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**GETTING SMARTER?  
INVENTING CONTEXT BOUND  
FEMINIST RESEARCH/WRITING  
WITH/IN THE POSTMODERN.**

**JEAN RATH**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Continuing Education.

University of Warwick, Department of Continuing Education

July 1999

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

[Acknowledgements] are 'special' both because their formulation is governed by conventions which are different from those of the main text and because they involve a unique potential for expressing issues not usually addressed in standard [research texts] . . . . Acknowledgements thus work on the basis of suggestiveness and indirectness rather than logical argumentation and direct criticism . . . . Because they are special, marginal texts, their operation is always twofold: social and textual, historical and literary.

Eyal Ben-Ari (1995, p.157)

### *Rape Crisis Centre Members - past, present and future*

Fear doesn't have to stop you. Even if you're afraid, you can still go ahead and make the changes you want. You just do it anyway. You do it afraid. You do it nervously, awkwardly. You shake or sweat. You are not graceful or composed, but you do it.

Ellen Bass and Laura Davis (1990, p.175)

### *Christina Hughes*

A creative event does not grasp, it does not take possession, it is an excursion. More often than not, it requires that one leaves the realms of the known, and takes oneself there where one does not expect, is not expected to be.

Trinh Minh-Ha (1991, p.26)

*Hazel Morbey*

'Failure is Impossible!' we all shout out together.  
In the blink of an Eye we set off through the sky. We will do or die . . .  
or do *and* die. But we won't be defeated, ever.

Mary Daly (1993, p.415)

*Mike Bunce*

The conventional Illusion (or Illusory Presumption) That Characterizes the conditional self Is The Presumption That whatever arises Is Already (or Certainly Can Be) Really experienced or known. The conditional self Is Commonly Presumed To Be a Knower, but, In Truth, the conditional self Is Inherently Ignorant. All conditional, perceptual, experiential, conceptual, or conventional knowledge IS Founded On The False Presumption That conditional forms or events Are Familiar. In Fact, Only Certain Formal Features OF arising phenomena Seem Familiar (Due To Repetition), Whereas, In Truth, no thing, being, or condition (Even the conditional self itself) Is Familiar (and Thus known) In The Ultimate Sense.

Da Free John (1985, p.270)

## DECLARATION

In the sense that I believe that the University of Warwick requires it, I declare that this thesis is my own work.

This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Jean Rath

July 1999



## SUMMARY

This thesis is a contribution to the debates about the impact of 'postmodernism' on qualitative research practices. It is a performative discourse on the invention of feminist research methods with/in the postmodern (here, related to the pedagogy of Rape Crisis volunteer counsellor training). It addresses how feminism acting with/in postmodernism may experiment with the invention of a 'new' method *hyper-textual electronic bricolage*, which I name from my readings of Gregory Ulmer's re-readings of Jacques Derrida. The research takes into account the enframing limits of technologies to argue that the theory and practice of electronic data analysis has been modelled to fit with/in existing notions of reading, writing, and the culture of qualitative research practice. It asserts that to invent a feminist research practice with/in the postmodern requires that we use hypertext not to do the work of print but to facilitate an alternative way of knowing materials. The thesis attends to the possibilities of electronic scripting as invention, and to the production of a print text arising from this. This electronically generated method bears the same relation to current CAQDAS (computer aided qualitative data analysis) techniques as the 'new' evocative ethnographic writings bear to the traditional ethnographic text. The thesis tells a reflective story of carrying out feminist inspired empirical work with/in the postmodern. It shows how, if feminism acting with/in the postmodern conceptualises research as an enactment of power relations between constituted subjects, the nature of our research conceptions and practices changes. It includes a multi-linear layered 'collective story' arising from the electronic hypertext generated from qualitative interview materials. This scripts some of the common themes that are important in forging an understanding of women's experiences of Rape Crisis counsellor training, yet always retains an awareness of the significant differences between these tales. Finally, the thesis suggests that, if we are to develop feminist research methods with/in the postmodern that take into account the enframing limits of our technologies, we need to attend to the re-mapping of validities as we move from print to electronic ways of doing/knowing research.

## INTRODUCTION

the text 'performs what it announces' in the use of introductory quotes for which the reader 'must come back to the text again and again; [s]he must brood on it...' (Bannett, 1989:9). Such a self-conscious use of difficult and indeterminant passages 'prevents the reader from consuming them at a gulp and throwing them away' and, instead, demands the active participation of readers in the construction of meaning (ibid :8).

Patti Lather (1991, p.11)

For me, the people I like, I utilize. The only mark of recognition that one can show to a thought like that of Nietzsche is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it grate, creak. Then, if the commentators say that it is or is not faithful, is of no interest.

Gregory Ulmer (1985, p.159, quoting from Michel Foucault)

if there is a fear that, by no longer being able to take for granted the subject, its gender, its sex, or its materiality, feminism will founder, it might be wise to consider the political consequences of keeping in place the very premises that have tried to secure our subordination from the start.

Judith Butler (1992, p.19)

I-have-written-and-rewritten-The-Introduction-more-times-than-any-other-portion-of-the-text-I-simply-do-not-know-WHERE-to-begin-I-know-that-it-is-crucial-that-I-begin-to-draw-in-the-reader-to-open-the-text-to-let-in-some-of-the-shades-of-meaning-that-permeate-the-remainder-of-the-thesis-But-HOW?-I-cannot-do-it-it-is-too-important-it-ties-'me'-to-the-text-in-a-way-that-more-'intimate'-revelations-can-never-do-It-is-the-entryway-and-yet-I-am-not-disposed-to-make-the-entry-easy-It-is-an-event-an-entering-not-an-entryway-it-is-a-somewhere-somewhat-someway-scramble-to-place-the-correct-words-but-always-knowing-that-there-are-not-correct-words-there-are-so-many-ways-of-starting-so-many-'places'-even-as-we-re-write-place-and-know-it-as-*chora*-not-*topos*-for-that-is-what-I-want-to-say-but-how-can-I-when-the-text-does-not-run-to-that-particular-place-until-chapter-1-For-that-is-forever-my-problem-I-know-this-text-as-my-own-text-and-now-I-must-write-it-as-somebody-else's-text-and-yet-I-cannot-because-I-know-it-and-even-knowing-that-this-is-always-the-way-with-introductions-still-cannot-bring-myself-to-write-I-want-to-move-to-the-manners-of-the-text-lest-I-forget-my-manners-yet-what-can-I-write-when-this-text-is-a-text-that-sometimes-(often?)-forgets-its-manners-and-yet-is-hopefully-just-rude-enough-to-work-Like-a-Cheeky-Child-placing-elbows-on-and-off-the-table-as-a-game-according-to-parental-smiles-and-cajoling-yet-the-day-is-sunny-and-the-mood-is-good-and-so-manners-are-somewhat-less-important-I-must-begin-somewhere-and-yet-I-cannot-begin-for-I-know-that-this-is-not-a-beginning-there-are-only-acts-of-opening-spaces-for-where-I-may-insert-my-pen-into-the-textual-flow-and-move-to-produce-with/in-the-boundaries-of-a-manners-that-wants-an-introduction-but-that-knows-that-such-a-thing-cannot-be-secured-for-in-writing-this-it-is-always-already-begun.

\*\*\*

This thesis is 'about' the prospects and possible forms of feminist research with/in the postmodern. It adopts the strategy of seeing 'how far it can get by failing to deliver simple truths' (Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p.6). It is 'about' engagement, possibilities and limitations. It is 'about' inadequacies of knowing. It is also 'about' Rape Crisis initial volunteer counsellor training. This (modified) quotation taken from the words used by Trinh Minh-ha when talking about her film *Reassemblage* shows what this means:

Substitutions

*Reassemblage* = *The thesis text*

Film = research/text

Senegal = Rape Crisis training

*The thesis text* evolves around an 'empty' subject. I did not have any preconceived idea for the research/text and was certainly not looking for a particularized subject that would allow me to speak *about* Rape Crisis training. In other words, there is no single center in the research/text—whether it is an event, a representative individual or number of individuals in a community, or a unifying theme and area of interest. And there is no single process of centering either. This does not mean that the experience of the research/text is not specific to Rape Crisis training. It is *entirely* related to Rape Crisis training. . . . The strategies are, in a way, dictated by the materials that constitute the research/text. They are bound to the circumstances and the contexts unique to each situation and cultural frame.

From Trinh Minh-ha (1992, p.116) with substitutions as indicated.

The thesis may be read as a discourse on method, lying within the manifesto traditions of the exposition of method (see Gregory Ulmer, 1994, and chapter 1 of this thesis). Norman Denzin (1997, p.xvii) describes his book,

*Interpretive Ethnography*, as 'about the prospects, problems, and forms of ethnographic, interpretive writing in the twenty-first century'. He works toward the development of a 'postpragmatist, ethnographic, ethical model fitted to the cinematic, video age' (p.xviii). His answer is to urge the development of a form of detective fiction. Although this thesis text has the same desire, my answer is to develop a form of electronic hypertextual practice that merges text with performance in this document. This uses the textual and hypertextual staging and re-staging of knowledge to probe conceptualisations of research and to destabilise the researcher as a unified interpreting centre. This thesis is concerned to take into account Lather's (1991) call to 'get smart' to ways in which feminist research may be accomplished with/in the postmodern. This is to acknowledge the current 'postmodernist tension' (McWilliam, 1993) in all educational research. To find a way through this maze, but not a way out, by means of pursuing research practices predicated upon Norman Denzin's (1997) nine part thesis for the practice of interpretative research (see chapter 1). *But* to argue that we need to go further/get smarter than Denzin who (mis)places hypertext as a mere example of 'mixed genres', and so does not take full account of the enframing limits of our technologies. I deploy a feminist move with/in Gregory Ulmer's (1985a & b, 1989, 1991, 1994) readings of Jacques Derrida's project of *Grammatology* (Derrida, 1976), in order to invent (hyper)textual practices that are concerned with 'creating and preserving knowledge rather than with the mere ordering of the known' (Joyce, 1991 ¶35). This thesis argues that the theory and practice of electronic data analysis has been modelled to fit within existing notions of reading, writing, and the attendant culture of qualitative research practice. Thus to invent a feminist research practice with/in the

postmodern requires that we use hypertext not to do the work of print but to facilitate an alternative way of knowing materials. The process of this research has attended to the possibilities of electronic scripting as invention (and to the production of a print text arising from this). This electronically generated method bears the same relation to current computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) techniques as the 'new' evocative ethnographic writings bear to the traditional ethnographic text.

\*\*\*

Feminism acting with/in postmodernism challenges the binary inflexible oppositions at the root of logocentrism, and exposes how they are informed by a hierarchically constituted masculine/feminine opposition. Research becomes (Lather, 1991, p.112) 'an enactment of power relations,' where research practices 'are viewed as much more inscriptions of legitimation than procedures that help us get closer to some "truth" capturable via language'. This thesis is part of the developing conversation between and with/in feminisms and postmodernisms. It concentrates on developing stories that rework modernistic dualisms (e.g. hooks, 1994; Lather, 1996; Lather and Smithies, 1997; Middleton, 1995; Trinh, 1991).

\*\*\*

This thesis is 'about' what might happen if feminists 'ride the wave' of postmodernism. It does not attempt to define the relationship between feminism

and postmodernism. It recognises each to signify diverse positionalities, strategies, and 'voices'. It acknowledges any sites of conjunction as episodic and unpredictable. This thesis is 'about' the types of research practices that we might invent as feminists with/in the postmodern, and how these may enable us to know empirically generated materials differently. It is 'about' how technologies of re-presentation enframe the what/where/how of knowing. Because of these 'about-nesses' I must address feminism and postmodernism somewhere within the text. However, also because of these 'about-nesses', I must not address them as being of foremost importance. For this thesis is not 'about' the conversation between feminisms and postmodernisms. I assume that the conversation is taking place but that it is happening in a different room to the one in which the 'party' of this thesis text is being held. Therefore, although I begin chapter 1 with the relationship between feminisms and postmodernisms if the reader so wishes it is possible to by-pass this politeness and start with the subsection entitled *Feminism acting with in postmodernism*.

\*\*\*

Just how does one 'do feminism' in a world of infinite heterogeneity and open-endedness? Postmodernism opens up the prospect of acknowledging previously marginalised 'voices' but it shuts off those 'voices' from accessing universal sources of power - by 'ghettoizing them within an opaque otherness, the specificity of this or that word game. . . . The language game of a cabal of international bankers may be impenetrable to us, but that does not put it on a par

with the equally impenetrable language of inner-city blacks from the standpoint of power relations' (Harvey, 1993, p.111).

\*\*\*

And-already-I-must-make-some-link-to-introduce-this-thesis-as-text-to-place-the-signposts-to-let-the-reader-know-where-she-might-be-destined-to-go-I-need-to-mind-my-manners-to-write-of-what-'will-happen'-always-already-knowing-that-'for-me'-it-has-happened-although-it-continues-to-happen-it-is-happening-I-must-mind-my-manners-lest-the-reader-loses-patience-for-this-text-needs-to-perform-a-competence-that-ties-'me'-to-the-text-in-a-way-that-I-am-uncomfortable-with-for-this-very-institutional-tying-prevents-me-from-letting-the-text-run-as-Cixous-says-we-must-for-I-want-to-let-the-text-run-and-make-the-reader-run-after-it-but-this-is-a-text-with-a-purpose-and-that-purpose-is-not-to-make-the-reader-run-not-to-leave-her-breathless-Although-too-much-breath-may-indeed-be-'the-problem'-of-a-text-such-as-this.

\*\*\*

This research as text is performative, it unsettles the 'science'/'art' interface. This thesis is a script for/of/arising from the research process. It is represented textually by the juxtaposing of various genres, which serve to structure the unfolding of a story of 'this research'. It recognises that *each* chapter/part/paragraph/page/word is performative, and not just those portions



that could be labelled as 'experimental' (Richardson, 1990b; Lather, 1996; Denzin, 1996, 1997).

\*\*\*

Chapter One, THE INVENTION OF RESEARCH, recognises that we need to acknowledge that 'the struggle is praxiological: the issue is not so much where postmodernism comes from, but what it will be' (Lather, 1991 p.35). This chapter acknowledges the shifting complexities of feminisms and postmodernisms and of the inability to tidily link the two. It focuses on 'getting smart' with regard to sets of practices that appear to be preferable to feminists acting with/in the postmodern. I agree with Patti Lather (1991, p.20) that: 'In an era of rampant reflexivity, just getting on with it may be the most radical action one can make'. Chapter One is thus concerned with how we might work towards getting smarter. It addresses how feminism acting with/in postmodernism may experiment with the invention of a 'new' method *hypertextual electronic bricolage*, which I name from my readings of Gregory Ulmer's re-readings of Jacques Derrida.

Chapter Two, INSCRIPTING THE *tale*: FROM HYPERTEXT TO TEXT, examines how during the research the weight of my endeavour came to rest upon the transition from electronic to print text forms. It acknowledges that the text is a *construction* rather than a *reflection* of the hypertext and discusses the difficulties of producing a text *arising from* hypertext. The chapter explores the possibilities of 'electronic thought' expressed as literary text, how the thesis

text may continue the hypertext's escape from any seemingly unmediated account of research 'events' and 'data', without constructing itself as a simple representation of the electronic form.

Chapter Three, FRAMING THE ISSUES: *What is this place called Rape Crisis?*, is in three parts. The first part, *Specific times, specific places*, is a review of the Rape Crisis movement in England, and the practice of Rape Crisis initial counsellor training. It includes an introduction to the Rape Crisis Centre where the research was carried out. The second part, *Found Material*, is shaped from a mystorical hypertext (see chapter 1), it uses evocative autoethnographic techniques (Ellis and Bochner, 1996; Richardson, 1997) to explore the storied nature of context and the intellectual and the emotional labour of research/writing. The third part of the text is in the form of *boxes*, which interrupt the other two texts. Here the font size is smaller and bolder than that of the surrounding text. This third part is inspired by Lather and Smithies (1997) 'factoid' boxes, but it is not restricted to texts that would traditionally be defined as 'factual'. These three parts are written to draw attention to inscription of context as both violating and enabling.

Chapter Four, RESEARCH AS PRAXIS: *The practice of method*, explores the process of arrival at, and practice of, method. This chapter is mindful of the expectations surrounding the thesis text. It lists the variety of approaches employed to 'find out' about the Rape Crisis Centre and the stories told about its initial volunteer counsellor training. Primarily this chapter tells a reflective story of carrying out feminist inspired empirical work with/in the

postmodern. It shows how, if feminism acting with/in the postmodern conceptualises research as an enactment of power relations between constituted subjects, the nature of our research conceptions and practices changes. It examines the processes of interviewing and transcribing, and discusses the electronic scripting of the research process.

Chapter Five, RE-COLLECTING OUR SELVES (*'Fractured and Authentic': A Collective Story of Rape Crisis Pedagogy*) concentrates on materials derived from and in collaboration with research participants. It is a multi-linear layered 'collective story' (Richardson, 1990a, 1997) arising from the electronic hypertext. This chapter refuses to reduce discord to a homogenised consensus story agreeable to all participants. It recognises that consensus 'is not completely innocent, since traces of force may be found in the history of any set of rules that attain and maintain binding effects' (Flax, 1992, pp.452-453). This chapter opens spaces for a diversity of perspectives, which permits the consideration of marginal discourses. Whilst it scripts some of the common themes that are important in forging an understanding of women's experiences of Rape Crisis counsellor training, it always retains an awareness of the significant differences between these tales. It is a form of 'montage' that always remembers that the spaces between the pieces are important (Trinh, 1992).

Chapter Six, END POINTS, refuses the possibility of any simple conclusion, whilst recognising the tiredness of this formulation. It returns to the notion of the text as a discourse on method, and asks how we might assess the

'outcomes' of the research process. It suggests that, if we are to develop research methods that take into account the enframing limits of our technologies, we need to attend to the re-mapping of validities as we move from print to electronic ways of doing/knowing research.

Each of the six chapters can be seen as emphasising a specific thematic strand. However, I wish to stress that such a reading, reliant upon the division of themes, is in danger of reducing the text to a series of simplistic overviews. Each theme is present in each of the chapters. This thesis text develops as a spiral passing again and again through the same points but at different levels. The thesis rejects the notion of successive chapters building straightforwardly on one another in an accumulative sense; it *relies* upon recognition of the connectivity between chapters. Each aspect permeates each other aspect in order to acknowledge differences and complexities that respect every chapter's *motif*.

Between these chapters lie the *intertexts*. These serve as 'both bridges and breathers' (Lather and Smithies, 1997, p.xvii). These intertexts are not intended to *convince* readers of their worth, rather they are a device to illuminate the dimensions of my research practice and perceptions of Rape Crisis pedagogical practices. The juxtaposing and mingling of elements with/in the intertexts seek to arouse a moving beyond and through critical intelligibility to the birthing of a pedagogical significance emanating from the 'bliss-sense' of reading/writing a (hyper)text script. The intertexts arise from the mystorical and chorographical hypertexts (see chapter 1), which form the core methods of

understanding explored through this research project. The intertexts undercut and trouble any easy sense of what the research means.

\*\*\*

Ultimately every doctoral thesis purports to be a text relating to a research process, it is *required* to appeal to a 'realism'. I take this to be the realism that Trinh Minh-Ha (1991) describes, in her book *When The Moon Waxes Red*. She is writing about 'realistically powerful media like photography and film' (p.166), however much of what she says is relevant to the expected task of a research project report written as a doctoral thesis:

Realism . . . requires that life be intimately understood both in its flow and its temporary pauses or specific instances. To face realism squarely and sensitively, without positive or negative escapism, is to see 'the small in the large and the large in the small; the real in the illusory and the illusory in the real' (Shen-Fu). The idea of realism in art, and more particularly in realistically powerful media like photography and film, should be linked with the principle of life (and death) by which things, endowed with existential and spiritual force and never static, continue to grow, to change, to renew, and to move. The freedom implied in the internal and external projection of these 'landscapes of life' on canvas, on celluloid, or on screen, lies in the availability of mind - and heart- that declines to limit one's perception of things and events to their actual forms. Such freedom also allows for the fearless assumption of the hyphen - the fluid interplay of realistic and non-realistic modes of representation, or to quote a Chinese opera expert, of 'bold omissions and minute depictions'.

Trinh Minh-Ha (1991, p.166)

\*\*\*

**Intertext:**

***naming space***

when you start calling yourself a survivor

I knew I'd been abused,  
I knew it I knew it I knew it  
I'd *always* been a survivor

then you start *calling* yourself a survivor  
then you talk about it  
then you become '*a survivor*'

you don't feel like a bloody survivor  
you feel like you're sinking  
you don't feel like you're swimming away

that's the beginning of it  
And *then* you have to survive  
Before it's just been happening

when you call yourself a survivor  
then you're dealing with the *shit*.  
And you don't feel like a survivor  
then you think  
'fuckin' hell I wish I hadn't bothered'

that's when all the mad stuff goes on

when you start calling yourself a survivor  
when you label it  
Then you go through all that and go through all that

The title is more than a 'mere preliminary'. Titles are invitations into the text - although the nature of their invitation may only be comprehended by the academically initiated, they may be read differently by the uninitiated. Paul Atkinson (1990) notes that many titles adopt a binary structure.

**GETTING SMARTER?** The first part of the pairing deriving from the 'native' categories of the culture in question. The first part captures allusive connotations whilst the second,

**INVENTING CONTEXT BOUND  
FEMINIST RESEARCH/WRITING  
WITH/IN THE POSTMODERN** the 'sub-

title' provides more explicit denotations.

The title of this thesis was chosen to summon the ghost of Patti Lather's (1991) text *Getting Smart* that haunts the scripting of this research/text.

There are different clusters of meaning that worry around this collection of words.

Smart, smarter, smartest?

What does getting smarter mean?

What is smartness about?

Smarter, streetwise smart, aware, capable of holding one's own smart.

Smarter, too smart, razor-sharp smart, best take care that you do not cut yourself or others sharp-smart.

Smarter, shaping-up smart, looking good smart, clearing the decks smart, aesthetics with a purpose smart.

Smarter, getting hurt smart, wounding smart, the bright smack against the bare skin smarting flush of pain smart.

*Bound?*

*Confined in bondage.*

*Bound?*

*Determined, resolved, certain of our aims and of reaching our destination.*

Smart smarter smartest?

How, why, who, where do we want to get smarter?



What does it mean to smarten up research practices how does this final text shape up. Smarter? Aware smart, savvy smart. A smart than acknowledges its technologies of enframement and moves with its sense of jouissance between the differing frames.

Smarter? Too smart, getting too smart to fit smart. Making the point but losing the plot smart.

Smarter? Aesthetically smart, sharp print on the blank page smart. Knowing that if we let the form slip then the content too is lost.

Smarter? Wounding our selves and our expectations smart. Painful smart, making it harder than it need to be smart, running breathless and bleeding after the text smart.

*Bound?*

*A limit, a line in the sand boundary.*

*Bound?*

*Jumping out, escaping from our confines.*

## Chapter 1

### THE INVENTION OF RESEARCH

I see theory as a constant questioning of the framing of consciousness - a practice capable of informing another practice, such as film production [or research practice], in a reciprocal challenge. Hence theory always has the possibility, even the probability, of leading the other practice to 'dangerous' places, and vice versa. I can't separate the two. . . . because of the film, I am constantly questioned in who I am, as its making also transforms the way I see the world around me. You know, history is full of people who die for theory.

Trinh Minh-ha (1992, p.123)

Given the postmodern tenet of how we are inscribed in that which we struggle against, how can I intervene in the production of knowledge at particular sites in ways that work out of the blood and spirit of our lives, rather than out of the consumerism of ideas that can pass for a life of the mind in academic theory?

Patti Lather (1991, p.20)

if the fiction of some conspiratorial connection between feminists and postmodernists engenders anxiety in the hearts and heads of the hegemonically powerful and institutionally entrenched - this might be a story that is worth repeating - at least until such stories are no longer necessary.

Linda Singer (1992, p.475)

In writing this chapter I am mindful of Morwenna Griffiths' (1995) typology of the five ways feminists have responded to postmodernism: (a) Being fearful that 'they' are trying to shut 'us' up. (b) Trying not to get seduced - or screwed. (c) Believing that we are all postmodernists now. (d) Having your cake and eating it - welcoming postmodernism but positioning it as subordinate to feminism. (e) Ignoring postmodernism. I am not prepared to place myself in any of these neat compartments. Yes, I do suspect that 'they' are trying to silence, to control, feminists through adopting a radical pluralism predicated on a so-called postmodernism with its 'masculinist predeterminants' (Brodrribb, 1992). Yes, I am concerned that postmodernism is a seductive move that allows women into the academy - but only so long as they are loyal to the male philosophical tradition. But yes, I do think that postmodernity is at this historical moment an ever present necessity it is not an 'option' that can be selected at will (Flax, 1992; Denzin, 1997). And yes, I am tempted by Spivak's (1993) call to take the risk of essence to have my cake and eat it. To be feminist yet strategically postmodernist at the times and places of my choosing (e.g. hooks, 1994). And yes, on occasion, I do long for the reassurance and simplicity of a position that takes no notice of postmodern thought. So yes, to each and every one of Griffiths' responses, and yes to each and every hue of the gradations that may link these five.

But, in the very style of writing the previous paragraph have I not 'given away' where I 'really' stand? Linking arms with Flax and Spivak, whilst waving cheerily at Brodrribb. A sort of 'OK, if the only thing I can have is cake, even though I am suspicious of the baker, I might as well eat it!'

It is not possible to define the relationship between feminism and postmodernism. Both feminism and postmodernism signify diverse viewpoints, strategies, 'voices'. It is impossible to 'capture' either; hence isolating specific sites of conjunction and consensus between the two is rendered almost overwhelmingly difficult. This chapter is not an attempt to construct a 'paradigmatic protocol' to link the two. Postmodernism itself radically forecloses attempts to tidily link 'feminism' and 'postmodernism'. I agree with Linda Singer (1992) that such a move is symptomatic of an earlier stage of theorising, which dictated the need to unify and consolidate knowledge. Relationships are recognised as episodic and unpredictable. And I am sensitive to Patti Lather's (1991, p.19) assertion that 'any effort at definition is not so much *description* as *inscription*, marking with words that impress investments of privilege and struggle'. The opening section of this chapter is concerned with inscribing the articulation of feminism and postmodernism. The movement here, as it is throughout the thesis text, is to produce a space that allows for a feminist/postmodernist understanding to be explored rather than resolved.

### **Postmodernisms and feminisms: developing a conversation.**

Postmodern sensibility has developed in historical parallel with recent feminist thought. Postmodernists compose complex and less hopeful stories about the relationship between knowledge power history and subjectivity. Feminists argue that ideas about knowledge depend upon, and are made plausible by, the existence of specific sets of social relations, including gender.

Both feminism and postmodernism resist and challenge the epistemological foundations of 'Western thought' (I acknowledge the problems of the monolithic fixity and homogenisation implied by this term, but will use it nevertheless). Both wish to displace Enlightenment humanism (if not all Western philosophy), and find different ways of acquiring and describing knowledge. Whilst not denying that postmodernity's rejection of absolutism provokes difficulties for the political project of feminism, I agree with Liz Stanley (1992, p.17) that postmodernist ideas are crucial to 'egalitarian work' and that they should not be permitted to be 'hijacked by highly conventional and predominately male theoreticians'. As Gayatri Spivak (1993) asserts to boycott Western male theories would be dangerous for feminism. We have no choice but to construct an agenda in order 'to stake out the theories' limits' (Spivak, 1993, p.x), so that they may be used constructively, even as we recognise that such a relationship is in itself potentially dangerous. I am alert to Sara Ahmed's (1998, p.1) warning that there is a sense that this 'thing called postmodernism' has 'taken over feminist debates (becoming a proper object of feminist dialogue in and of itself)'. I do not want to 'do' postmodernism as some recognition of 'the exhaustion of feminist concerns' (Ahmed, 1998, p.1). For Ahmed our work as feminists is to 'speak back' to postmodernism, to attend to how we might read postmodernism as and for feminism.

The relationship between feminism and postmodernism is, at best, uneasy. I am wary of claiming some uncomplicated kinship between the two, and heedful of the dangers of feeding some simplistic sibling rivalry. Feminism may ally itself with postmodernism in order to supplement the challenge to

modernist, Enlightenment epistemology, yet it cannot be forgotten that feminism is historically a modernist movement. As Linda Singer (1992) emphasises both postmodernism's and feminism's ambivalences about their respective ancestries and origins feeds the possibilities of a rivalrous dynamic. Postmodernist discourse can claim origin in canonical culture (e.g. Nietzsche, Heidegger), with any anxiety this arouses being assuaged by a focus on 'ends' (the end of history, philosophy, art etc.).<sup>1</sup> However, feminist discourse in the West, despite its reliance on Enlightenment discourses of rights, individualism and equality, begins with exclusion and exile from the institutions which begot postmodernism. Indeed Singer suggests that part of 'the draw' of feminism to postmodernism may well be its claim that 'all this' is over. Furthermore, I am mindful of Patti Lather's entreaty to resist the temptation to focus upon origins:

Rather than a contest over origins, the struggle is praxiological: the issue is not so much where postmodernism comes from, but what it will be.

Patti Lather (1991 p.35)

In considering this turn away from origin to focus on 'getting smart' with regard to sets of practices that appear to be preferable for certain (feminist) pragmatic purposes, I wish to remain alert to the pitfalls of constructing a modern/postmodern oppositional dichotomy.<sup>2</sup> If all epistemological points of

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<sup>1</sup> I am aware that the 'always already' formulation signifies that there is no origin, that 'origin' itself is an illusion.

<sup>2</sup> I am heedful of Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure's (1997) argument that we need to reject any attempt to understand postmodernism/modernism in terms of defining either of them. They discuss the meaning of the 'slash' that both joins and separates like a scar, engaging with three clusters of meaning to do with boundary, death and folding.

departure are inadequate it is not appropriate to construct subjects who claim to know and theorise under the sign of the postmodern as vying against subjects who claim to know and theorise under the sign of the modern. And, as Rey Chow (1992) reminds us, postmodernism has not displaced modernism. For modernism is still around 'as ideological legacy, as habit, and as familiar, even coherent, way of seeing' (p.102). And so with/in the postmodern, feminists must always begin with 'the legacy of the constellation of modernism and something more' (pp.104-105).

Therefore, although both are concerned with interrogating the mechanisms by which established forms of power/knowledge are sustained, feminists still need to negotiate a relationship that avoids being subsumed by postmodernism (see Ahmed, 1998). Linda Singer (1992) argues we need to attend to the dangers inherent in any strategic union. A straightforward merger may serve to strengthen both parties, yet it may result in a 'take-over' in which one entity is subsumed and subjected to the demands of the other. It remains important to distinguish between those concerns that are of feminism and those which are adopted for pragmatic purposes (e.g. Squire, 1995). Politically we need research practices and texts to affirm marginalised subject positions. However, 'it is important to be constantly wary of the dangers of fixing subject positions and meanings beyond the moment when they are politically productive' (Weedon, 1987, p.172). There is no easy reconciliation for those of us who are committed to feminist emancipatory discourses and strategies, yet are engaged by postmodernism to try to use it in the interests of emancipation. Instead of seeking the comfort of reconciliation, Gayatri Spivak (1987, p.249)

suggests that feminism and postmodernism need to be positioned as 'persistent interruptions of each other'. I conceive of my-research as being carried out at the site of this interruption, where postmodernism and the feminist politics of emancipation intersect/converse/intermingle/convulse.

At this site I am mindful of Patti Lather's (1991) typology of the three ways to receive postmodernism 'unambiguous condemnation, unambiguous celebration, and deliberate ambivalence' (p.163). This site-of-interruption concurs with her argument for adopting a position in the last category. She inscribes this as a pragmatic strategy to discontinue the 'contestatory discourses' of various feminisms and radical politicisms, and allow the movement outside 'both the logic of binary oppositions and the principle of non-contradiction' (Lather, 1991, p.163). This ambivalent appropriation allows the politics of feminism to determine the detailed articulation of postmodernist ideas with the emancipatory projects of feminisms. As Judith Butler and Joan Scott (1992) suggest in their introduction to *Feminists Theorize The Political*:

The point is not to apply ready-made concepts to feminist concerns, but to resignify or appropriate them for specific ends. . . . These theories are useful to the extent that they generate analyses, critiques, and political interventions, and open up a political imaginary for feminism that points the way beyond some of the impasses by which it has been constrained.

Judith Butler and Joan Scott (1992, p.xii)

Here a postmodern move from foundationalism does not dictate that feminism do away with foundations, or even sponsor a position of antifoundationalism. A move from foundationalism does not dictate a decline



into a relativistic swamp of meanings. As Lather (1991) argues relativism is not an issue:

If the focus is on how power relations shape knowledge production and legitimation, relativism is a concept from another discourse, a discourse of foundations that posits grounds for certainty outside of context, some neutral, disinterested, stable point of reference.

Patti Lather (1991, p.116)

Thus postmodernism *cannot* be a form of relativism, as relativism only takes on meaning as the partner of its binary opposite universalism. In acknowledging that 'power pervades the very conceptual apparatus that seeks to negotiate its terms' (Butler, 1992, p.6), postmodernism rejects an epistemology that defines knowledge as an absolute universal or relative. It sites all knowledge as contextual and historical. The relative/absolute opposition is obsolete, and we are required to 'pay more attention to the conditions under which conflicting claims can be resolved and those where only political actions . . . are sufficient' (Flax, 1992, p.452). If subjectivity is discursively produced through language (in social institutions and processes), then there is no pre-given reason why we should privilege sexual relations above other forms of social relations as constitutive of identity. The notion of positionality (which is not relativism) is helpful here. Positionality 'is the recognition of the interweaving of subject positions, and it is an attempt to sort out the political possibilities of that matrix' (Martin, 1992, p.160). Thus, as Chris Weedon (1987, p.50) points out, 'there may, of course, be historically specific reasons for [privileging sexual

relations] in a particular analysis'.<sup>3</sup> Positionality 'is a question of how we respond in a social matrix that is always positioning others and through which we are always being positioned by others' (Martin, 1992, p.160). The notion of positionality allows us to think/act/commit to feminism as a contextual and historical necessity without committing to it as a foundational absolute. Indeed, Judith Butler (1992, pp.6-7) argues that, by interrogating what the establishment of foundations authorises, such a move is 'the very precondition of a politically engaged critique'.

