes are cast, where memory is entangled with the learnt, learning to write, memory and writing are intricately knotted together. Tied up in the very act of learning the technique of writing is trauma and the insertion of a sense of difference.

The detective reads her story into already existent memorials.

That soldier, that horse. That 'left hand of darkness'.

Endo's canoe in the Art Gallery of South Australia has the water on the inside.

The water is a clear, still water reflecting the observer.

It is lined with tar; the blackened wood, a seal and a reminder/a memory of burning.

'Love many, trust few, always paddle your own canoe'.

The boat of memory brings with it empty space.

Artefacts are encrusted in gaps between the timbers. They are no more than this, pieces of paper with names and instructions on them. Lists and details of how things work.

Some photographs and some diagrams. And this is all there is.

No large piece, no cannon, no anchor, no hull. Only the fragment of a story filtered out, into the archive. No trophies, no jewels, they left nothing, no heirlooms. Working class leaves only scars and kitsch. It is all paper in the end.

ficto-criticism was never a genre that was One ... Ficto-criticism does not illustrate an already existing argument, does not simply formulate philosophy (or anything else) in fictional terms ... It is, in essence, performative, a meta-discourse in which the strategies of telling are part of the point of the tale. It is a mode of writing which pays particular attention to questions of address, even as it knows, with Barthes, that 'one does not write for the other'.

(Gibbs 1997, p. 1)

Event becomes memory.

· Remembered in current detail.

The way you tell the event to yourself, over and over, turning it in your hands, over, over.

'And then, and then'

When memory is passed onto you, onto me
it becomes my memory of you telling me,
not of the event itself.

It moves from membranous, felt in your body, impacted on your skin, your brow, memory.

To my current embellishments, as I heard it, as you told it, memory shifts, like film scenery, I capture my own *mise-en-scène*, your dialogue re-interpreted.

I see your memory, your emotional re-telling, on your skin as a record of events, lines on the landscape,
but for me it lies only on paper.

This story begins with a death.

It is detective fiction, after all.

Being a detective gives her the right to enquire, to stand disengaged and outside of the machinations of the world around her. She is there to observe and yes, there is a crime that she is investigating. Detectives describe space in ways that make you aware of politics, or class, or gender.

In thinking about Australia as the background to this story, she sees it as a place unfolding. Whilst some of its characteristics are known and accepted

there are many stories and interpretations of this country. The lesbian is interested in the lesbian domestic archive as the place from which she speaks. The story must be backed up with the validity of an archive, even if fictional. Never take anything for granted, nor at face value. It is after all the construction of self that is at stake.

There are many formations of lesbian and domestic arrangements and to come to some agreement on the archive will take some time, for the argument will rest with you accepting the importance of the informal, the unlisted, the personal and the observed, rather than the filed and the official, the archive that is. She reads this archive because it quickly fades and little regard is shown for it by the official machinery of preservation.

I ask you to de-nature your surroundings. To see the clothes you wear, the markings on your body, the hair cut and the shoes on your feet, as markers. As you wear these and enter into the house, the domestic sphere, which may be shared co-habiting couples or inhabited alone, of something outside of official discourses, ask yourself: how did you get counted in the census this year?

In this de-naturing you will see that you are making your archive as you live in this very moment, not in some future unknown and uninhabited. It is the accounting for the minutiae in the present that makes the archive work, that makes the detective understand the place of the lesbian.

In charting the personal and the intimate what might the archive look like? Will it be filed away in some future, perfect?

The following is the detective at work.

The small stories told through fragments, poetry and interruptions.

A collection of signifying processes, novels, poems, photographs, songs, and stories could show you what this particular archive looks like. But it could come down to the usefulness being made of these objects. Sometimes they are small acts of memory making, of soldering onto the daily, another register, 'I remember that day', she said looking at the photograph.

Or Patti Smith singing:

I'm dancing barefoot

In 1984 we made badges that read 'Invaginated Text'.

As a modern way of knowing the nation, the lesbian nation, such an idea was once an important part of being the politicised lesbian. What are the characteristics of the lesbian citizens of lesbian nation?

Is it wearing purple, or is it being a drag king?

This community is recognised by its initiates.

It's a walk, some say swagger.

A style.

And then there is the outsider who stays inside, the unrecognisable. Those you would not know, who make their presence differently felt.

All of the visible signs are missing

but wouldn't you know it, she has a dog.

What is an Australian lesbian?

In the display case, the photo establishes that she is on the outside. She is memorialised now as her sexuality, not for any other reason do these images have meaning.

I look and look for recognition, for affirmation.

The photos don't sing to me, I wish they would, they don't pierce me, why not?

The erotic of recognition passes the detective by and that is how she survives as detective, calm and not aroused by community.

Imagine a lesbian nation.

I posit this only in remembrance of a dreamed possibility before everything that exists now.

Pauline Hanson puts this back on the map with her fears of an Asian cyborg lesbian president.

Why not, that would be a healthy change?

The lesbian archives are real places in some cities. Here they are imaginative and exist in a more abstract way, a memory archive perhaps where memory is kept through language not necessarily in artefacts. The ways that language can

be used in the construction of a particular kind of subject, seemingly outside of dominant history, outside of the official archive, are open to possibilities and not restricted to research and statistics.

In the main street the argument ensues about what the lesbian memorial should be, a single woman, two women, a group of women? Would it depict the lovers, or the triangle of non-monogamous relationships? In a city not far from where I sit, a memorial is being planned.

Am I not an Australian citizen?

Do I, in the tradition of the heterosexual gaze place myself in the position of the soldier or the gay man?

Do lesbians shape knowledge and how?

Does their lesbianism come into the decision, any decision they might make on a daily basis?

It starts with a question.

What is this place?

I ride the love pony

caught in the love stirrup

I cannot, won't, don't know how, to dismount.

Love pony tilts and dies a wooden roundabout death.

You are my love pony,

love pony

love.

Love pony is the distant lesbian nation

a dreamed for place

Somewhere in New South Wales isn't it?

A name, a major signifier: Amazon Acres.

At the centre of the problem for some, for femininity

and might I say not just femininity, but for the whole sexuality, space, belonging, race, and class questions are the politics of love. No love.

Pony.

The pony grows old.

Give to good home

Healthy old mare

14 hh. Suit companion horse or trail riding.

'Export Romance not Live Sheep' appears alongside 'Social Needs Before Private Profits' on the stone wall across the road from the lesbian feminist communal household, back then, back then.

'Women hold up half the sky'.

Is that the marker and the memorial? A memory? A memory archive.

Watching her face as she answered, the detective suspected an ambivalence, a problematic uncertainty, she stored that for later analysis.

At the core of me, of you?

Some story of other impacts

where is that Mills and Boon lesbian love affair?

The striking Radclyffe/Stephen?

"But the moment passed and they drew together"(Hall 1956, p.326).

She stands outside of the cinema, waiting for you to walk by.

The archive is in all of these things, the moments of cruising, of knowledge not recorded, of informal trainings in love.

The first book you read, was it Ruby Fruit Jungle?

Once when it was sex, not love-making

the paths of emotional pain

were greater than the sum of their parts

all the ponies released at once

gathering like brumbies at watering holes

frisky, delighted

write with champagne fingers

along your neck

taking your ear in their mouth

all the women, all the women

and some, more like boys.

We like them as boys
hard boned definitions filling the space
button up is best
but then she shocks in her skirt or purple tutu
she has a tattoo 'Steve' on her right buttock
and it's not for a boy.

The girl is catching flesh and lips
counting the air between their bodies
the detective wants to know
and will not be brushed aside
how do they walk?

They walk
an effort is made against femininity
that walk gives away everything it is the butch cruising walk
The jeans slung low on the hips
it is a tight-chested Bonds t-shirt walk.
Or it is a beyond the being lesbian walk,
where the definition is ridiculous, impossible, finished
a small corner of the mind.
She is female masculinity,
she is feminine voluptuousness, she is, she is.

A few friends, you see here is the photo memo.
On the beach, in the restaurant, at the campsite, on the island naked. And at
other times it is the moment of remembering what a repressed and closet
history can do.
It is the feminist symbol with a fist inside the circle painted black on the back of
a motorbike helmet.
What does it mean to have lived like this?

They have their own codes and rules and ways of being.

Not knowing how it all works, how it all fits together can make for confusion and delight.

Does it matter?

It does if it can become part of the story, a small piece of being Australian.

My small story.

Who are you, walking across the horizon?

Shape distorted by the background, sun as it sinks, slow then fast, an orange ball distorted into the ocean.

Who are you, walking?

I write of now and the notion of the everyday lesbian. Inhabiting the shadows of the writing is a colonial past, a history I seek to bring to the surface. In this story of the post-colonial subject, the human post-colonial subject, the female post-colonial product of feminism and gay liberation and environmentalism subject. Not all subjects are created this way. In attempting to spell out the problem of writing the lesbian body and a particular archive that will not speak for all but will have resonance for some I make a small corner of remembrance.

And here I find myself falling back on some essential notion of the lesbian body. Various portrayed and recognised as shifting and situational, historically constructed, as lingering taste of secrecy and hatred, as passing and being feared, of fearing being outed, of being thought of as non-existent, of chic now, and of male to female bodily re-orientation and becoming lesbian minus penis. What then is the lesbian? The markers have become distorted, possible to question identity now, something strange in the fruit.

Writing teachers in their wisdom say 'write what you know'. But you see I know as you do, in the template of knowledge, that this lesbian body is always negotiated and aware of the various forms and structures and the range of possibilities open to it.

For now, for this week, or month, or for today, I am the domestic surgeon of love, excising from the banal and the mundane, the average weekly income, the structure of 'Australian society', the gold medal sporting achievement, the

preamble, the guarded apology, never one really, the ship stuck on the Barrier Reef, coral bleaching, this is where I write from today.

Does this contribute to the lesbian body of knowledge?

Through the attempt at placing myself as a body structured in part through being lesbian, alongside all of the other points of identity, I am acknowledging that which is often absent but integral. This is part of how I know. Am I sounding like identity politics gone berserk?

I want to write the everyday lesbian,
but end up with a detective.

Once I wrote:

she is ordinary

though she drives a Toyota Hi-lux dual cab with drop side tray

wears Blundstones and an Akubra

she is ordinary

eating organic vegetables, brown rice, tempeh and vegetables

she is ordinary

no make up

no high heels

she waits for too long.

This is the matter of the archive, sign of a different kind of woman in this place.

We grew to be like men in this sun bright country

The detective is archetypally male, no masculine. She holds herself against the ways that she refuses this and sees female masculinity as potential disguise and yet at the same time drawing attention to herself through that very disguise and costume.

This is appealing.

This is how a story should start.

The car moves along the desert highway.

Music. Not yet.

Bitumen and white lines divide us from each other, it doesn't take much to drift over to the other side, a look across at the scenery and soon we could be drifting, oncoming and risky, collecting head on.

1967 Valiant VC Utility, column shift.

Driving across the Hay Plain, not short of kangaroos, emus.

Wide open.

Bodies out here clearly lost for words.

Radio loud to blot out your voice.

That dry air filling the lungs.

We dressed like men

hard lines and short hair

it was a break, a shift, a movement away from femininity.

The detective also breathes that air, it's her disguise.

And on another day she looks for her stilettos.

Sad love song plays out on tinny speakers of a car stereo

Gloria Gaynor sings *I will survive*.

The scene, where you are now, describe the room.

Choice, you have no choice

in the background you will hear land clearing in progress.

Her body on the back seat.

Tattooed forearm, a cross and one word.

A name, a love.

Her body works mine, you know the clichés but do you know the way that she works out, into the endorphin state, no chocolate as replacement here, stuck to the roof of your mouth as you fall asleep, cocoa sliding down the back of your throat.

She slides, she makes wide, she coils, she springs, the desert hears her cries, night in the riverbed, moon on the horizon, smell of red gums.

'That', said the detective 'is an Australian scene, a desert scene, hidden in the

pages of the texts of girls and women, love in the desert'.

It leads me to think that this is an aside, not the truth at all, they won't be truthful, they're too good at deception.