Susan Hekman's (1990) consideration of the elements necessary to construct a postmodern feminism is helpful in outlining the possibilities of this process. She argues that feminism and postmodernism can be seen as 'complimentary and mutually corrective' (p.8). But only if we attend to both the similarities and differences within and between postmodernism and feminism. In this way postmodernism may help to address some of the key issues debated in contemporary feminism (e.g. the existence of women's 'nature'), and feminism can contribute to postmodernism by adding the dimension of gender. The critique of rationalism is extended by revealing its gendered character. Thus it is not necessary to accept all of postmodernism (which is in any event within itself diverse and contradictory) in order to enable feminism to learn something

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<sup>3</sup> Clearly postmodernism does not rule out the specificity of women's experiences and differences from those of men; under patriarchy women have differential access to the discursive field, which constitutes gender and experience. It may be politically comforting to know that other women have had similar experiences. However, the danger in formulating general laws about women's experiences is that they may suppress important differences and contradictions. These differences are at least as important as similarities and tell us a great deal about the precise discursive structuring of gender at any particular historical moment (Weedon, 1987).

useful from it. Nor is it necessary to pose feminism against postmodernism, as Marcus and Fischer (1986 p.233) assert: 'To still pose one paradigm against the other is to miss the essential character of the moment as an exhaustion with a paradigmatic style of discourse altogether'.

As I have already intimated, to talk of 'postmodernism' is to join together diverse and contradictory theories/practices. Whilst I have been employing postmodernism (and indeed feminism) as a unifying term I am aware of its disunity. Judith Butler (1992, p.5) describes attempts to group together diverse postmodernisms as a move 'to colonize and domesticate these theories under the sign of the same, to group them synthetically and masterfully under a single rubric, a simple refusal to grant the specificity of these positions, an excuse not to read, and not to read closely'. This amalgamation of postmodernisms, through the assumption that individual pieces of work are in some way representational, renders 'the postmodern' a decidedly 'modern' unifying sign. These conceptual groupings are often authorised by the desire to resuscitate a paradigmatic style of discourse, wherein 'postmodernism' is addressed as that which is to be negated or confirmed.

It is apparent that feminists need to be judicious in their articulation with postmodernism. As Chris Weedon (1987) argues, it is important to distinguish the types of postmodernist thinking valuable to feminism.<sup>4</sup> She argues that any

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<sup>4</sup> Weedon arrives at Foucauldian poststructuralism as the most politically appropriate choice. She argues that feminism, as a politics, requires the theorisation of individual and social meaning and of the political process of engendering change. She sees a Foucauldian analysis of historically specific discourse relations and practices (discourses as products, creators and reflectors

feminist articulation with postmodernism must pay full attention to textuality *within* social contexts if it is to address/redress the power relations of everyday life. In other words, feminism has to move beyond the level of textual analysis with an acknowledgement that the way we speak and write reflects the structures of power in our society. A recognition that experience has 'no inherent essential meaning' (Weedon, 1987, p.34), and is always constructed and contained within text, needs to be integrated with an appreciation that we act within those discourses available to us *as constituted subjects*. Such subjects have agency. However, this agency is not essentially male, Western or unified, nor is it the product of an internal self-consciousness it is 'a *posit* of external forces' (Martin, 1992, p.52). Such subjects 'are not unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will, but rather subjects whose agency is created through situations and statuses conferred on them' (Scott, 1992, p.34). There are choices but these are not unlimited. This positioning of the subject is not to pronounce its death but rather to claim that certain versions of the subject are politically insidious. There is a need to acknowledge that experiences accrue to women not by virtue of their womanhood alone but as traces of domination, and that these experiences are constituted discursively. We must then do away with an easy coupling of domination and emancipation as a binary pair, such that to displace one automatically creates space for the other (Flax, 1992). In refusing to separate 'experience' and language, and to insist that subjects are constituted discursively, is not to deny conflicts among and within discursive systems, or the

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of the social, economic and political) as enabling feminists to explain mechanisms of the exercising of power which privileges specific interests at a particular historic moment, and allows the analysis of opportunities for resistance and transformation.

varied meanings conceivable for the concepts they deploy. This enables us to develop an awareness of the oppressive role of ostensibly liberatory forms of discourse. How do we contribute to dominance despite our liberatory intentions? To what extent does the Rape Crisis training undermine its own liberatory aims? Thus, whilst sympathetic to the focus on texts and their study, I retain a commitment to women and their experiences (albeit that these are a linguistic event), as legitimate interests. I am also committed to working with/in the feminist tradition of reflexive research practice (albeit that the nature of reflexivity needs to be interrogated, e.g. Trinh, 1992) as this allows me/us to attend to the politics of my/our actions at a practical level.

My intention is to be sympathetic to what Patti Lather (1991) has called the 'postmodernism of resistance'. That is to say, reject any nihilistic collapse of meaning in favour of an assertion of (feminist) values. For although postmodern thinking has shown that no values can be shown to have final or absolute authority (as opposed to powerful or widely accepted), this does not disallow the making of meaningful value judgements. As Steven Connor (1993, pp.39-40) points out: 'the lack of absolute values no more makes all other values interchangeable than the absence of an agreed gold standard makes all world currencies worth the same'. Whilst I am prepared to assert that all feminisms have in common their challenge to the masculine feminine dichotomy, as it is defined by Western thought, there is, of course, no monolithic set of 'feminist values'. Like many women my personal intersections with the social project of feminisms have been, and are, multiple. I am sympathetic to the concept of *feministics* as a way of signalling the complexities that produce these 'feminist

values'. Patrick Murphy (1991, p.53) sees feministics as defining 'the orientation of feminist-anchored practices, including political activism, women's studies, feminist critique and gynocriticism, and feminist theory; but recognises that there is neither a monolithic "feminism" nor "feminist theory", and that much valuable feminist critical work is non- or anti- theoretical; it also implies the non-dogmatic multivocality, suspicion of *ismness*, and self-critique that abounds in feminist work'. Thus to speak of feminism as feministics is not just to speak of a site boundaried by the distinction between feminism and its opposition, but one fissured by controversies over the meaning of 'feminism' itself. Feministics signals that feminism includes a multitude of practices in its feminisms. This plurality demarcates a site of political difference and contestation *not* a zone of benign diversity. Feministics leaves open the meaning of feminism. It does not require a silencing of feminisms' discordances. And, together with postmodernism, may signal a route to avoid the habits of typification (e.g. 'Marxist feminism'; 'standpoint feminism') that divide feminism into partisan factions each 'competing for the privilege of authorizing feminist politics' (McClure, 1992, p.363). As Judith Butler (1992) argues, the constant rifts and differences between feminists thus ought to be affirmed as the 'ungrounded ground' (p.16) of feminist theory.

Feminist values are historically situated and community specific (see the collection edited by Judith Squires, 1993a).<sup>5</sup> The aim is to develop an approach

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<sup>5</sup> This approach carries its own difficulties associated with the particularisation of knowledges and the political isolation of communities, see Jeffrey Weeks (1993). Furthermore, as Bill Martin (1992, p.141) reminds us: 'Communities allow people to create shared meanings, values, and ways of life, but the fact of this sharing does not, in and of itself, tell us whether what is heard is any good or

which allows the research to be participatory and accept diversity, whilst using feminist values to repudiate a disintegration into a meaningless jingle-jangle of multiple 'voices'. This approach distinguishes diversity from pluralism and eclecticism. As Bill Martin (1992, p.162) argues: 'diversity encourages an active respect for and appreciation of the other, while pluralism is more akin to mere "tolerance"'. Whereas diversity requires the researcher to act:

in order to let the other speak, / have to do something - I have responsibilities here. Pluralism and eclecticism, on the other hand, do not confer obligations.

Bill Martin (1992, p.162)

The obligations of diversity reject any 'alienating notion of otherness' in order to favour the development of 'an empowering notion of difference' (Trinh, 1992, p.185). Yet, we still need to recognise that, like all discourses, feminist values are simultaneously enabling and limiting. It may sometimes be politically necessary to exalt female difference within the terms defined by the metaphysics of presence. This is in line with Gayatri Spivak's (1993) call for feminists to take 'the risk of essence' to develop a research context which takes into account essence. To create a space for women's 'voices' is to take the risk of essence. To admit *that at this point in time* it is politically and strategically necessary to explore how women re-present in their narratives. New forms of expression can then be invented to begin to untie women's relationship to conventional genres of expressing/being to misplace the unitary self and allow for 'the positive

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not . . . it still has to be admitted that the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, etc., are "communities" of a sort'.

representation of women's subjectivity as nonunitary, fragmented, conflicted, fluid, and in flux' (Bloom, 1998, p.63). This is a self-conscious and strategic use of essence to mobilise the research process within boundaries that do not invoke an irreducible 'real world' essentialism. Taking the risk of essence needs to be considered not in terms of questioning the essentialising move, but rather in terms of what motivates its deployment. 'The essence that is risked is always conditional, even if it may constitute a position that remains stable for a particular period - this stability, in any case, is always of a more strategic than ontological character' (Martin, 1992, p.158). Feminists create a collective unit 'women' for politically strategic purposes. It does not presume that there is a pre-existent natural group of women. We retain the category women as the basis for a coalition politics, not to essentialise but to remind us that sexual categories are constructions. The grand narrative of feminism still needs to appear, however it is in a less insistent place (Squire, 1995). However, ultimately, the privileging of the essentially feminine does perpetuate the dualities that must be overcome. It is a step *not* a goal. Spivak (1993, p.4) reminds us that: 'A strategy suits a situation; a strategy is not a theory'. Strategy is a temporary (but potentially long-lasting) artifice to outwit or surprise 'the enemy'. This should be a constantly self-conscious mobilising process, which is fully aware of its potential to become counterproductive. Strategy 'matches the trick to the situation'. A strategist is a trickster.

Despite the strategic 'risk of essence' this approach must ultimately result in the dissolution of the dualisms that feminists have used to structure their politics and practice. This is not some redefinition of modernity's dualities.



Feminism's relationship with the rational/irrational duality is a crucial instance of how postmodernism may positively interrupt feminist thought. In response to the recognition that the 'Man of Reason' is gendered not generic, feminists need to formulate a response to the association of reason and rationality with the masculine. As Susan Hekman (1990) points out there are three possible responses. The first is to accept the definition but work to open it up to include women. The second is to accept the definition as it accurately portrays the true nature of men and women - but to revalorize the feminine side of the dichotomy. She emphasises how these two options ultimately serve to reify the Enlightenment dualities that feminism seeks to overthrow. Even the second in its efforts to valorise feminine 'ways of knowing' cannot succeed in privileging the female, as it does not attack the dichotomy that constitutes the female as inferior. Once feminism makes space to articulate with postmodernism, then any rejection of rationalism does not have to entail a privileging of the irrational (and the gendered divisions of this split). A third option is created, one that follows postmodernism's abandonment of epistemology in its traditional sense and displace the rational/irrational dichotomy of modernist/Enlightenment thought. This loses gendered connotations of certain ways of knowing and stops the search for one correct way of knowing 'the truth'. No new orthodoxy is sought or arrived at. This articulation of feminism and postmodernism encourages us to think of differences between (and within) men and women in ways removed from absolute hierarchies. It is a way of talking about irrationality/rationality that displaces their opposition. It enables talk in terms of multiplicity and plurality rather than hierarchy.

I have argued that by holding a positive conversation between feminisms and postmodernisms, a rethinking of political action can be facilitated. This does not derive legitimacy from the derivation of some 'new' approach (Flax, 1992). Instead, it acknowledges that a specifiable resolution of the relationship is not possible or desirable. The relationship between the two needs to remain fluid and fragile. It is premised on the recognition of diversity and difference. We must attend to the nature of the 'and' that links feminism and postmodernism. Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure (1997) suggest that we should regard 'and' as a metaphor, not as an unproblematic embrace between set couples: 'Far from being a simple additive, "and" turns out to be the wild card behind whose bland exterior all sorts of covert negotiations, alliances, chances, failures and manoeuvrings are conducted' (p.150). As Linda Singer (1992) argues the nature of the 'and' that links feminisms and postmodernisms is crucial:

The 'and' therefore keeps open a site for strategic engagement. The 'and' is a place holder, which is to say, it holds a place open, free from being filled substantively or prescriptively. The 'and' holds/preserves the differences between and amongst themselves. To try to fix that space by mapping it - setting landmarks, establishing fixed points of conjunction-directionality - is precisely to miss the point of a conjunction which is also always already nothing.

Linda Singer (1992, p.475)

Hereby feminists come to compose more complex and less hopeful stories about the relationship between knowledge, power, history and subjectivity, than hitherto. For feminisms, postmodernisms are both useful and dangerous. Postmodernism allows an escape from the masculine/feminine

polarity as an absolute foundational base on which to construct feminist thought. Postmodernism refocuses, and is refocused by, feminism as desiring to displace the old truth regimes rather than devise some new criteria for the privileging of truth with/in an existing tension of opposites. Feminism does not need to merely displace a unitary masculinist epistemology and replace it with a unitary feminist epistemology, as in doing so it would become another version of phallogocentrism, shoring up the very system that it attempts to displace. Feminism becomes a historical project concerned with interrupting the historically constituted gendered polarities of Western thought.

### **Feminism acting with/in postmodernism**

In periods when fields are without secure foundations, practice becomes the engine of innovation.

George Marcus and Michael Fischer (1986, p.166)

The articulation of feminism and postmodernism has ramifications for what I can come to know, how I can carry out research, and how I can re-present it as thesis text. Feminism acting with/in postmodernism challenges the binary inflexible oppositions at the root of logocentrism, and exposes how they are informed by a hierarchically constituted masculine/feminine opposition. Research becomes (Lather, 1991, p.112) 'an enactment of power relations,' where research practices 'are viewed as much more inscriptions of legitimation than procedures that help us get closer to some "truth" capturable via language'. The developing conversation between and with/in feminism and postmodernism concentrates on developing stories that rework these dualisms (e.g. hooks, 1994;

Lather, 1996; Lather and Smithies, 1997; Middleton, 1995; Trinh, 1991). This research attacks these oppositions through adopting and expanding Norman Denzin's (1997, pp.xii - xvi) organising lens of a nine part thesis, which he uses to structure his approach to interpretative ethnography.<sup>6</sup> His thesis catalogues the current and projected future situation for ethnography and for all interpretative inquiry. Denzin argues that the moral element of ethnography dictates a change to the ethnographic writing form. A form which here must always conform to the feminist values:

- (1) Ethnography may be written and read through the texts of Jacques Derrida who argues that any theory of the social is also a theory of writing. And that a theory of writing is also a theory of interpretative (ethnographic) work. Theory, writing, and ethnography are recognised as inseparable material practices that locate the social inside the text. Language defines and constructs actual and possible forms of social organisation and consequences. Meaning is constituted in language and is not guaranteed by the subject. Experience is created in the social text written by the researcher. To write culture is also to write theory, and vice versa. This

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<sup>6</sup> To position this piece as belonging with/in the ethnographic is to signal a preoccupation with cultural behaviours of the Rape Crisis Centre as they impact on the women involved with the pedagogy of initial counsellor training. To make sense of this is not to seek to capture some out-there-already object of 'the training', but rather, it is to attend to the stories that circulate with/in and about the Rape Crisis Centre as women talk about their experiences of this pedagogy. Ethnography is more than merely a recording and recounting of events it is an attempt to render some sense of cultural behaviour. However, as Harry Wolcott (1995, p.86) reminds us culture is 'an explicit conceptual orientation that provides the purpose and rationale for doing ethnography - gets there because *the ethnographer puts it there*'. As I name the research/text (for remember that ethnography is *both* research process and text), I am already eager to re-name.

generates a need for a reflexive form of writing that turns ethnographic and theoretical texts back 'onto each other' (p.xii).

- (2) Although speaking of American ethnography, Denzin's point as to the embeddedness of ethnographic practices in national and world culture is important. As culture has become postmodern and international so too has ethnography. 'The ethnographic project has changed because the world that ethnography confronts has changed' (p.xii). Disjunctions, discontinuities and difference abound, National boundaries and identities blur. As Mark Neumann (1996) argues:

the once stable distinctions between foreign and familiar that located 'the field,' as well as the place where one returned to write, have collapsed and dissolved. . . In many ways, ethnography is a genre of writing that relies on that mysterious other who exists 'out there'. And this tension only becomes confounded when we acknowledge how much 'out there' looks a lot like 'in here'.

Mark Neumann (1996, p.182)

However, 'going postmodern' has not released cultural narratives from the Enlightenment worldview, which is still entangled in all narratives. The world is 'postcolonial and we have to think beyond the nation, or the local group as the focus of inquiry' (Denzin, 1997, p.xii). Denzin (p.xii) concentrates on the naming of America as a 'federation of diasporas', where the 'hyphenated American' (American-Irish, American-African, etc.), might have to become twice hyphenated (Asian-American-Japanese, etc.). My concern with the naming of Feminisms (and especially my-own-

feminisms as feministics) similarly turns to a multi-hyphenated diaspora, feminist-activist-post-modernist.

- (3) Ethnographic texts circulate in the electronic world economy like other commodities. We can not take for granted what it means to do ethnography in a postmodern world. 'It is time to teach readers and writers how to engage, produce, and understand the new ethnographic text. Global and local legal processes have problematicized and erased the personal and institutional distance between the ethnography and those he or she writes about. . . We do not own the field notes we make about those we study. We do not have an undisputed warrant to study anyone or anything' (Denzin, 1997, p.xiii).
  
- (4) Self-reflexivity in ethnography is a necessity. It is not some optional extra to be bolted on to a text in some marginal space, or, indeed as a separate book. 'The writer can no longer presume to be able to present an objective, noncontested account of the other's experiences. Those we study have their own understandings of how they want to be represented' (p.xiii). Plus the worlds we study are created, in part, through the texts we produce about them. Denzin argues that there are four forms of text: 'ordinary talk and speech, inscriptions of that speech in the form of transcriptions, written interpretations based on talk and its inscriptions, and performances of those texts' (p.xiii). These texts are always dialogical. In the ethnographic text the 'voices' of the Other, and the author, 'come alive and interact with one another'. These multiple 'voices' in the text are themselves 'textual,

performative accomplishments' that have a previous meaning/occurrence/life in their context of production. Denzin reminds us that whilst texts 'are easily reproduced; contexts are not' (p.xiii).

- (5) Ethnography is a gendered project. Feminist, postcolonial, and queer theory all question the traditional reflexive positioning of the ethnographer's 'gender-neutral (or masculine) self within a realist story about the "other"' (Denzin, 1997, p.xiv). Reflexivity does not produce a single, solid ethnographic identity. Reflexivity and experience both 'collide against larger cultural assumptions concerning race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class and age' (p.xiv).
  
- (6) Denzin builds on his third and fourth assumptions to argue that 'ethnography is a moral, allegorical, and therapeutic project. Ethnography is more than the record of human experience. The ethnographer writes tiny moral tales - tales that do more than celebrate cultural difference or bring another culture alive' (p.xiv). He argues for a 'feminist, communitarian moral ethic' to structure all ethnographic tales' (p.xiv). This rejects any fixed ethical protocols that can act as 'recipes' for successfully ethical research. Such a recipe approach is blind to the positionality of researcher and researched, and it privileges rational solutions to ethical dilemmas. It positions the research participant as the possessor of private commodities (attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours) which if connected to the individual may do them harm. Everything is secret, and so the process of the research is veiled. However, a 'feminist, communitarian moral ethic' presumes a

dialogical view of the self and 'seeks to produce narratives that ennoble human experience while facilitating civic transformations in the public (and private) spheres' (p.xiv). This research serves the community in which it is carried out. 'It works to build covenant rather than contractual bonds within the local community' (Denzin, 1997, p.277). This requires a personally involved, politically committed researcher, and those studied are asked to be active participants in a collaborative research process. This ethic produces a series of norms for ethnographic writing:

The ethnographer's oral tales are not written to produce harm for others. The ethnographer's tale is always allegorical - a symbolic tale that is not just a record of human experience. This tale is a means of experience for the reader. It is a vehicle for readers to discover moral truths about themselves. More deeply, the ethnographic tale is a utopian tale of self and social redemption, a tale that brings a moral compass back into the readers (and writer's) life. The ethnographer discovers the multiple 'truths' that operate in the social world - the stories people tell one another about the things that matter to them . . . These stories move people to action, and they rest on a distinction between fact and truth. Truth and facts are socially constructed, and people build stories around the meaning of facts. Ethnographers collect and tell these multiple versions of the truth.

Norman Denzin (1997, pp.xiv-xv)

- (7) Although qualitative research shifts and ruptures, as Lincoln and Denzin (1994) have argued, there is a shifting centre to such work and that is the study of social worlds from the perspective of the interacting individual. This point unites all the interpretative communities of qualitative research.



- (8) Ethnography's sixth historical moment<sup>7</sup> will be defined by the work that implements the previously discussed assumptions. Self-reflections and self-referential criticisms will produce few texts anchored in the worlds of concrete human experience. However, as we shall see for this Rape Crisis contextualised work, a text may be connected to the worlds of lived experience without being rigidly anchored.
- (9) Experimental versions of ethnography which have appeared since *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) have been vehemently criticised as 'narcissistic, overly reflexive and not scientific; some even call the new ethnographers ethnographs' (p.xv). Denzin sees these criticisms as policing the boundaries of ethnography, 'inscribing a proper version of how this form of scientific work should be done' (p.xv). Such criticisms bolster a 'traditional bias' which argues that ethnographers study real people in a real world. Yet as humans we have no direct access to reality. 'Reality as it is known is mediated by symbolic representation, by narrative texts, and by cinematic and televisual structures that stand between the person and the so-called real world. In critically reading these texts, the new ethnographers radically subvert the realist agenda because the real world is no longer the referent for analysis' (p.xvi).

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<sup>7</sup> The previous moments have been (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994):

|                                |                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1900 to World War II           | Traditional                         |
| World War II to the mid-1970's | Modernist                           |
| 1970 to 1986                   | Blurred genres                      |
| 1986 to present                | Crisis of representation            |
| now                            | The fifth moment                    |
| now moving to the future       | The sixth moment charts the future. |

Denzin's (1997) thesis is concerned with the inventions needed for representation he pleads that we are 'writing our way out of writing culture and into the still undefined Sixth Moment' (p.18). He sees the hybrid textualisation of the modern and the postmodern (modernist texts that look postmodern and postmodern texts that advocate modernist concerns) as a symptom of this transitional phase. He calls for new forms of both truth and verisimilitude, and notes that this requires 'extensive experimentation'. 'Doing' feminism with/in postmodernism requires us to invent new forms and formats for the academic text/research process. We need to reject the tidy security of consensus and to invent ways of embracing the contradictions of qualitative work. To script a performative text that includes: 'narratives of the self, fiction, poetry, drama, performance science, polyvocal texts, responsive readings, aphorisms, comedy and satire, visual presentations, and mixed genres (e.g. hypertexts)' (Denzin, 1997, p.26).

Whilst in most part I agree with Denzin, I think that he misplaces hypertext as a mere example of mixed genres. I believe that hypertext goes beyond 'mixed genres' into another space where cognition occurs differently. This is *why* I propose to deploy a feminist move with/in Gregory Ulmer's (1985 a & b, 1989, 1991, 1994) readings of Jacques Derrida's project of *Grammatology* (Derrida, 1976), in order to invent hypertextual practices that are concerned with 'creating and preserving knowledge rather than with the mere ordering of the known' (Joyce, 1991 ¶35). Derrida's work (or, to be more precise, readings and re-readings of his texts) can be made use of to form the

basis for a social theory uniquely suited to the postmodern social situation (Martin, 1992).

### **Exploring the CATTt**

In order to explicate the nature of this project I suggest that it may be read as a discourse on method, lying within the manifesto traditions of the exposition of method. Gregory Ulmer (1994) considers the manifesto traditions of discourses on method. He maintains that arguments for method tend to include a common set of elements, which may be represented by the acronym CATTt (see also Ulmer, 1991) where:

- C = Contrast (opposition, inversion, differentiation)
- A = Analogy (figuration, displacement)
- T = Theory (repetition, literalisation)
- T = Target (application, purpose)
- t = Tale (secondary elaboration, representability)

Each of these elements consists of complex sets of operations, which are best understood through their manifestation.

*Contrast* is the 'opening move' of method which performs a differentiation from an undesirable example, whose features 'provide an inventory of qualities for an alternative method' (Ulmer, 1994, p.8). Here there is the contrast that names itself as no contrast, that is to say the articulation of

feminisms and postmodernisms. Here too there is a contrast between existing qualitative research techniques that derive from the analytico-referential print frame, and the possibilities evoked by a move to 'the electronic'.

*Analogy* foregrounds method as invention. Ulmer argues that method becomes invention when it relies on analogy. Here, the move is to produce an electronically generated method that stands in the same relationship to current computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) techniques as the new evocative ethnographic writings bear to the traditional ethnographic monograph (as witnessed by Denzin's (1997) thesis). And remember too that, for Derrida, one cannot distinguish easily between a simple analogy and literal description (Derrida, 1976; Spivak 1993).

*Theory* is based on the authority of a preceding theory (or theories). It includes a repetition of at least some elements of a prior theory, together with their modification through interaction with other components from the CATTt. In brief, the theory that is drawn on in this research crafts together a diversity of postmodernist and feminist postmodernist works. Including those of Gregory Ulmer, Patti Lather, Laurel Richardson and Norman Denzin.

*Target* addresses the area of application for which the method is designed. Target therefore 'supplies an inventory out of what is lacking or missing, or out of the excess of a new situation for which no practices yet exist' (Ulmer, 1994, p.9). The target here is not simply an investigation of the stories

told by women re-collecting the Rape Crisis training course, the target is the practice of feminist doctoral research.

*Tale* acknowledges that the new method must be represented in some form or genre. The Tale communicates the method invented by means of CATTt. It is the dramatisation of the method, it both shows and tells. This *tale*, may be read as a discourse on a feminist method invented/invoked by the practices I read as Ulmer's re-reading of Derrida. This is my-own-text,<sup>8</sup> this thesis text. Which, given the analogy given above, inevitably draws upon creative ethnographic writing techniques (e.g. Rambo Ronai, 1995; Richardson, 1996a & b, 1997; Austin, 1996), to script itself as a dynamic textual shadow to the research's hypertextual space. This thesis *as print text* may be categorised amongst the growing body of linguistically informed texts which have been labelled as 'experimental' ethnography (for examples see the edited collections by Bochner and Ellis, 1996a; Ellis and Bochner, 1996). This text may be read as an experimentally written autoethnography,<sup>9</sup> that is a turning of the ethnographic

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<sup>8</sup> I have chosen the phrase my-own-text not as a my-own which is not a your-own this is intended as an invitation to an our-own.

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, as textual practices blur with the hybrid textualisation of the modern and the postmodern (Denzin, 1997) it may also be possible to read the thesis text in the context of the development of feminist auto/biographical practice (Stanley, 1992, 1993). Auto/biography as a term rejects any easy distinction between biography and autobiography - the genres are symbiotic. Any biographical work has inevitable autobiographical consequences for the biographer. Acknowledging the intertwined stories of researcher and participant can thus be used to enhance the repertoires of 'voices' (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993). This produces a view of the tapes and their transcripts as auto/biographical dialogues negotiated between researcher and participant. Liz Stanley (1992) in her book *The auto biographical I* puts forward four elements as the necessary key features of a 'method' and a 'form' for producing feminist auto/biography. These are: *The anti-spotlight approach*, which rejects a reductionist spotlight attention onto a single unique subject. This requires an

gaze inward on the self (auto) while maintaining the outward ethnographic gaze to peruse the larger context wherein the self experience occurs (Bochner and Ellis 1996b; Kolker, 1996). This thesis interlaces the research/writing process and the stories arising from the pedagogic practices of a Rape Crisis Centre. Yet it is also concerned to acknowledge the intricacies of both this inward 'auto' move of one who writes, and the outward gaze to context. To write from with/in the electronic frame is to engage with the complex blurring of this double move. This is not an autoethnography that takes itself for granted. It is not a personal memoir, or indeed a confessional. The deconstruction of subject questions the autobiographical framing that structures the poetic and personal narrative. It is insufficient to merely know the personal, it is necessary to speak differently about the personal (hooks, 1994; Trinh, 1991). A (post)narrative 'voice' is sought that writes against any favouring of lived experience as the site for reflexivity and selfhood. That label of the autoethnographic is already beginning to come away. For I am writing a *tale* that is mindful of Denzin's (1997, p.26) call to invent a new language in order to 'go beyond' autoethnography. In categorising this text with the flimsy label of the autoethnographic, I am positioning it within what Denzin argues is ethnography's sixth historical moment. This moment is more comfortable with the discomfort of makeshift labelling, than the security of categorisation.

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emphasis on social location and contextualisation within social networks. The textual recognition that 'facts' and 'arguments' are *contingent*. This approach recognises the viewpoint of the author. The author is not 'dead', but is situated and acknowledged. *The use of anti-realist approaches* which move beyond acknowledging contingency of the authorial 'voice' to disrupt and assault 'reality'. Stanley emphasises the explicit and diverse ways in which anti-realism can be approached. An *a priori* insistence that auto/biography should be treated as composed by *textually located ideological practices* and analytically engaged with as such.

### **(Hyper)Textual Practices**

Three important areas of focus: *jouissance*, bricolage and deconstruction, must be appreciated/deployed in this feminist move with/in Gregory Ulmer's (1985 a & b, 1989, 1991, 1994) (mis)readings of Jacques Derrida's texts. These three are tools for opening up/bursting apart dualistic and representative notions of the text.

*Jouissance*, the pleasure and playfulness of the text. *Jouissance* abandons textual affirmations of the consistency of a monolithic self. This foregrounds the dynamics of 'bliss-sense', what Gregory Ulmer (1989, p.96) refers to as 'the pleasure of the text, the love of learning, the subject's desire for knowledge, which is grounded not in a specialized discipline but in the family story and everyday life'. In the development of feminist practices with/in postmodernism it is important to note two aspects of *jouissance*. Firstly, the rootedness of *jouissance* in specific historically situated experiences, the insistence that 'one always thinks by means of and through these specifics, even if that thinking is directed against the institutions of one's own formation' (Ulmer, 1989, p.viii). Secondly, the complex meanings and practices associated with a sense of playfulness. This playfulness is not playful in the sense of a 'fun' countermove against 'the serious', rather it emphasises play 'in the sense of a certain looseness between mechanisms or meanings, is the condition of and for meaning' (Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p.140).

*Bricolage*, the crafting of the research/text as a one-off. To act as *bricoleur* is to employ whatever tools, strategies, methods or materials are available. This is a self-conscious bundling of skills, assumptions and practices. Bricolage requires a reflexive awareness of the social, historical and political position of the text (Scheurich, 1997). It incorporates a multitude of methods and methodologies to facilitate a multiple process of 'making sense'. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1994) succinctly site the *bricoleur* within the practice of qualitative research:

The *bricoleur* understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting. The *bricoleur* knows that science is power, for all research findings have political implications. There is no value free science. The *bricoleur* also knows that researchers all tell stories about the worlds they have studied. Thus the narratives, or stories, scientists tell are accounts couched and framed within specific storytelling traditions, often defined as paradigms (e.g. positivism, postpositivism, constructivism).

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1994, p.3)

Clearly then bricolage carries no assumption that it is 'the one best' description, interpretation or analysis. In bricolage, as Denzin and Lincoln argue, writing and fieldwork blur so 'in the final analysis there is no difference between writing and fieldwork' (1994, p.10). Bricolage, through the acceptance of multiple positions, permits a chaotic<sup>10</sup> motion with/in the research process which facilitates 'a dynamic opportunity to explore new ways of thinking and doing' (Arnold, 1994, p.104). Furthermore, the *bricoleur* in an electronic age is

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<sup>10</sup> I concur with James Scheurich (1997, p.77) upon the use of chaos: 'I am *not* referring to chaos theory. What I mean by this word is an open space in which occur events or actions that exceed the dominance-resistance binary'.



afforded with a new set of tools, strategies, methods and materials, which are able to facilitate understandings that embrace the 'collapse' of analysis, fieldwork and writing.

*Deconstruction*, is the practice arising from the admission that the text is neither seamless nor authoritative. Deconstruction shows that meaning derives not from differences between terms but from differences within each term. Deconstruction may be used as a tool to restructure established categories. For example, as in the way in which Judith Butler (1990) argues that gender itself is always fluid. She questions the current and historical set of cultural meanings and behaviours associated with 'the biological female body'. She proposes that the term 'woman' designates an undesignatable field of differences that cannot be summarised by a descriptive identity category. The term women thus becomes 'a site of permanent openness and resignifiability' (Butler, 1992, p.16). It is important to remember that deconstruction acts not to delete categories, but to call into question, to *displace* the oppositions that have structured the dichotomies of Western thought. Deconstruction is impossible to 'freeze conceptually', for it is 'above all an enacted strategy, an interpretive praxis that must be "seen in action," . . . before it can be understood and adopted' (Atkins and Johnson, 1985, p.2). However, in order to explore what use may be made of deconstruction, I will here outline its process using the three steps that Patti Lather (1991) identifies as constituting deconstructive process. Firstly, identify the binary oppositions that are used to structure an argument. Secondly, displace the dependent term from its negative hierarchical position so that it is relocated as the very condition necessary for positive term. Thirdly, 'create a more fluid

and less coercive conceptual organization of terms which transcends a binary logic by simultaneously being both and neither of the binary terms' (Lather, 1991, p.13). Through enacting these moves deconstructive practice is able to 'keep things in process, to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedures to continuously demystify the realities we create, to fight the tendencies for our categories to congeal' (Lather, 1991, p.13).

Deconstruction is not then so much a method it is more 'a way of rereading' (Spivak, 1993, p.10). Deconstruction encourages readers to feel the incompleteness of any one reading - misreading is not wrongness it is incompleteness. This is a way of accepting diversity and rejecting any removal of the 'method' from its 'subject matter'. It does not serve to neutralise, rather it acts to displace. It requires alertness to the multiplicity of language, not the destruction of all meaning. Tensions within the text are vehicles to open up a multiplicity of readings. This move is not supposed to reject alternative readings but rather to call them into question by findings the seams within the text and confronting them with their opposites. As Susan Hekman (1990, p.24) points out: 'It is more than an uncovering motion it acts to intervene in the field of oppositions that it criticises'. Hence, although deconstruction does call into question the feminist subject as she has been constructed, this is not a destructive move:

to deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question and, perhaps most importantly, to open up a term, like the subject, to a reuse or redeployment that previously had not been authorized.

Judith Butler (1992, p.15)

Indeed, Bill Martin (1992, p.149) stresses that: 'Feminist arguments about the subject rarely, if ever, simply leave the subject shattered and abandoned as some poststructuralist theories do. Rather, feminist analyses typically reconstitute subjectivity, but in a conditional sense'.