She works me, she takes my hand and that is the end of me, it's a shopping centre romance, it's that ordinary and it's that normal, an aisle awaits you, your name is on the shelving, but you won't find me there.

We dressed like men.

Witnessing ourselves as portrayal of a hardened place.

Stretched across the desert lines of bitumen

take you to here

take you to there.

Your soundtrack will be distances covered

loads carried

sounds heard and repeated

while you drive singing to the country.

Unspoken Knowledge

“Memory believes before knowing remembers” (White 1999).

There are places that when written down are forever lost to silence. Forbidden places that tell the story of serious excitement. The excitement of being the first to fall, to be specific. To press against a male body. One of the most un-negotiated of spaces is that of the lesbian body speaking of the heterosexual/bi-sexual body. The impossibility of this story being part of the lesbian body. Or the imprinting of place onto encounter. The smell of earth against my head.

From car parks in inland Australia, take the train straight out to the West, from Rockhampton to Blackwater, through Emerald, Capella, Springsure and Dingo. The Holden station wagon was two tones of green.

The daydreaming was of with girls, girls.

It is the bringing together, the merging of place and body, imprinting forever that place and love.

When asked about the possibility of fidelity

she says ‘It is of course possible’

for there in the city it is girls, girls, girls,

they walk past with their bodies moving together, in time

allow for change in the landscape, in the historical,

allow for change in costume.

Yes, I am produced,

in Australia, in ideas about sexuality

by history, by narrative, by landscape

by my own hand.

Flesh wounds.

I’m clearly stuck on flesh.

When I open my body to the speculum and the pap, every two years, a

reminder letter in the mail, the woman doctor places her hand, and it is the disengaged body that responds. This is no pleasant state. It is all gynaecological, logical.

But it's not from here that the narrative trajects.

It's no longer possible to watch the big cats at the circus without entering into a discourse of uncertainty, the spectacle is over-burdened with audience knowledge of extinction and cruelty.

The circus is no longer, and may never have been, innocent.

The simplest detail, the organisation of the caravans in a circle around the big - top tent is reminiscent of buffalo hunts, of painted warriors, of massacres.

Witnessing the circus is like a compression of the everyday. All acts are burdened with uncertainty, the most mundane acts require negotiating memory, negotiating discourses of development, of futures and science.

Love File

A convergence of sex, sexes, and places, place.
And then the nights that are too long
motel rooms that smell densely of other people, other sex.
Is it possible that they've left their fragmented souls in places like these, unable
to lock them in a suitcase, in a toilet bag?
You press yourself down on me, is it annihilation?
Do you want elimination, of me, of you?
Women thrust, I like that idea.
In that motel room she dreamt up a play.

A short play for negotiating memory,
a monologue for a female player.
Imagine a filing system, one of those concertina types with a handle and
alphabeticised compartments.
A system to account for all the love that has come her way. But how to do this
so that it is not tragic romantic, but is a representation of the times.
For in your bed, are the ghosts of lovers past
in your room
always the smell,
the memory of the one who never quite left
who maintains their connection.
Are you there?
Are you there?
In this photograph you will see the poster of Virginia Woolf, the photograph of
Chris, the handmade birthday card and the grey cat. This will tell you, will show
you more.
It is an account which allows for each one as a particular construction with
some indication of the gossip and story that keeps it running.
Did you know, did you know any of this?

In each pocket of the filing system, surname or given name, all nature of artefacts, letters, notes, cards, photos, gifts or descriptions, diary and journal entries and her own recollections.

What to do with the archive of romance?

Turn it into a performance piece, on stage, a naked woman and filing system. A wooden table and an office chair.

Work through each entry.

Speak to each alphabetical listing.

'A is for Augustine'

Speak of romance, of boundary pushing.

Pain - crushing, sex - heart torn.

Tell me what you like.

sometimes it fails,

courage is an antidote of sorts.

You know you can never know everything

the desire to keep knowing, to keep finding, accepts that sometimes there is a trough, a low off the coast.

A falling off place; once we lived with intensity, with arms unreservedly open.

Then what we learnt stepped in. 'Be strategic', she said.

Then the ability to take stock, to make amends,
to lodge in story.

Keeping hold of the cynic with one hand and the open hearted with the other,
you want to write with elegant simplicity and purple prose, to bring them
together under the roof of the sentence that is written to make a girl cry.

And then you want to say, 'get a grip' and 'it can't be that bad' but what if it is?

There are times when I can imagine the poem
creeping into your heart and

turning you into a singer.

Who can account for the shift in how we looked at each other?

A failure of nerve, the stepping over and outside of,
the place of comfort.

Do you know something I don't?

The moon is always there, its shape outlined as if with eye-liner.

We danced under it and called out, walking along the fence line between the neighbours and ourselves. But the voice will carry out, out into the moon night.

Sleepwalking

Briefly, the shell of the burnt out shed looked solid. I felt the pressure at the end of the bed, waking in the night, the woman saying 'please help me find my child'. Through sleepwalking I understand something, the innocent look guilty, the clarity of reason, the smell of emotion hanging in the room. What memory is it that invades sleep, forcing the mind to reach for detail on waking with Berocca?

All goes by too quickly. The detective has only a short time to solve the crime. She doesn't know much and is surrounded by the hardness of other's certainty. They know, oh yes they know, it is just this and nothing more. There is a clinging to the real and the known, don't think beyond or want more, just get on with it. The stories you know while asleep don't appear the same on waking. We were reduced to simulacra, our eye-sight confused and suffused, the circulating drama performed outside of ourselves.

I watch for the signal, never letting go for a minute, and when I do let go? This thin membrane, in which I am encased, called life and from the placental, shaping and distorting me, not that I would want to call for foetal rights first, what if that membrane remains around you and in you and cannot be removed, no exfoliant here.

Is the impulse for mother rejection found in that?

A mother's toxæmia while carrying is found in that case of fluid, embarking on a voyage over rough seas, where blood is poisoned.

First hate, then obsession.

The detective sits at a desk, late at night. Spot light.

She reads aloud. The file on Judy. These are the one line clues.

Opened and read. A woman investigates someone who once belonged to a group called WOMB

Left on the desk, pamphlets, books from the Third World Bookshop. They will meet at a set place and time, as pre-arranged in the last newsletter. Or will it be at Jerusalem Restaurant?

Marianne would not be found wanting, she wrapped herself off to experience everything. She had never tried illegal drugs. Perhaps she would. She writes small notes that litter the desk, the mind. In these records of the everyday she tries to make sense, but never will, never can.

The I Ching falls open at:

'Do not build up illusion over any human being'

She wears an earring with a symbol that is supposed to mean safe crossing of the desert.

Moya said: Live frugally and walk with an umbrella in the rain.

As I walk past the house a woman comes out and says 'give me a bloody go Joanne'.

It is like being cracked open like a nut.

The reading of a recipe, the beating of a mixture
the continual chopping of onions
television turned on in the corner.

This, the entry on Judy.

I called out to her in the night as the full moon
cast a glow across the naked bed.

Did I ever say, I'm living in that conversation.

It has fixed me to some place that I can't retreat from.

She said 'in my life I am the observer, the traces of familiar objects, a firm grip on reality, on subjectivity, to hold on to these matters of living, it is all precarious'.

We were all delighted.

Manifesto of Love

Many.

Each one to the next.

Getting closer to perfect.

Naked ambition. To lie next to you
cool breezes, mosquito free.

Detective.

You really are a normal story.

They will call it same-sex love

like some kind of sociological terminology, it doesn't hold me nor represent me.

I find it wanting and reductive. Not unlike a geologist's rock, the surface cut but
never polished, peered upon and thought about for its economic value.

Harnessing the pink dollar.

I ask you to think of the scene, I'll give you
colours and schemes

and ask you to think of ordinary ideas.

In some scenes it is the recurrence of the same political poster, the thrill of
recognition, always comfortable, as though houses and hallways are
transplanted throughout Australia with the same messages and meanings.

Can you construct the crime for me?

Your heart will beat faster, fibrillate, as you approach the solution.

But you know it will not simply draw itself out for you.

You must decipher

detect

discover

Every artefact placed in your hands, your white-gloved hands
passes through an ideas machine

You handle them with great care, reducing yourself to
a version of curator.

Curate me.

Handle me with white gloves, label me endangered, draw me, peel me open,
categorise, preserve, place in order, only dead do I make sense in the memory
museum.

In this curating, you discover, too late, too far,

I am worth more dead than alive, my surplus value your interest now.

My extinction your warning sign, your register.

I open a cavity and you know pain immediate, pain before sorrow.

Nomadism.

It starts with a question.

No strings attached, I wander through the pages of history, of knowledge, of
discourse, known as deviant, as problematic, as absent.

This is freeing and at the same time, constraining.

Repressed and available.

Moving and static.

Derailed from the purpose momentarily, or absolutely in the purpose?

Permanence an impossibility, not difficult to comprehend.

Do you remember moving in to the old house?

A house on stumps.

It smelt and felt of other people's lives.

The carpet indented with feet falling, the end of their lives here, before they
moved on, marked out in the signs of habitation.

Is it possible to be known outside of the master discourse?

Are you the vague daylight lover in the suburbs?

The one with the curtains closed, waiting for your girl to come.

She arrives and smiles.

She arrives and smiles.

The detective dressed in the brown pin-stripe suit, double breasted, delays the findings.

I thought I glimpsed a ghost shadow across the road, your pretence of being always with me.

Reduced to this then, I crawl through your dreams looking for evidence of love.

Today I thought of waiting for you.

You should know

this is all it takes.

You go on in the ordinary, forging ahead with no understanding of grief.

I have been given only a few clues.

Objects from other places. Two small red central Australian stones, in need of return. Taking them achieves little and in retrospect climbing Uluru was also a mistake.

They are reduced to representations of places visited.

They sit, a small cairn of remembrance created in a Zimbabwean basket, the words, 'Use your talent' woven into the base.

Places visited, perhaps with the untold and unspoken of lover, 'you must buy those', render the absence in the form of the gift, the representative gift. After I leave you close to me forever. These are the rituals that you live by.

Minor observances made large by repetition.

The clues I have involve the art of walking and the reading of the personal museum. The work on the personal and the museum is a way of thinking about the intimate and the personal as part of unofficial histories. It is useful as a way of thinking about the storage and maintenance of the personal and the personal object.

It involves reading personal objects in their cultural, historical, social and local place. She writes to me 'I have loved another'.

It means finding the links and narrative connections to the secret. It means reconstructing the story from the objects of a life, hoping they will speak, hoping they will reveal the fabric of the story. There is no guide, no map, no street

directory, and no global positioning system for this.

In this Australia where absence creates meaning
and is claimed for solitude

the journeys of tourists and the extinction of birds
become the mark of the modern.

For my small part I claim the following as particular knowledge:

where Oxford Street is – and what will be found there

the pity of Pine Gap – and how to live with this place in the Australian desert
not wearing track suit pants in public – why not she says they are so very
comfortable.

What a Swedish valiant is – and why not to buy one
and where to get good coffee – as if that is all that matters.

As your detective I can tell you where to watch for signs of potential – stories
are made from the smallest incident, idea or image.

I will tell you what the appropriate songs are to sing
and what to do with all of those letters, postcards,
journals, lists, poems, photographs and prose before it is too late.

Clue # 3

Writing the self, but the self is only ever partial, known through this or that lens. Always unfinished, always seeking to reflect, on the itself. Asked of by so many, 'do you see yourself in this or that?'

Are you the self of this or that advertisement, soap opera, or memory?

Are you the self-styled? Are you the fragment? I find small pieces or remnants of your presence, a torn photograph, a jacket no longer worn.

Always attempting to make yourself into some kind of acceptability, never quite achieving it.

Out across the landscape a torrent of misunderstanding, like a gender war, unleashed with no-where to turn except to the short answer, the cliché, the monosyllable, even the grunt. But I've said before and I'll say it again, story will out, and will be heard because it lives on and on in the actions of the victim.

Working on detective fiction gives rise to the need for a persona. This persona is not victim but the traces of victim are on her skin, caught in the interstices of each breath, in my responses Pavlov like I run around and around in the same maze, the same feeding frenzy, and then I get it.