Undoubtedly deconstructive practices are important for the practice of feminism with/in postmodernism, yet they are not the only possibility. I reject any move to simply adopt deconstruction as *the* 'recipe' for the practice of research interpretation with/in the postmodern. I suggest that we need to always 'bear deconstruction in mind', to always read 'away' from resolution and toward the (enigmatic) openness of the text, without allowing it to dictate all approaches to the research process/text. 'To act is therefore not to ignore deconstruction, but actively to transgress it without giving it up. . . deconstruction does not aim at *praxis* or theoretical practice but lives in the persistent crisis or unease of the moment of *techné* or crafting' (Spivak, 1993, p.121). In this research/(hyper)text I seek to expand on these three foci (jouissance, bricolage and deconstruction), and to suggest that the tyranny of deconstruction as method may be lessened through the deployment of Gregory Ulmer's reading of Jacques Derrida's texts.

## The Invention of Research

'I am aware,' Beuys says, 'that my art cannot be understood primarily by thinking. My art touches people who are in tune with my mode of thinking. But it is clear that people cannot understand my art by intellectual processes alone, because no art can be experienced in this way. I say to experience, because this is not equivalent to thinking: it's a great deal more complex; it involves being moved subconsciously. Either they say, 'yes, I'm interested,' or they react angrily and destroy my work and curse it. In any event I feel I am successful, because people have been affected by my art'.

Gregory Ulmer (1985a, p.249) quoting from Joseph Beuys

Gregory Ulmer's (1985a) project in his book *Applied Grammatology* is to 'reduce this gap between theory and practice', in particular to figure out what might displace conventional approaches to pedagogy and to text. I read this as a desire akin to Patti Lather's charge that feminist researchers need to 'get smart'. Gregory Ulmer re-reads<sup>11</sup> Jacques Derrida's texts to name the programme as one of 'grammatology' rather than the more usual 'deconstruction' - this is not offered as a binary opposition but rather as a turning of attention away from the exclusive concern of deconstruction (as I have already noted it is important that we 'bear deconstruction in mind'). Grammatology embraces both deconstruction and writing (understood here in the specialist sense of textualist *écriture* and in the sense of compositional practice). Having read this as an 'affirmative space' in Derrida's texts, Ulmer's next move is to explore 'the practical extension of deconstruction into decomposition' (1985a, p.x). He argues that Derrida's grammatology of deconstruction and *Writing* may be read

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<sup>11</sup> I use this term 're-reads' to emphasise Ulmer's point that (1994, p.21): 'My claim is not that my discourse on method is Derridean but only that I am making it out of Derrida'.

from the different treatments afforded to philosophical texts, which he deconstructs, and literary or artistic texts, which he mimes. Here Gregory Ulmer is talking of texts such as *Glas*, and *The Postcard* (Derrida, 1986, 1987). He argues that:

The methodologies in the two instances bear little resemblance to each other: the philosophical work is treated as an object of study, which is analytically articulated by locating and describing the gap or discontinuity separating what the work 'says' (its conclusions and propositions) from what it 'shows' or 'dis-plays' (its examples, data, the materials with which it, in turn, is working). Literary or plastic texts . . . are not analyzed but are adopted as models or tutors to be imitated, as generative forms for the production of another text.

Gregory Ulmer (1985a, pp.x-xi)

This *Writing* is a mode of composition, just as deconstruction is a way of looking/a mode of analysis. *Writing* denies the traditional distinction between the plain (scientific) and the rhetorical (literary). There is a collapse of the disparity separating inquiry and presentation (as transmission). This *Writing* is a motion of *invention*. Invention is a move both away from and toward deconstruction. And in making this move we need to be cautious as to what inventive practice we pursue. Ulmer (1994) calls for a 'necessary impudence' in inventing new approaches - if we are too respectful of the old stories, we will be bound by them. We need to deconstruct invention as a conceptual and institutional structure that would 'neutralize by putting the stamp of reason on some aspect of invention, of inventive power' (Ulmer, 1994, p.164). He argues that an inventive culture 'requires the broadest possible criterion of what is relevant' (Ulmer, 1994, p.6). We may then expect/require invention to be logocentrically 'faulty'. Hence Ulmer's (1989) acknowledgement that, at this

time of discursive transition (toward electronic thought), we need to include the, seemingly, illogical and absurd as materials from which to fashion a future in which the significance of their reasonable interconnections can be understood.

Furthermore, Ulmer suggests that it is more appropriate to name such *Writing as Scripting*. This, he argues, is because the end text has the status of a script: 'It is to the program of grammatology what a screenplay is to a film - a set of descriptions and directions which for its full effect must be "enacted." It is research undertaken in a dramatic rather than a conceptual form' (Ulmer, 1985a, pxiii).<sup>12</sup>

Scripting refuses to subordinate writing to speech or thought - writing ceases to be representative of thought. Meaning is not 'subjected to successivity' (Ulmer, 1985a, p.8) it does not have to follow a linear unfolding of presence. This is a 'performed autography' (Ulmer, 1985a, p.178) in which the identity of representer and represented should not be misconstrued as some call to either an authenticity of an orator, who represents only herself, or to the actor, who effaces herself and is lost within the character, since this is the very opposition being displaced. '[T]he personal self is used as a vehicle for a knowledge practice and is not explored for its own sake' (Ulmer, 1985a, p.231). Here, the writer is left inside the writing not as a psychological subject but as the agent of the action. The researcher acts like a shaman, working with materials not to recover the past but rather to think with into the future. A performer whose performance may be admired (as the narrative code is accomplished) but

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<sup>12</sup> 'I won't argue this point, but I will show it' (Ulmer, 1991, p.4).

who owns no personal genius (see Barthes, 1977).

Scripting by means of invention allows us to cut across the old divisions of knowledge, in a move that seeks to exceed logocentric closure. It is a mode of communication devised to address a register of comprehension other than the rational intellect. Scripting renders my-own-text a performance, this thesis is no simple notation of words, the text ranges between different writings and coordinates to visual, pictorial and plastic elements. I must be clear that such 'invention' is not an appeal to 'the new', rather it is an invention of translation (Ulmer, 1985a, p.163).

To think of invention as being 'of translation' is to name it as an intimate act. In order to translate one has focus upon self-meaning not just meaning as some simplistic transferral of content. It is necessary to move with a sense of the rhetoricity of the text. As Gayatri Spivak (1993) explains:

Logic allows us to jump from word to word by means of clearly indicated connections. Rhetoric must work in the silence between and around words in order to see what works and how much. The jagged relationship between rhetoric and logic, condition and effect of knowing, is a relationship by which a world is made for the agent, so that the agent can act in an ethical way, a political way, a day-to-day way; so that the agent can be alive, in a human way, in the world. Unless one can construct a model of this for the other language, there is no real translation.

Gayatri Spivak (1993, p.181)

This is an attempt to readjust the balance between representation and design. The research text in re-presentation - does not show things in

themselves, nor does it represent them in the usual sense, rather it *shows a representation*. This is a search for new imaginaries. In scripting, we look to art for its understandings of re-presentation. As Scheurich (1997) suggests we may be able to learn from the ways in which new forms have been adopted by artists:

In paintings , for example, abstract expressionism was a change to a different way of representing reality. Freeform poetry was a change to different way of representing reality. For those artists who were committed to prior forms of painting or poetry, the new methods may have been difficult to understand; for the abstract expressionists and the free-form poets, these new methods fit their new understanding of reality.

James Scheurich (1997, pp.74-75)

Scripting attends to the performative function of the text by highlighting a process of invention in which the reader participates in putting together and negotiating shared meaning and local understanding. Here the reader is invited into the text. The scriptor is required to pay attention to both the figure and the ground (Ulmer, 1985a, p.183). This thesis text is thus to be understood not as a representation but as a re-presentation, of itself a mode of action in the cultural world. As Ulmer argues, to focus on invention is to move toward a mode of practice that overcomes the logocentric limitations of discourse. It is important to note here the feminist traditions of invention as a narrative of extravagance to motivate political action. Inventive narratives of excess associated with a 'feminine' disruptiveness abound (for example, Mary Daly (1979, 1993) and see Toril Moi (1985) for a response to the inventive and critical texts of Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray). As already noted feminists with/in the postmodern take 'the risk of essence' in order to create forms of expression to untie women's relationship to conventional genres of expressing/being. To



invent story lines that can inform our thinking about the experience of being female/feminine/feminist outside the male/female dualism. As Bronwyn Davies (1992) notes in her discussion of 'women's subjectivity and feminist stories', we can use invention to locate the ways in which feminisms are 'impeded or enhanced through the taking up of particular story lines' (p.53). She emphasises the complexity of this strategy, particularly as the function of story in holding the existing order in place is not fully understood. 'New' stories are always at risk of being interpreted in terms of the 'old'. That 'our patterns of desire' are determined by existing stories and so are rendered difficult to disrupt, 'in particular to the extent that they are defined as signifying one's essential self' (p.67). Yet, I am also alert to the gendered acceptance of inventive texts. As Trinh (1989) notes the experimental texts associated with feminist standpoint reflexivity have been dismissed by male postmodern writers. Feminist experimenters have been accused of inadequate theory and of engaging in identity politics. Caplan, quoted in Denzin (1997, p.221), wryly comments that: 'When women were using the experimental approach to ethnographic writing, much of it was dismissed as "self-indulgence"; now that it is being done by men, it is called experimental'.

### **From text to hypertext**

Electronic logic is commemorative.

Gregory Ulmer (1994, p.47)

Gregory Ulmer's (1985a & b, 1989, 1994) re-readings of Derrida assert that we must pay attention to the enframing limits of our technologies. This is not to position technology as 'a problem', but rather to assert that humanity's inability to discern technology's enframing of how we know is problematic (the grammatological project is concerned with this enframing not with 'literature' or with 'science'). The process of this research has thus attended to the possibilities of *electronic* scripting as invention. This is an inventiveness that desires to displace accepted metaphors for doing qualitative research differently. To talk about 'new areas of research', 'new frontiers', 'fresh areas' is to adopt a particular metaphor of geographical exploration. I believe this myth of adventurous frontier exploration is a masculinist/modernist one. I am in agreement with Ulmer (1994) that we need to do something other than replace one metaphor with another:

Within the terms of grammatology and deconstruction, it is not possible simply to jump to a different metaphor for research. Such a jump would be easy enough intellectually. The electronic apparatus, however, is a *social machine*: the frontier metaphor is in our habits, our conduct, our emotions, in curiosity itself. My experiment, rather, is to deconstruct the metaphor associating method with colonial exploration, to put it under erasure in a certain way

Gregory Ulmer (1994, p.31)

For Ulmer 'electronic apparatus' is crucial in allowing the researcher to script 'a map' that is not designed in terms of centres and peripheries, or of frontiers and adventure. Such a map is rhizomatic, it has multiple entryways and

is susceptible to constant modification. Such a map no longer corresponds to 'the territory'. The 'adventure of knowledge' is placed under erasure.<sup>13</sup>

Ulmer argues that there is a convergence between information technology and epistemology. Hypertextual practices 'literalise' Derrida's theories of text. Notions that seemed bizarre in book form are literal qualities of hypertext. Similarly, George Landow (1992) argues that there is a direct homology between a postmodernist aesthetic and the possibilities of hypertext; intertextuality, multivocality and de-centredness converge with/in hypertext. If we are indeed to turn ethnographic and theoretical texts back 'onto each other', in the manner that Norman Denzin (1997) seeks to provoke, we may be wise to consider the ways in which we come to know the research as both text and hypertext.

Most attention to hypertext as it relates to qualitative research practices has taken the form of integration, an attempt to use technology within existing, print derived, models. For example, the recent debates about computers and qualitative research have focused upon the relationship between methodological approaches, particularly 'Grounded Theory', and computer-aided methods of

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<sup>13</sup> Recently when reading a storybook to my children, I came across an excellent example of a map that is not a map. In Elizabeth Pewsey's (1997) *The Dewstone Quest*, the main character is required to look for a map, but he is warned to 'remember that maps come in all forms', and told that 'you'll know when you've found it' (p.104). He finds a map that takes the form of a blue, stone egg. This egg-map allows him to 'drop out of time' and to move between places that it would otherwise be impossible for him to connect. Another example is that of the maps of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. These do not show linear spaces, but record distance as the time to get from one space to another (Arnold, 1994).

qualitative research (e.g. Lonkila, 1995, Coffey, Holbrook and Atkinson, 1996, Lee and Fielding, 1996, Kelle, 1997). The theory and practice of electronic data analysis has been modelled to fit within existing notions of reading, writing, and the existing culture of qualitative research practice. This has resulted in the development of software to automate existing research processes. Although other methods are acknowledged to exist, almost all CAQDAS involves coding or indexing of data. Indeed the advent of CAQDAS has meant that analysis is increasingly becoming synonymous with the sorts of procedures most commonly facilitated by these programmes (Kelle, 1995; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).<sup>14</sup> Research with users of CAQDAS suggests that the majority of users employ software to mechanise the clerical tasks of ordering and archiving research texts. As Kelle (1997, ¶6.3) notes: 'Software programs like THE ETHNOGRAPH, ATLAS/ti or NUDIST are tools to mechanize clerical tasks of ordering and archiving texts used in the hermeneutic sciences now for hundreds of years'.

In line with this strategy of automation qualitative data analysis software packages have been designed to function so that information can be quickly and efficiently delivered. However, this may not be as advantageous as it at first appears, since conventions advocating speed and efficiency may serve to restrict complexity. The very features that make hypertext interesting, such as complex implicit and associational links, are under-utilised. Current packages unquestioningly transpose print practices of representation and analysis to

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<sup>14</sup> Concerns have been expressed over this development. With Coffey and Atkinson (1996) stressing that 'it is important to identify the relevant analytic strategies before turning to the computer for analytic support' (p.165), and that: the coding and retrieval process is not analysis 'it is a way of organising data in order to search them' (p.172).

produce electronic procedures that automate through mimicry those of print. Hypertexts are conceptualised as possessing units of local stability (lexia), where conventional print reading habits apply, within the general flux of the hypertextual links. Lexia thus conceived encourage the reader to engage with the stability of the text (Landow, 1992). The variability of hypertext is generated through the links between the lexia. Qualitative data analysts work with materials to define stable lexia (words, paragraphs, phrases) which are then related through the formation of hyperlinks. Currently qualitative data analysis packages conceptualise the link as a direct connection from one lexial stability to another. Researchers have thus become accustomed to reading hypertexts which take the form of what Stuart Moulthrop (1994) names 'repurposed print'. Such hypertexts are composed of stable lexia which adopt the form of linear text that, even with an overlay of hyperlinks, conform to print conventions. These hypertexts invite the reader to act as if still reading a conventional print text. They are 'electronic analogue[s] of a printed text' (Joyce, 1991, ¶41). That is to say, despite the use of hypertext/hypermedia<sup>15</sup> apparatus, the logical and discursive structures remain those of print. Not surprisingly, although there have been arguments that researchers should make more use of hyperlinking technology (e.g. Dey, 1995; Weaver and Atkinson, 1995), and recent versions of CAQDAS appear to allow increased options for assembling materials, the focus has remained resolutely on facilitating analysis as defined by the medium of print.

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<sup>15</sup> The term 'hypermedia' is sometime used to describe hypertexts that incorporate mixed media such as video, sound and graphics. Following George Landow (1992, p.4), I agree that the terms hypertext and hypermedia may be used interchangeably, to denote 'an [electronic] information medium that links verbal and nonverbal information'.

A recent report by Bella Dicks and Bruce Mason (1998) describes efforts to design a new 'ethnographic hypermedia environment' (EHE), that takes into account the historical shifts in both ethnography's 'object of study' and its mode of presentation. This report demonstrates how 'innovative' approaches to CAQDAS design adhere to print conceptions of analytic processes. Their work focuses on the uses of computer software to allow for non-sequential data organisation and for the integration of diverse media (visual, aural, verbal, pictorial) within every stage of the research project. I agree with them that a well-designed EHE would allow us:

to make the step from thinking of the visual merely as illustrative of argumentation spelled out through the printed word, and to see it as itself constitutive of meaning. Thus we need to consider seriously what hypermedia can do that a well-illustrated and produced book can not. There are potential gains to be derived from exploring how interpretation is simultaneously a verbal and a pictorial, a visual and an aural activity.

Bella Dicks and Bruce Mason 1998, ¶3.7)

Yet, they are still wedded to print conceived notions of interpretation and analysis. They are concerned to attend to 'the intellectual coherence of the environment as a whole' (¶3.8). They are prepared to admit that: 'Each medium ... brings its own logic of communication', and that: 'A well-constructed EHE would seek to take advantage of these, instead of seeing them as add-on "special effects"' (¶3.9). However, they are not prepared to countenance the deprivileging of rationality that computer mediated approaches may facilitate:

What we see as the potential for hypermedia authoring is its capacity to allow a deeper and more rigorous exploration of ethnographic knowledge and a more faithful representation and communication of that depth to readers.

Bella Dicks and Bruce Mason (1998, ¶7.5)

I believe that if we are to carry out empirical research with/in the postmodern then we need to ask how the electronic manipulation of materials can be used to move away from the requirements of 'more faithful representation'. We need to undo the tacit layering within the above quotation that speaks to an ideal of communicating some pre-existing complexity and depth. Although Dicks and Mason suggest that hypermedia has implications for all stages of the research process, and reject its use as an either/or tool to be applied to analysis *or* presentation, they nevertheless fail to question many of the fundamental assumptions about what it means to 'do research'. When commenting on the recent debate about CAQDAS and grounded theory they suggest that the apparently divergent commentaries of Coffey et al (1996) and of Lee and Fielding (1996) do 'converge in the sense that they take it as axiomatic that "doing ethnography" requires eclectic and multiple perspectives. The disagreement focuses only on how adequately, or otherwise, current CAQDAS applications respond to this requirement' (¶1.4). They propose that there is an 'orthodoxy' within current ethnography that insists on the 'complexity of the ethnographic endeavour', and that this generates an interest in hypermedia. However, despite acknowledging the ongoing debates about the ethnographic subject (e.g. Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986; van Maanen, 1995a; Denzin, 1997), they seem to slip easily into the assumption that this

complexity is itself a property of the ethnographic subject. The task of the EHE thus becomes to represent and communicate an already-there complexity.

Furthermore, despite their knowledge of the existence of the work of Trinh Minh Ha, Dicks and Mason fail to take into account the significance of her work for the development of the electronic manipulation of materials. In seeking to develop an EHE they argue that: 'If hypermedia were to be used merely for the stringing together of different voices and perspectives, this would not be offering much more than a collage-effect postmodern video could achieve' (Dicks and Mason, 1998, ¶7.5). Yet, Trinh Minh Ha has worked with film to move beyond the 'collage-effect postmodern video'. Her work is concerned to perform the ongoing issues of mode of representation, reflexivity, and the research subject that Dicks and Mason highlight as crucial to the pursuance of contemporary ethnographic research.

Trinh (see Trinh (1992) for film scripts for *Naked Spaces - Living is Round, Surname Viet Given Name Nam* and for *Reassemblage*) is concerned to undo the entire realist ethnographic project that is intimately connected to such terms as: lived experience, authenticity, truth, facts, and fictions. I agree with Norman Denzin (1997) who argues that the scriptors of postmodern research texts have much to learn from her approach, as a way in which to undo 'the entire realist ethnographic project' (p.74). Furthermore, Ulmer (1994) argues that 'the specific metaphor most likely to replace the book in the design of hypermedia interface (rhetoric) is film making' (Ulmer, 1994, p.145).



Trinh's work redefines three intertwined activities, filmmaking, writing and the storytelling self. Stories, proverbs and poetry are not fictional materials. They are materials that (Denzin, 1997, p.80): 'contain the cultural truths about women and their lived experiences. They are stories that must be told and retold' - yet there is always a difference between the truth and the facts. 'Truth does not need to make sense; it exceeds meaning'. Trinh does not produce texts in order to 'free the masses'. She knows that she cannot speak for the Other, rather she works to (Denzin, 1997, pp.81-82): 'create spaces for the retelling of the stories that the science of ethnography has stolen, reduced to history, categorised as fiction and subaltern literature'. In these spaces, she creates visual texts that 'leave room for the spectators to decide what they want to make out of a statement or a sequence of images' (Trinh, 1991, p.206).

I use computing technology to re-make what it means to do qualitative research, when we are required to re-think issues of mode of representation, reflexivity, and the research subject, through accepting Gregory Ulmer's (1989) re-reading of Derrida to outline 'teletheory', as the application of grammatology to computing technology. Ulmer argues that hypertext allows cognition to occur differently to that of the printed text. If we are to focus not on where we have been but on where we might be, to 'get smarter' by scripting towards the Sixth Moment, then we need to reject the strategy of an integration of electronic technologies within existing print-derived approaches. We need to develop packages that acknowledge the importance of the electronic medium as a way of challenging current understandings and not just of representing those understandings differently. Academic culture has developed hand in hand with

print-based systems, producing specific genres of writing academic knowledge. Print offers a mode of intellectual discourse that is socially organised to facilitate a particular form of the institutionalisation of academic knowledge. Indeed Ulmer (1989), following Derrida, argues that critical analytic thinking developed in direct correlation with the properties of alphabetic literacy which increased the potentialities of criticism because writing laid out discourse before one's eye in a different kind of way; and increased the potentiality for cumulative knowledge. The coming of print shifted the emphasis of education from the training of the orator to the training of the essayist. Print publication allows the academic community to construct specific discipline based literatures, with a clear system of intertextual referencing to validate particular knowledge claims. Such writing is governed by a linear cause and effect logic, it is fundamentally 'argumentative writing'. Information is arranged hierarchically and accessed by means of indexing. The printed research article or report progresses smoothly from abstract to conclusion. Here knowledge is laid out in a progressive sequence that seeks to resolve any ambiguities, or point to their future resolution. Unsurprisingly current qualitative data analysis packages are designed to complement current academic textual representations of 'findings'.

To invent a feminist research practice with/in and beyond this postmodern moment requires that we use hypertext not to do the work of print but to facilitate *an alternative way of knowing materials*. Hypertext is organised as a network and its 'logic' is associational. The researcher's task thus becomes building not a single argument but a structure of possibilities. This means that those used to working in print may become frustrated, whereas those willing to

experiment will find it liberating. We need to embrace some of hypertext's cognitive intricacies. Unlike other researchers (e.g. Weaver and Atkinson, 1995; Dicks and Mason, 1998) I am not concerned with the dangers of becoming 'lost in hyperspace'. Anna Weaver and Paul Atkinson (1995, p.152) describe this as 'los[ing] one's place within the multiplicity of links, levels, Windows, trails, and so on'. For readers used to print forms hypertext does indeed complicate the reading process, dismantling the security of linearity, providing more choices and rejecting any simple closure of topics. The disjunctive breaks of hypertexts complicate interpretation for those seeking to 'understand' in a way akin to that in which print forms are understood. Hypertext may disorient and confuse, but this is because the reader has not adapted to the new medium. Researchers need to develop a cognitive flexibility that denies the priority of the formal print genre. This may include accepting becoming 'lost in hyperspace', as an integral part of electronic cognition.<sup>16</sup> As Stuart Moulthrop (1994, ¶16) notes: 'Cognitive complication is only a problem if we expect our media to make the world simple'.

Ulmer (1989, p.7) is clear that 'electronic cognition will not come about automatically through a simple change in the technology of inscription'. He is primarily concerned with the development of an electronic pedagogy. However,

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<sup>16</sup> This 'being lost' can be related to a need to remake our notions of space within research. Norman Denzin (1997) contends that with/in the postmodern there is only one story: 'the story about constant displacements - how do I make sense of myself in this world that will not go away?' (p.195). There is no longer an unrepresentable, no longer an unfamiliar, no longer a separation of the prior from the later, no longer a difference between original and the copy. The postmodern story is thus about the end of travelling. 'There is no there to go to anymore' (Denzin, 1997, p.195).

much of what he writes is applicable to the entire academic culture of analysis. In teletheory distancing is rejected to produce academic discourse immersed in 'community, tradition, and personalised forms of authority' (Ulmer, 1989, p.10). The crossovers of these different areas of culture facilitate a research process recognisable as discourse rather than a representational process mired in 'the pretense of reference (of realism)' (1989, p.13). Again Ulmer stresses the vital role of invention, 'the single most important distinction between teletheory and the current notion of critical thinking' (1989, p.15) is its shift from hermeneutics (interpretation and definition) to euretics (invention). Once more his stated intention is to be transgressive not oppositional. Furthermore, euretic thinking is 'goal-directed without knowing exactly where it is going (it is tele-illogical), for which the already-not-yet temporality of the Bomb serves as an image' (1989, p.19).

The shift to teletheory is a move to a space where cognition occurs differently. It is a shift that allows invention to displace analysis. It is a shift to a space that subverts both our notions of space and our notions of how to map this space. The method which Ulmer invents he calls *chorography*<sup>17</sup> (Ulmer, 1994). Chorography addresses notions of space/map by substituting *chora*<sup>18</sup> for *topos* as the name for the places of invention. This concentrates on the identity of a place as being generated not by the place itself, but by the things in and

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<sup>17</sup> 'One of the features of the method, chorography, is that it does not lend itself to direct communication, at least not yet. . . . Even if I cannot define chorography, however, I can show something of what it is like' (Ulmer, 1994, p.45).

around it. Chorography insists upon a remaking of the qualitative researcher's bricolage. Ulmer argues that changes in the 'equipment of memory' brought about by the use of computing technologies, invoke changes in both people and institutions. Researchers are now being freed from the labour of compilation and indexing (as painters were freed from the primary task of representing the visible world). Chorography thus responds to recent changes in computing such as connectionism (networking). Memory is still conceived of as 'place', but the notion of spatiality has changed. The classical concept of memory conceives information as being stored at a specific locale (from which it may be retrieved), connectionism produces storage in which information is not stored at any particular location. Rather it is stored everywhere. Information is invoked rather than found. Chorography places the point of study not in the underlying topos (which, by inference, either generates the specific ideas or relates them to other ideas in the universe), but in the ideas themselves. Hypermedia is given to chora over topos because the investigator cannot identify the texts through some simple localisation. The same text can be seen in an innumerable array of contexts, each view creating its own chora. Information is seen as being stored in the relationships between units rather than in the units themselves. These 'distributed' memories (which correspond to the qualities of chora as space) function by means of pattern making, recognition and generation. Chorography gathers information into an unstable set held together by a pattern that is the trace of understanding. Derrida shows how philosophy has tended to suppress the harmony between necessity and accident, through constructing them as

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<sup>18</sup> Chora is a mobile and provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases. '*Chora* is an area in which genesis takes place' (Ulmer, 1994, p.48), they 'can only be touched upon indirectly or obliquely' (p.241).

opposites. Chorography is the practice of chance. Chorography works with conductive thought to add in suppressed alternative forms which had been deemed to be of no value. It is a visual text that uses the metaphor of film making to re-make the hypermedia interface. In chorography the interface metaphor is not navigate but is *negotiate*. Ulmer (1994) argues that much of the history of cinema has been told as the struggle between montage (editing - relation between shots) and *mise-en-scène* (framing - composition within the shot). He sees chorography as adding the *mise en abyme*<sup>19</sup> as the technique to merge filmmaking and computing.

Ulmer (1989, 1994) believes that the developing process of chorography is symptomatic of the 'qualitative leap' in writing/researching that is emerging from new media. He argues that it is time to reassess the relationship between the analytico-referential discourse and the discourse of patterning (from which the former emerged). He sees the analytico-referential discourse as acting historically in opposition to patterning, which became 'no longer a practice but an "object" classified as a "form of thought": "ancient", "primitive", "mythical", or later even, "pathological"' (Ulmer, 1989, p.24). Thus pattern the verb was congealed into a noun and so 'became an *object* fit for analysis' (p.24). Indeed, qualitative data analysis *requires* that understandings be forged from a charting of data's internal patterns (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Patterning is now a 'lurking', marginal discourse waiting to re-emerge. In electronic discourse patterning is remotivated as the 'pleasure of orality' *but* with the 'crucial new

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<sup>19</sup> Literally translated as 'putting into the abyss', *mise-en-abyme*, is translated by Ulmer (1991) as 'miniaturizing'.

element' (Ulmer, 1989, p.25), of electronic technology. In teletheory, analysis and pattern are styles of cognition which act in alliance. This frees the scriptor/researcher to explore the patterning of chance happenings without the burden of distinguishing 'real' or 'imaginary' connections. As one genre of learning available to the doctoral student, this is valuable in deprivileging the written registers of academic discourse. A patterning of repetitions and matches thus allows a gathering of significance 'through juxtaposition and arrangement, rather than through direct metacommentary' (Ulmer, 1989, p.104).

The use of inventive hypertext re-scripts what it means to 'do' qualitative research, to read it and to write it. Chorography is 'based on the assumption that invention may not be undertaken "in general," solely by means of abstractions that leave out the foundation of thought in the practices constituting the cultural identity and ideology of the inventor' (Ulmer, 1994, p.84). Here we are *required* to be audacious (Ulmer, 1989; Lincoln and Denzin, 1994) in order to expose the accepted doxa of what constitutes representation and knowledge (Scheurich, 1997). Hypertexts generated from qualitative research and which embrace 'electronic thought' entice readers and researchers to think differently. This move allows feminist politics to direct but not determine the research: 'the inventor's ideological *premises* do not determine in advance the outcome of the process but constitute the field, place, diegesis, or *chora* of its genesis' (Ulmer, 1994, p.84).

Ulmer argues that the crisis of the absence of centre precipitated by the advent of hypertext is causing academic writings to disintegrate within electronic

culture. This absence of centre means that: 'anyone who uses hypertext makes his or her own interests the de facto organising principle (or centre) for the investigation at the moment' (Landow, 1992, p.12). Hypertext is infinitely de-centreable and re-centreable. Chorography accepts that in reading/writing hypertext we constantly construct transient centres (and that these relate to chora not topos). In order to decide where to go next we activate personal directories and indices to employ as maps to orient oneself and to decide where to go next. Ulmer suggests the electronic genre of *Mystory* as an incarnation of electronic writing method that accepts this de-centred organising principle. In *mystory*, texts are arranged by euretics rather than 'truth' to produce a different enunciation of simple forms. Teletheory moves then to critique realism by representing the issue without dependency on realism's codes. It is an attempt to enable academic discourse to work with the logic of the unconscious. However, this logic cannot yet be grasped. Hence Ulmer acknowledges this time of discursive transition (toward electronic thought) needs to include the, seemingly, illogical and absurd as materials from which to fashion a future in which the significance of their reasonable interconnections can be understood.

We must invent a new conceptual system that suspends, or clashes with the most carefully established observational results, confounds the most plausible theoretical principles, and introduces perceptions that cannot form part of the existing perceptual world. This step is counterinductive. Counterinduction is therefore always reasonable and has always a chance of success.

Gregory Ulmer (1989, p.30)



Using the pun<sup>20</sup> of electrical conduction Ulmer proposes (and performs) an electronic reasoning by means of *conduction*,<sup>21</sup> akin to the flow of electrical circuit currents, to allow the connection of disparate fields of information. Conductive thought acts to supplement the established movements of inference between things and ideas (abduction, deduction, induction) with a transit directly between things (unconscious/intuitive thought). Teletheory thus exists on the ground of a research pun conjoining the fields of electricity and logic. Ulmer expands conduction to facilitate invention: 'the term must be pushed not only where it has been in the past (its history or etymology), but also to where it might be in the future (catachresis), to name, in this case the flow of significance from one semantic field to another' (1989, p.65). Anecdotes thus serve as important performers of conduction. 'They are told not for informational interest, not in reference to a prior life, but as part of a "speculative" organization, the *mise en abyme*, a double-take in which the narrative development of the event has formal, conceptual, explanatory consequences' (1989, p.92).

The genre of mystery is crafted to 'bring into relationship the three levels of sense- common, explanatory, and expert- operating in the circulation of culture from 'low' to 'high' and back again' (Ulmer, 1989, p.vii). Ulmer foregrounds the dynamics of bliss-sense in driving the exchanges across these

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<sup>20</sup> Puns are an important practice as they form non-dialectical points of entry into a text. For example, Derrida (1986) exploits puns to begin a deconstructive practice to 'deflate' proper names into common nouns, as in *Glas*, thus revealing that the name and the text *do* stand in a *motivated* relationship one to the other.

<sup>21</sup> Conduction operates a logic of invention. It acts as a supplement to the logics of critique (deduction and induction) and hermeneutics (abduction).

sense registers. A mystory assumes the writer's beginnings to be in specific historically situated experiences, 'and that one always thinks by means of and through these specifics, even if that thinking is directed against the institutions of one's own formation' (Ulmer, 1989, p.viii). As pedagogy this assumption frees students to think immediately, and does not require them to reject personal cultures. As a way in which we may invent a research practice, it performs a similar function. Mystory moves beyond using technical machinery (television, video, computers) as strategic devices to communicate conceptual thoughts. Mystory generates ways to 'write and think electronically' (Ulmer, 1989, p.x), as supplements to analytical reason. To write of the Rape Crisis Centre and of 'my research', involves not only a certain place but also 'a direction or "heading," a dynamic undertow of time carrying me toward a certain end' (Ulmer, 1994, p.100). In scripting a mystory, my task is to transform from the mode of mystery (interpretation, truth) into the feeling of eureka (invention).

Mystory is one aspect of cyber-scripting with/in the research process. To develop a way to write/research/think electronically feminism needs to attend to the diversities of method. Ulmer (1994) argues that the choreographer should use the mystory to guide the exercises of method. In order to actively search for, and create, repetitions among the discourses of society. These repetitions are a patterning that does 'not produce "grand designs" but "miniaturizations" bringing the heterogeneous items of information into order around a detail or a prop (a strange attractor) in the setting (Ulmer, 1994, pp.139-140). Choreography as a method of invention writes through entrusting the process to a machine.

This generates knowledges through intuition<sup>22</sup> in contrast to analysis. Intuition Ulmer argues is supported by electronic apparatuses in a manner akin to the ways in which print favours and supports or augments an analytical mode of thought based on the fit between the properties of verbal discourse and the abstract demands of logic (as the study of grammatology demonstrates). In teletheory, intuition displaces analysis:

[Intuition] operates in a global or Gestalt mode, crossing all the sensory modalities in a way that may not be abstracted from the body and emotions. There has never been a technology capable of fully supporting and augmenting intuition in the way that print supports analysis - until now. The multichanneled interactivity of hypermedia provides for the first time a machine whose operations match the variable sensorial encoding that is the basis for intuition, a technology in which cross-modality may be simulated and manipulated for the writing of an insight, including the interaction of verbal and non-verbal materials and the guidance of analysis by intuition, which constitute creative or inventive thinking.