Filtering down like water through drains, combining to produce a slight knowledge of what made you, one single event courses through your life and produces you as the woman who was, the girl who was, the female subject who was, made the object, the target, the source of incest. Weep and weep and never weep again.

I consider myself an ordinary person with a plain surface upon which life is written. When the ordinary is challenged, the present by the past, when information and detail becomes powerfully placed within your consciousness, walking away could be your response.

Sometimes the inability to walk away and the conditions that require and make possible a response exist concurrently.

In walking, the human body recurrently teeters on the edge of disaster, continually falling forward, pivoting on the fixed foot, then catching the body with the other leg and foot just before the body becomes dangerously over-balanced.

(Solomon et.al. 1990, pp 328-329)

Making us who we are. Walking is precarious and yet so taken for granted, until the ability to walk is lost. Momentarily or permanently. A child learns to walk in stages, walking does not come first. 'Look, she walks, she walks'.

And even then it will only be one story, my singular small story.

In the background, notice this: fruit that will not set on the tree, disappearing birds.

I hear frogs.

I hear frogs are disappearing.

There are crimes all around and the detective or detective persona looks for the cynical statement, the wool over the eyes.

Looking through the shutters, reading between the lines, faced with disused mine shafts, owl scats, bones revealed. Revealed to an eye not jaundiced, slightly myopic, wide open.

Seeking the everyday in the ordinary, in the exotic.

In the everyday level playing field.

I will walk out on this night and see the moon and the stars and note the climatic conditions; the temperature. I tell myself that it is cold but need the affirmation of the weather report. Even while it is changing, it doesn't tell me more than I need to know but I can make my investigations short or long according to the temperature.

I cook and clean, detectives are too busy to embroider, except in the telling of lies, too busy collecting bones to be bothered knitting, too busy solving problems and constructing reasons for being, too busy to be a seamstress beyond sock repairs that is, except when it's all sewn up and the end of the

story can be told. The detective can't crochet except to find in lacework the intricate detail needed to think about the network of clues, too removed from the domestic to be thinking decoration. But to cook and clean, that is another story, for the detective knows that when others cook and clean for you, this provides a site for surveillance.

Where and how they keep their underwear.

What flavours they like in their food.

Dusting books can reveal love letters,
cards left open and on display: 'for my darling'.

My mother liked to cook. She cooked and cooked and now she cooks no more. And yet it was these crafts that she wanted me to learn. I imagine myself a lesbian detective slipping between the real and the memorialised.

I am made up and made over. I am one of the people
our parents warned us about.

In many ways being lesbian is often like being undercover. Working outside yet inside, inhabiting the same spaces as others yet with a secret, a hidden self. I know something about secrets. That is until something happens, a coming out, an opening, a site for being different is revealed.

Being a detective then can also be a secret.

I imagine myself an Australian lesbian detective, where the yellow and red of the desert and the blue of the sea meet and coalesce on the Nullarbor, where identity is of little consequence.

I may not be who you think I am.

As a detective I can walk and pass without your knowledge.

I can show you who I am in this moment and then in another I can become the unattainable yet real.

You cannot fix me, though it is possible to hold these wings down. Pinned to the table you might think you can normalise me, but I slip between the air and the sea, the horizon illusory yet able to mask my movement.

In the case of the lesbian detective she has been given the clues to a story of something that happened in another time and she must construct, from a small

number of clues a story, stepping into another persona and becoming someone else.

How can you look at the landscape and not see the mystery? Even if it is simply the mystery of a vanishing story.

She will work through a story that is a memory in an attempt to understand how something is working in the present. For like many real events, the effects and the resonances continue to be felt and thought. Reminders cling to the surface of the everyday, projecting action as if onto a clean white screen.

She takes your hand
kisses your fingertips.

Seeks you out against the kitchen cupboards
up against the wall.

or is she your girl all soft and feminine and pink?

Waiting for you in silence, words on the page, line after line of anticipation, it is the women you notice, not the man.

You take up the male gaze then and there,
and it is enough to find your own hand.

In the private histories of the family, where lives collide and circumstance is created, femininity becomes
a zone of contestation.

What kind of woman are you?

The detective attempts to move between all of these. In one she is simply fragmentary because evidence is the fragment, the corner piece of material left by the sewing machine, once operated by hand, now machine.

The detective cuts her hair short but keeps the heavy ponytail, cut just above where it was gathered by the rubber band. She puts the hair in a leather suitcase;

a distinct memorial to times past.

The detective is investigating versus being.

As lesbian she is often outside,

the ideal place to investigate from.

But in her being, in a being dislocated, outside the sound of rain on a tin roof,
breeze against weatherboard. Filled up and over with distinct possibilities,
remaining outside she is calling and whispering.

Never comfortable, never relaxed, not even for a moment.

Do you or don't you declare?

Do you or don't you pass?

Do you or don't you have your hair short, long, short butch, short femme, soft
waves of curl, number one and hard but fun.

Do you or don't you shave, here, there, legs, underarms, moustache?

Pluck: eyebrows, chin hair, moustache, what kind of woman are you anyway?

Do you wait for the lesbian character on television?

Do you care, do you or don't you care?

Have you told: your mother, does your father know,

what about your siblings, rest of the family, friends, family, doctor?

Are you a category, a statistic, absent from the census?

Are you breaking the law, which law is that? The law of the father, oh yes, the
law of the land perhaps.

Have you a tattoo across your forehead?

It is not hard to just write LESBIAN

Or are you now

QUEER?

It is not without a struggle, does it matter?

It's only now that the importance of the title Ms. makes sense, only when the
grey has started to show and the insistence on calling me missus arises. I've
never been a missus not even once. I've been a bridesmaid, but never a
groom, that doesn't count. I know how to be normal. I know how to perform in
such a way that my existence is not an affront.

Clue # 4

Listen, this story is mine and not mine
listen; outside it is possible to hear trees
blowing in high winds.

I can beat the story line

let you know what will happen before it really does

A body lies down. Fronds against the mouth. Rain forest.

Frogs

I hear frogs.

This is the knowledge you have to live with now.

No turning back

now that you know, what will you do?

You came back sooner than expected

your heart on your sleeve, final statement made,

I can run with that.

She looks forty or fifty. Hard to tell these days

doesn't wear the pre-requisite flowing clothes

nor play the right music, hits of the seventies,

eighties and nineties.

I can run with that

I can run.

We take her out and show her beaches, fountains and lookouts.

It's fast approaching the time for leaving

one more thing to show you, this street,

this house, this time past.

Down a shady lane, now a bed and breakfast.

now a hotel.

This fence, this line against the private

this minute in time

'Wait' she said 'wait for me'
We left her way back on the path
uneven, corrugated
she walked slowly
'Wait' she said, 'Wait for me'.
One more thing to show you
through a window, through a window
where no glass remains
Can you see anything that might have inhabited this space before now?
'Wait' she is screaming now, lost in the everyday
all that matters is the house, the shopping, the ironing
a final thing
a thought
a length of silk
a fine object
a china teapot lid
a remnant
I can read it. But I don't know its place
I can see it
It doesn't yield its secrets
I can think of it in its finite space
Whose hands have touched it before
It's a memory you can see
For you, for me.
Constructed differently for each of us
I can release it at any time, take it or leave it
it is not held there by your dreams.
Do you think that it is unclear where the line is drawn?
It's in the sand
it is washed away
I'll never know where it once was

I never saw it.
When it came
it hit us all by - Surprise!
With a resounding false expression
you know, I always thought that you were honest
but honesty is only ever conditional
how you can tell the story
-in all honesty
it is weather dependent
time bound
gender inflected, spoken, soft voiced
historically fixed
your honesty is only ever yours - from the body.
The mouth speaking
the mouth piece
and you catch me wondering
who is the speaker?
Where do they speak from
why now, why now?
Holding me above the wood fire stove
kicking and screaming you threaten to
bake me, stew me, fry me, grill me
I have one fine burn across the back of the wrist.

Clue # 5 Resolution

I thought fifty-one was your day, now I'm not so sure that fifty-one wasn't your age.

From a remnant of hair the father is cloned. Why clone the father? To find the answer, to keep the faith. I asked you why and you said 'masculinity, cruelty, unforgiving cruelty'. They go to war, to work, to jail.

Father, then grandfather, making the girl in your body. You toss away any semblance of grief in that moment and I wonder who you are, no, who you really are. Don't get me wrong; I didn't think anything would come of it. This is merely the task of accumulating knowledge. Of making the event known, nobody knew, how could that be true? If only knowing was that simple.

You said, 'nobody knew' you said 'cloaked in secrets' and you made the comment 'trust you to ask about secrets'. But the detective knows that is how things come about, by the slow release, the compounding of drama, the distinct way that you purse your lips against speaking, I can tell, watch this, are you able to speak now? It was a dream, nothing really happened, I won't force you; there is a passage you must read, I'll leave it there, if you can't make sense of it let me know. I shifted in my seat, she followed suit, we both left the room, the sun was going down, it was a moment not recorded, somewhere outside the sounds of life going on, I will always remember what she said.

I've tried to make sense of memory, to understand its power and resilience.

Why, when you've moved on, when many of the things that are painfully held in memory and involve people who may never cross your path again, why do the cuts go so deep?

Turn back and go the other way

your investigations will never be complete

the detective is merely a metaphor, a stranger in our midst.

A skulker, an exhibitionist

waiting, both waiter and waitress

you might say that you never saw it coming
that you were beyond suspicion
but there it is, it's that small indication

With palm upward
the lines of your hand
reveal much to some, nothing to others.

Your life line, this is your life line
I'm holding it out to you
grab it now.

Your connection to this is tenuous
you think it's your children, your house
even your small dog
but it's all fabrication
your history flawed in the telling
is dangerous and tainted.

You define yourself too close to the bone.

In the autograph book of my childhood someone writes:

2YSUR2YSUBICUR2YS4ME

It's plain to see, of course, to anyone who cares to look, that there is no simple
cause and effect
if only.

Love many, trust few, always paddle your own canoe,
this also appeared on regular occasions in the autograph book.

What do they mean?

Are they telling the truth?

Watch their eyes, teeth, the corners of their mouths
the truth will out.

What if this is repressed memory syndrome?

Not a drop, not an ounce, not a skerrick of truth.

Here I am

telling stories, truthful stories.

I drive across the landscape.

Like a painting flat on the floor of the car
a dot painting, I see it as if from the air,
but cannot sustain this viewing position.

It is not mine.

Directions dominated by roads, by signs
by pre-destined points.

By maps previously thought wise and the only possible ways of seeing
landscape.

Detours, streets between blocks
urban sprawl

always something there

no clear spaces

more houses more cars.

I drive across the landscape

urban and cluttered

the emptiness must be filled.

the Indigenous replaced with deciduous.

Not one stone left unturned

so they think, so they think.

Do lesbians inhabit this landscape?

These spaces?

Or as some suggest, is the landscape woman/female?

Mother nature and all that.

Is it female and always the other to machine?

And how? Are they exempt from a colonial effect
or part of the complete story?

Some would say so at times, inhabiting landscape and country with ideas of
connection to the earth.

Body encased in metal, chrome, glass and fuel. It is not natural but I have become this movement, this combination of movements, clutch, gear, brake, accelerator, completely naturalised. I barely think about it anymore. Body comfortable in the seats, the technique of driving and manoeuvring second nature, second only to you.

I drive across the landscape watching the sway of grasses. Leaning sheds and disappearing landmarks. The mud map you made me is crushed into a small wad on the back floor. I can no longer follow your directions.

He said 'I like to drive through landscapes'.

It is as if I am digging and digging
and never getting to the end, or the object
that I'm looking for.

As though the red ribbon I'm following disappears into the dirt
and I can't get to the end of it.

You surround yourself with objects of direction, in display cabinets of
accumulated reason; money spent, presents given, small objects, glass
ornaments, all for what?

These are the things of definition and meaning, dust collectors.

What is dust? Is it pre-dirt? Through the wall I experience the shift in my body. I
disappear into the tongue and groove and see myself
lying beside you.