Gregory Ulmer (1994, p.140)

### **Euretics: The logic of invention**

The words describing Ulmer's work tumble onto the page. And yet as Ulmer (1994) emphasises his texts are *experiments* offered not as a proof or assertion of truth but as a trial or test. Not 'a recipe but an evocation of the attitudes and strategies of a specific practice' (Ulmer, 1994, p.41). He performs a version of practice, knowing that its value will be determined by those who

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<sup>22</sup> Chorography is clear that 'intuitions' are not 'natural', they rely on a stereotyped thinking of 'common sense' (ideology). Intuitions bear no closer relation to 'truth' than that possessed by the cognitive regimen. The euretic code is supplementary to hermeneutic.

choose to try it. I make that choice. Although as a feminist seeking to work with/in the postmodern it feels that it is a choice that is no choice. It is a strategy so seductive that it cannot be refused.

Ulmer's work prompts a writing to replace the treatise (with its holding of the subject apart from object of study). It makes space for a complex reflexivity in a discourse of knowledge whilst allowing formal experimentation as a political as well as epistemological strategy. Feminism through embracing teletheory as scripted through the practice of choreography and the mystorical genre is explicit that it is making a creation, not a discovery. We are invoking a field of possibilities; we are inventing not verifying. Academic narrative without an authoritative account allows for any expectation of resolution to be removed. By working with the logic of the unconscious the electronically thought genres begin to articulate the possibility of a 'middle voice', which originates in usage and is symptomatic of the change in memory that accompanies a change in the technology of communication (Ulmer, 1989, p.87). Through the middle voice the subject affects herself through acting, and is forever within the action even when an object is involved. The problem for my doctoral thesis is how to write this middle voice, to leave myself within the writing as active agent. Ulmer's *mystory* acts to foreground the voice of pedagogy, in *my* *mystory* feminist pedagogy is re-motivated as the vehicle/embodiment of myself as doctoral candidate. I am not 'discovering' feminist method I am making it. 'A mystorical essay is not scholarship, not the communication of a prior sense, but the discovery of a direction by means of writing' (Ulmer, 1989, p.90). Ulmer argues that the current modes of academic writing are positioned on the side of

the already known rather than on the side of wanting to find out *and hence discourage learning how to learn*. To write mystery as part of doctoral research moves beyond the customary feminist reflective sharing of personal experiences (e.g. Sollie and Leslie, 1994; Ribbens and Edwards, 1998) it is to take part in an experiment. Writing mystery as research process is a pedagogical exercise that requires the practice of the art of speculation and invention. Instead of playing the role of analyst or cultural critic, the mystorical essayist serves as an *active* channel, patterning and relaying information.

This approach has particular resonances for me as a feminist doctoral candidate inventing method with/in the postmodern. For, as Ulmer argues, this approach 'permits the student to by-pass initiation as a specialist (the "specialist" is to modernism what the "genius" was to Romanticism), to confront simultaneously the provisional, permeable character of all knowledge, the creative "ground" (*aperion*) of the formation of a discipline. This confrontation is achieved by removing the disparity between the history of knowledge and its transmission through the pedagogy of a given moment, between the private experiences of discovery and the public or collective institutionalization of a canon' (Ulmer, 1985b, p.62). Feminist doctoral research with/in an electronic frame, accepts Ulmer's (1985a & b) argument that a 'post(e)pedagogy' must operate by means of a dramatic, rather than an epistemological, orientation to knowledge. This requires a mode 'in which the teacher *does* something *with* literature, rather than *saying* something *about* it' (Ulmer, 1985b, p.45). In this research I experiment, I *do* something *with* data, rather than *saying* something *about* it. As Patti Lather (1991, p.91) argues, a focus on the textual staging of

knowledge creates space for a reconceptualisation of empirically generated materials: 'Data might be better conceived as the material for telling a story where the challenge becomes to generate a polyvalent data base that is used to *vivify* interpretation as opposed to "support" or "prove"'. In this research I script a middle voice that speaks to significance as *jouissance*, as a bliss-sense, to the notion of post-meaning where understanding and cognition are approached as apart from the certainties of positivist discourses. The research re-scripts the relationship between the doctoral candidate and knowledge.<sup>23</sup>

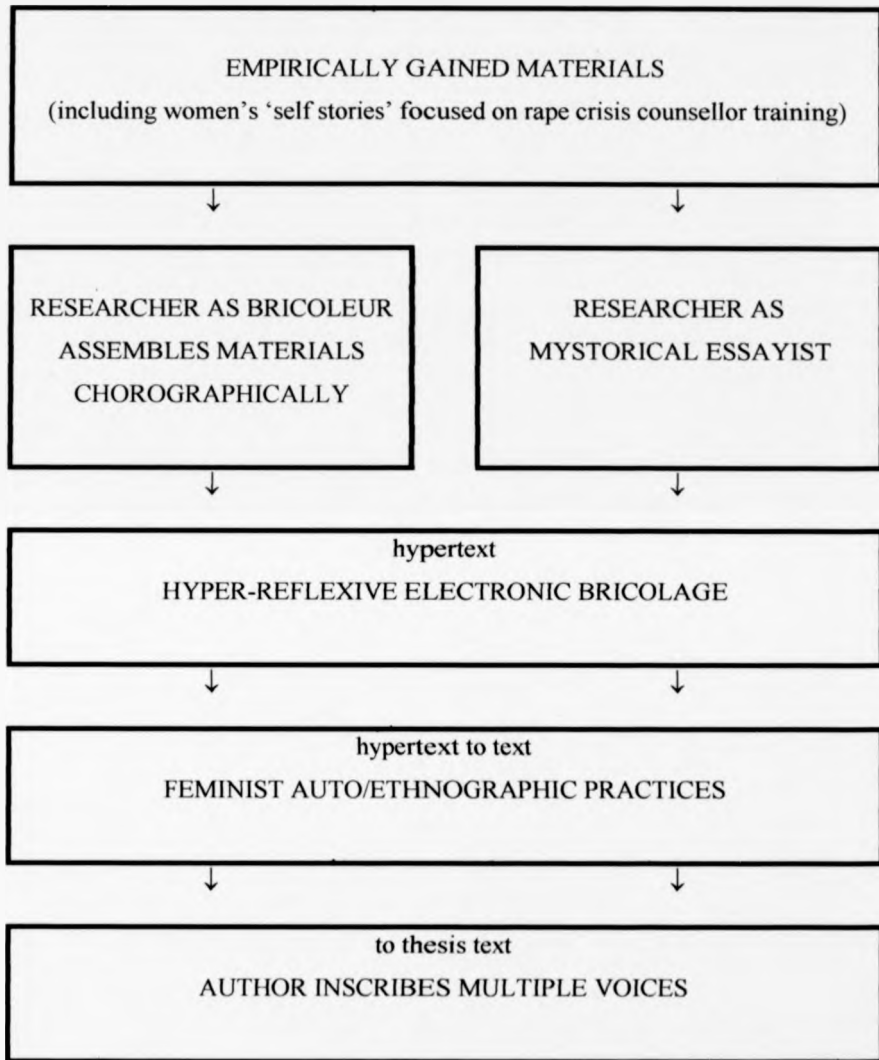
As a part of moving to invent a feminist doctoral research practice with/in the postmodern I agree to embrace the diverse forms that Denzin (1997) suggests, and to move further, to displace the urge to analyse as suggested by the different cognition proposed by teletheory. Teletheory joins doing and telling. Ulmer seeks to de-privilege justification, thus permitting style to emerge as a feature of cognition. This foregrounding of style uses the common ground of invention to challenge any absolute distinction between literally truthful (scientific) explanations and purely imaginary (artistic) ones. This permits a movement beyond the schism of the oral (highlighting the contingency of stances: personalised intuitions, customary knowledges, physical skills) and written registers (highlighting the abstraction to an empirical formal register: experimental, impersonalised 'objectivity') of academic discourses. When I ask

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<sup>23</sup> And addresses the relationship between the doctoral examiner and knowledge. How does 'examination' take place when examiners need to take into account that: 'The only response to a "text of bliss" (experimental arts, whether generated by automatic techniques - collage, frottage, aleatory devices, free association - or linguistic theory) is another text, alongside an originary plagiarism or parody' (Ulmer, 1985b, pp.57-58)?

women to tell me of their experiences of Rape Crisis pedagogy, these past moments are rescued not as spectacles for nostalgic contemplation but as 'tools for opening up the present' (Ulmer, 1989, p.112). Interview generated materials are used as a 'toolbox'. As 'a way of building-up a new text rather than a way of critically (re-) viewing an existing one' (Arnold, 1994, p.7). Here 'qualitative data' does not represent phenomena to be explained, but images provoking expanded thought. The process of the research allows these thoughts to move in a variety of directions, which are intended as cross-cutting devices to illuminate local significance. The research materials (see chapter 4) are arranged by chorography to produce an electronic bricolage. The researcher as mystorical essayist, recognises the reflexivity of this process and produces a hypertext that explicitly recognises the re-working of space. This produces a view of the resulting hypertext as 'hyper-reflexive electronic bricolage' (a term I have coined to signal the merged processes of mystory and chorography). The resultant tale has to be produced as a text and so auto/ethnographic practices (that interrogate the 'auto') are employed to produce a thesis text. The scripting of which is recognised as an inscription 'by the author' of multiple 'voices' (see *Figure 1*).

*Figure 1. Arriving at the tale.*



The researcher as inventor of this hyper-reflexive electronic bricolage is able to expand feminist concerns that structure research practice. Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith Cook (1991) suggest that four themes are crucial to the practice of feminist research. Firstly, an emphasis on researcher and textual



reflexivity, secondly, attention to the affective, emotional components of research, thirdly, an action and praxis orientation, and lastly, a grounding in immediate situations.

The mystorical component of the research allows reflexivity to be recognised as inscriptive, rather than descriptive: 'To become reflective and reflexive about judgement is to realize that much of one's thinking takes place "outside" the "self" and within the symbolic order' (Ulmer, 1994, p.180). The researcher as electronic essayist self consciously creates her own *situated* versions of the world she studies. Yet, it avoids solipsism as it is carried out in full awareness of its process as method. That is to say, research hypertexts become necessarily *dialogic and changeable* in response to the social interchange of the research process. The collapse of writing/theory/method thus allows a demystification of the research process and consequently permits an integrated engagement of participants throughout. This 'hyper-reflexivity' moves away from a peripatetic cataloguing of positions (*topos*) to negotiate an integration of the researcher/participants into the whole research process.

The affective, emotional components of research achieve an active role within the research process, including the generation of theory:

Can a theory express an emotion? It can if cognition itself is emotional... And this emotional dimension of comprehension is precisely what is in need of exposure, such that to tell us about cognition without making us at the same time experience it emotionally would be to give a false account.

Gregory Ulmer (1989, p.109)

This is not to essentialise or naturalise emotion - emotions are multidimensional complexes, which have both socio-cultural and embodied significance (Burkitt, 1997; Lupton, 1998). It is also important to note that in inviting and enticing emotion, we are not including the previously excluded, rather we are increasing the repertoire of academically acceptable emotions. As Ulmer (1989) argues emotion is not currently absent from research practices, but its role is often denied. The dominant acceptable emotion in contemporary research is the pleasure of recognition as expressed through understanding.

An action and praxis orientation permeates the entire research process. This research is *for* and *to* the women of the Rape Crisis movement (Roberts, 1981; Stanley, 1990; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Maynard and Purvis, 1994). This research takes place at an intersection of postmodernism and the feminist politics of emancipation, and is alert to charges of nihilism, 'methodolatry,' and of having no practical effects beyond the printed page (Patai, 1994). Both postmodernism and feminism argue that new visions for generating social knowledge are needed. As this research is inspired by feminism it must ultimately define itself through political and social action. Yet, feminist research with/in the postmodern is *not* seeking political conclusions (as writers such as Sue Widdicombe (1995) have argued), but seeking ways to *operationalise* political values.<sup>24</sup> The research itself is both a political and social action. This

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<sup>24</sup> To illustrate, as a feminist working with women adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, the mainstream appropriation by 'experts' of the discourse of survival feeds in me a partisan impulse to facilitate the telling of 'positive stories' of the lives of women who suffered sexual abuse as children. Yet, to valorise 'a survival experience' would be a pursuance of 'political conclusions'

may initiate political thought, but shuns political conclusions. This research practice enacts an inventive and provocative theory/method. As *a priori* theory is a feature of all praxis-oriented research, we need to be alert to the dangers of both imposition and reification on the part of the researcher. Patti Lather (1991, p.64) argues that a key issue for such research is 'how to maximize self as mediator between people's self-understandings and the need for ideology critique and transformative social action *without becoming impositional*'. For this reason, I do not seek to impose meanings but rather seek to act to construct meanings through dynamic, reflective negotiation with research participants. The structure of the hypertext is required to resonate with lived experience as storied by research participants. The evocative power of the research outcomes becomes crucial:

By resonating with people's lived concerns, fears and aspirations, emancipatory theory serves an energizing, catalytic role. It does this by increasing specificity at the contextual level in order to see how larger issues are embedded in the particulars of everyday life.

Patti Lather (1991, p.61)

Theory thus becomes an expression and elaboration of women's feelings and not an abstract framework imposed by academics. Theory written through this research is thus grounded in immediate situations. I believe that within choreography and mystory this evocative power is recognised and performed as

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through academic action (which some feminists have been charged with, see Debbie Nathan (1994) for examples). In contrast, to operationalise feminist values requires a challenging of the acceptable constructions of 'survivor-hood', the dispute of modernist tales of survival, coupled with a revisioning of the complex entanglements of differing subjectivities and selves.

contextual.<sup>25</sup> The research text must go beyond evoking 'emotional catharsis' it must have the ability 'to move audiences to reflective, critical action' (Denzin, 1997, p.94). This evocative contextualisation is necessary if Rape Crisis pedagogues are to incorporate the cognitive/emotional experiences of women who have undertaken the training into their own stock of knowledge (from whence it may come to influence practice). This appeals to the notion of *vraisemblance*, which, unlike a modernist notion of verisimilitude<sup>26</sup> that may be said to depict a similarity with a truth, reflects a notion of probability or likelihood. That is to say, the hypertext is 'of' or 'arising from' the 'truths' as research participants story them. Jim Mienczakowski (1996, p.258) argues that for a script (in his case referring to ethnodrama) to act as an emancipatory tool it must 'first gain credibility, via *vraisemblance*, in the eyes of its informants who

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<sup>25</sup> This is the role of invention as translation as the researcher is required to invent re-inscriptions for different readerships in order to retain the evocative momentum of texts. 'If we say that things should be accessible to us, who is this "us"? What does that sign mean?' (Spivak, 1993, p.192).

<sup>26</sup> There is, of course, a possible re-naming of verisimilitude with/in the postmodern. Here verisimilitude is not a naive gauge of the text's ability to trace the real. For verisimilitude will always be deferred as the text's 'grounding' in the real is forever contestable. Denzin (1997) writes of three levels of verisimilitude: a collection of laws set by convention; a mask that presents these laws as evidence of a text's submission to the rules of a particular genre; the production of a text that 'feels' truthful and real for the reader. A text with high verisimilitude is then an 'opportunity for vicarious experience' (Denzin, 1997, p.10). An experience achieved through the reader's willingness to submit to the laws that govern a given genre. Verisimilitude is then multiple and shifting according to genre. Achieving textual legitimation through verisimilitude makes no claims for 'truth'. As Denzin reminds us (1997, p.12): 'Truth is political, and verisimilitude is textual. The meaning of each of these terms is not in the text but rather brought to it by the reader'. Thus verisimilitude is measured by an ability to 'reproduce and deconstruct the reproductions and simulations that structure the real' (Denzin, 1997, p.13). Evocative and messy texts thus achieve an important role in legitimation as they act through the generation of 'vicarious experience' and through the performance of multiple versions of 'the real' show how each version impinges on the phenomenon of study.

are seeking emancipation'. He believes that once expression moves to the mode favoured solely by the researcher then the research process becomes concerned with explanation rather than emancipation.

Here then is a way for the feminist working with/in the postmodern to adhere to emancipatory intentions. To concentrate upon developing hypertextual practices that arise from the truths of the participants and the truths of the researcher. This process seeks to ground the research in immediate situations, but to reflexively question this as process. 'Ground' is not permitted to congeal from verb to noun. This grounding takes place not topographically but chorographically. Grounding is always already process. Grounding is a mobile and provisional articulation.

## **Intertext:**

### *making space*

Coding

(on reading Coffey and Atkinson, 1996)

codes complicate data  
expand and reconceptualise  
open up diverse  
possibilities

codes open up  
interrogate, not aggregate  
expand dimensions  
beyond the data  
creatively asking  
questions?

Derrida's philosophical use of the homonym is likened by Ulmer to the nineteenth century mathematicians who (Ulmer, 1989, p.28) 'challenged by the axiomatic absoluteness of Euclid's principles, were able to prove that it was possible to devise a geometry that Euclid's system held to be impossible. Considered at first to be playful monstrosities or abstract exercises, these non-Euclidean geometries provided eventually the mathematics of relativity'.

get the lipstick on and get out there

I didn't think that I fitted  
I'm not sure what the role was  
how I was meant to be.  
But then I'm like that all the bloody time  
Every day I don't fit  
I can't go into Gateways  
I don't fit

It was challenging lots and lots of things

I couldn't hack it  
I had to stop  
I just felt like -

I had nothing  
Nothing I could get hold of  
Nothing I could rely on

It was good

I didn't think it was  
I didn't think it was good

It wasn't how I wanted it to be

I couldn't see where it was going  
or what we were doing  
or what we were achieving  
I couldn't get a grip on it.  
Which was its virtue

## Chapter 2

### INSCRIPTING THE tale: FROM HYPERTEXT TO TEXT

What we whiff is not the smell of ink but the smell of loss: of burning towers or men's cigars in the drawing room. Hurry up please, it's time. We are in the late age of print; the time of the book has passed. The book is an obscure pleasure like the opera or cigarettes. The book is dead, long live the book.

Michael Joyce (1991, ¶9)

To speak so as to be understood immediately is to speak through the production of the transparent signifier, that which maps easily onto taken-for-granted regimes of meaning.

Patti Lather (1996, p.528)

We should not take ourselves too seriously. We should have fun doing what we are doing. We need to understand that writing is inscription, an evocative act of creation and of representation. We can invent a new language, as other avant-gardes have done. This should be done playfully, however, with a sense of parody, knowing always that any new form of writing that goes beyond autoethnography, 'teletheory,' or 'mystories' (Ulmer, 1989) can always be undone.

Norman Denzin (1997, pp.25-26)



## Reinscribing otherwise

The use of chorographical hypertextual practices has difficulties that need to be faced when producing the final thesis as printed text. A text that does justice to the complexity and uniqueness of my enquiry must seek to foreground the complexities of re-presentation. I must be concerned to take into account the *crisis of representation* (Denzin, 1994, 1997) facing all qualitative research, and to acknowledge the inscriptive difficulty of producing such a text with/in the postmodern. I agree with Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure (1997, p.4) that there is a need to practise a 'methodology, and a politics, of disappointment - not (or not just) as a state of resignation about the impossibility of escape from the "crisis of representation", but as a strategic act of interruption of the methodological will to certainty and clarity of vision'. During the research process, the weight of my endeavour has come to rest upon the transition from electronic to print text forms. If we have left the age of description and entered the moment of inscription, wherein writers create their own situated versions of the world (Lather, 1991). Then we cease to write because we know what to say, and we begin to write because we seek to discover what to say. 'I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it' (Richardson, 1994a, p.517). Therefore, in making the transition from electronic to print frames/forms, I must acknowledge that this thesis text is a *construction* rather than a *reflection* of the hypertext. Recently writers have concentrated upon the possibilities of creating electronic

environments for their readers,<sup>1</sup> to move beyond the generation of conventional ethnographic texts to use the electronic medium as a mode of presentation. If we are to carry out serious qualitative research which makes full use of the cognitive flexibility of electronic media we do need to develop new electronically derived conventions not only for the analysis of materials for also for the communication of hypertextual 'findings'. *However*, the boundaries of doctoral research require a printed text and the expectation of academic publication is still print-determined. This requires a certain amount of 'stage-talk' to impose a dependable continuity upon the text. Yet, this is not to say that the thesis text itself may not be read as a challenge to the conventional thesis genre.<sup>2</sup> This is text as praxis that seeks to dissolve the distinctions between theory, writing and practice. As an exploration of complex ideas, it is both a proposal and an experiment. The hypertextual manipulation of materials does not facilitate the print out of a linear textual product. This text-arising-from-hypertext must be written to announce a structure of possibilities, not to build a single argument. I wish to signal to my readers that to stop at a single aspect is not enough. Chorography and mystorical crafting present hypertexts as malleable fabrics<sup>3</sup> from which to construct my-own-text. This is a way of opening up the multiple

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<sup>1</sup> Although, as Dicks and Mason (1998) note, nobody to date has produced such an environment.

<sup>2</sup> I wonder if Jacques Derrida's notion of 'writing under erasure' applies to the production of this research as a thesis text. This text is both inaccurate and necessary. To write under erasure is the strategy of using the only available language while not subscribing to its premises. 'This is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion' (Spivak, 1976). Since the word is not accurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it has to remain legible. Is this a *thesis text*?

<sup>3</sup> This is not intended as an appropriation of other texts, but rather to permit their action as *imprimaturs*, which sanction my-own-text.

readings/possibilities of the text, of telling multiple versions of 'the truth', that acknowledge a connection to the worlds of human experience. This is a strategy of displacement rather than confrontation.

This thesis employs electronic hypertext as the basis for a print text that explores the possibilities of electronic thought expressed as literary text. The text identifies, performs and reflects upon relevant theories, and is reflective about the way they are constructed within this document. Access to information technology allows different cognitions of other existing media and people will therefore employ oracy and literacy differently, perhaps through a frame of electronic thinking. As we now may speak from within the oral frame by practising written text, so the intention here is to produce print text from within an electronic frame. In doing this I seek to produce a text that erases the dividing line between empirical research activity and the processes of theorising. A text that is inventive and recognises that as language is productive in the construction of subjects of investigation, so the meanings of any research participant's statements, and of any (hyper)text produced with/in the research process, are always in motion. The text is not intended to be self-justificatory, rather the intention is to be self-revelatory, to show the crafting of the text. At times, the text may appear rather like a conventional 'work in progress' before its eventual synthesis. Yet, this 'is not a work whose step precedes other steps in a trajectory that leads to the final work. It is not a work awaiting a better, more perfect stage of realization. Inevitably, a work is always a form of tangible closure. But closures need not close off; they can be doors opening onto other closures and functioning as ongoing passages to an elsewhere(-within-here)'

(Trinh, 1991, p.15). And so the reader is requested to work at *playing* the paradoxes of the text rather than seeking to resolve them. As an author I must attempt to nurture 'ways of reading which see texts for what they are - partisan discursive constructs offering particular meanings and modes of understanding' (Weedon, 1987, p.172). There is a concentration on the *tale* of the production, to perform how the text is a stratified, seamed, intertextual patchwork. 'It admits and clearly indicates its own constructedness. It is able to be entered into, altered, left' (Arnold, 1994, p.2). As a performed text, this tale knows that there 'can never be a final, accurate representation of what was meant or said - only different textual representations of different experiences' (Denzin 1997, p.5). I can perform through the tales of my-own-text a multiplicity of different and dissenting 'voices' (for, of course, as Lather (1993) notes it is pure presence and not re-presentation that is at an end). However, this does not erase my final acquiescence to the structures of academic text. Clearly then in one sense, my 'challenge to the conventional thesis genre' is hollow, in that I am not breaking with the deep structures of the thesis *récit*, but rather engaging with them in a more direct manner than is customary. Perhaps, as Hélène Cixous suggests, we need to act to wound rather than to break:

The wound is what I sense. The wound is a strange thing: either I die, or a kind of work takes place, mysterious, that will reassemble the edges of the wound. A marvellous thing also: that will nonetheless leave a trace, even if it hurts us. It is here that I sense things taking place. The wound is also an alteration. Breaking, for me, remained in the domain of a less fleshy material. I see a stick being broken . . . of course, one can also break one's bones, but then the sticks of the body repair themselves, and there is no scar . . . I like the scar, the story.

Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber (1997, p.16)

To wound is to recognise that we must work sometimes with and sometimes against the past. 'It is not the literary strategies in isolation that make a text postmodern but rather their connection through complex feedback loops with postmodernism as a cultural dominant' (Hayles, 1990). The dynamics of this particular site of action require a careful play between new ideas and traditional formations. I have no choice but to re-enact the old for these are the only forms available. I am engaged with wounding, in order to push these forms to the limits of their assumptions. And always overlaying my thoughts is Norman Denzin's (1997, p.251) warning that to foreground resistance and subversion is to adopt a position that 'ignores the recuperative and conservative practices of the traditional hegemonic ethnographic order - that order that insists on marginalizing the new, not treating it as a version of a new order of things, and always defining it as an aberrant variation on the traditional way of doing things'.

In embracing hypertext's multi-directional intertextuality, my 'research outcomes' need to be expressed through the retention of a multi-linear approach in the textual product. As re-presentation becomes evocative re-presentation (Lather, 1991; Denzin 1997) so the form and words selected to present this thesis are recognised as being of utmost importance. In order to textually present the complexity and uniqueness of my enquiry a new form of textuality is needed. To work with/in the process of re-presentation this text needs to problematise 'the real', the author, the subject (and their intentional meanings) and experience. The physical presentation of this thesis text must be varied to undermine the particular reading effects that derive from a poetics of

transparency that assumes language to be merely a neutral medium of description. The presentation of this text seeks to alert/remind readers to their own power over the text, and to position the writing of text as an enactment of the social relations which produce the research. This does interfere with the mechanism of summary research representations. Evidently, there is more at issue here than different ways of writing. The shift to recognising the significance of the electronic frame with/in the postmodern requires a different conceptualisation of the research process and not just the development of a new academic genre of re-presentation. As Ulmer (1989) notes we do not, yet, have the forms that will be to electronic media what the essay and novel are to print. However, as we move to generate these forms, it has become possible to expand the reach of the traditional academic forms by imitating in writing the features of videocy (the order of discourse in video, as literacy is to literature). To illuminate this point in his book *Teletheory* Ulmer (1989) offers a personal mystery, *Derrida at the Little Bighorn*. In this way, he shows how thinking a mystery with video has expanded his writing. Mark Taylor and Esa Saarinen's (1994) book *Imagologies: Media Philosophy* is another example of how electronic practice may stimulate different print practices, 'not to analyze but to explode language in an effort to create tentative syntheses of that-which-cannot-be-synthesized' (Taylor and Saarinen, 1994, Naivete<sup>5</sup>).

This is not to say that it is possible to move effortlessly between hypertext and print forms. Stuart Moulthrop's (1994) piece *The Shadow of an Informand* provides a clear explanation of the potential difficulties involved in the transfer between hypertext and print forms. Moulthrop's (1994) use of the

distinction between automating and informing technologies is helpful in exploring what it may imply to embrace cognitive complication, to re-think the textually patrolled boundaries of academic disciplines, and what it means to write (and to read) research. *Automating* technologies replace human productive labour (e.g. skill, technique, physical strength), through investing them in machines. They produce as their ultimate object the robot. Whereas *informating* technologies extract or externalise workers' activities (e.g. planning and discussion) in order to expand or augment people's performance. Informating technologies which externalise the work of the mind or language in order to expand or augment people's performance, in an important sense (Ulmer's 'electronic cognition') do not produce an object, but rather an 'intersection of objects and events' (Moulthrop, 1994, ¶28). The object-event thus produced is an *informand* 'the object-event produced by an interactive communications technology in its social application' (¶29). Although George Landow (1992) argues that technology allows trails (hyperlinks) to not fade, unlike those in the mind, this fails to take into account the dynamic social properties of the trail as informand. It may still be traceable as a contour through hyperspace - *but* the social resonance has shifted. The informand is founded on participation. It is not intended for independent operation as it is not an autonomous system. It is a medium for interaction, which does not exist outside the context of its use. It makes sense through its social distribution, and is capable of fully acknowledging the polyvalency of research materials.

The transition from hypertext to text may then be read as the scripting of a single performance of an electronic text - *it is a shadow of an informant*.<sup>4</sup> This text must be carefully crafted to show the momentary structures of coherence apparent to the researcher/reader/becoming-scriptor as she interacts with a particular hypertextual representation of qualitative materials. 'It is therefore like the shadow of a three-dimensional object, simply a planar approximation, flat and obscure' (Moulthrop, 1994, ¶29). I believe that to produce a shadow of an informant requires the scripting of a text-portrait that recognises the need to do away with 'the parasitism of shadow on substance' (Martin, 1992, p.157). As I write, the shadow is fading.

Feminism with/in postmodernism, as it seeks to challenge disciplinary boundaries and destabilise accepted procedures, must work to open up the possibilities of displaying complexities. The deployment of devices to foreground an awareness of (inter)textuality for the reader (and indeed, for the author) contribute to a re-reading of the relationships between the social, the writer and the reader, between researchers and the researched (Fox, 1995). I carry the responsibility of invoking the possibilities of the text to draw attention to its construction of knowledges. This text as performance is not an interpretative event: 'The emphasis is on performance, presentation, and improvisation' (Denzin, 1997, p.116), and not on authoring a 'fixed text'. As the shadow of an informant, the text expects/invites the reader to bring her own biography and 'voice' to the lines. This text works to signal the embeddedness

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<sup>4</sup> It is this status as a single performance that incites me to use emphatic italicisation within the text. This is not to dictate the emphases that a reader will enact rather it shows the emphasis placed on the occasion of the performance.



of theory in the entire research task. In creating an alternative form, this text resists the traditional academic labour of accretion, where critical analysis is used to build one layer of work on another. To script from the electronic frame into the print frame foregrounds that the transparent use of language is not innocent. Those labelled 'postmodernists' do not write obscurely just so that no one outside their cult can understand them (Flax, 1992). Text arising from hypertext needs to perform an argument against either/or framings of accessibility/inaccessibility. For as Patti Lather reminds us: 'Clear speech is part of a discursive system, a network of power that has material effects' (Lather, 1996, p.528). The text *is* difficult to grasp. However, grasping is not the appropriate metaphor when reading such texts: 'the goal . . . is not to communicate [to allow the text to be grasped], but to bring about understanding by other means' (Ulmer, 1991, p.3). Clearly then the careful crafting of this text is no ornamental ancillary to otherwise clear communication. The textual staging and re-staging of knowledge is used to probe conceptualisations of research and to destabilise the researcher/author as a unified authorising centre. As researchers, we have been freed from trying to write a definitive text where everything is said to everyone. We write/understand ourselves as persons writing from particular positions at particular times (Richardson, 1992, 1994a, 1995, 1997). The text may, at times, be audacious, but the language is not gratuitously confusing. The crafting of the text is not 'novelty' for its own sake (e.g. see the criticisms by Weaver and Atkinson, 1995, Atkinson, 1990). The crafting of the text is not aimed at some 'cleverness-on-paper' (Arnold, 1994, p.23), it is written to de-doxify, to foreground that both content and form communicate meaning, and to prompt questions about the authorisation of

knowledge. This text requires spaces (and do not forgot how in chapter 1 space was remotivated) for issues of texts and composition. Spaces which question the structures of 'taken-for-granted intelligibility'. Whilst I do not wish the text to be subsumed by writing about writing, my uneasiness with any easy separation of content and writing form means that it does frequently stray toward this particular abyss.

Through refusing to seduce the reader with the appeal of familiarity and self consciously playing the author/reader/text symbiotic relationship I seek to both get out of the way and in the way (Lather, 1996; Lather and Smithies, 1997). This text continues the hypertext's escape from any seemingly unmediated account of research 'events' and 'data'. The text seeks to 'enact a double reading' to 'think opposites together' without a reconciliation that neutralises differences (Lather, 1996, p.526). By structuring the text to entice its co-construction by an active reader, I invite *unforeseen* congruences to be explored between concepts that are normally labelled as if in opposition. The scripting of this informant's shadow knows that textual effects cannot be stripped away to expose a core, a kernel, a 'true thrust', there is none to reveal. Meaning is dispersed throughout the text, through the inseparable interplay of content-meaning.

## The reader and the text

We cannot ensure our preferred readings, but we must attempt to ward off ones we believe to be oppressive.

Pam Alldred (1998, p.146)

To 'defend' is sometimes a necessity. But it is an ambiguous gesture: whoever defends him-or herself forbids [*qui se défend défend*], i.e. interdicts. And I do not like the regions where people lay down the law. In addition, this secondary gesture screens the principal act.

Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber (1997, p.6)

Lather (1996, p.541) notes that we are 'in need of an audience we cannot create and cannot do without, an audience only history can make possible, as we move toward a practice that deconstructs itself in the face of history's sedimentations and our urge to some beyond'. If I write toward ethnography's sixth moment in my-own-text through adopting Denzin's (1997) organising lens of a nine part thesis (see chapter 1), then I am beholden to speak of and to the audience for this text. To write to a reader that I cannot create and yet I cannot do without. A 'new reader, a reader willing to suspend belief in the efficacy of the older narrative forms' (Denzin, 1997, p.267). And whilst I write to this audience of the *manners* of readings, I am aware of the irony of adopting this position within a text which rejects its treatment as a mirror of reality and claims to be open and multiple. I do not seek to discipline any one form of reading and writing. On the other hand, I cannot absolve myself of this responsibility for the reasons that Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis (1996b) portray in the form of a dramatic staging of a conversation between the two editors in the introduction to their book *Composing Ethnography*:

Art: (*Facing Carolyn and seated on the couch*) Look, I just don't want to be stuck saying, in one breath. 'We promote the idea of a plural text, open to many interpretations'; then, in the next breath, declare, 'Here's how to read and interpret each chapter'.

Carolyn: I don't see it that way, Art. As editors, we do have a perspective on ethnographic practices that guided our selection of papers. Can't we discuss this perspective and help readers connect themselves to these essays and studies without necessarily privileging our voices? I think it's dishonest to pretend we're invisible. We've left traces of our convictions all over this text. Instead of masking our presence, leaving it at the margins, we should make ourselves more personally accountable for our perspective.

Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis (1996b, p.15)

As the author of this thesis document, I am personally accountable for this conviction-traced text. I am sensitive to the points made by Erica McWilliam (1993) about the dangers of bringing new forms of writing to the educational thesis. She argues that the increasingly ephemeral nature of contemporary social theory produces particularly acute difficulties for doctoral candidates. They must either finish *'post haste'* or be condemned to constant reworking of texts, which appear instantly out of date. She asserts (McWilliam, 1993, p.202) that the traditional linear thesis form 'fails to signal the embeddedness of theory in the entire research task' and is 'at odds with imperatives emanating from contemporary social theory'. We need, not just a new way of writing but also, a new way of reading and examining the doctoral thesis (Rhedding-Jones, 1997). How does 'examination' take place when examiners need to take into account that 'two of the worst faults' in current academic practice, namely misreading and plagiarism become 'guidelines' for

the scripting of what we might label 'postmodern texts' (Ulmer, 1985b, p.59)? For misreading is motivated by the desire never to reproduce the given, but to innovate to produce something other. Whilst plagiarism is motivated by the desire to reject Romantic theories of 'genius' and 'originality' whilst seeking a sense of invention as provocation rather than creation (for Derrida's (1976) '*différance*' eliminates any claim to a priority of originality). I am acutely aware that I am in need of an audience that I cannot create and yet I cannot do without.

Norman Denzin (1997) argues that as we work toward this sixth moment we can begin to identify our audience and to write towards its creation. We may be able to summon our audience through organising the place of the reader in the text. He (Denzin, 1997, pp.234 - 240) suggests the place of the reader may be organised in accordance with the following ten assumptions:

1. Every text is embedded in an intertextual multiplicity of other texts. Readers always embed their interpretations of the text in the larger intertextual arena, the intertext shapes the text. Every text thus has multiple authors and readers (or audiences).
2. Every text 'embodies a narrative logic concerning discursive authority, sexual difference, power, and knowledge . . . This logic is repressed and displaced in the story the text tells; it must be exposed and analyzed' (pp.235-236).

3. In presenting their favoured version of reality, ethnographers privilege the visual.
4. The aim of any reading practice is *not* to reproduce some 'so-called standard version of the knowing subject of cultural studies or of contemporary ethnography' (p.236).<sup>5</sup>
5. Reading as an interpretative activity must be 'rescued from those analytic and storied frameworks (narratology, positivism and postpositivism) that seek to anchor a reading in a fixed text, using a closed interpretive framework. Reading has no fixed place' (p.237). There are several different versions of 'the reader': *positivist* applying a set of external criteria (validity, reliability, objectivity) to the interpretive process; *post-positivist* attempting to formulate criteria unique to narrative inquiry; *resistant* connecting particular cultural practices (e.g. torn jeans) to the subversion of

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<sup>5</sup> Denzin (1997) delineates a four step model to show how this 'so-called standard version of the knowing subject' is constructed: 1) The investigator 'endorses the enabling theses of contemporary ethnographic (and cultural studies) theory. . . Everyday people are not cultural dopes but active constructors of meaning; everyday patterns of action cannot be reduced to the mirrors of cultural or economic production; and everyday life is about dreams, hopes, fears, and desire and consists of a "multiplicity of fragmented and contradictory discourses"' (quoting from Morris, 1990). 2) The analyst obtains a record of the subjects' words/experiences. These words are located in the text undergoing analysis or are reproduced in the ethnographic text. 3) The subjects' experiences must be translated into theoretical terms - this is necessary 'because, at one level, the subject is still a cultural dope'. The subject is unable to understand the forces that shape biographical life - only the analyst is able to understand these. 4) The scholar comments on the collected experiences from within the theoretical model. Utterances of informants are then deployed to show how either they have resisted cultural domination and produced 'their own' versions of a complex and contradictory culture - or how they have become victims of this culture. These works never establish the writer's place outside the context of study - the institutions of higher education are never written into the text.

the hegemonic cultural order; *realist-functional* presumes a causal link between a text (e.g. sexist photograph) and social practices (e.g. sexism); *processual-conjectural* is 'radically contextual, materialist, antiessentialist, and antireductionist' (p.238). The meaning of a text is located in a network of complex determining, enabling and constraining relations. Norman Denzin argues that these five reading models must be navigated with care as conjectural readings are developed.

6. The reader creates a world of experience through their interaction with the text.<sup>6</sup> The reader-as-bricoleur allows departures from the text and refuses to be constrained by predetermined conceptual schemes of interpretation. This reader is necessarily knowledgeable about the many schemes of interpretation available.
  
7. The reader knows that all readings are carried out for a purpose. 'The desire is not to put words or interpretations in people's mouths but to create the spaces so their 'voices' can be heard, to write (and read) with them, for them, and not about them. Such readings are more than cathartic productions: They are instigations to action' (p.239).
  
8. Every text needs to be analysed to explore how it constructs and negotiates the meanings in relation to author, reader and speakers. This is an examination of how particular readings and interpretations are given

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that the reader is not positioned as re-experiencing the events in question. Rather the reader is positioned reflexively, prompted to experience themselves in relation to these evocative texts.

authority. 'Every reading challenges or destabilizes a text, questioning its representations of reality. . . . any text can be read (and written) at three levels (realist, preferred, and subversive), each level opening up another version of the story being told. The goal is to exhaust, within a given reading, the meanings located at each of these levels' (p.239).

9. Readings are carried out against 'the sting of memory' (Ulmer 1989, p.209).

The reader seeks to invoke personally significant epiphanic moments in relation to a particular work. The various meanings brought to this moment can then be unravelled, in terms of differing forms of interpretation.

10. A dialogical ethics of reading is necessary to maintain a 'conversation' between text, reader and audience. The reader and writer are co-producers of the text. The reader *creates* the text, the object of analysis, through the process of reading. Furthermore, as the text is about the 'Other', so we must ask: 'How do writers (and readers) speak of the other while being implicated in the very representations (and interpretations) that bring the other into existence?' (p.240).

From the above it is clear that the reader is her/himself placed in a multi-dimensional space, and that considerable effort needs to be made to not just place the reader in terms of how to read - but also prompting them to consider how *not* to read. This placing of the reader produces a text as thesis that generates meanings not simply in the text. Its meanings reside *in relation to the text* - its effect on the reader is to make her/him speak as and of the text. The



invitation extended to the reader is one of ambiguity and uncertainty. The text 'is grounded in the process of self-formation and self-understanding [both of the reader and the writer]. It is not anchored in the so-called external worlds' (Denzin, 1997, p.267). The text's structuring may disturb a reader's codes of reference and in doing so thrust upon her/him an awareness of the reader's authority over the text. This may induce an anxiety, a need to fix the meaning of the text.

That meaning resides *in relation to the text* is apparent from employing Norman Denzin's device of placing the reader. There is no assumption that a reader will bring together juxtaposed textual elements by means of some unifying concept. Whilst 'new writers' may seek to create a 'new reader', clearly, the search for such a unifying concept cannot be interdicted. I believe that to seek some closure of the text, despite the lack of a clearly apparent 'given' unity may invite a productive pedagogic deployment of text. Gregory Ulmer (1985a) suggests that such potential for pedagogic deployment borrows from the cognition appropriate to/necessary for the knowing of an experimental art text, film narrative or dramatic performance. He cites Joseph Beuys performative 'speech' at an art academy matriculation ceremony in 1968 (dressed as a shaman he made the sounds of a stag (o-o-ø) for ten minutes). Ulmer argues that the audience's expectations of content and information were violated to create a potential for pedagogic deployment. That is to say, the meaning resided not simply in the performance but in relation to the performance.

This deployment of an appropriate cognition is one enactment of a double reading, where *unforeseen* congruences are explored not neutralised. This is an act of addition without equivalence. Thus X is not opposed to Y, rather X is both added to and replaces Y. Reading and writing emerge here as supplements of each other. The text's structuring may facilitate readers to both tolerate and confront ambiguities and uncertainties through this addition without neutralisation, fixity or unification. I acknowledge that unifying, neutralising and fixing may be part of a reader's set of responses to the text. However, these should be pedagogically employed as a process with/in the text not as a route to closure. 'There is always content of course . . . but the matter of that content is left open' (Ulmer, 1985b, p.43). To leave open content is to invite in the reader.

### **Dead or alive? The author and the thesis text**

The focus on the textual staging of knowledge and the acknowledgement of an active reader, shape the crafting of this text. I do not wish my readers to be consumers, spectators excluded from the pleasure of the text whilst they struggle to decipher 'my authority'. Yet, in foregrounding reading as an active process I do not seek to render the author powerless or the text inert. I am not, as Roland Barthes announced in 1968, supposing that the author is 'dead' and do not agree with his assertion that the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author<sup>7</sup>. I am sharply aware that 'The Author' may be suffering a politically

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<sup>7</sup> Although I construct myself here as disagreeing with Barthes text, I am aware that there is an uncertainty as to what Barthes means by 'Death' (an ironic point, given the substantive discourse of his piece!), as he also writes of a 'distancing', of 'the Author diminishing like a figurine at the far end of the literary stage' (Barthes, 1977 [1968], p.145).

very fortuitous death. That is to say, at the time when political movements began to name the author, when the 'voices' of those traditionally excluded from authorship were beginning to be heard, and when an accusatory finger was pointed at the traditional Authors of the literary canon, *then* the author conveniently 'died'. This death re-denies the privileges of authorship to those who were only just beginning to acquire it. As Liz Stanley (1992, p.17) notes: 'This is a suicide that is no suicide at all. This suicide is alive and well and still calling the theoretical shots'.

Bearing the above in mind it is important that the thesis takes into account what Maurice Biriotti (1993) calls the 'continuing debate' about the nature of authorship. I refuse to take part in the binary opposition of the disappeared author/humanist author divide. The 'problem of the author' needs to be dealt with as an area for temperate debate, I am in sympathy with Biriotti's stance that there is no single correct way of approaching or indeed answering the question of authorship. What I do seek to acknowledge is my diminished role as a textual scriptor. The author is no longer an all-centring presence. The author is no longer seen as a transcendental signified being at once both the beginning and the end of the text. I take responsibility for the text, but I have no abiding authority over it.

To reject the author as an absolute centre does not necessitate an absolute absence of centre. It is clear that the author has been jettisoned as the source and guarantor of all meaning. However, to deny this liberal humanist conception of

Author does not eliminate the author altogether. The author has been unsettled, displaced and re-located, *not erased*.

As author of the thesis I reject formulating myself as the guarantor of textual meaning, however I do acknowledge that I possess the (undeniable) authority of author as an institution (Michel Foucault's (1977) argument in *What is an Author?*). Although I may evoke an authorless world, we clearly have not yet arrived at it within our academic institutions. Authorship, as a legal, political and historical category, carries out a number of author-functions that shape the writer's and reader's approach to the text. My author/ity comes from the social arrangements of thesis production and examination. As a doctoral candidate, I am institutionally charged to perform certain author/ity-functions through the thesis text (as indeed my examiners are charged to perform certain reader-functions). The text has to perform the educational validity of the doctoral process. It has to demonstrate the links between it as a document and the processes of doctoral education/research in which I have engaged. *And* it must do so within the boundaries of institutional expectations. I entered an explicit contract with the University about the textual form of my thesis.

The thesis shall be clearly and concisely written, well argued, and shall show a satisfactory knowledge of both primary and secondary sources. In addition it shall contain a full bibliography and, where appropriate, a description of methods and techniques used in the research. The thesis shall not exceed 70,000 words in the Faculty of Science and 80,000 words in the faculties of Arts and Social Studies. This limit shall in the Faculty of Social Studies be inclusive of appendices, footnotes, tables and bibliography and in the Faculties of Arts and Science shall be exclusive of appendices, footnotes, tables and bibliography.

(University of Warwick Calendar, 1995, p.217)

Clearly then, I have agreed to perform certain author/ity-functions through the thesis text. I need to enunciate my own complicity in the institutional practices in which this thesis is embedded.<sup>8</sup> Even if I should wish to do so, a thesis document cannot fully accept a notion of textuality that dissolves the link between text and author. Personal selves are *required* to haunt thesis texts. Any self-willed cancellation of Self from the text would serve to unite author and text if only through the sign of their disunion. Furthermore a thesis text is institutionally constructed to be representative of a research process as pedagogy. It cannot fully break free of its representational obligations and thus the author is tethered to the text. I *must* place my signature to this document, and in doing so recognise that this is an act in excess of a textual effect. This signature is not a mark of property (an authority through ownership), but it does 'leave a trace, a deposit of oneself' (Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber, 1997, pp.37-38). The signature ties 'me' to the text, yet simultaneously disrupts 'me' as a presence within, or source of, the text. 'The effects of signature are the most ordinary thing in the world. The condition of possibility for these effects is simultaneously, once again, the condition of their impossibility, of the impossibility of their rigorous purity' (Derrida, 1982, p.328).

So, to return to the question posed in this subsection's heading, *is the author dead or alive?* The answer has to be formed in terms of a double reading

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<sup>8</sup> As Laurel Richardson (1990a, 1996c, 1997) emphasises such strictures with regard to the textual presentation of academic work serve to encode institutional expectations with regard to how research is conceptualised and carried out, in addition to how it is textually presented (and in the case of a doctoral thesis examined).

- the answer is 'yes'. In the words of Seán Burke (1992, p.30) 'A little like Dionysus, or Christ, the author must be dead before he can return. In a sense too, he must continue to be dead though he has returned'.<sup>9</sup>

### **Life in the text? Textual constructions of my self/selves**

My position is mine to the extent that 'I' . . . replay and resignify the theoretical positions that have constituted me, working the possibilities of their convergence, and trying to take account of the possibilities that they systematically exclude. But it is clearly not the case that 'I' preside over the positions that have constituted me, shuffling through them instrumentally, casting some aside, incorporating others, although some of my activity may take that form. The 'I' who would select between them is always already constituted by them. The 'I' is the transfer point of that replay, but it is simply not a strong enough claim to say that the 'I' is situated; the 'I,' this 'I,' is *constituted* by these positions, and these 'positions' are not merely theoretical products, but fully embedded organizing principles of material practices and institutional arrangements, those matrices of power and discourse that produce me as a viable 'subject'. Indeed this 'I' would not be a thinking speaking 'I' if it were not for the very positions that I oppose, for those positions, the ones that claim that the subject must be given in advance, that discourse is an instrument or reflection of that subject, are already part of what constitutes me.

Judith Butler (1992, p.9)

In rejecting the 'nothingness' of the author I develop a view of the author's textual presence as an excess - staged in the text as 'author by the author' (Derrida, 1976). This is the first part of Norman Denzin's nine part lens. *All* texts are imbued with authorial presence. There is no need to advocate, as

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<sup>9</sup> Yet note, this walking corpse is a man. Part of the 'continuing debate' about the nature of authorship should be to consider the question of authorial agency for women. This is in line with Nancy Miller's (1993) proposal to 'change the subject of writing' and recognise that to foreclose the question of agency for women would be premature (due to the historically collective denial to women of the agency of selfhood).

some writers do, the 'putting back' of the author - the author never left. When 'I' use 'the personal', I am not writing from an individual standpoint or foregrounding the Self. I am not 'expressing myself', but I am showing how my self/ves necessarily mediate the writing/researching process. There is a need to enact the irony of a researcher who seeks to undo traditional authorial strategies by unmasking their construction, yet who must in places saturate the text with 'the author' in order so to do. It is important to emphasise that there is no assumption of an isomorphic relationship between the 'I' the author creates in the text and the 'I', the individual who writes the text. This thesis text is an experimental writing driven to produce a self-acknowledging 'author-saturated text' which denies accusations of assuming that 'the author in the text and the author of the text are one and the same' (Moore, 1993, p.201). Clearly to acknowledge the division between the author of the text and the author in the text is not to automatically deny any relation between the two. As Sean Burke (1992) notes, there is an inevitable commerce between the two subjects even though they cannot be regarded as co-substantial in space and time. As I have already noted personal selves are institutionally required to fraternise with thesis documents due to the representational obligations assigned to the text, and the author's binding to the document through a signature in excess of a textual effect.

### The stable self strategy

A foregrounding of the denial of isomorphism can allow the author in the text to adopt a fixed and highly individual position *as a textual strategy*.<sup>10</sup> This recent emigration of authors from textually marginal spaces (e.g. footnotes, acknowledgements), has provided many examples where a powerful construction of Self within the text is used to highlight the modernist pretence of objective research writing. Erica McWilliam (1993), Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989), Patti Lather (1991) and Jeanette Rhedding-Jones (1997) have all written such documents, where an uninterrogated 'I' and stories about 'my research' pepper the text. This strategy should not be confused with those texts, structured in separate sections, which engage in what Rosalind Gill (1995) has labelled 'political credentialling'. In such texts a prominent debate about self or reflexivity takes place separately to the main body of the text in order to establish the political credentials of the authors. The remainder of the text then adopts a 'business as usual' approach. These stable-self-as-strategy texts are self conscious in their appropriation of the autobiographical, and ascribe its use as but one textual strategy among several.

This is not to say that relying on a stable textualised Self to achieve new kinds of textual legitimacy is not without problems. The strategy veers toward inviting its misrecognition as an acceptance of the author as guarantor of textual

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that as social actions such texts may also be read as strategy. Published works serve to solidify an academic's career identity within institutional settings. The 'I' of the researcher serves to signal privileged knowledge and possession of the research. A fluid and/or multiple authorial presence signals differently.



meaning. Such readings may mark a confusion between *author of* and *author in* the text. Although it may be strategically legitimate for us to occasionally play with the author-of/author-in confusion as a tactic (my-own-text does). It would be shortsighted not to recognise the danger in this of paradoxically ratifying those very hegemonic forms which I seek to undermine (my-own-text does). Although to recognise a danger is evidently not the same as to neutralise it. Furthermore, critics such as Daphne Patai (1994) complain of writers staking out highly individual 'I's, of 'very fixed and unpostmodernist identities' (p.67), and engaging in interminable 'individualistic self-reflexive shenanigans' (p.62), rather than directly engaging with the content of their research. As Vaughan Prain (1997) argues any attempt to rely on a stable textualised Self needs to be cautiously approached, if writers are not to fall into the trap of simply (with the proviso that they do so 'knowingly') reverting to modernist discursive strategies.

### **The fragmentary self strategy**

If I am to produce a text which rejects a poetics of transparency and which plays the author/reader/text symbiotic relationship then in textualising my self I must take Prain's warning seriously. My scripted self needs to enact the continuing debate about an author who has been unsettled, displaced and re-located. To unmask traditional authorial strategies it must tolerate and confront the ambiguities and uncertainties of the author in the text. Writers such as Nancy Miller (1993) argue that we need to 'change the subject' of writing to locate new subject positions that recognise that women are required to tell their stories against prevailing discourses that seek to silence them. To recognise that

women need to be cautious in the crafting of their stories within models derived from masculinist norms. Yet whilst we struggle to redefine/retell stories of women we need to be cautious of adopting our own feminist 'master script'. To validate these other ways of telling we need to foreground, but not reify, multiplicity. That is to 'acknowledge fragmentation, indeterminacy, ambiguity and complexity, as well as the larger social discursive and theoretical coordinates that shape any representation of "self" or "selves"' (Prain, 1997, p.71). To stage such an authorial presence is to recognise that it is insufficient to use a stable authorial Self as the sole textual strategy to unmask our assumptions about textualised knowledge, and to instead stage a multiple excess. The author's textual presence staged in the text as a multiple excess, becomes a shifting, shimmering and multiple apparition. This thesis text requires an attentive crafting if it is to produce a self *and selves* acknowledging author-saturated text, which maintains a constant denial of an isomorphic relationship between the 'I' in the text and the 'I', who writes the text.

Such carefully crafted texts 'mess with the conventions of writing' (Sharon Crowley, 1985, p.98) in order to question the poetics of transparency, question author/ity and make self/ves-referentiality a reminder of the constant flow of textuality into which author's insert their-own-texts.

Texts such as Dalley's (1992a, b) exploration of bilingualism where she invites her readers to 'feel the fragmentation of my selves rather than be told about it' (1992a, p.203). She states that her papers are 'an author's view of lives-as-lived in conversation with an interpretation of that view' (1992a, p.203).

To textualise this conversation she uses a parallel interconnected commentary on her personal experience written by herself as 'research narrator'. By using two different fonts and spatially separating the sides of this conversation on the page with the device of extensive footnotes, she achieves a self conscious textualisation of her different selves which invites the reader to take their own part in this conversation.

Texts such as Karen Fox's (1996) '*A subversive reading of child sexual abuse*'. Fox interweaves her story as a survivor and researcher of child sexual abuse with the story of another survivor and her offender. Her text is formed into three columns representing the three 'voices' of the narrative accounts. Fox writes that in 'blending' the stories in this way she intends to allow the reader to move 'among the voices in a weaving pattern so that a single perspective is not privileged' (p.331). She recognises that readers may find 'the three-person account violent and sickening' (p.350). However, she argues that it is only through the careful placing together and the subversive reading of these stories, that we can be challenged to 'go beyond seeing the issue exclusively in terms of offender/victim dichotomies' (p.333).

Texts such as Mary Jane Kehily's (1995) *Self-narration, autobiography and identity construction*, which explores the links between personal storytelling, autobiographical writing and the process of identity construction. Here texts describing past and current versions of self are juxtaposed to produce layers of meaning and understanding. She uses the 'well worn stories we tell about ourselves' (p.24) to show how different aspects of herself are constructed,

marginalised or even omitted in these different tellings. She argues that this mode of autobiographical writing problematises the self such that 'identity can be seen as fluid and fragmented' (p.30).

Some readers may be musing at this point that such textual acrobatics are beyond all but the most advanced writers. But that is just another way of saying that students are not ready to grasp textual authority. Such a statement is true enough, not in its usual sense that students are intellectually incapable of entering their discourses into textuality (no user of language is so incapable), but in the sense that culture, as it is currently constituted, forbids their doing so.

Sharon Crowley (1985, pp.98-99)

And also . . .

Texts such as my-own-text in which the staking out of the researcher's textual identity is both incitement and confusion.

### **Crafting self/ves into the text**

Vaughan Prain's paper (1997) ends with some 'speculative suggestions' for ways to address the textualisation of the self. These are a handy reminder whilst I labour over the weaving of this text.

- The researcher needs to acknowledge that recourse to the personal is always an attempt to reclaim textual authority.
- Researchers should pay 'scrupulous attention' to the limits of their authority.

- Researchers should negotiate the coordinates of identity (gender, race, class) rather than simply announce their identification with these groups.
- Self-representation needs to be carefully integrated with other kinds of (perhaps more modernist) research evidence and perspectives.
- The researcher needs to cautiously define the personal and not take experience as self-evident.
- The researcher should 'acknowledge the impossibility of a full textual inscription of self or selves' which attends to the gaps between the author of and the author in the text.

My-own-text must weave together many threads of life with/in this thesis. To saturate the text through the practice of an experimental, inventive writing driven to produce a self-acknowledging 'author-saturated text' which denies accusations of assuming that the author in the text and the author of the text are one and the same. But which simultaneously admits that there is commerce between the two, and that the nature of this commerce is influenced by the binding signature of the doctoral candidate to the thesis document. But which also admits that it may be strategically legitimate to play with the of/in confusion as a temporary tactic, and that a stable textual self may - or may not - be scripted for this purpose. And furthermore the text needs to self-consciously maintain its rejection of the poetics of transparency in order to draw attention to its construction of all knowledges including that of the authorial 'I'. And the

text needs to perform a series of textual selves who are prepared to engage with the continuing debate about the author even as these selves are being unsettled, displaced and relocated. And this change from Self to selves needs to be marked as the fragments of self/selves are inserted into the textual flow. To stage a self-acknowledging 'author-saturated text' as multiple excess does indeed require an exceptionally attentive weaving. To call this thesis document *my-own-text* (extending the invitation to an our-own) is to create the space for this weaving to begin.

### **The crowded text? Inviting Others into the text**

Once out beyond the picket fence of illusory objectivity, we trespass all over the classed, raced, and otherwise stratified lines that have demarcated our social legitimacy for publicly telling their stories.

Michelle Fine (1994a, p.80)

[I]f the subject is constituted by power, that power does not cease at the moment the subject is constituted, for that subject is never fully constituted, but is subjected and produced time and again. That the subject is neither a ground nor a product, but the permanent possibility of a certain resignifying process, one which gets detoured and stalled through other mechanisms of power, but which is power's own possibility of being reworked.

Judith Butler (1992, p.13)

Once we collapse the boundary between being inside research and being on the outside, we risk colonising the world of the 'subject' in new ways, not least by attempts to create an 'us' that is implicitly ethnocentric and essentially patronising . . . . The danger in post-structural writing is not so much a continuation of the irritating myth that the author is always right but the assumption that nothing is important unless it enters the consciousness of or touches the sensibilities of the author.

Michael Schratz and Rob Walker (1995, p.137)

The other is not always that which is furthest away from the Same. Some time the other is that which is closest.

Bill Martin (1992, p.125)

In placing my selves within the textual frame what impact is there upon the place of Others within the text? If I seek to incorporate the words of research participants then what damages do I inflict on Others with/in the text?<sup>11</sup> Michelle Fine (1994a & b) criticises researchers/writers who fail to recognise the Self-Other hyphen in their work through attempts to shelter themselves in the text by, supposedly, removing their 'voice', 'body', 'race', 'class', 'gender', etc. Yet, am I in danger of a mirror move: that of failing to recognise the Self-Other hyphen through a surfeit of self/selves? Feminist methodology challenges researchers to put themselves on the same conceptual plane as their respondents (Bloom, 1998, Reinhartz, 1992). It is vital that this goes beyond 'a gesture that is enforced by politically correct convention' (Marcus, 1994, p.572). The placement of Self and Other together is what it means to 'work the hyphens' (Fine, 1994a).

I am concerned to recognise the Self-Other/Selves-Others hyphen, to craft my self/ves and the selves of others with/in the thesis text. Yet, to attend to the hyphen, I must be alert to the implications of this overt presence for the research participants. The self-conscious inscribing of my self/ves into the text should not appear as a bid for transparency (the mirror-move to the, supposed,

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<sup>11</sup> Of course, I may also need to take into account what damages I inflict upon myself/ves.

removal of the author). I do not want to be guilty of pursuing a 'vanity research' that loses the stories which women have entrusted to me. To take account of the Self-Other hyphen is to move to the fore the desire to accommodate the meeting of the non-unitary subjectivities of both researcher and researched, *and* to take into account both textuality and embodied social individuals. The stories of research participants emerge as speech events that involve social, cultural and political relations. I am exploring interacting reflexive subjects not mute objects. These subjects are *not* recognised as monolithic, unified, selves engaged in solely conscious rational action. Nor should they be reified as fractured, fragmented, schizoid. Language, positionality of researcher and researched, and their interactions are all indeterminate and saturated with the complex power relationships at the Self-Other hyphen. As Patti Lather (1991, p.120) reminds us the subject of research is 'a provisional, contingent, strategic, constructed subject,' for whom 'sense-making activity... is as important as how they are acted upon'. To critique the subject is not to pronounce its death but rather to claim that certain versions of the subject are politically insidious. Hence the subject is not eliminated rather s/he is de-centred through a reconceptualisation of agency with a shift from '*subject-centered agency to the plurality and agency of meaning*' (Lather, 1991, p.120).

The problems of writing 'my life' into the text coalesce with the writing of the research process and of the lives of Others. I am seeking to craft a text that creates a form of knowledge that can landscape the research process and the researched/researcher subject. To produce writings which have value for research participants and communicative value for further circulation. The



landscape depicted in this thesis is multiple. Yet, simply to script a multiplicity of research participants' 'voices' does nothing to address the current crisis in representation. It does nothing to address traditional notions of Voice and Authorship. It does nothing to address how current social structures result in the different 'voices' within the text not carrying equal legitimacy. There needs to be a focus on the complex ambiguities of power, language, communication and interpretation at the Self-Other hyphen. There can be no correction through addition. As Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989, p.312) states 'unproblematic pluralizing loses sight of the contradictory and partial nature of all voices'. Sentiments echoed by Henrietta Moore (1993) who, in her discussion of anthropology and writing, argues that we need to take care not to simply multiply the problem of authority. To develop texts where a number of individuals 'have their say' will always fail unless it addresses the complexities of the relationship between the author in the text and the author of the text, the research subjects in the text and the research subjects as human beings. This is not to act so as to negate the subject but rather to interrogate its construction.

This text moves toward creating a dialogic community, what James Scheurich (1997, p.66) calls 'a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity, a moving feast of differences interrupting differences'. This text acknowledges the impossibility of altogether escaping oppressive formations. As Fine (1994a, p.75) argues there is 'no simple binary opposition of Self and Other, nor of texts that inscribe and texts that resist. There is no easy narrative litmus for Othering. Contradictions litter all narrative forms. And all narratives about Others both inscribe and resist othering'. This text refuses to retreat into a powerless

inactivity, instead it nudges toward further possibilities. This text rejects a seemingly unmediated recounting of tales and documenting of research events, it writes an enactment of the social relations that produce 'the research'. This text acts to draw attention to the politics of the knowing and being known through a bringing forward of the complexities of the relationships between the author of and in the text, and the research subjects of and in the text. This unsettled, and unsettling, text uses evocative experimental writing to ask not only how do I structure my self/ves into the text, but also, how do I position myself as knower and teller of empirically generated materials? Evocative research generated texts turn against canonical stories to take the form of 'creative non-fiction' (Bochner and Ellis, 1996b, p.24). They take certain expressive liberties associated with 'the arts', but clearly reject that they are 'art' or 'literature', retaining some political/ethical commitment to converting empirically generated materials into knowledge/experiences that readers can use. Evocative research texts are creative in their attempts to write *about, for* and *to* their audience. An evocative text encourages the reader to loosen the boundaries of their expectations. To prompt understandings that: 'Give respect to empathy and solidarity, but try to hear Others speaking back' (Bochner and Ellis, 1996b, p.42). This research text must reject the game of creating a stable textual self through which to view stable Others. This text welcomes the flow of understandings circulating through the author/reader/text.

In rejecting an accurately descriptive text, I do still allow that this textual journey is inextricably *related* to action in the world. For in this research it is clear that experience does generate knowledge but that the knowledge generated

is not authoritative and is not stable. For this reason experience can never be the origin of an explanation - rather experience itself *is* that which we seek to explain (Scott, 1992). Whilst acknowledging the inscriptive process of research writing, I have sought to produce a dynamic vividness which evokes my-own and other's worlds. Any statements are historically sited, and authentic by means of relevance to the stories of this gathering of research participants. There are frequent episodes of negotiation within the narrative. This text is a crowded place, peopled by research participants, myself, my supervisor and many others. I do not want the individual women's 'voices' to be drowned by a deluge of theoretical sophistication, by which I, as author of the final text, could be seduced. Nor do I want to offer a polyphony in which I clearly favour one reading. Understandings are forged through coalescence of the multiple understandings/stories constructed by all research participants. This text is a process of addition without equivalence. I seek to emphasise the diversity and perhaps contradictory meanings within my-own-text and the empirically generated texts. Throughout I have been conscious of my responsibility to write of and with others in ways which preserved *their* sense of the research process and *their* feelings and thoughts. I have a reluctance to speak on behalf of Others, yet I do not want to retreat into a comforting abdication of authorial responsibility. The decentring of my self/ves as author through an acknowledgement of intertextuality must include a relationship with the empirically generated research texts, the texts of participants. If this is the case then to critique the work for including 'unanalyzed data' would be to misread the intention of the work. *By necessity* the work is multiple and transgressive in

its synthesis/refused-synthesis of coherent and contrasting themes. There can be no final reconciliation. There can be no tidy packaging of discordances.

Such a staging of intertextuality with a multiple excess of selves for the researcher and participants is in line with Patti Lather's (1991) plea to present materials which can bear 're-analysis' by the reader in different ways. Such an approach is another *leaving open of content* that seeks to 'bring the reader into the analysis via a dispersive impulse which fragments univocal authority' (p.91).

### **Scripting Poetry**

'... the *reason* poetry makes nothing happen is because those same old fat cats won't let it'.  
'Who won't let it? Which fat cats? Come on, be precise'.  
'Imprecise fucking fat cats. Movable fat cats. Because poetry's packaged as a late-night slot, a quite minority taste unquote, like water-skiing or goat-fucking or something ...'

Julian Barnes (1980, p.145)

In foregrounding the complexities of re-presentation of hyper-reflexive electronic bricolage as a print text that performs its status as a dynamic shadow, querying both Author and Other, I have developed an approach that includes multiple poem-like sequences. Researchers (e.g. Richardson, 1992, 1994b, 1997; Austin, 1996) have used poetry to represent qualitative research materials because of poetry's qualities of not shying away from either ambiguity or indeterminacy, and because of poetry's cultural associations with

communicating 'the emotional'.<sup>12</sup> Researchers have also used poetry to express other aspects of the research process. For example, Kay O'Connor's (1996) *Glossary of validities*, where she addresses the elusive and complex issues of validity with/in the postmodern, and Joyce Stalker's (1998) *(L)earning a living in adult education*, which reflects upon her development as a feminist and academic and discusses the difficulties of persuading an academic journal to accept poetic text. Laurel Richardson (1992, 1993) has also written about these difficulties of finding a space to be published, and of how 'violating the norms of sociological production and dissemination' (Richardson, 1992, p.126) induced powerful emotional reactions in some readers/audience members. With/in the postmodern the use of poetry is important in unsettling expectations of what constitutes acceptable 'academic knowledge'.<sup>13</sup> It foregrounds not only its own constructedness but also the dominant role of the prose trope in constituting knowledge:

When we read or hear poetry, we are continually nudged into recognizing that the text has been constructed. But all texts are constructed- prose ones, too; therefore, poetry helps problematize reliability, validity, and 'truth'.

Laurel Richardson (1994a, p.522)

Research generated poetry is an 'admitted re-arrangement of found material' (Arnold, 1994, p.3). The poetry arises from the qualitative research

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<sup>12</sup> It is pertinent here to recall Gregory Ulmer's (1989) point that emotion is not currently absent from academic discourse it is just that it is limited to the pleasures of recognition.