Digging to China are you?

Pardon?

How is this detective made?

The detective really becomes a maker of knowledge between warring parents.

She is the acquiring of distance and distant travels away.

From over here I see that the tailor-made life has gone, that journeying is the
only way to see self. She brings me maps and books, *Holidaying with your
Dog*. She fills the thermos, freezes the ice-blocks, cleans the esky, fills the
water bottles, drops the keys. In the dream we are driving, travelling, singing.

The detective reading the everyday for clues.
Constantly asked to read the simplest gesture for meanings,
to evacuate the scene if necessary.

The home makes a particular privatised body available,
she becomes someone else inside, falls away from display.
The lesbian detective puts that body outside of the home.
It all begins with a body.

You are a mother's daughter, they tell you this but it doesn't mean much.
She sits in a second-hand chair and watches and stitches
stitches and watches
life goes by like this
interspersed with the lives of children, then gone.
Boredom ousted by sport and gardening, time measured by weather patterns
and a little radio overflowing with romantic songs
and right-wing propaganda
She laughs at that
she was of the left but is now of the right in attitude and beliefs.
Pauline Hanson is right.
It's a strange time to be alive in multi-cultural lessor land,
what about those homos on the streets of Sydney?
Some things will not be mentioned.
The chair comes from a Gold Coast apartment
sat in regularly and only by bums from the Southern states,
rich and travelling.
Probably white bums.
Not the Queensland tanned variety.
We write final versions, when the delays become obvious.
What does the detective do?
Searching.

It looks like a mundane landscape
rocks carelessly thrown about.

Why is she here?

Well you may ask

you ask yourself this question from your white cotton sheeted bed
cotton too costly to produce, favoured by many.

Comfort in the dark

cold moment, no comfort

Alone, why not?

She insists in waiting out in the cold.

I have tried to think of my mother as a woman first and then as my mother. A woman whose subjectivity is created in a particular historical time, subject of a range of discourses of femininity. Two things count here, she is able to go on and yet carry around this knowledge and memory. How does she go on with these memories, why not pack it in?

This work is a mixture of the poetic, the real and the everyday, if you like.

Negotiations around memory.

I could pass a fine brush through the air and know you were there.

The fine brush of detection, of finger printing and pressing in ink.

Her house: the place of constructing identity

Imagine the house as a site of memory.

The personal museum sees each artefact embedded with memory, each artefact speaks of these memories and each artefact is only partially rendered readable.

She walks through the house of memory. In each of the rooms, in each corner of each room, in each and every object, embedded stories and evidence. Some of these will be known and told, repeated and altered, shared and judged but with her sit the meanings. In these she invests the pleasure of looking, of touching, of nostalgia and of ownership.

She sets them out, positions and places them in sections, in invisible orders and categories, in groups of similarities or differences.

They are in glass fronted cabinets and on shelves, on dressing tables and bedside tables. They sit on embroidered and crocheted doilies, that she makes herself. Each stitch perfect, each hook placed according to a pre-designated pattern. There is an order and knowledge, a technique of performing and it is here that she excels.

Do you put egg in the stuffing of a chicken to be baked?

This knowledge is covered in her daily existence.

It is the personal museum or the domestic archive that she stores this knowledge in. This is the map of her life, she charts herself through these familiar territories, occasionally becoming stuck on the rocks as she spends hours dusting and re-arranging, reciting the memory of the object and its connection to place, to people. One day in her life.

I write the words that are visible in public places and stated on days of remembrance.

"Lest We Forget". Throughout Australia these words appear as little poems of memory.

We are united in knowing what these words mean, some long ago war, 'not that long ago', she said, a strange national unity made from the re-stimulation of ceremony, Anzac Day, Remembrance Day, don't forget Mother's Day.

We were there, in that war we saw from our verandas, and while it ran, another war, a war of family, of masculinity versus femininity, a war of sexualities, a war with consequences and casualties, but no memorials.

I see it carved out on their faces.

Memory is something worth travelling for, worth staking a claim for, little acts of memory making accumulate and become a history of desiring subjects. It is the memory I want to return to. The living out is filled with dissatisfaction, the memory, however I look at it, is available at predictable times, surprising in its intensity, triggered by unexpected connectors.

And then I hear you telling me stories of memory.

In your heart, heart of hearts, heart of Phar Lap, museum piece and ordinary, a horse's heart for heaven's sake.

More for the horses perhaps than for the racing, a heart, a memory of a horse's heart.

In the womb, already beating, mate.

Specificities of place and politics are important to making accounts of lives. The specificities of Australia, in particular Queensland are part of what helps in the construction of representations of place.

Memory writing produces particular effects - and these allow for the personal, individual story to inhabit the greater, wider historical stories which have previously been the dominant forms of story making.

I am not seeing and when I'm not seeing I'm inventing. I'm inventing a past that has some semblance to the events as they may have happened, but they have only been told to me, yes from the horse's mouth and yes in times when telling is necessary and essential, but does it matter? A sense of origins, of circuits

accounted for and histories cleared up.

Space. I'm talking into space. That space that you inhabit is not real but imagined, in the interstices of memory, easily called up.

It is the touch of your hand against the blanket and the memory of cold air. The nights spent at the drive-in pictures while you worked on the counter and smelt of hamburgers on the drive home. You worked.

You worked to furnish the house, to furnish a life more respectable. You worked for the items in the inventory of my childhood. I can summarise these and make them real and available to the imaginary. In the reader will arise echoes of remembered childhoods.

Song of the Shirt

It's best to go mid-morning, to the Art Gallery of South Australia to view the 'Song of the Shirt'. At mid-morning on a sunny day, it must be a sunny day outside, a bright Adelaide glare, UV extreme, for then the sun comes through the roof of the room that houses the sculpture. The sculpture is milk white; a woman sits with sewing basket and shawl draped over her shoulders. The marble is carved into folds, creating the flow of her layered dress. The sculpture draws me in every time. The representation is both nostalgic and melancholic. She belongs to another time and place and her story becomes art rather than work. It is its whiteness, which can only come from the imaginary use of marble and carving which works to make the sculpture inhabit the romanticisation of work.

The shawl falls to one side revealing a breast, as she bends towards the viewer. An idealised worker, an idealised woman. I go back to look again. What can she tell me? She holds a sewing basket, an embroidery basket and that is all, the signs of work, of class. It is the very whiteness that shocks and reinforces. What is it that women do? She is memorialised as with soldiers in statues but not in the main street of this or any city or country town. She is art.

Canoe Tree

Is the landscape implicated in her life?

The sound of currawongs on a clear blue, frost-free morning.

Bead yellow eyes seeking fledglings. Piercing sounds.

The gum tree as witness, invader,

story in its rings,

how old?

How old are you really?

Boat tree, canoe tree.

Forget that, fibreglass lasts longer.

Canoe tree scar.

Meanings coalesce, a bitumen road going by, one hundred kilometres per hour,
top speed.

A ghost in the space between barbed wire and white lines, I follow and stay on
the right side of the road.

A memorial to something misunderstood.

Memorialised in guilt and yet, living,

branching out with new growth.

How old? How old did you say?

Insert the measuring stick, that is a particular kind of truth,

formalised in a measurement.

This tree is the canoe tree.

Memory cannot be cloned

nor reduced to tourist sites

skin maybe, flesh, bone.

You can clone your favourite dog or horse but will their memory of you be intact? They will have different behaviours, different ways of responding.

You will have to invest all of that effort over again. What is it that you are cloning? You think you will keep the being itself out of memory and alive in the present.

You cannot clone memory.

Mysteries and murders. Clone and rebuild some of those who were there. But they will have no memory. Why did this happen? What was the feeling of the time, can you tell me how the incest was received at the time?

If there is an echo in me

It is of what?

An echo of story.

What is an echo?

It travels, it is sound, it is expected.

We establish echoes in certain sites and return to them,
knowing they will be there.

Echo Point where we call and call, echo returning as
a memory of voice.

Where are the best echoes?

Visiting Victoria Falls where the echo is drowned by the bellow of the water
falling over the edge.

Is there an echo in here?

I hear my own voice returning to me with fear of the past.

I have said I thought I knew, wherever, whenever I go.

We go, a detective echo

is an echo of astounding meaning

each line of sound

tested beyond its strength

rubber band like returning in the pull, in the repair.

You can't repair it; it's too late,

you mightily changed the course of lives

struck out any other possibilities

finalised the story before the ending

ensured the strength of your own capital would hold sway.

No other voices to be heard, a long masculine drone

reaches me where I am lying in the creek bed

waiting to see a leaf fall

how it falls

and is lifted on the wind

blown lightly, a path in the air twisting
how a leaf falls
rapidly to decay and become soil.
That was you then
lifted leaf into mulch
body into soil
a patience for life
little point in fighting
you might think you know something
then after your death
there will be an absence in the landscape.

The body is a multilingual being. It speaks through its colour and its temperature, the flush of recognition, the glow of love, the ash of pain, the heat of arousal, the coldness of no conviction. It speaks through its constant tiny dance, sometimes swaying, sometimes a-jitter, sometimes trembling. It speaks through the leaping of the heart, the falling of the spirit, the pit at the centre, and rising hope. The body remembers, the bones remember, the joints remember, even the little finger remembers. Memory is lodged in pictures and feelings in the cells themselves. Like a sponge filled with water, anywhere the flesh is pressed, wrung, even touched lightly, a memory may flow out in a stream.

(Estes 1992, p.200)

Skin Types

We become aware of the skin of others,
skin that felt and skin that marked their difference.

It is skin that holds you together and
skin that you run around protecting.

It is skin that demonstrates my birth to her
skin that attaches me to the inevitability of
some kind of connection.

Skin that marks us as part of, not part of.

It is skin that bruises and stretches,
and is cellulitic.

Skin that surrounds thinness and weight
skin that ideology wages over.

It is his skin that is touched up or painted over in photographs, to make him
look grander,

the features emphasised and definitely male.

It is skin that:

encases the body, can be punctured

skin as marker, skin as colour

as specific part for the whole.

Things can be done to skin, and some things you do
get under the skin.

Her skin is my skin is his.

And around me now I see tattooed skin, when the body has become a text, and
skin is the content of the text.

What is skin then? It is skin that is touched and exposed, skin that shows the
writing of life.

Skin works as the site between things, it is skin that you see.

Throughout this work it is skin that becomes a repeated sign.

It is upon skin that the weather is recorded in Australia, it is skin colour that lies

at the heart of the encounter, it is upon the mother's skin that another body
crushes

youth and innocence.

In the idea of skin a range of things can be found.

The skin of the lesbian lover, the detective's thick skin,
the skin of the country.

It is to skin that they look for the DNA.

In the skin of the woolly mammoth as the snows melt,
is found a perfectly preserved flower that when carbon dated
yields an ancient history.

It is possible to travel in the skin of a boat,
the skin of a car.

The big question about skin is its ability to withstand attack and the ways that
skin ages and is marked, by the circumstances of a life. It is skin that leaks out
tears and blood.

Skin is never neutral. How do we know that it isn't the skin/body of the touched
that moves towards the toucher?

'Histories are considered to be written like a light tattoo on the skin of the one
who has lived them'. (Estes, 1992 p.462)

Embroidery

I have the raw materials, the tools of this activity, the threads, Semco Stranded cotton, the colours placed in order and in a code of personal organisation. Rather than the needle and thread of my mother's embroidery, of idealised country cottages and flora, her skills of femininity, I am using no more than words. These tell a story, this piece of coloured cloth, reaches back.

This story resembles beading stitch where a line of small holes are overcast, the small holes are the parts of the story that I will never know. I fabricate and construct with my hands and thoughts, translating them onto designs already known, narrative impulses already set out. The shape of the poem attempts to demonstrate stump work, a three dimensional effect is created by raising the ground with wooden moulds or pads of cotton wool. Is that all it takes? The poem cannot, no matter how hard it tries, be three dimensional. I turn it over, attempt to wrench from it the meanings of all the participants, never assuming, never relying only on the one interpretation. The poem leaves me wanting, leaves me thinking how can I show not tell? I pad it out, my needlework is slow, and threading the needle takes longer each year, not unlike the knowledge of the path of the poem.

She rests her head on the cushions that have images of trees and running creeks embroidered onto them. A particular point on the cushion shows where the groove of lying has developed, impossible to re-shape after years of use, the groove of a head, the day-dreaming marks of generations of use. The cushions passed on after death, taking up space in the houses of her children, carrying the feeling of well worn and used objects that signify comfort and sleep, rest and decoration.

She lies against me, her head cradled by the cushion, its colours making her skin appear softer than usual. Now, there is the skill, the deliberate choosing of colour to enhance skin tone. Such sensibility in femininity. So marked, so controlled, and some suggest flattering.

Cotton materials, no longer found, are valued as antiques and sold for high

prices. On the walls of her house she has hanging racks of all of the materials collected from all of her travels. More cloth than she will ever make into wearable items. Asked when travelling to bring back materials, coloured cloth from Africa, is this what the friend imagined?

The cheap materials that everyone wears, rather than the perfectly woven cloth that sits in tourist shops? Cloth collected, cloth discarded, an over supply of all of the goods that mark out the West, capital and clothes. Self-help manuals suggests throwing out anything not worn in the last six months. Charity begins at home. I've held on to two dresses my mother gave me. Dresses for dancing in. Dresses made in the 1940s. Dresses for your future. Dresses with wide spreading skirts. Dresses with straps that tie behind the neck. These dresses tell me that you were young and that you danced. Dancing and dressmaking, you made them and wore them. I too wore them. Your waist size was 24 inches in the year of 1952.

The archetype is made up

Of strings of meaning, contiguities and transfer.

'Watch', she says as she drops to the ground revealing herself as pain. I don't know, I can't know if I really believe you.

All goes by too briefly; the detective has a short time to solve the crime. She doesn't know much and is surrounded by the hardness of other's certainty.

They know, oh yes they know, it is just this and nothing more, it is the clinging to the real and the known, don't think beyond or want more, just get on with it.

She is supposedly a safe and unflinching character in whom self doesn't reside.

And taking off the purple ruffled shirt I see scars and marks of life.

A small love bite caught in the light as she turns her neck. The vulnerability revealed in that moment allows me to slide my hand around and under the gun holster. Releasing the buckle I push it down off the shoulder. 'Wait' she pushes me away, a slight resistance, finishes the displacement of the gun.

I reach for her. She looks away. Hard to get?

I don't think so.

She turns in the light, in the night.

I reach and fall.

The sound of buttons sliding out of buttonholes.

The detective arrives.

Engram 1

Raking over the past, a miniature rake
fine toothed prongs, the handle feather like.
So as not to disturb or carry on too long or breach the confidence.
I watch out of the corner of my eye, as action is committed.
You wash your hands of the affair.
You use a poison pen.
Acting from the very training that you have forgotten,
when this could be outside of that - impossibility.
You assume that it is simplistic.
I tell you to look to the end of the story; there you will find the resolution that will
release you from that past,
that indomitable past.

You can cry out all you like, sing songs of mourning with Woody Guthrie
'through my window, sad and lonely'
Down my path you come.
The memory of you surrounds me daily, holding deferred.

How far do you think I need to travel to get away from here?

If by night I dream of separation,
yelling out at the empty air
and crashing into the wall,
no-one there
palpitations in the veins.
Memory is locked in and does not move away.
If all of the things that matter are not said and
kept in some minor place,
the kitchen drawer,

the detail of which you keep to yourself.
I watch you take out scissors to cut the paper,
cut the paper and never look back.

Memory trace,
on the floor, in the ceiling.
Cannot unfold or clear myself of the engram of you.
Still and moving, left in some small site.
These things I keep from you,
not my story to let you
see the pain or even the look away.
I won't do it, she breathes in a shallow way.
Her eyes closing down on the witnessing.

Memory has a public function.
I watch and weep whenever the last post,
sounded through crackling speakers, comes in with the dawn.
'At the going down of the sun'.
Well, memory has a public function.
Gathered around we drift between watching the spectacle of old men in old
suits and young children marching
with grandfather medals.

As they are very busy producing memory and making it over for this very public
function, producing sentiment and absence,
at home we enjoy the day off.
On the television you might watch,
might watch everything, anything.
And when you stop, step over, step over the line,
somebody else's line,
what watching might see is:

we want the scene like this: a remembrance of women raped in war, a remembrance of the pointlessness of it all.

A permanent record of every returned soldier, sailor, and airman saying 'War is pointless after all',
and they do.

She is a boat

A boat in the desert
South Australian desert with
dust storms and
sense of encroachment.
She is a memory of boat
the boat burnt in memory.
Burnt into the memory
leaning up against the walls of the house
tucked under the veranda
resting on its side
and in the memory of the boat
listing in the Pacific
bodies on the way to somewhere
wish and wish and never get there.

Looking at the South Australian coastline
struck by the lack of pounding surf
except at the southern end
where civilised houses
encroach and encroach again.

I see two women in Hutt Street
they carry wooden models of buildings.
Architects of the idea they walk, loose walk, confident young walk carrying little
shell like buildings, into a bigger building.
Little offerings to the built,
to the idea.
If the land is feminine and wild these two
reduce it to something that is built on.

They walk with such intent
they do not see what it is that they are.

On Memory

Australian memory is nowhere.
Unlike AMERICAN MEMORY
which you and I share in
do share in
have shared in.
We used to say cultural imperialism
US cultural imperialist memory.

What does the detective do?
Searching for words
clumsily looking out of windows for clues to why
it looks like a mundane landscape and yet in the very mundane is the sense
that rocks have been carelessly thrown about.
Creating a pattern in the random.
A landscape often uninterpretable and yet
over-interpreted by constrained eyes.
Why here?
Why not there?

It's late
3am or thereabouts
the sound of a train in the distance
in the dark.
She waits in the shadow, in the shade.
Beside an abandoned railway station
weeds in the cracks of the concrete
graffitied and cold. Trains don't stop here. Smell of trains past.
A train going by will always represent night, the future,
and the past.

Why is she here?

You ask yourself this question from your bed.

Comfort in the dark.

It's that easy. That hard.

Cold moment. No comfort.

Alone. Well, why not?

She insists on waiting out in the dark, out in the cold.

Her persona complete.

You will remember, looking forward, looking back,
standing on a ridge, panoramic photograph. Horizon indecipherable. Too much
of it climbs down onto your skin and thrusts you against yourself, your learning
and your culture, never making it the top, but I have photos, I have photographs
to prove to you that it was me. I was there; I looked out over the Pine Gap
domes and took off my shirt to rub my breasts against the air, as if it mattered,
as if it mattered. Perhaps they saw them, perhaps they took photographs,
satellite figures against those red rocks, criminally the detective has a previous
history.

No longer out in the cold but taking part, taking part.

Where is she now I hear you ask?

The detective is possibly the only means for understanding this family, to see
family and its members as killers and thieves of emotion.

Because the usefulness of clues, the clarity produced by distance ensures it
sounds like you are talking about someone else.

These questions will not be answered

there are no formulas

simply suppositions and theories.

Your aim?

To follow through with one or two ideas before it is too late,
before the weather changes permanently.

She steps out
no longer simply following the patterns set up by
pre-designated trainings.

Watch out, watch out for that.

Watch for the moment when you speak out.

A stalking presence in your voice.

Little fishes swimming past

Waiting to be hooked, hooked for love, life.

The road is a very pretty place

and innocence they say is in the child, the image of the child, you go down hill,
it's all down hill from here.

As soon as you enter that place, utter those words, you will be implicated in
your own story.

You entered that place and found yourself in what was a very ordinary moment,
committing yourself to memory, to everyone else's memory and committing a
crime. A personal invasion.

Skin lifted.

And you repeated that.

Down through three generations of women.

Your wife, your daughter and your granddaughter.

It must have been good, it must have been grand, those available resources,
out in the country under the gum trees,
the dirt farm.

The soil hard against their heads.

Woman, girls, girls, women, repeated.

The lines on your hand might indicate it. Or you are a statistical probability, part
of a particular historical period. Knowing this gives comfort but no joy.

Lifting the skin

On the version of events, a sphere rotates illuminating a new moment of belief, another version, now think of it like this: no one will force you, it's a voluntary code, believe it or not.

What does it take? Is it thought out, planned, did you make diagrams, build a special hut?

Stumps driven into the ground stand like weathered reminders of the site.

A mud map for your own eyes.

When you closed your eyes did you see them lined up with the others playing, set up around the table in the story? You are always an overbearing, meat cleaver of a man.

Did you see?

With your eyes closed at night overburdened by your masculinity, poverty and hardness, your girls lined up in pretty innocence?

For you, as yours.

Is that how it worked?

Or was it more sinister, deliberate and clearly enacted?

Was it merely a sense of possession and right?

Of course I see questions, only questions.

That is the meaning of detection.

It was a land of dairy cattle.

Australia at that time a population of seven million.

History fuses onto the population its events.

You went out to an isolated place, but then isolation was the matter of it all.

You could break free

Break anew

the driving could be better

Release the clutch, foot on the accelerator, window down.

Driving through landscapes, disembodied, locked in metal.

What street does she walk down?

Small fragments, letters form street signs and
numbers locate residence.

Directions and orders.

Even 'NO DOGS'

A word here, there

show me one space not designated, ordered and worded up
one space without a brochure, without a map.

Let me find one un-authored space

on stobie poles someone paints a picture trying to obliterate the ugliness of this
South Australian invention.

Cement is hard to cover.

Where might you find clues?

In significant places only?

No, not really, it's in the very mundane and in the ordinary.

It's how you hold your pencil I'm afraid, it gives away a lot.

It means I see you.

We weren't going into deep time, not necessary.

No need for radiocarbon dating or archaeological digs, remnants open for
interpretation.

No.

It will simply be these words left in the ash of the bonfire
(night on the beach, flames orange against the sea).

Like the plastic bag in the tip spilling its contents, leaving an envelope with your address on it.

Then I'll track you down.

I know you are about.

I know you are about to go.

I will follow.

You think it's over and can shake me.

My body not lined up next to yours.

Surely a sign and a marker.

Even when you leave, are leaving, have left,
Your touch is singed on my skin, a branding mark.

It is night
and in this night
with reference to other nights
and night expectation.
Darkness and light breaking
in this night
you watch it happening
because you are always,
waiting
against the night.

The night with its cause and effect
night with windows closed against possibilities.
In this night, on this night she will try and find ways to describe when all of the descriptions have come before. This is an over-determined site.

Night when dreams disturb

crying you were, crying in your sleep
calling out you were
(Glacial floes, black hole, curses)
I heard you in the night
wrapped in your overcoat of pillows and blankets
a shape under the covers, breathing
night in, night out.

Don't stop breathing.
Night is your cover
the extreme site of your disarmed behaviour.

He creeps around in the night

under cover of darkness
pretence of normality
you saw through that.

Night with a switch blade
(fishing knife stuck in the sand)
coming through the fog
Lit by high beam.
You see exactly what is in front of you
but it is in outline
the landscape as painted backdrop
not a land you inhabit
felt in your body as you enter
that is why you can reclaim, renovate, replace, report and relinquish.

If your body
falling into the landscape

cuts as it enters
 bleeds on the whiteness of your skin
 (or cut into black as ritual, as birth, what do I know?)

If that cut, (speaking white)
 then you might enter a deeper place
 but not to inhabit, to verbalise.
 But for now like surface oil
 not penetrating but perpetrating
 a chatter and a gossip of ownership.

Circling the event and surmising.

Unclear of it's own motives
 acting

just acting.

Whichever embodied activity
 chopping, ploughing, shooting, burning.

Men in the clear fell
 this is the landscape inhabited

Easy to read

but unclear in separation.

A country road, a dirt track. A sign points to empty space.

Reason leaves a sign at least.

On the roadside near Narracan the sign says 'Site of the world's largest tree'.

We drive in to find that the tree has been felled in order to measure it.

Narracan, home of potatoes and an Olympic high jumper, the sign barely
 visible, faded.