<sup>13</sup> See Michael Schwalbe's (1995) criticism of 'sociological poets' and Laurel Richardson's (1996c) response.

materials. In crafting poems from the transcriptions of interviews, I *do* something *with* data, rather than *saying* something *about* it. These poems all use the words as transcribed, in the same order, with no additions, with no extra repetitions and with the emphasis as heard on the tape recordings.<sup>14</sup> I have also written some poems arising from my reflections upon the research process (throughout the thesis as text these are printed in Times New Roman font, whilst those poems arising from 'data' appear as Courier font). This poetic scripting resists the desire for analytic certainty, decentering both the texts of researcher/author and the texts of participants. It foregrounds the negotiation of meaning between researcher and participants, and invites the reader into the text in order to take part in this. I believe that poetry acts to highlight issues around integrating the researcher into the text whilst simultaneously asking what it means with/in the postmodern to 'give voice' to research participants. I am alert to the danger of inadvertently silencing research participants by attempting to encourage 'alternative' modes of expression (this is an acute concern in a research project attempting to undermine the dominance of modernist tales). I need to be cautious that in acting to facilitate research participants to compose stories of more self-conscious construction I am not guilty of imposing an inappropriately 'better' discourse. Yet, there are particular reasons too why 'this place called Rape Crisis' is amenable to the creation of poetry-like sequences as part of a research process. There is a tradition of creative writing, including poetic writing, by survivors of sexual abuse (e.g. Bass and Thornton, 1991, Malone, Farthing and Marce, 1996), frequently self-help books for survivors

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<sup>14</sup> In chapter 5, I also generate some prose text using a similar approach but mingling the texts of different participants to form a single narrative piece.

include poems (e.g. Walsh and Liddy, 1989, Bass and Davis, 1990) and books directed toward counsellors and other helpers of survivors of sexual violence (e.g. McIntee 1992). Poetry is a way that women who are, or who work with, survivors of sexual violence are used to seeing everyday experiences re-presented. Thus, for the research participants, the re-presenting of experience as poetry text is not some retreat into a specialist and excluding discourse. Indeed, many of the reservations that women did express were not 'to do' with the poetry but rather related to the expectations that they had with regard to 'academic research':

Before I even opened your file, it is useful to note that I had certain expectations about the poetry - based partly on you and partly on the assumptions for requirements of PhD work, i.e., what I am about to read will be obscure, abstruse, fragmented, not easily understood unless thought about very hard.

Well I was wrong, and perhaps because I was wrong, that much more taken aback by the impact the poetry had on me. There were very few pieces where I didn't feel 'oh yesss, that's it. . . that's Righhht . . . a little like distilled drops of my own experience and/or my experience of others' experience, bottled . . . and hence very potent . . . small glasses of Cointreau spring to mind . . .

Letter from 'Norma' a research participant (spaced full stops in the original).

My previous exposure to poetry as a feminist political expression has undoubtedly influenced my acceptance of it within the research process. My position is akin to that adopted by with Trinh Minh-ha (1992) in relation to the politics of using poetry (in her case she is writing of poetry in anti-racist work rather than related to sexual violence). I agree that we need to carry this awareness of the poetic to our research work in order to acknowledge that theory can relate intimately to poetry:

Theorists tend to react strongly against poetry today because for them, poetry is nothing but a place where subjectivity is consolidated and where language is estheticized (such as building vocabulary and rhyming beautiful lines). Whereas poetry is also the place from which many people of color voice their struggle. Consider Cuban and African poetry, for example. . . . So poetical language does become stale and self-indulgent when it serves an arts-for-art's-sake purpose, but it can also be the site where language is at its most radical in its refusal to take itself for granted.

Trinh Minh-ha (1992, p.154)

I must also stress the ways in which these poems have been generated from electronic text. In using transcripts in this way, I am following Gregory Ulmer's (1989) injunction to make space in the development of research methods for patterning as a valid approach to processing empirical material. The following poem shows the fluidity of this process:

poems arise from transcripts  
arise from transcripts in electronic form  
arise from the placement of text on screen  
words are cut, moved, lost, re-gained  
the on/of screen is plastic, mutable, mutating  
words dance, words sway and flow  
fold,  
and stick together.  
cohere, adhere as only the screen allows  
cleave to the transcript  
(and yet invent another way to know)  
moving beyond the lives of individuals  
a slippage of/in text  
distils the embodied to the collective



Poetry acts to dissimulate singularity and individualism (Martin, 1992). Here the words of the interview transcript become units of invention. They arrive on the screen as re-presentations of utterances from an embodied individual, yet leave with the illusion of presence unmasked:

[T]he exploration of new complex subjectivities and problematizing of the subject in contemporary theory can be best carried out through poetical language - as long as poetical language is not equated with a mere aestheticizing tool nor practised as a place to consolidate a 'subjective' self. In poetry, the 'I' can *never* be said to simply personify an individual.

Trinh Minh-ha (1992, p.121)

Scripting these poems as electronic hypertext requires that I attend to the patterning the role of invention, the shift from hermeneutics (interpretation and definition) to euretics (invention):

The definition and explanation of euretics are entrusted to miniaturization, treating concepts, arguments, and descriptions as if they were composed of that material that, when immersed in water for a certain time, expands dramatically to ten times its original size. The reader of such a piece is active, then, not as a decoder, but in the manner of playing with this toy, made in Japan, a packet of tiny dinosaurs, except that in our case it is not so clear what the items (the scenes, the objects, the arguments) will become when they are immersed in a new medium. On the side of making a text capable of changing scale, and even of changing modality, the assumption is that whatever my intentions are the very act of condensation and displacement involved in writing or packing alters the value of the materials.

Gregory Ulmer (1991, p.3)

These poems are part of feminism's drive to reorganise the boundaries of knowledge. Here 'my feminism' comes to be shaped in the writing as a bias in

the text. The text is cut on the bias as a piece of cloth is cut on the bias to fashion the final garment to drape in the correct manner. To script poems is to displace communication and to instead evoke understandings by means of inference. That is to say to render into text the conductive process of chorography. These poems are no simple index. They are 'the map' to a research space that substitutes chora for topos. The poems relate to the story of Rape Crisis training in such a way that the reader might be enticed to switch strategies 'to stop trying to understand what the author means and decide instead to make something out of it' (Ulmer, 1991, p.4). For indeed this 'making something out of it' is the very approach I take as I script the text following Hélène Cixous' injunction to 'write where it vibrates'.

I write where it vibrates. . . There is sending, dispatching, there is jostling together and reverberating; it echoes through our memory, through our body, through foreign memories with which we communicate through subconsciouses.

Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber (1997, p.68)

And this is intimately related to the reading, for poetry crafted in this way generates a need for a reflexive form of writing that turns qualitative research texts and theoretical texts back 'onto each other' (Denzin, 1997, p.xii):

For us to hear the vibrations, there must be silence. Poetry works with silence: it writes a verse followed by a silence, a stanza, surrounded by silence. In other words, there is time to hear all the vibrations.

Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber (1997, p.66)

## Afterthought

Subj: A little light reading  
Date: 6/19/97 10:16:15AM  
From: JeanRath  
To: anon@univ.ac.uk

In a message dated 6/17/97 2:47:27PM, you write:

>If you accept / believe that you write and 'play' to different audiences  
>..... what's the problem with writing and 'presenting' your PhD  
>thesis in a conventional academic style?! Are they not just another  
>audience who need to understand your work in a certain way? Are  
>there not other forums at which you are at full 'liberty' to write and 'be'  
>how you want (and prefer)? .....

Don't you understand anything about crusades? :-) Unfortunately given that writing is the mode of 'analysis' (or rather invention - see Greg Ulmer, 1985, 1989, 1994 etc.) it becomes somewhat difficult to remain within conventional boundaries. Particularly as the technique is performative rather than critical (ultimately a problem I know since a PhD is 'supposed' to develop your ability to think and write critically!). Plus if you know of other forums where I can write what I want please let me know!

So, the short answer is that I have moved a long way toward the conventional thesis genre, but I cannot move all the way or the ground on which the whole thesis is constructed will collapse (i.e. the premise that content and form are inseparable).

Jean

## Intertext:

### *breathing space*

I struggle a great deal with the phone, because I think the telephone *is very dangerous* to our lives in that it gives us such an illusory sense of *connecting* . . . I have to remind myself that talking to someone on the phone is not the same as having a conversation where you see them and smell them.

bell hooks (1994, p.228)

*The Rape Crisis Centre works through with by the telephone.*

*There are two, one maroon (line 1), the other grey (line 2).*

*There is an answering machine. Only a few of the volunteer workers know how to use it.*

*Of course there are face-to-face counselling sessions.*

*But the route to counselling, the 'way in' is via the phone for the overwhelming majority of women.*

On the telephone I hear your breath, - all your breaths that sigh between the words and around the words. Without the telephone, no breath.

On the telephone, you breathe me. Friends speak to each other on the telephone. The far and the near. The outside in the inside. The telephone is the imitation of the loving aspiration to be the one in the other. This is why we love the telephone cord so much: it is our umbilical cord. It is our windpipe.

Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber (1997, p.49)

Supervisor: What you are doing - it's not quite ethnography is it?

## Chapter 3

### **FRAMING THE ISSUES: *What is this place called Rape Crisis?***

we are always adrift. We respond straight ahead and think sideways. Always in the process of betraying (ourselves), of leaving (ourselves). We 'take decisions': in a stroke, we come down on one side - we cut out a part of ourselves. We are tortuous, impenetrable. We do the thing we just decided not to do. We are the place of a structural unfaithfulness. To write we must be faithful to this unfaithfulness. To write in volts. In volts.

Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber (1997, p.9)

Although we usually think about writing as a mode of 'telling' about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of 'knowing' - a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it.

Laurel Richardson (1994a, p.516)

This chapter is in three parts. The first part, *Specific times, specific places*, is a review of the Rape Crisis movement in England, and the practice of Rape Crisis initial counsellor training. It includes an introduction to the Rape Crisis Centre where the research was carried out. The second part, *Found Material*, is shaped from the mystorical hypertext. The mystory begins with those moments that define the issue in question: 'a turning point in the person's life. . . . The sting of memory locates the moment, the beginning; once located, this moment is dramatically described and fashioned into a text to be performed. This moment is then surrounded by those cultural representations and voices that define the experience in question' (Denzin, 1997, p.117). And remember that the issue in question, the target, is both feminist doctoral research and the stories of Rape Crisis pedagogy. This part of the chapter uses evocative auto/ethnographic techniques (Ellis and Bochner, 1996; Richardson, 1997) to explore the storied nature of context and to perform a writing practice that acknowledges the intellectual and the emotional labour of research/writing. The third part of the text is in the form of *boxes*, which disrupt the other two texts. Here text is physically smaller and bolder. These are inspired by Lather and Smithies (1997) 'factoid' boxes but are not restricted to texts which would traditionally be defined as 'factual'.<sup>1</sup> These three parts open up processes of dialogue about certain aspects of the research 'context' which are frequently ignored in more traditional research accounts. These three parts are each within

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<sup>1</sup> Later, I realise that there is another influence. I buy a copy of Germaine Greer's (1999) new book *the whole woman*. She peppers her text with boxed quotations from diverse sources. And then I recall an earlier text, with a similar structure. When I was fourteen I bought a copy of *The Female Eunuch* (Greer, 1971). When I tell the story of 'my life', I speak of this purchase as an epiphanal moment in the development of my feminist politics/activism. My introduction to feminism is haunted by the use of such boxes to 'break' the text.

themselves multiple. These three parts recognise that to construct context is to both violate and enable the research project. Overall, and within each part, the text takes the form of a 'layered account' (Rambo Ronai, 1992, 1995, 1996). Rambo Ronai (1995) argues that the layered account resembles the *durée*, 'the stream of consciousness experienced in everyday life' (p.396). This has a temporal momentum, but it has a rhythm beyond that of any simplistic chronological cataloguing. This chapter is the shadow of an informant - it is a scripted performance of the electronic contour of one reading of the research hypertext. As the stream of conductive, 'electronic' thought, and not of consciousness, (although I will admit to each *lexia* having touched upon my consciousness) it is intimately related to the *durée*.

Carol Rambo Ronai has used the layered account technique to interweave the different selves of the writer throughout the text. For example, in her piece *My Mother is Mentally Retarded* (Rambo Ronai, 1996) she switches between (to name some but not all) the fractured recollections of her mother as she remembers experiencing her as a child, the relevant sociological literature, media representations, family history, and her own relationships with other family members, past and current. In my-own-layered account, I interweave different 'selves' and different 'voices' constructing 'context' in order to question taken-for-granted-meanings of context. I am suspicious of 'context' as it implies a bounded entity that exists in some objective time and place and can therefore be entered and exited (this is akin to the difficulties that ethnographers have expressed over the concept of 'the field'). To provide context is not to magically compress the research project, to say all that can be said, to capture some

essential meaningful quality. To speak then of 'context bound research' is to acknowledge the dangers of the prescriptive stipulation of context with its essentialist connotations of a drive to reduce ambiguity. To formalise context is to delimit in advance, to permit attention to that which is included yet simultaneously to exclude. Context is a process of authorisation. Context places constraints that stipulate a form of analysis in advance. Context places constraints that stipulate the form that a subject can take within that delineated space. Context, is indeed 'a con' of the text. This 'place called Rape Crisis' is inscriptive. It does not equate to a temporal, spatial or social unity. I cannot refuse context, for we all need 'somewhere' from which to write, but in foregrounding that it is problematic, that it is itself open to deconstruction, I am acknowledging the particular danger of something one cannot not use. 'My' Rape Crisis context is written as a forced choice:

'The situation of the forced choice consists in the fact that the subject must freely choose the community to which he already belongs, independent of his choice - *he must choose what is already given to him*'.

Gregory Ulmer (1994, pp.110-111, quoting from Zizek)

I can write toward my own premises yet I cannot recover the moment of this choice that never *happens*. As I skirt the story of Rape crisis pedagogy, I ask myself repeatedly 'what are the foundational myths of the Rape Crisis Centre?' However, it becomes increasingly appropriate to ask what are the foundational myths of this research project? This thesis chapter addresses both of these questions - it is (as Ulmer (1994) suggests of his work) like performing a tableau vivant (for Ulmer from *Beau Geste*, for me, from the 'collective story'



(Richardson, 1990a) of Rape Crisis Training) as part of a follies show. As Ulmer emphasises, the important part is the rehearsal (for me the practice of research) and not the performance (the thesis text). The rehearsal is the 'work around the margins' which works in parallel to the play but is clearly different from it. The rehearsal attends to the 'paratext', that is 'all the materials generated around and about the text' (Ulmer, 1994, p.119). Paratext is necessary for rehearsal but not for production. Ulmer insists that we ask what happens when they are incorporated into the production? This chapter performs a mediating function (perhaps as an auto/ethnography?); it prompts me to become conscious of relations with all those Others who dictate the premises of my judgements.

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>Jean</b>   | <b>Who's we?</b>   |
| <b>Audrey</b> | <b>The Centre.</b>   |
| <b>Jean</b>   | <b>(Laughs)</b>  |
| <b>Audrey</b> | <b>(Laughs) The Centre as a whole.</b>                     |
| <b>Jean</b>   | <b>The <u>badqe</u> the Centre (laughs).</b>               |
| <b>Audrey</b> | <b>Well I can never remember who's around at the time.</b> |
| <b>Jean</b>   | <b>Oh right, <u>right</u>. I see.</b>                      |

In the layered account part of the process is always to invite the reader into the text to fill the empty spaces, which are deliberately left for her/him to construct her own interpretation. 'The readers reconstruct the subject, thus

projecting more of themselves into it, and taking more away from it' (Rambo Ronai, 1995, p.396). This layered account moves between many different positions of presenting the Rape Crisis as a location for research. Whilst this responds to the question 'what is this place called Rape Crisis?', no answer is provided. None of these different positions is privileged as 'the truth'. Although the reading together of these positions may produce for the reader a temporary and strategic truth, that makes the piece contextually meaningful for her/him. That is to say, the meaning of the text resides not simply in the text but *in relation to the text*. The juxtaposed textual elements may provoke the reader to seek unification or s/he may be content to view their scattered parts. Gregory Ulmer (1985) argues that discontinuities between textual segments may invite a positive pedagogic deployment of the text, where the appropriate cognition is one appropriate to/necessary for the knowing of an experimental art text, film narrative or dramatic performance, rather than more conventional academic genres. For the reader to deploy the text in this way is to recognise that reading/understanding is an ongoing process in relation to the text. The layered account must contain substantive content for it to be meaningful, however this content is left open as an invitation to the reader to participate actively.

**The anniversary of my rape is the brooding axis of my year, more significant than my birthday. After all, I don't remember my own birth struggle. But I remember every second of those three hours. Like most rapists he was never caught, tried or imprisoned. Like all survivors, I am growing accustomed to living with an anniversary that can be marked only by silence, a silence that tastes a lot like shame.**

**Nancy Raine (1999, p.6)**

I have used hyper-reflexive electronic bricolage to shape interview generated (hyper)texts linked with/around historical documents related to Rape Crisis. The expectation of active readership permits the layered account to present diverse ways of knowing a context without falling prey to reification of experience or historical fact. The Rape Crisis Centre cannot be homogenised or subsumed into some all-embracing place/identity. The layers of text are not to be reduced to contradiction, they are richly supplementary. No one account within the text is privileged. This is a technique that recognises the fluidity of meaning within storied experience (Richardson, 1997). Writing this text I accomplish what Rambo Ronai (1995, pp.398-399) calls 'an acceptable-to-me-for-the-moment portrayal'. Of course, as I type this moment has passed. My intentions cease to matter as they buckle and crack over time. I cannot provide an authorial centre to this text and by stepping back I invite my reader in.

*No sooner I write . . . it is  
not true.  
And yet I write hanging on to  
Truth.*

**Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber ( 1997, p.10)**

When I write about the Rape Crisis Centre and reflect upon my self/ves in this place, I shuffle between the imagined now and the then in my mind. I am in danger of objectifying my past selves as I write. When I write as 'I was' I invent a character from my past to populate my text: 'The person we have been is now an "I was", the character from our past. She follows us, but at a distance.

And sometimes she can even become a character in one of our books' (Cixous and Calle-Gruber, 1997, p.138). And so I write and re-write in order to move closer to a something that I am uncertain whether it exists. I am always the first reader of my text, the first person to hold a dialogue with the written words. This layered account as *my* layered account speaks directly to both my memoried experience of the past and my own experiences of the text. As a layered account, it may speak to a reader's experiences of both personal educational history and of the article text.

**A responsible, reflexive text embodies the following characteristics:**

- **It announces its own politics and evidences a political consciousness.**
- **It interrogates the realities it represents.**
- **It invokes the teller's story in the history that is told.**
- **It makes the audience responsible for interpretation.**
- **It resists the temptation to become an object of consumption.**
- **It resists all dichotomies (male-female, etc.).**
- **It foregrounds difference, not conflict.**
- **It uses multiple voices, emphasising language as silence, the grain of the voice, tone, inflection, pauses, silences, and repetitions.**
- **Silence is presented as a form of resistance.**

**Trinh Minh-ha (1991, p.188)**

If we are to recognise a need to change the subject of our writing to acknowledge the fragmentary and momentary and problematic issue of context, of this place we call Rape Crisis then a straightforward linear narrative simply will not do. To meaningfully explore what it might mean to produce context that 'faces down' its authority requires not merely a drawing upon personal

experience and emotionality, but also a place for other methods re-presentation.

A layering of material invites the reader to place together these multiple parts.

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| <b>MY RAPE CRISIS CURRICULUM VITAE</b> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1984</b>                            | Train and then work as a counsellor for a pro-abortion choice telephone help line, share offices with a Rape Crisis Centre consider training as a Rape Crisis counsellor. |
| <b>1985</b>                            | Move to a new area. In response to an advertisement in the local newspaper, attend a Rape Crisis information evening.   |
| <b>1985-86</b>                         | Train as Rape Crisis counsellor; begin counselling; join management group.  |
| <b>1986</b>                            | Move back to previous area return to abortion counselling.  |
| <b>1987</b>                            | Move again; rejoin Rape Crisis Centre as counsellor and collective member.  |
| <b>1989</b>                            | Cease counselling as birth of first child approaches.   |
| <b>1989-92</b>                         | Not actively counselling but carry out some training work and occasional telephone support for counsellors.   |
| <b>1992</b>                            | Accept paid work as Rape Crisis co-ordinator. This involves administrative, counselling and training duties.  |
| <b>1992-93</b>                         | Member of Rape Crisis national federating group.  |
| <b>1995</b>                            | Leave paid Rape Crisis work to accept post at Warwick University. Continue to be involved in collective and facilitate aspects of the training course.                    |
| <b>1996</b>                            | Run workshop on survivors in remote and rural areas at Rape Crisis Federation for England and Wales launch in Manchester.   |
| <b>1997 onwards</b>                    | Continue with Rape Crisis training work and collective work focusing on future developments.  |

## **Specific times, specific places: contextualising research within the Rape Crisis 'Movement'.**

**Women live with the fear of male violence as part of our everyday lives. We adapt to it in ways that we take for granted and often hardly notice. Most of us, if we are walking down the street alone, will be instantly aware of a man's approach. You may cross the road, go into a shop or even take care not to walk alone in the first place. You may walk on, apparently untroubled, but not feeling relaxed any more**

**The London Rape Crisis Centre (1999, p.183)**

### **The National Situation.<sup>2</sup>**

Rape Crisis Centres in the United Kingdom provide free of charge services for women and children who are survivors of sexual violence. Liz Kelly (1988) defines sexual as including 'any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of degrading or hurting her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact'. In the early years Rape Crisis Centres concentrated on being an initial reference point for recently raped women in immediate crisis, however, the services provided rapidly broadened. Most Centres now offer telephone crisis counselling, face-to-face counselling and on-going support and information to survivors of rape, incest, child sexual abuse, sexual assault and sexual harassment. Amanda Root and Sue Davies

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<sup>2</sup>National statistics are taken from two reviews of Rape Crisis Centres and Rape Crisis training provision carried out during the early 1990's (Amanda Root and Sue Davies, 1995; Joanne Moore and Gill Whitting, 1993).

(1995) found that Centres reported the majority of women using their services to be survivors of long-term sexual abuse.

Root and Davies (1995) found that Rogerian and/or person centred counselling was the most frequently mentioned approach to counselling. However, other approaches are used including Egan, Gestalt and art therapy. Many Centres are eclectic selecting the most appropriate method for the survivor seeking help. The overall emphasis is to allow the 'voices' of survivors to be heard within an accepting and empathetic environment. Some Centres describe their approach as being one of 'listening' rather than 'counselling'. In the context of developing helping skills, it is important to note that the use of the term 'survivor' rather than 'victim' is seen as an important historical shift in the Rape Crisis movement. In the naming of 'survivor', the emphasis is upon the positive abilities and responses of women who live through sexual violence.<sup>3</sup>

#### ***DRAGONS***

**Once upon a time there was a little girl who believed in dragons. Everyone told her the dragons were not there but that she imagined them. Her teachers said that she had a vivid imagination and patted her on the back. Her mother said that dragons only existed in fairy stories and she should forget them.**

**But the little girl knew that there were dragons because she had seen them and heard them and smelt them and they had touched her with their evil-ness. And so the little girl also knew that she was evil and bad and that she was like the dragons. And she was afraid.**

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to deny the ongoing debate surrounding the use of these terms (e.g. Armstrong, 1996, pp.30-31; Plummer, 1995, pp.75-77).



And she tried to run away from the dragons and find a place to hide. First of all she ran off into the sun and the grass and the trees, and she gathered the flowers and brought them home, for she thought that their beauty and scent would make the dragons go away.

But the flowers died and the grass withered on the ash and it grew dark.

Then she tried to be very quiet and still and good, thinking that she could fool the dragons and make them think she had gone away. But the dragons knew that she was bad and they found her, smelling her evil-ness from far away.

Sometimes she just pretended they weren't there at all - after all everyone said dragons were only in stories and weren't real at all and she had only imagined them. So she pretended that they had all gone away, flying off into the sunset like cowboys. And she made an imaginary world where there were no dragons and everyone loved everyone else and they didn't hurt each other and there was someone special just for her. And he was beautiful and kind with honeyed eyes and a soft voice. And he loved her.

But no matter how hard she imagined that the imaginary dragons were imaginary, she always found them again waiting round corners to pounce on her with their smell and their noise and their evil-ness.

And the little girl knew an angel who was good and kind and she laughed all the time and she loved the little girl very much. When the little girl was with the angel she felt safe for a while, but even the angel couldn't make the dragons go away. They always came back and found the little girl. For the dragons were bad and the little girl was bad too.

And every day the little girl hoped the dragons would just go away and leave her alone. But they never did. And little by little the little girl grew more like a dragon and little by little the little girl died and the dragons remained.

And everyone told the grown up girl that there were no such things as dragons. But she knew different for she had seen them and heard them and they had touched her and made her bad. And although this is a fairy story it has no happy ever after for the little girl knows that there are no such things as happy endings.

A story written by an adult survivor of childhood abuse, quoted in Jeannie McIntee (1992)

Fewer than 25% of Centres are able to offer a 24-hour service, 83% undertake outreach work and just over 50% provide facilitation for self-help survivor groups. Only 12% of Centres are able to offer counselling in a language other than English. Wherever feasible provision is 'demand led' with workers adjusting their counselling hours according to local needs. Even so several Centres are unable to meet demand and after initial telephone contact operate waiting lists for face-to-face counselling. This work is achieved mainly through the use of part-time unpaid volunteers. Approximately one third of Centres rely solely on volunteer labour, whilst 90% have some volunteers, with an average of thirteen per Centre. A small number of paid staff are employed, 52% of these are part-time, the majority working between ten and twenty hours each week. The 1993 Charities Evaluation Services report (Moore and Whitting, 1993) found that Rape Crisis Centres tend to rely on short-term insecure funding sources. One fifth of Centres were principally self-financing, and over half were primarily funded by local authorities. National statutory bodies and health authorities were also important sources of funding. The majority of Centres felt that the lack of funding limited the services they were able to provide. Root and Davies (1995) report that 58% of Rape Crisis Centres survive on a budget of less than £10,000 per year. Clearly without volunteers the majority of Rape Crisis Centres would not exist.

All Rape Crisis Centres accept self-referrals from survivors. One third accept referrals from the police and hospitals and half from local authority statutory services. Most Centres are active in their local communities through taking part in locally based information exchange with other organisations and

approximately half have local training and conference links. In 1993 only 40% were found to be part of formal regional, national or international networks. Centres believe that resource limitations mean that their levels of provision are inadequate for local need. Lack of resources for child survivors, people with special needs and survivors from minority ethnic groups were highlighted by many groups. The geographical coverage provided by Centres is also a cause for concern.

*The nature of founding and implications for structure.*

1996 saw the establishment of Federations for Rape Crisis Centres in England and Wales, and for those of Ireland and Scotland. However, historically Rape Crisis Centres have been founded over the last twenty years by local women in response to needs of the local community. Often this has occurred in response to particular locally publicised rape and sexual abuse cases or court judgements. This local feminist activism is set within a broader feminist politics which has sought to raise awareness of the issues surrounding rape and sexual abuse (see Mayes, Currie, Macleod, Gillies, and Warden (1992) for a review; Olafson, Corwin and Summit (1993) for a modern history of public and professional awareness of child sexual abuse; see Armstrong (1996) for difficulties with the 'outing' of childhood sexual abuse in particular). The local generative power driving the specific founding of particular Rape Crisis Centre's has produced over one hundred Centres in the United Kingdom. Thus, although each Centre has evolved from women's experiences and understandings of sexual violence (particularly the recognition of the historical silencing of

survivors) Rape Crisis Centres have their own individual characteristics, which have grown in response to local circumstances. However, service provision is patchy (the majority of Centres are located in southeast England and in metropolitan areas), and Centres tend to function in an isolated way. Indeed a survey conducted in 1992 (Moore and Whitting, 1993) reports that only fifty percent of Centres agreed that a Rape Crisis *Movement* existed, although eighty-six percent felt that it should be a goal to achieve this sense of common purpose. The establishment of Federations may now act to generate a greater feeling of cohesion between Rape Crisis Centres. Although Centres remain keen to maintain autonomy and stress that the Federation should act to cohere rather than control.<sup>4</sup> However, for the purposes of context it is important to note the disparate nature of Rape Crisis Centres and the individualistic ways in which different Centres have developed training resources to meet local needs.

**ORGANISATION OF RAPE CRISIS AND SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRES**

self-help group - 7%  
independent committee - 36%  
committee linked to funder - 5%  
linked to statutory service - 2%  
line management to 'parent' organisation - 2%  
Collective (full consensus) - 62%  
Other collective - 7%  
Other - 5%

Joanne Moore and Gill Whitting (1993)

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the Federation's *Aims and Membership Criteria* document (1996, no page number) states that it 'exists to provide a range of facilities and resources to enable the continuance and development of Rape Crisis Groups throughout Wales and England. The Federation does not seek to direct or control individual groups'.

The 1993 research found that nearly two thirds of Rape Crisis Centres adopted a collective structure, with the remainder operating under an independent management committee. This research developed a simple typology of Rape Crisis Centre characteristics (reproduced below as *Table 1*). This typology can also be taken to illustrate the organisational pressures toward 'professionalisation' of the voluntary sector which are often driven by funding bodies (Root and Davies, 1995). Stephanie Riger (1994) in her survey of feminist organisations in the United States remarks on the 'press toward bureaucracy that accompanies growth' (p.295), and feminist organisations' tendencies to evolve toward more mainstream structures as they expand.

Although not United Kingdom based, it is pertinent to provide a summary of Riger's work here as it provides a useful conceptual framing of the pressures influencing Rape Crisis development over the last two decades. Riger suggests that diverse feminist organisations (e.g. women's shelters, law firms, rape centres, women's studies departments) confront similar issues as they grow. She suggests four stages of growth: creation, collectivity, formalisation and the elaboration of structure.

**Table 1. Rape Crisis Centre Typology (adapted from Joanne Moore and Gill Whitting, 1993, p.14.)**

| <b>STAGE ONE</b>  | <b>STAGE TWO</b>  | <b>STAGE THREE</b>   |
|---|---|--|
| Small group of volunteers (6 -8 women)  | Acquire funding for paid workers  | Paid workers   |
| Fund raising activities for resourcing needs  | Local authority or statutory funding plus fund-raising                            | Funding from statutory services<br><br>Move towards a service provision agreement with social services or health authorities     |
| Collective decision making  | Management committee structure to support collective                              | Committee structure for management   |
| Part-time telephone counselling (e.g. 18 hours per week)  | Increased number of hours for counselling   | Increased number of hours for counselling  |
| May not have premises   | Use of premises   | Enhanced premises  |
|   | Provision of face-to-face counselling; provision of survivors' self-help groups   | Expanded service provision   |
| Some liaison with other agencies  | Enhanced campaigning role and greater outreach activities                         | Formal management and enhanced roles for community liaison officers/outreach workers and finance officers/full-time fund raisers |
| Infrequent formal training sessions (perhaps annual), associated with recruitment of new volunteers | More frequent training sessions and development of more formal training materials | Well developed and resourced volunteer/counsellor training and development programmes  |
| Internal development of on-going training through group support and on-the-job training             | Greater development work re recruitment and training of volunteers                |  |
|   | Use of external training courses on specific issues                               | Use of external training courses   |

*The Creation Stage* marks the establishment of the organisation. A need is perceived for a feminist service to the community (support for survivors of rape or sexual abuse in this instance). This is an energetic, exciting time for the organisation's members. The women involved are highly committed and voluntarily donate their labour. Riger suggests that individuals tend to be 'risk takers' who 'like to maintain personal control', 'disdain managerial activities' and favour 'frequent, informal, and face-to-face' communications. The organisation has to maintain its feminist identity to retain volunteers, but it is already under pressure to move toward mainstream principles and practice if it is to secure widespread community credibility and funding.

If the organisation manages to survive and grow it enters *The Collectivity Stage*. Now the women are freer to concentrate on delivering the service and are less taken up by the dictates of day-to-day survival. This stage is typified by 'a relatively informal structure in which jobs and authority are often shared among group members' (p.281). Members all participate fully and decisions are typically reached by consensus. Riger warns that women need to work hard to maintain a collectivist structure as there is a tendency for informal hierarchies of influence to develop. She also notes the dilemma facing a feminist group which needs to stay small to facilitate women-centred collective working practices, but which seeks to grow in order to provide a wider service.

*The Formalisation Stage*, arrives gradually as the organisation's policies and practices are institutionalised to facilitate communications between members of a growing workforce, the provision of a quality service and the procurement

of external funding. At this stage, original founders may leave rather than compromise their ways of working. The loss of staff exacerbates the need to formalise structures as the need develops for the organisation rather than individuals to clarify expectations and relate the history of the group to new members. The mix of paid and volunteer staff is a further pressure toward institutionalisation, that is to say (p.289): 'The press for a more differentiated structure in feminist organizations may stem from a desire for greater clarity about the division of labor rather than a need for many levels of authority'. The challenge becomes one of adhering to feminist principles whilst selecting which elements of bureaucracy are necessary for organisational growth and survival.

The *Elaboration of Structure* 'is characterized by expansion, delegation, and co-ordination as well as renewal and generativity' (p.290). Collaborative structures may develop as coalitions between similar organisations. A coalition is able to be politically active in ways that individual organisations cannot. Thus, the Rape Crisis Federations are an elaboration of structures for locally based Centres as is Women's Aid for individual Shelters.

Riger's stages are clearly echoed in the move from Stage One to Stage Three in Moore and Whitting's typology. With the recent establishment of the Rape Crisis Federation serving to initiate the Elaboration of Structure for the Rape Crisis 'movement'.



### **The Local Situation**

The Centre that took part in the study was founded in 1985, in particular response to the rape of a local woman, but with an awareness of the situation for women in general. Although numbers fluctuate on average there are ten active volunteers. At the time of the course on which the individual interview research is focused (1992-1993), I had been in post for two months as a part-time paid co-ordinator, although I had previously worked at the Centre as a volunteer counsellor. Constitutionally a Management Committee ran the Centre, this was seen by founding members as a necessary device to achieve charitable status and access to funding. In practice a collective decision making group operated, consisting of all the counsellors and myself.

**A fifth of centres mentioned that they were unable to advertise due to a lack of resources to provide for the demand for [extra] counselling [that advertising would create].**

**Joanne Moore and Gill Whitting (1993, p.19)**

The Centre could be seen to be positioned as having recently transited from Stage One to Stage Two (of Moore and Whitting's typology) at the time of the course, which generated the participants for the individual interviews. Although clearly in Riger's Collectivity Stage in 1992, the shift had begun toward the Formalisation Stage, consolidated by my appointment. By the time of this research (1995-1997), the shift was well underway.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> That the course took place at this time of change may be significant in understanding the context in which research participants received the training

**RAPE CRISIS CENTRES' TARGET SERVICE GROUP**

**Survivors of adult sexual abuse - 100%**  
**survivors of child sexual abuse - 95%**  
**survivors from minority ethnic groups - 26%**  
**survivors with disabilities - 31%**  
**lesbian survivors - 29%**  
**Other - 10%**

**Joanne Moore and Gill Whitting (1993, Appendix 1)**

The Centre offers telephone and face-to-face counselling to survivors of sexual violence, on a self-referral basis. The counselling adopts an eclectic feminist perspective and other services are also provided to survivors, e.g. advice on specialist services such as the genitourinary clinic, legal procedures; confidential assistance to those supporting survivors; outreach work, external training services. Funding is mainly from the local authority, supplemented by a small amount of money from fund-raising activities.