Don't draw attention to it, make the sign as obscure as possible. A hand
 painted wooden sign, black letters on white wooden background, from the
 council sheds out the back surrounded by weed killer, brown grass, rubbish, old
 papers, insignificant sign made for the tree.

Fading, the sign is hidden behind high roadside grass; it rains all the time out here, they say, go past quickly, in your speeding attempt to get somewhere else fast, is it the getting there or the being there?

You will miss that sign.

A tree must have a beginning, middle and end.

Records Office

Her plastic disco heart flashes at me across the dance floor.
We hand over diaries and journals; they are inside a leather suitcase. You think that this act may alleviate your grief, it won't, it will only exacerbate it. It's the back room next to the women's toilets. A queue forms, all attempting nonchalance. I see faces I know, I look away before they demand I acknowledge them. The suitcase is heavy.

It helps to know something about darkness
about walking with care
in the long summer grass
thick with snakes
and fear.

And then there is that moment of holding your breath
as pygmy copperhead slides by.
Make friends with the snake.

This boy
this boy will never know
will never carry this story around
in a sack, in a book
this boy will never know.

'Life', he thinks, 'is a series of intersecting detachments,
it is not about place,
place is something you look at when reading a map'.

These are my tears
I can show them to you at any time.
They have no place in the Atlas, however,

but are sometimes registered as place
Coffin Bay.

Photographs are not facts, they can hint at a secret life.
A life untold.

Where did this photograph come from?
The detective certainly makes connections.

She appears to do what you do.
Talk, laugh, cry
perhaps even to weep
these are my tears
I can show you them.

This death in a hospital bed in Rockhampton
allows cruelties and other deaths to be spoken.
The contiguity is bound to trigger stories of memory, as the body passes and all
other bodies register the loss.
Brought out into the open, creating openings for other stories.
Producing an environment for telling,
(environment with torn edges, never the same, even the scribe is watching the
number of pages printed out).

Postcard: Kangaroo Island

Even microwave ovens have a memory.

On an island, a dirt road, corrugated
travel to a lighthouse

Built in the 1880s.

Outside smashed glass,
crochery of white habitation and disposal.
light beamed out to sea, warning.

Shards of the light and of living.

Willow pattern.

All along the creeks in the Adelaide Hills the willows are being cleared and
await burning. At one time willows went in with the same energy that
indigenous trees came out.

Now, the willows are spurned and cleared.

When I wake in the middle of the night,
on the island I think of the willows.

In the kitchen of the house built
for the lighthouse keeper
(and his family)

and now a tourist stopover
is a microwave oven
with a memory function.

In the lounge room in the information folder the narrative of isolation is told.
All night the house is lit by the intermittent
strobing light from the lighthouse.

Where memory is constantly staged.

Where questions of memory and settlement are connected in the 'historical
sites' we visit again and again.

Where the smell of the New Zealand seals comes up and at you from the coast.
(These lighthouses - lighting the way for boats).

The lessons of dying come at you from nowhere; is that what writing allows and produces?

To know that something will be left, something sweet, something textual, something read.

I resist all temptation to liken myself to my mother. Therefore I'm prepared to say that 'I love this space'.

Somewhere in the package, pass the parcel,
at the very core, after it has been passed from hand to hand, the little gift for the most loved girl.

A plastic ring with a packet of sherbet attached.

If I could write all night with you.

Will you write to me?

Of all things, I couldn't stand losing those letters, those contacts, those communications. Because I can't re-read them, I make my own meanings, read between the lines, and think about you as you wrote them.

Please don't leave me in that textual way.

Let me hold that paper, that envelope;

look closely at the stamp,

the strange scrawl of the address.

(The detective leaves, having found no bundle of letters -

'My darling')

You see I'm in love with the word,

the artefact of language

as you let the sentence leave your body,

you can have the last say.

I'll wait for you here

where I can see the letter box by the side of the road and recognise the sound

of the postman's bike.
I know where to look for you,
know where you keep the words hidden.

Don't leave me this way.

In which sentence can I find you?

Something happened.

The air or the distance.

It's raining here, heavy and full of promise.

Once you told me stories and I wrote back to them
willingly and passionately.

The wind is out of my sails

and I fall wondering where the weather will take me.

The small boat is tilting to the left, the bodies threatening to become dislodged.

Do I begin or do I retreat?

I want to tell you about a German woman I met yesterday, she was walking two
German shepherds in the bush.

She referred to the dogs as husband and wife.

She cried as she told me, a perfect stranger, about her dog that had died, its
name was Heidi. These fragile subjects who are able to tell stories that carry
more meanings than a surface reading can betray.

The detective finds the unsent letters – in the freezer.

Dear one,

We've been waiting, me and all of my shadows

For you.

Yes, Elvis we love you.

Thank God it's not you who is dead.

That vanilla was not you.

I was looking for someone else, someone who wouldn't say

'I knew you were that kind of girl'

I'm not counting; I'm waiting for you to go by.

Waiting outside your window, outside your door, outside your body.

Waiting with blinds wide open, not noir, so that you will see me

before you forget who I am.

Before someone else briefly catches my attention

and I end up with them whilst thinking of you.

It's not out of my way

I won't leave you yet

I'll stand by you till the end.

She can buy me gifts, put me on planes to faraway places, talk kindly to me but

it will be you that I can never resist.

all my love

B

In the botanical gardens

under the long wisteria avenue
flowers out and intensely purple smell
I leant against you
and felt your body tremble.
We've never been the same since
It is that memory of smell sustaining us
against the fear of falling.
For now the wisteria is dormant.
Yes, I've been watching you.
Not now, not always, but sometimes.
It's the small things that I tuck away for later contemplation.

Your hands, the tilt of your head.
The journey you made across the Nullarbor.
And then there was a momentary intake of breath when I could hear you
thinking of going to the next stage.

Okay, why do we do it?
I think I could taste her in their mouths.
It's the closest to death I've been and may be the only time I came close to the
perfect sentence.

You give me your memory

It does not appear as a gift
or a fine thing
but a blurring out.

An unpicked hem, dragging behind you.

A lost story.

Your memory has pushed through into your life
clouding, clouded actions.

Your action in the world always tempered,
always cautious.

Memory spilling out into your everyday.

Memory accused.

Memory confessed.

You say:

Don't do this, don't trust men, don't get married.

Don't go here, there, wear this, be respectable,

if you haven't got anything good to say, don't say anything.

I have a life filled to the brim with the cautions of memory.

That is how you passed it on.

It doesn't need statement, explanation, explication, summary, forever told,
out in the open.

It's always there.

The soft skin of your belly.

Memory makes your illnesses, headaches, fears.

Parlous dog, watching for your fall, devours you limb from limb.

The brain, memory brain, delicate, so easily injured.

Memory out of place, out of race.

I knew something was there.

Collage as Method

How else is it possible to write of the kind of
fracture fissure disturbance
that is the story of incest?

Around incest a whole set of ideas circulate. People say 'Adelaide is
incestuous'.

Australia is incestuous.

On finding out that I know her oldest friend my neighbour says 'psychic incest'.

With collage the partial can be fulfilled.

With the problem of memory it is possible
only to manufacture, to fictionalize.

Where the lack of evidence leaves me wondering.

Where I can only call on the knowledge that I have
not that of others.

Because this story has repercussions and holds meaning
which can produce a sense of,

that 'it was like this'

or,

'it is because of class and culture that such things occur'.

It can only 'mean' when placed against these other templates.

But it will not fit.

While it is a story of great pain and personal difficulty it is also an intellectual
exercise, an opportunity to create story and resonance.

To identify the aspects of it that work towards seeing the bigger picture of
relationships between men and women in this island continent.

It's a historical moment, you see

when all that we know now bears on what occurred then.

And rather than hiding the skeleton in the closet I see the opportunity to think through my own relation to this event.

To find in the found objects of Rosalie Gascoigne and Paul Carter, the detritus of the tip, the abandoned farmhouse, the incidental tip, to find clues, to satisfy minor seekings.

Echo Kiss

Echo is a memory of sound
echo kiss a memory of kisses past
returning across the tyranny of distance
held up momentarily by the Goyder line.
Some kisses like that chocolate with proverbs
wrapped around it
easily summarised from some famous dead philosopher
Baci
Echo kiss not so easily surrounded
some smacking in the air
the South Australian air of a red dust storm filled with topsoil
a Western desert kiss looking close to Sturt's pea
eaten by the dog in jealousy.

Your face in the echo kiss
in the north light, throughout the rainforest wet
echo kiss in the mouth-opening shout across a valley, across a gorge.

Echo kiss will return
memory of mouth, voice, lip, skin.

Locked to the back of the train as you leave
light as down
soft like this.

Echo will remind you of, will remember itself
in the dark night
2am lying in wait for your return.

Will bruise with teeth marks on lips

share lip balm secrets and watch for blisters
lysine in the bag
will wash your clothes
search your pockets before you put your lipstick on
let me kiss you
the coffee cup stained red lips.

Draws my hand
across the air trail left as you go
through the dust on the books left unopened
since you left
outside you wait
and speak something lost to the traffic.

Hair across my pillow
on my clothes in the machine
lost to life washed to identification
DNA positive
echo of the living.

She said kiss me too late
shot out from a nocturnal rest
to find the kitchen empty
the cupboard bare of nourishment
yet filled with smell
of closed doors
it's a Nick Cave day at last
mourning
echoic left-overs.

It's too late now for the manifesto of love

except between the lovers
ensconced in each other's breath, a surface layer impenetrable.
They are the looked upon, her eyes are blue.
Her face held in two hands,
and what I am really investigating,
turn away turn away,
is how you exist
what choices you make
what lines you delete from your tale.
You say you can never know me
or is it the choice of hand covering skin,
against all,
and only ever
knotting together
two ideas.

In fetid water I will be memory for you
line my pockets with shards of meaning
of English made crockery,
lying in shallow creeks.

In particular lesbian memory
Australian lesbian memory.
A wide ranging and variable state
with one singularly uniting principle.

With a beach, a city, landscape and foreign inflections.
Her body on the beach, walking.
Is there a lesbian walk?

What about when you stopped being lesbian?
Now queer, now bi-sexual. What is your walk like?

Your washing hangs damp in the winter
a moment caught in another place
frozen for remembrance.

But that's not all
that cause and effect lasts longer.
Not easily cured or read.
She said, 'Where is the body'?

The face would follow me for months to come. I would see it, speak to it and
live with it. We became lovers. The end came quite soon and unlike Paradise
Hawaiian Style there was a moment when we could fold ourselves together and
touch our lips to the brim.

Return

As representative it can tell, will tell, has told.
Hold on, it's a fine day here.
Looking back at other fine days
a poet sees.
She will never understand the need for return
she says, 'You go away so you can come back'.

It's a fading time for mixed emotions
they fall, they fall.

It's in the way she lifts the lid
and cooking up nutritious building blocks
falls back on the menus of old, menus her mother taught her.

Things that belong in the past.

Memory triggered.
The smell of her hair, the disarray she left behind.
A permanent mark of sorrow
you think you might clear it up,
what stories you tell yourself
and others
that might track down and release you from that past.
The country returns your love
some squeamish, cannot see it,
attempt to cover it with the built and the idea.
But there it is
country.

Text can become a kind of memorial
words placed on paper
making sense in particular ways.
Words that look back at events
or stories
and compile them.
Text can make sense of but never know.

Travelling

Take Australia as an island
colouring in the edges blue.

Travel is a remedy for stasis.

I find incomplete remains,
throughout Australia these mark the sites of farms, of towns, railway lines,
machinery sheds, car bodies, water tanks cut in half for wood sheds.

Corrugated iron fences, falling and rusting.

The markers of memory - signs of eras, of doing/being in Australia.

Embedded in the landscape I watch a blue plastic bag caught in the branches
of a tree, float and fall free to the ground.

Mother makes gardens that become memorials

Each place she leaves,
she leaves a garden and a re-constructed site.

The texts of her memory are those gardens
each one planted to keep memory at bay.

To keep busy
to immerse in activity
she keeps busy, very busy.

When she sells her houses she sells her gardens, the house is unimportant.

She gives away work and labour and closes the door on memory.

But she keeps some plants, some for forty years.

She rescues neglected plants on sale in the supermarket, over or under
watered, carelessly placed in windy spots, victims of air-conditioning. She
makes incoherent gardens according to the gardening texts she doesn't read,
she is an untrained gardener. She has a green thumb.

Engram 2

Negotiating the everyday with the memory of the body in water, floating, now there's a thing. Making stories that work to create a swoon. In one sentence she creates that. You wish for it. Writing that invests the everyday with body memory. Pages that speak like lips against skin. We watched our moon shadows in the still water, moon lit night. Calling back, dragging the moon back into it's phases, imagining that we had something to do with it.

Appropriating as many myths as we could for our own understanding, seeing ourselves as intellectual owners of global knowledge, understood intellectually but dispirited that we could not quite enter the embodied space where dust, blood, ritual and thought inhabited the occasion, where the myths ceased to explain the world. Now I explain the world through all of these stories and past meanings as if I have the right to assemble them in that way, to take a portion of explanation and reconstruct them as my own. The everyday is often a place of uncertainty and trepidation, it feels at times as though I am constructed in the waves, constantly changing, never the same.

I want to know

what the body of anyone
might feel.

It's a package made of skin, it can be described anatomically, surrounded by
measurements.

Its poetry, however, is in the arc of light about the face, the structure of feeling,
and how we talk about it.

Sometimes it leaks out, and deposits of pain or despair, joy or lust can frame
the package and leave you with only words of description.

This past then, this memory.

As a way into this writing - that is the return - what might return mean?

By return it is possible to think of lost possessions, lost memories.

What is the law of return?

Return, as in return to spaces previously known

As in a statement like 'in recorded history versus non-recorded history'?

It is the return to the mother after years of denial, after breaking with the
maternal.

On becoming a detective, on refusing to be the feminine, the pretty, a detective
must be hardened and diamond like, placing nurturing into places where
memory resides, not into living, the life form, the everyday, the detective must
balance deception with knowing.

And in return?

In return she will know only the clues she has been pursuing, seeking
everywhere in every distant place, every place filled with the scent of history -
or perhaps an embroidered pillow case where your head has been secure in
sleep until reminiscence catches you and throws you out into the sea of angst
and negativity.

The detective you see is positive, ah yes, positive that she will find the answer, struggling with the worldliness of simply staying with the material (but it has no answers). She needs to look beyond, find the answers in some strange mixture of walking through the sites, reducing everything to its possible meaning, lifting the veil and the lid and finding all before ruin.

Detection is ultimately about return, return of remains, of meaning, of clues, of lost body parts, of a range of ideas that will lead to a solution.

The boat must eventually come to shore, bringing the end of the story, the resolution, the results of the investigations.

They will tip them out onto the deck. Emptying, books of their words, leaving questions unanswered and forces not responded to.

If only it was that simple, if it were really possible to simply empty out onto the deck, the story, the meaning.

She waits on the shoreline, anticipating the contents, even as the sun sets and she sees the last of the light go down into the horizon sea.

Yes, it is true. The detective is a fall back onto some kind of archetypal character, seeking out the lines in the story, withholding any indication that she knows exactly what has happened.

Memorialising the thylacine

Science wants to clone a memory.

The Sydney Museum is a storehouse for memory; these memories have the potential for restoration. Memory in this instance is made real by the possession of a preserved thylacine pup. The pup, held in glass, is made a specimen by the use of scientific methods. The representation we are most familiar with is aided by the use of images of the last thylacine in a cage in a zoo in Tasmania.

The animal paces and walks around the cage. Each time thylacine cloning is discussed the memory is represented by the pup preserved and the last of the tribe in the cage in the zoo. The day after the announcements are made about the successful cloning of a lamb and a calf - two species introduced to Australia by white settlers, and one of which, enabled the extinction of the thylacine with a bounty placed on it to stop the destruction of sheep in Tasmania, (Lines 1991, p.10) - the Sydney museum follows up an earlier announcement of the desire to clone the thylacine by announcing the successful retrieval of DNA from the preserved organs of the thylacine pup. The Sydney Museum representative jokes about picking up DNA from the scientist who originally placed the pup in the alcohol. Much of the Australian landscape is embedded in memory, lost through farm clearance, development - the stories remain. There are before and after photographs, firstly fat with nature and diverse ecology and then thin with land scraped bare and built upon. Many things are irreversible.

Loss descends into your consciousness after you've made the cut, after you've taken apart the machine or the battery-operated toy to see what is inside. Filled with regret and shame, reversing the act is impossible. Is that what torture forgets? Bodies pasted onto nothingness to not allow memory.

The story – almost extinct

Outlining the story was the easy part, accumulating detail and sound reasoning proved difficult. She said 'Give me substantive evidence, not hearsay, gossip and comment but substantive claims'.

'Oh well, it's a feeling really', she said 'I cried when they took him away, when they took him away'.

The grave is a site of memory and the museum is a kind of grave. What makes some things available for museum inclusion? They gather around, hands clasped behind their backs, never showing grief except in the clench of lips, the close-up there please, don't show weeping, cursing, what are they mourning? I watch in a kind of quietude. Is death something new, because for a while we had been protected from its stories.

The institutional grave, the protected space, ensconced inside sandstone walls, a museum to an idea.

The labels describing the exhibition have been written in the smallest print, the time it takes to read them sees a passing of viewers, of audience.

There is a body, a body that has many things said over it.

Where do you come from?

What is your name?

Once I knew your body

body history

body memory

bodies collide

body value.

This text is performed in particular ways. I tell stories in particular ways, I do not construct the linear narrative, find more satisfaction in the random and the disconnected, knowing that somewhere links arise and are made and make

sense in their own ways. This text is written for a purpose, to make something out of disparate and disconnected information, little stories that now appear isolated and without context.

The texts that my mother made were growing, green and tangible. They changed the landscape and are still the markers of her life.

Writing + Memory = Memory Writing

Memory. To end at the beginning.

Something happens. An event. A physical rupture that turns onto internal membranes, deposits of blood, left for trace.

In a clean and Catholic hospital ward, with a crucified Jesus hanging over the bed, a man dies.

He dies with the bolus of morphine surging into his body, the noise of the automatic syringe, electronic and straight forward, a comfort and a fright.

White sheets and no visible blood.

As part of the souveniring of this death, locks of hair are cut from the father's head and given to his children.

There is an opening made with death.

An unexpected excitement, elevated emotions
an adrenalin rush of living.

We go on with the everyday, punctured with the knowledge of the potential for death.

This death happens in the beef city of Rockhampton in Queensland, where two large cement bulls grace the highway's entrances from Brisbane in the South and Townsville in the North.

The bulls cement testicles are regularly souveniried.

Into this opening after death a possibility is produced for telling, for talk, the revealing of secrets.

Secrets become lodged in memory. Memory is never pure in the sense that in the re-telling, in the recovery, it is made through versions, through editing and through selection.

To handle the secret and its attendant investigation I imagine myself a detective, with the carefree allure of a Marlowe and the commitment of a Mary Wings protagonist.

Once you've said all there is to say about memory, something else comes

along.

If we went back there it was in compressed images afloat on an orange sea of sunset.

In empty rooms I called your name,
in crowded malls and railway carriages.

Modern memory is, above all, archival: it relies on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the word, the visibility of the image ... The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs ...

(Nora cited in Darian-Smith and Hamilton 1994, p.11)

GEOGRAPHY 111 - Elizabeth Bishop

, For Alice Methfessel

[From "First Lessons in Geography,"

Monteith's Geographical Series,

A.S. Barnes & Co., 1884]

Lesson VI

What is Geography?

A description of the earth's surface.

What is the Earth?

The planet or body on which we live.

What is the shape of the Earth?

Round, like a ball.

Of what is the Earth's surface composed?

Land and water.

Lesson X

What is a map?

A picture of the whole, or a part, of the Earth's surface.

What are the directions on a map?

Toward the top, North; toward the bottom, South; to the right, East; to the left, West.

In what direction from the center of the picture is the Island?

North.

In what direction is the Volcano? The Cape? The bay? The Lake? The Strait? The Mountains? The Isthmus?

What is in the East? In the West? In the South? In the North? In the Northwest? In the Southeast? In the Northeast? In the Southwest?

Inventory of Childhood

The first cloud.

And this is where you find yourself watching for the gesture that coincides with memory being spoken. This gesture will not make its way into the research document and yet it is this gesture, of sadness or joy that tells more about memory and its resonances than any words, or words in text.

It is a gesture invested with perfection and protection.

An inventory is an accounting exercise. It is taking stock and making a list of things. Things in and of themselves don't have meanings. We attach meaning to them. When material objects go into an archive they are read by decipherers at different times under different conditions to those who entered them into the archive. They are read as objects that will tell stories of where and when they were made and utilised as everyday objects.

Childhood is filled with objects that have particular meanings attached to them. Some of these are objects connected to events, and in memory they become a register of feeling, not a record necessarily of the event itself. The inventory here is based on a little archive that has been kept in boxes and moved from house to house, until recently when it came to be with me.

The inventory of this archive is partial and has other trajectories and limitations depending on the subject position of the inventor.

For me the objects listed in the inventory are imbued with memory sensations and triggers.

What is childhood?

Is it in memory? Or is it carried around as part of who we are in the present? Is it in the East, or in the West?

It is learning – in memory we learn to walk and to talk. The down turned mouth, the sigh that enters the room before the earthly body.

From cell division to genetic structure these things we see in a child.

She looks like her father, you have his eyes, you have his curly hair, or is it

hers?

For what is childhood but possibly learning the faces of those you resemble?

In their faces – memory deposits.

Laughter and tears.

A memory of coal and shovel

the voice of night

says 'sing, won't you please sing'.

Take me home again Kathleen

and if in childhood on the other hand

Disruption, fracture, fragmentation?

Too much is placed on childhood and yet we must

protect it, protect it in its so-called innocence.

Object Lessons

Originally toys were produced by artisans, on the side, in the course of their work, as mere miniature reproductions of the objects of daily life.

(Benjamin in Mehlman 1993, p.4)

The lid of the Made in Japan child's Sewing House is made up of one side of the roof. Lifting the lid/roof reveals pins, needles, cotton thread, scissors and a number 3 silver thimble. The act of opening the lid is imprinted strongly on me; I am able to move back to those sensations and memories. It is not just a toy which is composed of a sewing house, it is a lesson in maintaining the tools for hand sewing, it is the keeping of these in their own container ready for a button to be sewn on, a hole to be darned. It is the teaching of care and attention to these lessons and their very real material uses. They are material acts that are signifiers of learning and signifiers of femininity.

Raymond Williams has written of the 'structure of feeling', which comes to represent more and more each time I hear this term or think of it. In this childhood is structure and lesson. The structure of feeling that surrounds these objects is one of pride in maintenance and care. It is a deeply instilled belief in learnt tidiness and care of these objects. Partly, that is why they are still available for contemplation. The care that has gone into the collection of toys over many years has been transmitted to caring for them now when they are no longer played with, but looked at and recorded. Williams 'structure of feeling' is a way of thinking about a time when these skills and trainings were valued, when they really did constitute daily life.

Vulcan Junior Sewing Machine Made in England

The Vulcan Junior Child's Sewing Machine is still in its cardboard box with 1950s style illustrations and exhortations. She sews as she grows with a Vulcan. Thread cotton between washers Regd. Design No. 882961 Pat. Appn. No. 237/57

For the little lady with a Vulcan Child's Sewing Machine

Instruction Book:

Start your Vulcan sewing with simple work such as a new bib for your doll or a set of handkerchiefs. As your skill grows you can take on more complicated sewing. Here are some of the things for which this handy machine can be used. Doll's Dresses Pram Sets Table Runners Sachets School Shoe Bags Scarves Doll's Undies Tea Cosies Table Napkins

Good luck – and happy sewing – with your Vulcan.

Together these two objects, the sewing house and the sewing machine formed the basis for a reasonable training in some of the skills required for survival. Combined together the sewing machine and the sewing house are complimentary; these are the machines and the containers that are essential for the skills and techniques of particular types of femininity.
'She sews as she grows'

Idle Hands.