**Training: the national picture**

The review carried out by the Charities Evaluation Services (Moore and Whitting, 1993) found great variation in the time spent on initial training. From

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which they later reflected upon during the interviews. Riger (1994, p.283) suggests that volunteers at this organisation stage 'may not have the same sense of mission that the original members had', this may have implications for the way they received and later storied their experiences of initial counsellor training.

30 to 420 hours for paid staff, and up to 500 for volunteer staff. The average was 97 hours for paid staff, and 61 hours for volunteer staff. The majority of Rape Crisis Centres provided this training internally for volunteer workers, with some outside expertise provided by external speakers. Nearly all Centres provide internal initial training for all staff both paid and unpaid. The majority (95%) of Centres developed their own staff training resources, with 64% saying that external agencies made contributions. Many smaller Centres carry out training on a 'cascade' basis, with the longer serving volunteers training new recruits. All workers received some on-the-job instruction as part of their initial training. Policies of encouraging on-going training and development were in place in 86% of services, although lack of resources limited the ability to participate in the range of external courses. Resource limitations were also seen as contributing to the limited availability of formal supervision for counsellors, although a small number of relatively well funded Centres are able to provide such support for paid staff.

Rape Crisis counsellor training has to be designed primarily to develop competent counsellors. However, it is also self-consciously concerned with the personal development of the individual women involved. In common with most counsellor training courses, it requires participants to go through a process of reflexive learning. However, this is politicised with an awareness of the need to explore common sense ways of understanding the world as permeated with meanings that sustain the disempowerment of women, particularly those who are survivors' of sexual violence. For example, the Rape Crisis Federation *Minimum Standards for Training* document (1997, no page number) requires

Centres to include topics such as 'male power and myths', 'anti-oppressive practice' and 'sexuality awareness, including homophobia, biphobia and heterosexism'. The stated pedagogic intention is to open debate and create spaces for the negotiation of new personal meanings. There is an expectation that wanting to become a counsellor is the opening gambit of a far more complex personal move. Whilst foregrounding that 'there are no right answers', the training allows space for each woman to consider both her own life and approaches to the issues of sexual violence. However, this is constantly undermined by the embeddedness of the training process within the Rape Crisis volunteering system. There may be no 'right answers' but, since the Rape Crisis movement has a particular set of feminist understandings of sexual violence, there are answers that are more appropriate for women working for a Rape Crisis Centre.

**PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF FUNDING RAPE CRISIS AND SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRES**

**Charitable trust or foundation - 12%**

**local authority - 55%**

**health authority - 14%**

**national statutory body - 12%**

**national/local business - 2%**

**self financing/fund-raising - 21%**

**Other - 12%**

*Joanne Moore and Gill Whitting (1993, Appendix 1)*

Patti Lather (1991) emphasises, the pedagogic challenge of the liberatory curriculum is not merely to open these spaces for the exploration of new meanings but to then use them in non-impositional ways. In her exploration of

her university's women's studies programme, Lather focuses on student resistances, rather than dismissing them as false consciousness, to look at pedagogues' impositional tendencies. Her intention is to forge an understanding of the complexity of the interplay between the empowering and the impositional at work in the, supposedly, liberatory classroom. The Rape Crisis trainees' collective story (see chapter 5) is complex, containing elements of acceptance, resistance and of direct response - these responses have multiple meanings to the individual women involved. They are reacting to the Rape Crisis training yet also to the cumulative conditions of their lives, relationships and educational past. This collective story speaks to resistance through both acceptance and rejection of Rape Crisis discourse. Susan Chase (1995) argues that interviewees need to be alert to 'submerged stories' and to invite their telling (see also chapter 4). However, it may be that the type of reflexivity permitted in Rape Crisis training may work against this. Women may be telling a story shaped by the narrative traditions of surviving sexual violence, where the discovery of unconscious knowledge is commonplace (see Michele Davies, 1993, 1995). Of course 'being a survivor' offers a woman a socially structured set of opportunities and constraints. The discovery of unconscious knowledge, the integration into her life complexities and the construction of change as transition all 'fit' snugly with the pedagogic subject of Rape Crisis training. The training, particularly influenced by tales of survival of sexual violence, rejects the unified, monolithic, reified, essentialised subject capable of fully conscious, fully rational action.

Many Rape Crisis volunteers are themselves survivors of sexual violence. This connects with the general debate in the counsellor education literature relating to the parallel processes that trainee counsellors may undergo when working with individuals experiencing similar circumstances. This literature concentrates on issues of family origin, receipt of therapeutic intervention and implications for counsellor practice. A plethora of studies have observed that many counsellors and trainee counsellors come from a 'dysfunctional family-of-origin', and have concentrated on the implications of this for counsellor training, practice and supervision (for examples of empirical studies in this area see: Buelow, Bass and Ackerman, 1994; Lawson and Gaushell, 1991; Nuttall and Jackson, 1994). Reports that are not sympathetic to feminist analyses view the issue of survivor-as-counsellor as problematic. For example, Shirley Emerson (1988) refers to trainee counsellors who are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse as 'walking time bombs' (p.15), and notes that course facilitators should expect some 'explosions'. Rape Crisis Centres reject such moves to problematise the inclusion of survivors (or indeed women who define themselves as 'non-survivors'). Rape Crisis Centres are aware of the need to explicitly and sensitively address training and supervision issues relevant to volunteers who have themselves been abused.

Many years later, I told my friend and lover about the incident. It was like a ghost returning as the familiar grin came to his face and he said, 'You must have been a sexy little girl'.

**Karen Asherah (1991, p.181)**

Pedagogues relating to survivors of sexual violence need to be particularly aware of the complex interplay of trust, knowledge and power during the training. Whilst there is a need to create a secure space for disclosure, if desired, there can be no easy assumption of trust. Nancy Potter (1995) in her discussion of developing a pedagogic approach suitable for survivors of incest notes how difficult it may be for women 'whose histories are imbued with disrespect, violation, and degradation, and whose experiences with persons in positions of authority and trust were detrimental to self-development' (p.70) to trust a figure perceived as imbued with pedagogic authority. Rape Crisis pedagogy attempts to take into account the need to develop a trusting and accepting atmosphere, which is aware of the implications of past abuse for learning relationships and the development of knowledge. Although many counsellor training courses are aware of their therapeutic commitment to students, Rape Crisis training courses are clearly not therapy or support groups. Their primary goal is to train effective counsellors.

- Jean            How did having a survivor identity fit with the training course?
- Zoe            D' you mean (pause) I don't know what you mean (laughs) (sniffs).
- Jean            Right I- I'm trying to ask a question without leading you. That's the problem (pause) Lets be bloody straight about it the extent to which doing the training course was like kind of the icing on the cake for like getting your own stuff sorted?
- Zoe            Yes. (pause) yeah I suppose it was in a lot of ways. Because it just felt like at one point, which a long time ago, I wasn't sure I would ever sort my own 'ead out. But by then I'd sorted my stuff out to do with abuse and things like that. And I suppose in some ways it's like I know there's no right and wrong way to look at things. But there's a comfortable way to look at things, a way to look at things that other women were agreeing with. Yeah. In a feminist sort of a way.
- Jean            Yes.
- Zoe            Things like it's not your fault and all those kinds of issues. And that was quite nice to be with other women who thought that. But then you start puttin' it into practice and talk to other women about it. It certainly felt like (pause) it was a good way, the Rape Crisis thing was a good way of thinking. I'm trying to think of a bloody word (pause) not confidence booster, but it's a word like that. (pause) It was (pause) I suppose it made me feel better. It made me feel good cos I thought I can use this and do something with it. I really have sorted it out, it isn't that I think I sorted it out I really have sorted it out.
- Jean            Right.
- Zoe            I'd done work with other people and work on my own on my own stuff. The training group certainly felt like 'yep I'm really there'. I'm able, ready and able, to talk about this without going 'ooooo my life's terrible'.



Rape Crisis Centres draw a distinction between those women still in significant distress who may be in need of considerable support, and those survivors who are not in crisis but who wish to support others in a similar situation to one in which they had been in the past. Root and Davies (1995) found that Centres were appreciative of the phenomenon of volunteers coming forward who were in need of counselling or who were using the training course as a way of dealing with their own distress. All Centres are aware of the need to deal with this issue sensitively. Disclosure of abuse histories is explicitly required by some Centres, implicitly required by some and genuinely not sought by others. Some Centres have developed specific policies regarding survivor status, although most deal with each survivor according to her unique situation. No Centre assumes that if no disclosure occurs that no abuse had occurred. The need to develop appropriate supervisory practices as part of the initial training in addition to on-going support has been recognised by many Centres. This is frequently provided by existing volunteers on a one-to-one or group basis, as already noted, Centres generally do not have the resources to provide formal external supervision.

Interleaved with the concern to provide the necessary space for the personal development of all trainees is the recognition that volunteer training must include a variety of relevant theories and techniques. A wide range of issues is considered pertinent for Rape Crisis work. Training courses have grown up in response to local circumstances although there seems to be considerable 'convergent evolution'. Almost all Centres include the following areas of concern as part of their initial counsellor training: counselling and

listening skills, both telephone and face-to-face; police and court procedures and the law; health issues, including HIV/Aids and women's bodies; issues of sexual abuse and violence, including child sexual abuse. Other topics vary between Centres according to local needs and knowledges.

Although the focus tends to be on the development of counselling skills many Centres (67%) did identify a need for further provision of training in management skills, fund-raising, training for trainers and personal development skills. More specialist provision relevant to developing skills of working with people from diverse cultures was seen as required. Root and Davies (1995, p.16) suggest that there is often 'a gap between equal opportunities rhetoric and reality'. For example, whilst their quantitative data suggested a high level of concern with anti-racist practice, during qualitative interviews it became apparent that 'in some cases it was little more than sympathy with the principles of anti-racism which were not being transferred to the working practices of the Centre'. They found little recognition that it might be necessary to move beyond the specific targeting of publicity materials and begin to provide services in different ways according to the needs of particular groups.

No Rape Crisis Centre training carries recognised accreditation. However, Root and Davies (1995) found that 65% of respondents indicated that a formal counselling qualification would be useful. The National Federation is keen to investigate the possibility of accreditation as a way to recognise skills, structure staff development and facilitate the retention of volunteers. However,

the issue of accreditation is complex as the following quotation from a Rape Crisis worker illustrates:

I think the women who work for rape lines put in an enormous number of hours and have lots of skills and expertise which is often unrecognised/discounted in job interviews or public attention. A national qualification would help validate our work and skills. It might also help in funding applications . . . It [an accredited qualification] might not be able to recognise the diverse skills women have and a central qualification might ignore local specific needs/achievements.

Amanda Root and Sue Davies (1995, p.17, quoting a Rape Crisis worker)

There has been some concern that accreditation may lead to women volunteering merely in order to get the qualification rather than out of a genuine desire to work with survivors (there is anecdotal evidence of this already occurring even without accreditation). This is a difficulty for those Centres that are concerned to 'weed out' volunteers who see Rape Crisis work as a way to enhance their employment prospects. However, other Centres take the view that whether or not a woman becomes a volunteer the training is of use to her and the community in which she lives. And, as Linden West (1996) reminds us, the distinction between career and personal motivations to undertake training is not clear-cut. Perhaps a more important concern is that accreditation may alter the nature of the training. Accreditation raises issues of who has the right to define what is counselling, how it should be taught and what should constitute good practice. Accreditation may not fit comfortably with the feminist concerns that underpin the very existence of Rape Crisis Centres.

In 1993, 81% of Rape Crisis Centres said that they would support the development of a central training resource, with the emphasis on the provision of training *materials*. Although the majority of Centres did not favour the development of the national provision of training courses, the feeling was that only local provision could develop a service truly responsive to local circumstances. Since the inauguration of the Federation, and the funding of a training officer post, materials development work has begun with a consultation on the content of good practice guidelines. Centres see this type of national provision as important in assisting the development of a nationally cohesive movement that acknowledges the importance of local specificity.

**Training: the local situation.**

**Jean**            **I dunno it sounds like it wasn't an *ordinary group*. But there isn't such a thing as an ordinary group though. There isn't you know. I think each group is unique and if, if I'd chosen another group to look at I feel that I could pick out things that made them unique.**

**Ida**              **Yeah, yes.**

**Jean**            **In the way that I could pick out things that made this group unique. It's the emphasising that *makes them unique*.**

The course from which the participants for the one-to-one interviews (see chapter 4) were drawn had sixty-five scheduled contact hours: thirty evening sessions lasting two hours, plus one day session of five hours. External speakers and visits accounted for eighteen of these hours. At the end of these contact

hours, volunteers were required to complete a detailed questionnaire and attend an interview with two existing workers. The Rape Crisis Centre group would then discuss each woman and decide which applicants to invite to join as volunteer counsellors. On-the-job training took place via a system of accompanied sessions with existing counsellors when staffing the crisis phone line. The course was conducted from September 1992 to May 1993, and the research interviews were carried out in 1996 and 1997, with those course participants who could be contacted and who wished to take part. The timetable for the course is produced in *Table 2*, and the end of training questionnaire is produced in *Figure 2*. The detailed end of course questionnaire has remained unchanged for eight years. There is no written, accepted list of 'correct' answers to this questionnaire. The answers given are used to structure the end of course interview. The course timetable represents a syllabus thus partly made. The exact course timetable differs from course to course. The length of sessions is always two hours, but the order of the sessions changes and so may the particular facilitator or outside speaker. In addition, what comes into play when the group of course participants is invited to talk together cannot be predetermined. Furthermore the course does question the usual model pedagogically (within the academy), wherein 'a course' is a temporal string of bounded occasions within some coherent framework. Participants then 'progress' through the duration of the course, with the intervals between the bounded occasions not seen as part of what happens on 'the course'. The rest of the participant's life is not in the series. This one-after-anotherness of the sessions as bounded occasions is questioned in the practice of Rape Crisis training. Pedagogues assume that the sessions will bring about actions beyond

them. There is awareness that the series of occasions, which make up the course, do so within the surrounding texture of other events. This includes the on-going individual biographies of the women involved. In some ways then, the use of the past tense to describe the training is inappropriate as this serves to place 'it' as a completed event. 'The course' may no longer be taking place but it is never 'finished'.

**Table 2. Rape Crisis Centre Training Course 8.9.92 To 1.5.93**

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| 8.9.92   | Introduction                           |
| 15.9.92  | Listening skills                       |
| 22.9.92  | Politics of Rape                       |
| 29.9.92  | Law on rape and sexual assault*        |
| 6.10.92  | G.U. Clinic (starts 8pm)*              |
| 13.10.92 | Open session (1)                       |
| 20.10.92 | Counselling skills (1)                 |
| 3.11.92  | Abortion and contraception *           |
| 12.11.92 | Relationship problems and abuse*       |
| 17.11.92 | HIV/AIDS*                              |
| 24.11.92 | Prejudices                             |
| 1.12.92  | Counselling skills (2)                 |
| 8.12.92  | Sexuality                              |
| 15.12.92 | Open session (2)                       |
| 5.1.93   | Principles                             |
| 14.1.93  | Issues arising from Principles session |
| 19.1.92  | Police & social work perspectives*     |
| 26.1.93  | Counselling skills (3)                 |
| 2.2.93   | Survivors of child abuse*              |
| 9.2.93   | Open session (3)                       |
| 16.2.93  | Domestic violence                      |
| 23.2.93  | Suicide and self harm                  |
| 2.3.93   | Crisis intervention                    |
| 9.3.93   | Video session                          |
| 16.3.93  | Police*                                |
| 23.3.93  | Open session                           |
| 30.3.93  | Counselling skills (4)                 |
| 6.4.93   | Open session (4)                       |
| 20.4.93  | Counselling skills (5)                 |
| 27.4.93  | Counselling skills (6)                 |
| 1.5.93   | Full day session                       |

\* Sessions with an external facilitator.

**Figure 2. Rape Crisis End of Initial Counsellor Training Course Questionnaire**

1. *What was your initial interest in the Rape Crisis Centre?*
2. *What do you think the aims of the Rape Crisis Centre are?*
3. *Why have you continued with the training?*
4. *What have you got out of the course?*
  - a) *What areas do you feel most confident with?*
  - b) *What areas do you not feel confident with?*
  - c) *Are there any topics which you found useful to discuss?*
  - d) *Are there any areas which you found difficult to discuss didn't like to discuss?*
  - e) *Are there any areas which you felt needed more time or were not covered sufficiently?"*
5. *Why do women ring the Rape Crisis Centre?*
6. *Why do you think men rape women?*
7. *Which men rape women?*
8. *When are women raped?*
9. *Where are women raped?*
10. *What sorts of women are raped?*
11. *In what age group is a woman more likely to be raped?*
12. *Do you think there are any circumstances in which rape becomes inevitable or in which a man may feel justified in insisting that intercourse take place?*
13. *What encourages discourages women from reporting to the police about rape sexual assault?*
14. *Who abuses children?*
15. *Why are children abused?*
16. *What stops children from talking about the abuse?*
17. *What are your feelings about a white woman being raped by a black man?*
18. *What are your feelings about a black woman being raped by a white man?*
19. *Which of the following makes you feel most appalled?*
  - a) *The rape of a prostitute?*
  - b) *The rape of a child?*
  - c) *The rape of a lesbian?*



d) *The rape of a married woman?*

e) *The rape of a virgin?*

*Can you put these into an order?*

20. *What are your concerns about making a home visit?*

21. *What would you be thinking about?*

22. *You are talking to someone for the first time. Do you think it is relevant to talk about yourself?*

23. *How would you react if you were counselling a woman who has been raped by her husband?*

24. *What acts can be involved in rape and sexual assault?*

25. *Do you think your own personal opinions may impinge on:*

a) *The attitude of the person involved?*

b) *Any comment you feel you might make?*

26. *How do you interpret our policy on confidentiality?*

27. *How would you cope with talking to a woman whose cultural background was different to yours?*

28. *What would you say to a woman who thought she might be pregnant as a result of a rape?*

## Found Materials

I am in my office sorting through old files. I come across the most amazing find, a set of notes which I must have written when I was telephone counselling at the Rape Crisis Centre. It was a long and complicated call. I must have needed notes to help me keep track. Nothing identifies the caller's identity - in fact I don't think that I ever knew her name. I have been working for nearly three years on the evocative presentation of research texts - could I craft something from these notes? Or perhaps my question needs to be *should* I craft something? This closely packed scrawl names no names, but it is nonetheless intimately revelatory. This is an intimate document of the dialogue between the two of us. This is a document of what we negotiated as our joint meaning of her experiences. This tight package of words and doodles is my filtering of her spoken words - my script of her enunciations.

### RAPE CRISIS CENTRES' TYPES OF TRAINING

Counselling skills - 98%  
Issues training - 93%  
feminist theory and practice - 52%  
sexual violence and sexuality - 93%  
Racism - 55%  
Legal discrimination - 50%  
Other - 57%

Joanne Moore and Gill Whitting (1993, Appendix 1)

I want a text that presents the doing-ness of rape crisis work. This is a vital position from which to understand the building of this research. If I craft a text from these notes it will carry an emotional charge *for me* which resonates with the doing of Rape Crisis work. In a very important way this is what the training is for. The training helps women to prepare for these moments of listening to a survivor. As a counsellor I listened to this woman, I attempted to create a safe space for her to talk of and to her experiences. When we spoke I wrote notes because I needed a text to help me hold on to what she was saying. I had no intention of using these notes for any other purpose. What right do I have to represent this text here? I am not the first researcher/writer to find myself facing this dilemma. Michelle Fine (1992) uses her five-hour conversation with a rape survivor, 'Altamese Thomas', whom she saw in her capacity as a volunteer rape counsellor, to structure her arguments about the appropriateness of individualistic ways of coping with sexual violence. When I read Fine's text I had a 'gut feeling' of ethical discomfort. I wondered what it would be like for Altamese to stumble across Fine's words and, perhaps, find herself there.

## FORENSIC EVIDENCE

The police surgeon is usually a GP who has received training in the collection of specimens for forensic purposes. The Home Office provides a standard sexual assault examination kit.

1. The doctor obtains permission for the examination, stressing that all information will be made available to the police.
2. A detailed history is taken to include: recent sexual, menstrual and contraceptive histories; the details of the assault; what action the survivor has taken since, e.g. bathing, changing clothes.
3. The survivor stands on a piece of paper and undresses down to her underwear. the paper collects any 'trace evidence' which may fall during the process of undressing.
4. The clothes are taken for forensic examination.
5. The upper part of the body is examined, injuries documented and bite marks swabbed. Particular attention is paid to the mouth, especially in the case of oral penetration. lips and gums may be swabbed.
6. A fluorescent light is used to help locate semen and saliva stains.
7. The underwear is removed, and taken for forensic examination.
8. The breasts are examined.
9. The genitals and anus are visually inspected and then swabs are taken.
10. A speculum is inserted so that high vaginal swabs can be taken. If the rape occurred more than 48 hours previously an endocervical swab is taken to try to locate surviving spermatozoa.
11. Combing of head and pubic hair are taken, plus some 'control specimens' plucked from the head and pubic region.
12. Fingernail scrapings are taken.
13. Two blood samples are taken. These are for blood grouping and DNA analysis. Some police surgeons take additional blood in order to estimate drug or alcohol use.

Adapted from Helen Lacey (1991)

I *will* craft something from these found notes of a long past counselling session - but that does not mean that I am comfortable doing so. I will proceed, but I will do so 'in anguish' (Josselson, 1996, p.70).

The intersections of form and frailty are haunted places. The solace of good form organizes and warms our frailties; the persistence of our damage empties out form and wears it away. The intersections of form and frailty are haunted places and duets there are beautiful and horrible, so vivid and so austere.

Judith Hamera (1996, p.205)

I PRAYED 'Please God, stop this happening. Just let me die'.

I just want to be held for it to be *appropriate* - I just want to be held without having to offer purity.

I don't feel like a woman anymore.

Well suicide would be an off button.

My sister's anger is like a wall that I can't break through.

I feel like they're all watching me. Waiting for me to be a 'victim'.

I dream about him and when I wake up I can smell him in the house.

I don't know how to solve myself anymore.

It's come into everything.

Parts of that night are always there. Freeze-framed in my mind.

I can still smell him, alcohol, vomit, body odour, a staleness. I can almost taste him.

It makes it worse telling people - it makes him real again.

It was an ordinary day. I decided to walk home.

I can only react to what he did rather than think about what happened.

He said that he would find me again and kill me.

Oh God I feel sick.

Somehow I still believe that he will kill me. He won't be in prison for ever.

I can still feel his hand over my mouth.

There's this fear inside me just growing.

I can hear his voice smothering me.

Did I signal to him that I'm a lesbian? Is that why he did it?

They let me look at the forensic pictures. That verified that it was that awful.

That was how he saw me.

The photos they just represent pain. They're not me, they're not a person.

I can't remember what life was like before.

I was just 'a female' - a vehicle for his rage.

I can't remember if I was quiet.

I remember feeling scared, then terror.

It was so physical. I bit my tongue, then there was blood in my mouth.

There was light at the end of the tunnel - but I couldn't see it I couldn't get to it.

All the time his smell.

I remember thinking 'what will I say to my mother?'

Nothing is automatic anymore.

When I sit down to eat I think of what he did.

I've lost my body.

It's not getting any easier.

I'm screaming but I'm not making any sound.

I'm looking for somewhere to get under - like a dog does.

It's a place I'll never get out of.

I feel like a sponge that soaked him up.

I'm two people now.

I'm totally contaminated now. I'm sordid.

This wasn't in my life plan.

He owns the space I stand in.

I keep feeling him here now.

I feel like reacting to this rape is all I've ever done.

I want to connect to myself but I keep connecting to him.

I am a powerful woman I can silence his voice.

I can't push the words out far enough.

no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew.

Michelle Fine (1994a, p.70, quoting from bell hooks)

So, let me write about myself. Let me write my pain. Let me write from my margin. Not my comfortable self-ness which everybody sees, the whiteness, the middleclass-ness, the intellectual cleverness, the fluidity of everyday competence. Just why did I become a Rape Crisis counsellor? Why do I care so much and work so hard? Is this con/text then, a con? This context shuttles between so many different places. I am left breathless. I have succumbed to Michelle Fine's (1992, 1994a & b) charge of 'ventriloquising' I have choreographed all my significant selves from the text.

\*\*\*\*

*Dreaming*

*Small spiders stream from my mouth to cover my body.*

*Catching and scraping I vomit them in protesting mouthfuls.*

\*\*\*\*

I suppose I was born in a pretty standard sort of way. Second child to a thirty-something and a forty-something. Of course late parenthood felt stranger in the sixties. I longed for a mini-skirted mum like those of my friends.

\*\*\*\*

*Dreaming*

*Snowflakes land on my bare arms and settle with perfect gentleness.*

*Everything is cool and clear.*

*When I tire of watching I lay back and close my eyes.*

*Peaceful. Cold. Quiet. Still.*

\*\*\*\*

I have no photographs of myself as a baby. So I have to rely on piecing together family memories to see my baby self. Later I will stare into my daughter's face looking for the baby I was. I'm told that I slept long and hard for most of my first two years. I careered toward toddler-hood in a cocoon of milky sleep. I might remember a white barred cot with a green checked coverlet. I might remember lying on my back and staring up as the bars went on forever. I think I might be able to feel the slight roughness of the sheet, and smell the cleanness of everything. I might be able to make these memories for myself. I cannot be sure how close they are to what actually happened. Sometimes I don't believe anything actually happened ever. Sometimes I believe that I have just been made two seconds ago. Sometimes I believe that my mind has created this story of a past to deal with the shock of a sudden creation.



\*\*\*\*

I have small faded photographs of the young child I used to be. At first chubby, curly haired and smiling. Later more surly, frowning with distrusting eyes at my mother behind the Box Brownie camera. The muscles of my face grow tenser in succeeding pictures. My features fold in on themselves. My face snaps shut and refuses to open again until I am over twenty. The camera's evidence becomes increasingly sparse. Who knows what others might see?

\*\*\*\*

I enjoyed mud. I have authentic, photo-told and family-taled memories of mud. Sweltering mud, too good to waste. Mixing puddle and soil, then working slippery toy spaded chunks into careful piles. In one picture I am still chubby, curly haired and smiling, I have a large mark of dark mud across my forehead. I lean toward a toy pram. Unseen by the camera, but failing to escape from family legend, lies my doll, impeccably dressed, her head smothered in a thick layer of suffocating mud.

\*\*\*\*

*Dreaming*

*My mother resents my nightmares. She blames them on a nearby dusk-barking dog fox. The fox moves on; the dreams continue. My mother sees the world from one small place, and marvels at the persistence of these fox-induced dreams.*

\*\*\*\*

I had a form of glandular fever very unusual in such a small child. It is often contracted by teenagers. Some people call it the kissing disease. When it was eventually diagnosed (which took a long time - because who would look for such a disease in such a small child?) I went to hospital. I refused to take any medicine by mouth, I had injections. The hospital was like a giant's palace. High rooms full of metal furniture too broad and tall for child-sized people. Even the toys were too large. An ogre's play chest packed with over-sized soft toys of the type used to attract attention to fairground stalls and school raffles.

\*\*\*\*

*Dreaming*

*My mother explains my nightmares. She is tenacious in her co-option of the barking dog fox as dream intruder, causer, shaper.  
Repeated telling persuades me to include the fox.  
Over time it transforms to a wolf.  
I run with heavy legs from a wolf with a man's shadow. The wolf's breath swells against my back and weaves into my hair.*

*I move with resignation through this constant dream for fifteen years. Some mornings I must wash its stink away before I can breakfast.*

\*\*\*\*

I clung to my mother's hands, her skirts, her coats. I screamed when she left for even a few minutes. I slung myself around my mother's body pleading with her to notice me. At night I was inconsolable. The hospital staff decided that I would be better off at home.

\*\*\*\*

I know how to listen. I know how to notice the re-working of people's lives around the silences of the past. I sit and listen to a friend tell me of her idyllic childhood. I wait. Two years later she tells me of how her father sexually abused her until she was fifteen.

\*\*\*\*

*Dreaming*

*The moon shines slowly through the window. It hazes the dust motes and lazily grazes against my eyes. The man-wolf's shadow creeps through the folds of the curtain slipping between their thick darkness to shine blackness into my eyes.*

\*\*\*\*

*Therapy 1*

'Jean', she places my name in the room.

'Jean, try breathing into your pain. Find the place that hurts and take your breath to it'.

I forget how to inhale. But that isn't important. I must remember how to exhale. If I can, then my body will inhale for me.

I force my breath out, then watch as it comes in. My lungs gather the air. I feel air moving into me, past me, through the revolving doors of myself. I become transparent.

\*\*\*\*

*Therapy 2*

My therapist sighs.

I sigh.

She sighs.

I hand over my cheque and leave.

\*\*\*\*

I have a privileged life. I have opportunities to reflect and theorise about women and feminism. I see who I am as a feminist as linked with what I *do* as a feminist. I can afford to use my personal resources to address inequalities, not just for myself but for others. I can afford to take time in my life to work with other women and to celebrate our achievements together. I am privileged to have worked as a paid and unpaid worker within the Rape Crisis movement, and to have been involved with various women centred activities. All of these can be undertaken because of my relative privilege as a white, now middle class, well-educated woman. The greatest privilege is to have time to reflect on my activism, and to be able to devote time clarifying my position as feminist activist concerned with academic endeavour.

\*\*\*\*

Is even this con/text, a con? This context shuttles between so many different places. I am left breathless. I have succumbed to Michelle Fine's (1992, 1994a & b) charge of 'ventriloquising' I have choreographed all my significant selves from the text. Yet even as I choreograph them in am I in process of othering my past selves? Can I ventriloquise myself?

\*\*\*

researchers . . . must learn to look at themselves from both sides of the voyeur's keyhole, seeing themselves looking at themselves through the eyes of the modernist gaze. Reversing the logic of the traditional, masculine, investigative project, this new female look will shift and take on multiple forms, making it impossible to clearly define who is subject and who is object.

Norman Denzin (1997, p.47)

\*\*\*

Jean . . . Well it was a group [the one from which the individual interviewees were drawn] that made *me* think very acutely about the difference between being a volunteer and being a paid worker. And there was a certain kind of historical environment.

Ida Right.

Jean There was a lot of stuff going on for me about how maybe I had to behave differently because I was at the Centre as a paid worker as opposed to a volunteer.

Ida How long had you been a paid worker by that time?

Jean I started in June and this group started in September.

Ida Right so a few months.

\*\*\*

Researchers need to study:

the personal experience and self stories people tell one another about the important events in their lives . . . These narratives will work outward from the researcher's biography, entangling his or her tales of the self with the stories told by others. As lived textualities, these personal experience narratives and 'mystories' recover the dialogical context of meaning, placing the observer on both sides of the 'keyhole'. As an emergent cultural form, these fragmented, moral texts mediate and connect persons to culture, history, and ongoing group life.

Norman Denzin (1997, p.47)

\*\*\*

#### **DATE 1996: Why This Group Then?**

I sit in a friend's study. A fellow PhD candidate and Rape Crisis counsellor.

She interviews me about my research:

Ida            Why did you choose this 92/93 group for your research?

Jean           Because - hmm - deep psychological reasons probably.

Ida            (Laughs). That's what we want to hear about.

Jean           Right (pause). Ostensibly, because I thought I could get in touch with a lot of them.

Ida            Right.

Jean           And because I thought they were quite a psychologically *robust* group. I mean there certainly have been groups in

the past that I wouldn't feel happy contacting people who dropped out, because they were dropping out for quite particular reasons.

Ida Right.

Jean I suppose I didn't feel comfortable contacting them because I thought it would bring up a lot of stuff that was best, from their viewpoint, best left. That was *why* they'd left the Centre.

Ida Was there something in the *nature* of this group that makes it stand out?

Jean Umm (pause). No. I don't think it's a particularly unique group. I think it's more kind of an historical accident that I know how to get in touch with most of them.

Ida Right.

Jean But I mean uh - actually from *your* group I could probably get in touch with most of your group as well.

Ida Right.

Jean Umm. Again it's historical there's nothing special about that. It's just that I could. It just *happens*.



**DELIVERY OF SERVICES**

**24 hour telephone lines - 24%**

**part-time telephone lines - 83%**

**face-to-face counselling - 95%**

**on-going information and support - 90%**

**legal advice services - 40%**

**outreach work - 83%**

**advocacy work - 33%**

**drop-in provision - 7%**

**residential services - 2%**

**facilitating survivors' self-help groups - 52%**

**counselling in languages other than English - 12%**

**complementary services (e.g. homeopathy, massage) - 5%**

Joanne Moore and Gill Whitting (1993, Appendix 1)

.....

Ida            So why not use my group then?

Jean            (Pause) Umm. (Pause)

Ida            Well why not? I'm being a bit devious here. (Laughs)

Jean            (Laughs)

Ida            Because I - the reason I ask is because I remember you saying a few days ago that this group was your kind of *first* group [as paid worker]. So does it have a special sort of *status*, cos that was your first group as an organiser.

Jean            Yes, I think it's something about having quite acute memories of that group. Because it was the first one which

I had a lot to do with in the sense of being - umm (pause) interesting actually yes - it was the first group I had a lot to do with in the sense of me being the *co-ordinator*.

Ida Right.

Jean Yes and I was thinking - and *your group* of course was one of - I think was *the* first structured group.

Ida Right. Oh was it indeed. (Laughs)

Jean Which - which I'd had some input into designing that.

Ida Right, right.

Jean Although Wanda was the main kind of mover and shaker.

Ida Mmm.

Jean I'd actually been involved in a lot of the *agonies* of that.

Ida Right.

Jean The *birth pangs*. Oops [Ida was seven months pregnant at the time of the interview].

Ida (Laughs)

Jean The birth pangs of producing that. And therefore it's interesting that those are the two groups that I figure I can get in touch with those people.

Ida Yeah, yeah.

Jean            So maybe it's true. Maybe I can pay more attention to those people.

Ida             Mmm.

Jean            *Interesting.*

Ida             Not so much an *accident* hey.

Jean            (Laughs) That's right very important groups, very important groups - yes.