I make a sampler. On the sampler I try out different stitches. I'm happiest with blanket stitch. Turning the small handle now on the miniature sewing machine I am with the sampler and the sounds of Herb Alpert and his Tijuana Brass. All of these objects are for making and for doing, to create a world of instruction and training, to not allow for too much drift. It is the making of a tight world of stitches and buttoning down, of making and making do. It is a world that comes directly out of a historical period of making and doing. These are passed on from one who learnt these skills when they were essential, before the mass production of clothing had reached its peak, when to make your own was the only and the most affordable way. These are life lessons in tightening the belt, in penny pinching, in making the most of what you've got.

13 Piece Porcelain Toy Tea Set

Made in Japan

These are miniatures. Small things that evoke childhood play. Small things that have been involved in childhood play, not one item broken, not one item in need of replacement.

They are made for small hands. Would you like a cup of tea?

Into the child is poured, and trickle by trickle, dropped, a deliberate and structured longing and despair. Passed on like ice frozen and then melted – disseminated across all surfaces and in the making; cells take up and remember these contradictions and confirmations.

When workmen arrive you must always offer them refreshments. It works, they always treat you better.

How does memory work? If remembered in surface layers that sink in cell by cell it is geographic in its memorisation and instilled as fixed belief systems. She is the keeper of the archive of childhood. It represents not just the childhood of the girl but the mothering attention which she paid her. Each item thoughtfully bought, each one a tribute to motherhood.

He explained that a memento hominem, rather than proclaiming mortality, registers a life. Each object in the case indicates a decisive moment or relationship in the personal history of the compositor. The objects chosen are often commonplace; the reasons for their selection never are.

(Kurzweil 1992, p.vii)

Childhood is its own enclosed space. If childhood means anything – what can material evidence tell?

In the keeping of material objects from childhood, objects that speak and signify – the time capsule is created to show what may have been spoken and what may be signified.

What has she put into these time capsules? All of the objects, the toys and artefacts that give material witness to the girl. They are preserved for later readings. Without being a collector – ‘these will be worth something one day’, the detective has to stand aside and let memory be the partner, not the everyday. The everyday partner will be there to simply lean on and command the attention of all the other dancers in the room.

To a point the archivist is keen to keep all of these objects because for her there are no physical and material signs of her own childhood left to show. Nothing but a doll’s head. But memories, as if objects might replace memories – embedded in the objects when they are taken out and admired. Someone of a similar age might recognise these and have a reaction. Childhood is after all a game for one or more players even after it is over and replaced with different kinds of play. You will always find the rule and instruction book close at hand in case there is a challenge to the way you are playing. Ballet costumes kept in their entirety. All hand made. Butterfly wings made of wire and green gauze like material, attached to the back of the little girl dancer. She trips, she falls and the dance goes on. She catches up soundlessly, aware of the laughter from the audience.

Small blue wooden piano with three legs and numbered keys

One key is out of tune. It is flat in tone, has never been in tune. This flatness disturbs the sound of the other keys. She dances around the bedroom. The bedroom with ballerina curtains, ballerina photos on the wall and pink furniture. How much of little girl is retained?

A mothercraft certificate

Queensland Department of Health

Maternal and Child Welfare Service

5th October 1970

This is to certify that Rosslyn Prosser

Attended a course in Mothercraft and has passed an examination.

Ornament

A girl with long blonde hair holds a baby up to a letter box. The baby holds a letter with a heart seal on it. A fence frames the two. In this small ornament a story is told. The act of receiving or sending correspondence, the act of helping the smaller child, the story is instructional and designed to fulfil a desire for a younger brother or sister being cared for by an older sibling. The ornament has been smashed and repaired, fault lines run around it, the baby's arm has been broken. For anyone else the ornament would be destined for the tip however it holds more than just the surface story that it tells. The ornament has been on every dressing table in every bedroom. It has been cared for and carried from house to house. It is part of the domestic archive of memory trigger and only has resonances for two parties here. The mother and the daughter know what the letter contains. She says 'I want to tell you something, I've written it down for you'.

Childhood stories and memories only provide part of the story. They are clues and hints at partial constructions. They are fragments that can give an overarching positive or negative inflection to personal histories.

This has been the story of two childhoods. One disturbed, disrupted and fragmented, the other has everything thrown at it to compensate. To make it up to her will be the testament against the doubts and questions about mothering.

Girls who will be detectives are made of this. Spectacular stories can often be made in the very ordinary and in the very mundane. In the mirror she offers me "proof of my body" (Ernaux 1998, p.25). This proof is returned to me regularly and is the register and the connector, I see myself in her now. The face changes in the same ways that hers did and yet the genetic material of the father distorts this version in the mirror. I can see them both now and with each look am taught about memory and its referral points.

Dolls for Christmas Every Year

The doll is the symbolic homunculi, little life. It is the symbol of what lies buried in humans that is numinous. It is a small and glowing facsimile of the original Self. Superficially, it is just a doll. But inversely, there is a little piece of soul that carries all the knowledge of the larger soul-Self. In the doll is the voice, in diminutive, of old La Que Sabe, The One Who Knows.

(Pinkola Estes 1992, pp. 88-89)

The dolls each have a name. They sit upright like sentries on the bed after it is meticulously made. For some reason the making of beds, the washing of dishes, the cleaning of toilets, takes on inordinate worth to some women. The dolls have their clothes made for them as well.

They are composed of the walking doll, the twins, the individual and much loved small doll, the list is extensive but into each doll has been invested hours of touch and familiarity. The doll helps to define femininity, it is the object of dressing, washing, combing, talking, tea parties, and taking apart.

Learning to put the legs and the head back on is an achievement in itself.

Taking them apart a source of investigation and surgery.

Caring for these plastic homunculi has its own essence. The play is concentrated and casual, it has its own language.

Is it as simple as 'how to be a good wife and mother?' Is it even that? Or is it the making up for the lack, the enduring lack. To cover over, to keep up a sustained war against nothingness. To replace all pain and doubt with things. I say: things have meaning and value to the one who looks on with interest.

Greeting Card

Congratulations to you and your little daughter – From the tips of her dainty
little toes

Way up to her uppermost curl

Bet she'll bring

A world of joy to you

Cause that's just like a girl

Sugar and spice and everything nice.

Annette Kuhn says "a mother's investments in her baby daughter, inflected by particular circumstances of time, place, culture and class, meld the social with the psychic" (Kuhn 1995, p.49).

My mother wants to tell me something. And in not telling, in repressing she manages to produce a fiction about herself which becomes solid yet breakable. In this she seals me up with her, she seals me up. Wraps me up in the fiction and in a history of departures and frozen affections in what can only be described as a smothering cloak. The pressure of knowledge.

Before I became a detective I was a child, on my pillow I found a message which I still haven't deciphered.

There once was a girl with a curl right down the middle of her forehead, when she was good she was very, very good when she was bad she was horrid.

Child's Cane Chair

At the archival interface what stands between me and the objects is the sense of myself as a child. I see that girl running.

And this is where you learn the geography of the room. This is how it is laid out and this is how it is negotiated.

The furniture, the utensils, the books, the piano.

Look back in

the geography is unsettled

she whistles, he sings, they call

Over here over here look I've found one.

Here, sitting here.

A line, a line that leads back to the child's cane chair, object and furniture of play, which goes in a direct line to where you sit as an adult. How you sit as an adult – how you sit – learning to sit – to sit still.

In stillness to dominate all restlessness to learn to listen to not speak.

No eruptions here please.

To sit to listen

the line is now tightly drawn.

In your memory words address these minor details but they are repeated and it is in their very repetition that you know about discipline, about leaning forward, about scratching, wriggling, muttering, mumbling.

Bundles of energy produce electricity, and activity produces creativity, disruption and chaos.

Ah, but sit still, sit still.

On turning and seeing yourself sitting in the child's cane chair.

It's the mimicry

I like this chair I can lift it and it fits me perfectly

I can be the owner of this space

Because you can't sit in it.

Music Box

After you leave, for valid reasons, I find the harmonicas. Five in all. Each one close to your mouth and breath, moving across lips and tongue, left to right, played by ear.

Apply no sentimentality here. Capturing the expression of your leaving as the voice makes its way into the sound of the harmonica. Lifting the lid on the music box, red velvet lining, Mt Fuji on the lid, you go away, you go away.

Hair

Your hair is your crowning glory. In it are the traces and signs of the father. The grandmother, the grandfather. Both sides. Hair will tell its own stories and is worried over and trained, tortured and teased. She combs it out, the knots are forever, tangles endlessly played out in the relation between mother and daughter. This salient metaphor of knots and tangles, the endless imposing of order on hair is at the heart of the drama. Sit still, sit very still.

She teaches care and attention to detail. She worries about the visible signs of femininity and that in all of this presentation of neatness and order respectability will be earned. It is never possible to leave this behind and move towards a self that does not care about these acts of personal care. So deeply carved into the psyche are the lessons and trainings of childhood. The layers of training can be subject to critique and mused over but always retain a deeper fold and current where time and memory coalesce.

And hair will not be the only thing. But in hair lies the sense of duty and power. The visibility of hair masks the stories that surround it.

Miniature glass birds

Two sets of glass birds. Two swans. One hen and four chickens.

It is not so much that they are glass or that they are birds. It is that they have been carried from childhood through to adulthood. They are always there. They are markers of nothing more than what they resemble as referents. They mean nothing more than their status as objects of a particular period. To lose them would be significant, the loss, however, would only be felt here. These little artefacts are minor in their physical presence but linger in their presence as 'exterior scaffolding'.

An archive is never merely the objects that trigger memory and nostalgia, archives can speak about expectation and disappointment, success and failure. Archives are always already made in the hands of the inventor.

Meaning lies in the interstices, not in the objects themselves.

She brings her interpretations to the same materials and tells me her story. An archive is always objects, artefacts, fragments and collections. The inventory of childhood sees an archive in miniatures that is read by adults in different ways to the ways in which it is read by children.

The child will play with the archive, the adult wears white gloves. Between the two lies the possibility for looking at the archive in different ways. Because this is my memory archive with material objects available for examination I bring to it a mix of seeing these objects as laboured for and instructional, as pleasurable, and markers of a particular relationship.

To this she will say 'We had very little'. I find this unimaginable, but through the archive can register this disjunction. The archive has been imbued with her yearnings and desires, to capture it in an inventory that might register not only the external description but some of the internal workings of these objects, as they stand in their use as objects that have lessons written into them, is to see the inventory as a reading and a result.

Success/failure

If you are a success then all will be forgiven. Having done what is expected in childhood rest on your laurels. If you can show that you have learnt the lessons of sacrifice then respect will be given to you.

It doesn't work like that. The overwhelming lesson of sadness stays and contaminates all. As we walk in childhood through places that can teach us lessons, observation is contained not only in the words but also in the gifts. I feel your reining in and control. Having learnt control as a way to manage situations you produce a kind of deceit. The deceit becomes practical and is revealed in everyday actions and language. Manufacturing a past contains within it not protection and shelter for those who come later but a sense of disconnection. You have succeeded in producing success and failure simultaneously.

Expectation/disappointment

She makes the archive with another idea in mind. It is for the present, it is for the gift. She will expect something in return. When this doesn't happen she retreats into a place where anger is closer to the surface. A touch produces an emotional outburst. Disappointment accrues and is given voice, stays around and contaminates. Disappointment can be read on her body, her face, her gesture. Hiding disappointment goes with the territory and comes out in distortion. Another story, oh just joking really.

Expectation fills her nights, stays her days. It is the expectation that all will be well, that something so good will come along with enough power to cancel out all the bad, all the disappointment. You would like to live in balance but investment in another can lead to failure, to disillusion. She constructs the archive, the glory box, the learning of the trainings of femininity with precise detail. In each part of the body she plants the memory of loss and disruption. Inanimate objects replace emptiness and aloneness. The detective begins to understand the accumulation of material objects, the construction of the personal archive and museum.

They fill the empty hole of yearning.

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