\*\*\*

Is even this con/text, a con? This context shuttles between so many different places. I am left breathless. I have succumbed to Michelle Fine's (1992, 1994a & b) charge of 'ventriloquising' I have choreographed all my significant selves from the text. Yes, I know that this is the third time that this phrase has appeared. I am repeating it to give the reader and opportunity to read it again. To read it having taken in the words between the repetitions. To read it knowing that repetition needs to be used as a transforming as well as a rhythmic and structural device:

Repetition as a practice and a strategy differs from incognizant repetition in that it bears with it the seeds of transformation. When repetition calls attention on itself as repetition, it can no longer be reduced to connote sameness and stagnancy as it usually does in the context of Western progress and accumulation. . . Repetition outplays itself as repetition, and each repetition is never the same as the former. In it, there is circulation, there is intensity, and there is innovation.

Trinh Minh-Ha (1991, p.190)

\*\*\*

I am a doctoral candidate and my-own-text, my-own-research is shaped by this knowledge and by the choices I must make as candidate. I have certain obligations to fulfil. I work toward the thesis text. Is the context of this work merely the pedagogic momentum that carries me toward the fat bound and boundaried text of the doctoral thesis?

\*\*\*

**There is muteness. The writer as witness, speaking the stories, is a lie, a liberal bourgeois lie. Because the speech is the writer's speech, and each word of the writer robs the witnessed of their own voice, muting them.**

**Michael Joyce (1991, ¶29, quoting from Erin Moure)**

\*\*\*

I am cautious of becoming what Trinh Minh-Ha labels the 'ideal insider'. That is to say, one who faithfully represents the Other with/in the established order and who in doing so polices the self-other boundary by gathering 'data' and offering difference in its expected/acceptable form. I am a woman in the

hyphens at the Rape Crisis Centre. I have neither a place inside nor an outside position to occupy. To return to Trinh:

The moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Like the outsider, she steps back and records what never occurs to her the insider as being worth or in need of recording. But unlike the outsider, she also resorts to non-explicative, non-totalizing strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure. (This is often viewed by the outsiders as strategies of partial concealment and disclosure aimed at preserving secrets that should only be imparted to initiates.) She refuses to reduce herself to an Other, and her reflections to a mere outsider's objective reasoning or insider's subjective feeling. . . . Not quite the Same, not quite the Other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out.

Trinh Minh-Ha (1991, p.74)

As insider/outsider, I am a Rape Crisis worker. But I am not 'typical'. There is no homogeneity of Rape Crisis workers. Furthermore, my status is not static. I am an increasingly different sort of worker because of doing this research. As Jane Ribbens points out (1989, p.589) with regard to her work with mothers: 'I began the project thinking that I was in some senses researching my own peer group, talking about a way of life from the "inside", close to the position of observing participant. However, one of the clearest emerging personal feelings is that, through the research, I have come to a much greater awareness (and acceptance) of my own differences'. Working at the insider-outsider means that I am constantly at risk of 'falling off'. I know that my feminisms have not been 'arrived at'; my place as a Rape Crisis worker/researcher is not an end point, it is

a point of re-departure in the process of understanding how to live my feminist politics.<sup>6</sup>

**I am showing you my valise: it is opened, but not unpacked. Nothing in it is 'mine'; everything is appropriated as the makings of a rhetoric or a poetics that teaches me how to make something, reproducing the fundamental feature of language as an open system - the capacity to invent new texts out of extant, familiar units.**

**Gregory Ulmer (1991, p.5)**

---

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, towards the end of my doctoral research it became clear to me that my position at the Rape Crisis Centre was no longer tenable. Whilst I do not seek to attribute this to the research process, being a researcher did serve to place me as marginal in some Rape Crisis situations. And I 'felt' as if I was heard less clearly than I had previously been. Perhaps I have toppled from the insider/outsider position? Perhaps I have re-departed to live my politics differently?

## Intertext:

### *addressing space*

I had no expectation of, or image of. I didn't think that I'd go you know to- it would all be full of raving dykes you know that sort of thing. And they'd all be wearing Doctor Martens. I'd've been fine if they were. But we're all products of society in our upbringing and whatever. People who get involved in running a Rape Crisis Centre, they are all going to be-either all lesbian or anti-men and all this sort of stuff. I mean it's not true. I don't believe it I'm just saying that you have to really watch it. I mean society sort of throws it at us. And even if you don't read the tabloids you are aware.

*We spoke about footwear frequently during the interviews. No, we spoke about*

*Doctor Marten shoes and boots a lot.*

*I was intrigued by this conversational turn and eventually e-mailed a women's discussion list to which I belong to request some more diverse ideas.*

Subject: Slightly bizarre request for help

Date: 17 October 1997 20:50

I'm intrigued by the number of times that Doc Marten shoes and boots have cropped up as topics during interview sessions (about the experience of Rape Crisis training) - so, does anybody know of any literature which refers to Doc's with regard to feminist activism or sexuality or subcultures generally??

Jean Rath

--- Yeah. Audrey didn't look the part and I think that challenged people's ideas of what feminism was.

Jean Right.

--- Y' know a feminist marched about in Doctor Martens thank you very much and said this that and the other. They shouldn't have grey hair and glasses and polyester trousers.

Subj: RE: Slightly bizarre request for help

Date: 10/20/97 11:40:35AM

Hi,

You've just triggered off a whole load of chat in my office about people's relationships with Dr Martens. Anyway, in my cuttings files on everything to do with fashion, I have a DM ad. Thought you might like their slogan:

Walk a mile in somebody else's shoes - and you'll understand their problems -Walk a mile in somebody else's Dr. Martens - and you probably won't give them back.

Hope this helps. Good luck.

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P.S. The following refs might be helpful . . .



Subject: Re: Slightly bizarre request for help

Date: Monday, October 20, 1997 1:37PM

Dear --- thanks for the references.

Somewhere at the back of my memory I remember reading a piece about DM's and neo-Nazi groups and was rather hoping that somebody had made a similar study re DM's and feminist activism!! I think that DM's have become one of those deconstructivist fault-lines running through my thesis so I'll chase up the refs and see what I get. I've got the Dick Hebdige book (unread) on my bookshelf and I've also got a book on Youth Subcultures and discourse analysis by Sue Widdecombe.

Plus, as you found out in your office, lots of people have lots of opinions they're happy to share re DM's (I know that I could talk for hours about mine!!).

Jean Rath

Subj: Re: Slightly bizarre request for help

Date: 10/26/97 4:41:08PM

Jean,

This is not a reference to text, but in Canada there is a group of three feminist performers, called Sensible Footwear and who perform a series of songs and skits at local theatres. They are very, very entertaining and their sensible footwear are Doc Martens.

Cheers,

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-- Maybe with me it's just that I've never found a group that I want to belong to wholesale >or maybe it's just that I'm bloody minded< errmm I I've always felt like this certainly with regard to external image and clothes and errmm (pause) clothes and makeup and all that kind of stuff. I can remember being ohhh twelve or thirteen years old having problems with that. You know that that errmm if you liked a certain kind of music you were supposed to dress a certain way. This would be (pause) early seventies (laughs).

Jean Right.

-- Err so you know (pause) umm. I was really into David Bowie and glam rock. But there was no way I was going to cut my hair orange and spiky and put a zigzag across my face and look like five million other people. Like five thousand other people at a concert.

**OIL  
FAT  
ACID  
PETROL  
ALKALI  
RESISTANT**

**AIR CUSHIONED SOLE**

**MADE IN ENGLAND**

Subj: Re: Slightly bizarre request for help

Date: 10/27/97 10:07:35PM

Many thanks to everyone who has provided refs or info or expressed an interest in Doc Martens (keep those e-mails coming - I especially love the way that we all seem to have such meaningful relationships with our docs!!).

Jean

*Made like no other shoe on earth*

Dr. Marten

Dr. Marten's

Doc. Marten

Dr. Martin

Doc Martin

Docs

DM's

DM shoes

DM boots

steel toe

AirWair

Airware

Subj: Re: Slightly bizarre request for help

Date: 10/30/97 3:26:33PM

Hi

Just an anecdotal response, but the first time I wore my new Docs was such a significant moment in the development of my feminist consciousness, I had to say something. I was in XXX in this warehouse district with a girlfriend and from the instant I got out of the car I felt so different: aggressive, I didn't have to look where I was walking, the sheer weight of my feet made me swagger, and I felt like I could take any comers, regardless of my seedy dark location. It was definitely walking \_like a man\_ that made me feel powerful, but it was really nothing other than my footwear. (Combined with a motorcycle jacket you're practically unstoppable!)

I still like to wear delicate clothes, but now I think it is with complete awareness that I'm "dressing up" and that I can get rid of the delicate feeling that comes with that just by changing clothes. I think the fashion trend of the last 6 or 7 years towards clunky shoes in general has been magnificent for girls (although I wouldn't want to commit on the etiology...) and I feel somewhat panicky about the return of spike heels and jelly shoes. . .

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## Chapter 4

### **RESEARCH AS PRAXIS: The practice of method**

By understanding the potential of nonunitary subjectivity, feminists can read it not as a weakness, but as a strength and as an alternative feminist discourse. It is a strength because giving up the myth of unified subjectivity allows respect for the complexity of subjectivity and the validation of conflict as a source through which women become strong and learn to speak their own experiences.

Leslie Bloom (1998, p.93)

the rules of a discourse enable us to make certain sorts of statements and to make truth claims, but the same rules force us to remain within the system and to make only those statements that conform to these rules. A discourse as a whole cannot be true or false because truth is always contextual and rule dependent. Discourses are local, heterogeneous, and often incommensurable. . . . This does not mean that there is no truth but rather that truth is discourse dependent. Truth claims can be made by those who accept the rules of a discourse or who are willing to bridge across several. However, there is no trump available which we can rely on to solve all disputes. Prior agreement on rules, not the compelling power of objective truth, makes conflict resolution possible.

Jane Flax (1992, p.452)

This chapter explores the process of arrival at and practice of method. It addresses how I went about the empirical work of 'being a researcher'. It examines the processes of interviewing<sup>1</sup> and transcribing, and discusses the hypertextual practices used to facilitate the research process. A series of decisions had to be made at every stage of the research. Each point in the research has multiple pathways leading from, and to, it. If feminism acting with/in the postmodern conceptualises research as an enactment of power relations between constituted subjects then the nature of the research process changes dramatically. Once we begin to explore the 'relational focus on how method patterns findings' (Lather, 1991, p.113) then attention moves away from efforts to represent 'objective knowledge' as the 'truth' of what is 'really' there. The research endeavour has to be re-focused to take into account the productivity of language and so to view research practices as inscriptions of legitimation, which are intimately related to the politics of what constitutes 'knowledge'. Objectivity as textual construction is displaced by writing as an enactment of the social relations that produce the research.

I adopted a variety of approaches to 'find out' about the Rape Crisis Centre and the stories told about its initial volunteer counsellor training. Working chorographically and mystorically to craft materials into hyper-

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text, I refer to these social interactions as 'interviews'. James Scheurich (1997, p.73) argues that 'whether we call the interview interaction "interviewing", "conversation", "story-telling", or simply "an interaction" is of much less importance than what we think occurs in this interaction'. I agree that we need to focus on what happens in the social interaction, however, I believe that through naming as 'interview' I am acting to retain a term in order to both acknowledge and break with its accepted usage, to place 'the interview' under erasure.

reflexive electronic bricolage' (see chapter 1) is highly sensitive to the social interchange of the research process. As can be seen from the previous chapter, the different elements of research are closely interleaved. In practice there exists a merging of research processes. However, for the purposes of clarity I will address the nature of 'opening materials', and leave discussion of the processes of working with these materials, until later.

The expression opening materials is used to designate those materials that are the 'entry points' to the research process. Opening materials were obtained via individual taped interviews of women's stories focused on their recollections of rape crisis training. This involved recording a series of individual interviews with women who were involved with the pedagogic process of a Rape Crisis volunteer counsellor training course from September 1992 to May 1993. During the interview sessions I invited women to tell their 'self stories' (Denzin, 1989) focused on the experience of Rape Crisis counsellor training. I began the first session by asking women to position their stories in this context. After this exchange, we then moved on to explore stories of the course in relation to events at, and away from, the Rape Crisis Centre. I conceive of these stories as already-told. That is to say, they are stories, which because of their frequency of telling, may be told in unique form during the social encounter of the interview, but that this uniqueness is tarnished by their already-told status. As Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson point out (1996, p.78): 'Many stories are worked up and are recounted on repeated occasions. Often the research interview provides an additional situation for their telling rather than a uniquely novel encounter'.

Documents are another form of opening material. I had access to all the course materials that were presented during the training, plus copies of participants' (including course facilitators) questionnaires which must be completed at the end of the course before the final selection interview. I also have a personal journal, which I kept during my own training (1985/86) and during the 1992/93 course. These documents were used in two ways:

1. As materials to *do* something *with* (see chapter 1).
2. To provide a focus for a participant's story during an interview session. That is to say, they are used as objects so that stories can be constructed around them (See Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly's (1994) discussion of personal experience methods in qualitative research).

The following other approaches were also used to gather opening materials:

- Continuing to work as a Rape Crisis training course facilitator.
- Group interviews with other current Rape Crisis volunteers.
- An end of course group interview with trainees on the 1996 course as they approached the end of the training.
- Through my own living, reading, writing.
- Being interviewed myself.
- Writing a mystory.
- Through discussions with my supervisor, academics, friends, and other research students.



- Seeking to engage in collaborative writing and reading with research participants.
- Taking part in a series of meetings during which the Rape Crisis Centre undertook a review of its training policies (recording three of these sessions).

Working with/in the postmodern I have to be concerned to undo the collecting of opening materials as a form of gathering information about 'reality' (Lather, 1991; Trinh, 1992; Denzin, 1997), yet to do so whilst taking responsibility for the decisions that I make as a researcher. Ultimately as researcher I bound the research with/in my questions and during the writing process transcribed words are under my control. I have the power to shape the words elicited during interviews to fit the boundaries of my final text. I must recognise my place as question poser, context shaper, and co-participant in the interview interaction, whilst highlighting the 'slipperiness' of the entire process, once we have unfastened the interview from the task of gathering information about 'reality'.

This chapter focuses particularly on the interview generated materials, although everything written here is pertinent to the treatment of all opening materials. I address reflexively the process of carrying out interviews from the telling to the electronic scripting, recognising that this is germane to multiple aspects of what it means to work as a feminist with/in the postmodern as a qualitative researcher. This chapter is structured into three sections: *Telling* (with some mention of attending), *Transcribing*, and finally *Electronic Scripting*.

## Telling

One indicator of friendship is having someone to confide in and knowing that person will listen sympathetically to what you have to say. Another indication is reciprocity, in that confiding and listening are usually shared activities between close friends. . . . [But] close friends do not usually arrive with a tape-recorder, listen carefully and sympathetically to what you have to say and then disappear.

Pam Cotterill (1992, p.599)

Some of what occurs in an interview is verbal. Some is non-verbal. Some occurs only within the mind of each participant (interviewer or interviewee), but it may affect the entire interview. Sometimes the participants are jointly constructing meaning, but at other times one of them may be resisting joint constructions. Sometimes the interviewee cannot find the right words to express herself/himself and, therefore, will compromise her/his meaning for the sake of expediency. There may be incidences of dominance and resistance over large or small issues. There may be monologues. There may be times when one participant is talking about one thing but thinking about something else. A participant may be saying what she thinks she ought to say; in fact, much of the interview may be infused with a shift between performed or censured statements and unperformed and uncensored statements. Indeed, the 'wild profusion' that occurs moment to moment in an interview is, I would argue, ultimately indeterminable and indescribable.

James Scheurich (1997, p.67)

The complexity of the interview has long been a concern for feminist researchers who have returned repeatedly to the meanings and processes of the research interview (e.g. Oakley, 1981, Finch 1984, Ribbens, 1989, Cotterill, 1992). Both feminist and postmodernist researchers have noted that the dynamic between interviewer and interviewee cannot be reduced to a simplistic dominance of the interviewer versus compliance or resistance of the interviewee. I agree with the above quotation from James Scheurich (1997). His postmodernist critique of interview process and representation emphasises that interviews are epistemologically ambiguous, morally ambivalent and

emotionally charged. What occurs in an interview is indeterminate, relative and unknowable. As a researcher, I have multiple intentions and desires (some known, some unknown), the same is true of the interviewee. I concur with Peter Collins' (1998) view that the interview is an interactional process wherein the multiple 'selves' of those taking part are negotiated. '[T]he selves of both interviewer and interviewee are variously and complexly defined the interview is a carnival of voices and a concatenation of events. Even to define the interview in terms of the co-presence of interviewer and interviewee might be an oversimplification' (Collins, 1998, ¶2.6). The following extract from an interview extract scripts one type of crowded-ness of the interview space. This crowded-ness arises from an appreciation that the research interview is a public event. Jane Ribbens (1989) emphasises that we cannot pretend that the interview is a private conversation upon which the tape recorder eavesdrops: 'research relationships are in some senses public, which creates inescapable tensions if we seek to regard them as purely private ones' (p.579). This is a crowded-ness that invites not just the multiple selves of the interviewee and interviewer, but also the multiplicity of any potential audiences.<sup>2</sup> Here is how Gina responds to my query about who she perceives her audience to be when being interviewed:

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<sup>2</sup> Whilst this quotation from Gina illustrates her appreciation of potential audiences it is important to bear in mind that the audience exerts and influence on the whole nature of any research project. As Jane Ribbens states (1989, p.589): 'Who the audience is going to be must exert an influence on the whole nature of the research project, because it relates so strongly to the basic reasons or purposes we have in doing the research in the first place. Some of these purposes (like doing a PhD) may be quite implicit and taken for granted, but will nevertheless have a significant impact on how we do the research'.

- Jean           And who's your audience now?
- Gina           Oooo you could get a T.V. show (in mock Northeast England accent).
- Jean           (Laughs)
- Gina           Errmm. Who's my audience? That's hard isn't it? Cos it's not known. And I like to approach things with an audience in mind. Which is why I'm not comfortable with this - perhaps.
- Jean           Mmm.
- Gina           Cos I can't *tailor* it. Cos I don't know who the audience is, the *eventual* audience. You're an audience but you're interim aren't you? So, it's untidy I don't like that.

This is a crowded-ness that appreciates multiplicity of any potential audiences. This is a crowded-ness that knows that power is situated within and beyond the intersubjective relationships and interview instances. Pam Cotterill (1992, p.605) notes 'issues of power and control which are fundamental to the research process shift and change, and within the interview situation the researcher as well as the researched is vulnerable'. I may wish women to have more control over the processes of the interview. However, I must take account of this crowded-ness. I am wary of any simple conceptualisation of empowerment and the dangers of hidden paternalism (see Troyna, 1994, Opie, 1992). This is not to say that I seek to deny my power as interviewer, I initiate contacts and manipulate interview-solicited materials. Furthermore, I am concerned to note that interviews inescapably involve power imbalances arising in other domains. For example, Ros Edwards (1990, p.482) in her reflections about being a white woman interviewing Black women notes that 'Race does not simply exist as an object of study or a variable in analysis, it enters into the

research process itself - into the selection of a problem, into the methodology, the conduct of the research, the assumptions behind it, who is included in the study, whose perspective is highlighted - and importantly influences the relationship with those we are researching'. As a white woman interviewing white women (there were no minority ethnic women to be interviewed at the Rape Crisis Centre that took part in the research), I need to be aware of how 'race' enters the whole research process, and not just the interview, to implicitly shape and constrain.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, as James Scheurich (1997, p.71) notes, 'the asymmetry of power is not a total description of the interaction' between researcher and researched. Leslie Bloom (1998, p.40), in common with many feminist researchers, suggests that we may envisage power as a mobile force 'alight[ing] on respondents and researchers with differing degrees of weight at different times and with different meanings in specific contexts'. Yet, I concur with Scheurich's (1997) suggestion that conceiving of power as a mobile force alighting upon fixed subjects, fails to appreciate that we act within the interview as constituted subjects. He argues that as we reconstitute the subject of research with/in the postmodern so we need to move away from conceiving of power as taking place within a dominance-resistance binary (typified by the 'mobile force'). He

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<sup>3</sup> For me, this involves taking up Naomi Norquay's (1993) assertion that we must acknowledge 'the other side of difference' (p.241) through 'doing memory-work to reconstruct and interrogate our past selves' (p.250). This on-going process interrogates the 'invisible practices' whereby my privileges are maintained. I concur with Norquay's concluding argument that, for her, it is from this 'painful place' that: 'I can begin to reclaim and re-name the past in order to envision a future that is shared, not restricted and not donated - a future that for me begins with acknowledgement of my privilege as the place from which I speak when I speak about racism' (p.250).

suggests displacing this binary with an 'open-ended space' that he labels 'chaos/freedom'. This space is an attempt to resist any simplistic totalisation of the self-other interaction. It 'is everything that occurs that is neither dominance nor resistance; everything that escapes or exceeds this binary is chaos (because it is not encapsulated by the binary) and an openness or freedom for the interviewer and interviewee' (Scheurich, 1997, p.72). Resistance to dominance is necessarily created by, tied to and shaped by dominance. Scheurich continues: 'Dominance is the master; resistance is the slave's reaction to this master . . . Resistance is thus not freedom. Resistance is not an open possibility; it is a closed determination' (p.72). Chaos/freedom thus allows diverse enactments of power to be acknowledged and accepted as part of the 'self-other hyphen' (Fine, 1994a). Here the subject is recognised as constituted and that 'power does not cease at the moment the subject is constituted, for that subject is never fully constituted, but is subjected and produced time and again' (Butler, 1992, p.13).

Feminists, and others working with/in the postmodern, have emphasised the importance of attending to the diversity of (constantly re-constituted) subjectivities arising from the research interview. The polyphony of interview texts emerges from this complexity (Bloom, 1998). In my interview practice I have been concerned to both elicit and attend to stories - in particular the stories that women tell about themselves when telling about the Rape Crisis training. I am concerned to listen attentively and empathetically to everything that participants say. I believe that through my listening I negotiate with these women the words we use together to construct meanings. I am anxious to bring to this process some awareness of factors such as class, sexuality, disability and

'race' as complexities inherent in myself as well as interviewees. I agree with Jane Ribbens (1989) assertion that we need to pay scrupulous attention to how we listen to interviewees. In all conversations with participants I believe that what they are saying has merit, even when it may not fit neatly with my ideas built through the research thus far. I do not see myself as required to manipulate others by virtue of having acquired greater information about the general situation and higher awareness of possible outcomes. I see the interview as a process undertaken in order to bring the researcher into close contact with research participants as they are engaged in interpreting themselves and their own lives. Words are uttered that re-present the life and there is some shifting negotiation here as interviewer and interviewee build not merely an interpretation together, but the events, experiences and selves involved. To describe a situation narratively is to constitute it (Denzin, 1997). As a feminist with/in the postmodern I do have a commitment to these women as embodied individuals making sense of their lives. Yet in developing such respectful attentiveness I am constantly aware that researchers are more than 'vehicles for transmission, with no voices of their own' (Fine, 1992, p.211). To be collaborative does not necessitate whole-hearted agreement.

I agree with Susan Chase (1995) that it is important to 'take narrative seriously', and to therefore develop an interviewing procedure that explicitly elicits narrative. *If*, language defines and constructs actual and possible forms of social organisation and consequences, and people create and make sense of their experiences through narration (the first part of Denzin's nine part thesis, 1997; see chapter 1), *then* 'in-depth interviews should become occasions in which we

ask for life stories' (Chase, 1995, p.2). That is to say stories which narrate life experiences of 'abiding interest' to the narrator. Chase argues that in order to elicit stories the interviewer needs to invite respondents to take responsibility for the meaning of their talk. She suggests that, for example, sociologically phrased questions, intended to include respondents in the research process, do not invite the respondent to take responsibility for her own story, as the 'weight of the question lies in the sociological ideas' (p.8). Such questions orient the interviewee toward the researcher's interests, rather than her own life experiences. Chase talks of the need to produce interview questions that encourage the respondent to 'embrace' the responsibility for the import of her talk. She recommends orienting questions toward 'life experiences that the other seeks to make sense of and to communicate' (p.12). I began each initial individual interview with a request to tell re-collections of the Rape Crisis training course within a life story narrative.

Jean I'd like you to think about the training course.

Zoe Mmm hmm.

Jean And reflect on your, kind of, memories of that course.

Zoe Yeah.

Jean And to think about how that fits in to like your life.

Zoe Where it comes into it?

Jean Yes.

Jean If you were going to tell your life story and fit the Rape Crisis training in how would it fit?

Tamsin I've been thinking about this actually. Cos you mentioned that [when arranging the interview]. I find that really quite hard, you know? I thought you were going to sort of ask like questions. I have given a lot of thought to the course. But it was it was more around stuff like where I was at the time, really.



After this exchange, we move on to explore stories of the course in relation to events at, and away from, the Rape Crisis Centre. I trust participants to speak about Rape Crisis in ways that are meaningful to them. To produce their own 'tiny moral tales' (Denzin, 1997). To tell stories that are not required to 'make sense' logically, but that may be rendered to 'a sense' chorographically (see chapter 1). I do not 'pull them back' to the Rape Crisis experience as I define it. It is not always clear in advance what will serve as a 'good' question, and during the interview process I found it necessary to 'try out' several ways of asking in order to elicit a story heavy with meanings for the narrator rather than a report, of prime interest to myself as the interviewer, that waits to be interpreted. Catherine Riessman (1993) suggests that to encourage women to tell about their lives we need to facilitate an appreciation and use of questioning that goes beyond thinking in terms of 'open-ended' (e.g. 'tell me what happened?') versus 'close-ended' formulations (e.g. 'when did that happen?'). She points out that seemingly closed questions, that could be answered by a short piece of information, or a 'yes' or 'no', can generate extended accounts, if the topic is of abiding interest to the participant and the interviewer is prepared to listen attentively and question collaboratively. She suggests that such an approach will almost inevitably produce narrative accounts 'provided interviewing practices do not get in the way' (p.54). This concurs with the comments from many interviewers (e.g. Patai 1994, Ribbens, 1989) that women are quite able to take charge of their own narratives if questioning is inadequate. This process of generating questions and listening to stories takes place with an awareness of the complex social nature of story telling, which embodies the relation between narrator and culture. 'Taking narrative seriously' thus involves

attending to what narrators accomplish as they tell their stories, and how that is culturally shaped (Chase, 1995).

In developing an interview practice, I found myself tensioned between feminist approaches in the manner that Leslie Bloom (1998) describes in her reflections on the development of research practices. She suggests that interviewers often encounter difficulties when trying to incorporate two contradictory feminist approaches. Namely, the call for conversational interviewing as a grounds for friendship building (e.g. Oakley, 1981<sup>4</sup>) and the call for interviewer restraint to allow women to speak on their own terms. The former requires that the interviewer attend to the development of friendliness and to creating the interview as a site for 'good conversation'. Like Bloom, I am attracted to an 'Oakleyesque' model of conversations between women as a powerful alternative to conventional qualitative interviewing procedures. Yet, as Trinh Minh-ha (1992) suggests, we do need to be cautious of any simplistic assumption that: 'The more intimate the tone, the more successful the interview' (p.78). I concur with Bloom's (1998, p.32) assertion that we need to avoid 'having a rigid ideal of what a feminist, feminine, or woman-to-woman conversation should be'. Shulamit Reinharz (1992) suggests that researchers need to let go of expectations of high rapport to avoid making it 'the normative, not the special condition' (p.265). And in any event, to be cautious of over-romanticising due to an assumption that 'feminists are supposed to feel toward

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<sup>4</sup> Close scrutiny of questions that Oakley lists as having been asked by interviewees and answered by her reveals that the majority was not about personal issues but was about the research or advice regarding pregnancy or childcare. As Ribbens (1989) suggests 'This can hardly count as reciprocity in the mutual exchange of information' (p.584).

other women as if they are her 'sisters', the presumption being that sisters have profound positive relations and shared interests' (p.265). We need to take account of the many textures of interaction and of reciprocity within each interview. Furthermore, we need to be careful that this move to develop friendship may in itself be a route by which researchers move to exploit the interviewee. As Judith Stacey (1988) warns, feminists' attempts to build rapport may inadvertently participate in exploitative dynamics.

The call for interviewer restraint requires the provision of focused attention and validation; it does not require the interviewer to disclose information about herself. The intent is to allow the interview to be guided by the respondent; by 'stepping back' the interviewer creates the space for the interviewee to express herself as she wishes. Yet, as Bloom illustrates, this being a 'good listener' may be insufficient for some women, but exactly what others require. She also notes that it may be possible to work toward some level of mutual comfort, without achieving the kind of conversational patterns advocated by Oakley (1981). A good example of this is the approach described by Kathleen Casey (1993) in her study of women teachers working for social change. She opened each of her interviews with the same phrase: 'Tell me the story of your life' (p.17). Although she initially calls this 'a challenge' she later corrects this to being 'an invitation'. At first this would appear to be more sympathetic to a model of interviewer restraint. However, as Casey reminds us, there is more to the interview process than the interview itself. She writes of the need to become 'an insider' in order for a conversation to even begin. This work of friendliness is thus positioned as primarily prior to the first interview. This is

in contrast to Bloom, who 'does friendliness' in parallel with the interviews, continuing over a number of years and then (contrary to Oakley's experiences) ending both simultaneously.

I would say that on balance I was tipped more toward the role of 'good listener' than that of 'good conversationalist'. However, I am aware of how I shifted between these different positions not just between interviewees, as described by Bloom, but also within an interview.

After ten minutes of speaking with very little prompting from me, my sole utterances being 'um', 'uh huh', 'mmm' and 'right', Gina stopped mid-sentence and requested more active involvement from me as interviewer:

- Gina            Rape Crisis was the nearest thing I'd done to any sort of consciousness raising about that. I'd missed out on all of that when I was younger. Err so that maybe made me look at that kind of stuff again I CAN'T KEEP WAFFLING.
- Jean            Okay.
- Gina            Talk to me.
- Jean            Was that one of the -
- Gina            Waffle, waffle, waffle.
- Jean            Laughs.
- Gina            I can only have conversations!
- Jean            Okay. Was that one of the things that you were conscious about when you went on the Rape Crisis training course?
- Gina            The feminism thing?

Jean Yes.

Gina No I don't think so. Well hum I answered too quickly there didn't think. I think perhaps part of its appeal was that I felt that perhaps there'd be a degree of empathy there. . . .

Written feedback from Gina on reading the above transcript and my interpretative comments:

I was perfectly happy with the response to the request for conversation being a question. What is uncomfortable for me is talking in a vacuum so I had no perception of you misinterpreting my request. I am always more than happy to talk about myself but I need outside stimuli in whatever form. Perhaps all I want is the illusion of conversation.

Several things are interesting here. Despite a clear request for 'conversation', I offered a question 'Was that [feminism] one of the things that you were conscious about when you went on the Rape Crisis training course?' Yet, this appears acceptable to Gina as a prompt to continue speaking. Was she asking for a conversation - or for a structure? Given that she then returns to speaking fluently with my encouraging sounds of 'mmm', 'right', etc, and with the occasional brief question from me that links with topics raised by her, what was she asking for? I am aware that we fell into a pattern very close to the counselling style advocated by the Rape Crisis Centre. I acted to prompt her recollections, although this may well be a route for the

elicitation of narratives as advised by Susan Chase, was it the 'right thing' to appropriate (however, unwittingly at the time) a counselling format?

In a later session when she talks about her difficulties in maintaining a sexual relationship with a male partner whilst attending the training course. During this interview, I initially appear almost eager to move toward a conversational mode, I engage with 'the personal' but then retreat:

Gina I just got very mixed up with stuff that was an issue for me at the time.

Jean Yeah.

Gina My sex life was crap.

Jean That must have been quite difficult doing the Rape Crisis course as well.

Gina Why?

Jean Because when I did it I had a crap sex life.

Gina (Laughs) Bit of personal experience creeping in there.

(Both laugh.)

Gina Can you link the two things up?

Jean I think because the Rape Crisis course is about questioning past assumptions and getting us to look at the way that things are constructed, and sometimes those are the kinds of structures that constrain us. It can be uncomfortable when that starts looking at particularly personal issues. And there is this kind of confusion between how the

power issues around rape and sexual abuse link in with those power issues around all sexual relationships. It's very difficult for people who've got an excellent sex life to come and start dealing with those issues. But if you've got a crap sex life and you're dealing with those issues, then that can actually accelerate the process and make the process more painful, because you're taking a lot of that stuff back. Back into your bedroom.

Gina            Yeah. When I think back that was three months before I left [her husband] and I was doing a lot of avoiding closeness and intimacy.

Jean            Mmm.

Gina            Having a headache a lot, I mean not actually (half laugh). Hopefully I was being a little bit more imaginative than that. But I certainly wasn't being straight about it.

Jean            Right.

Gina            I certainly wasn't all of the time saying I don't want to, which is what I felt, I was making excuses so not to so as to protect his feelings.

Jean            Right.

Gina            Errmm, I didn't feel like having sex with him. So I suppose that that's a kind of strange juxtaposition isn't it? Talking about issues around rape and sexual abuse on the one hand, and doing your best to avoid sex by polite means at home. Which is, I think, why that stuff was such an issue for me.

Jean            Right.

Gina            Cos it was about exactly what I was dealing with at home.

Gina takes the initiative by asking a direct question after I have interjected my recollections. I interpret this as a request to 'make sense' of my interjection, and do so in terms fairly typical of the views that I am expected to hold as a Rape Crisis trainer. Having swerved in this direction we then return to

Gina's narrative, and do not move to a more conversational mode that would have included reciprocal information exchange. Despite my stated intent to be friendly and to avoid positioning myself as expert, I readily constructed such a self when a space appeared. Of the possible ways of answering, 'Can you link the two things up?' I positioned myself as a somewhat didactic pedagogue, and not as a woman willing to share her experiences of the impact of the Rape Crisis training upon her sex life. I refused the invitation to reflect in the way that Gina does about her own experiences.

Yet, there is an intriguing counter-shift here. Outside the interview context, Gina and I are 'friends'. We need to pay attention to the resonances of this relationship within the interview. Leslie Bloom (1998) suggests that if 'the relationship is a research relationship, perhaps it is less "natural" to have a conversation than to have an interview' (p.40). However, I am cautious about making some mirror assumption that friendship will tend toward a conversational style. Perhaps, by adopting the short question with 'encouraging noises' format we were acting to discipline the boundaries of our friendship? Perhaps, my adopting an explanatory rather than reflective tone was an attempt to signal that in this 'interview mode' I would distance my 'friendship self' and thus not appropriate the friendship as part of the formal research process (embodied during the interview)? Why did I position myself as Rape Crisis pedagogue in answering her question? Why not answer in terms of the doctoral research? As Gina points out, she recalls being aware during the interview of me as researcher, friend and experienced counsellor.



My first thought on reading it was - thank God I don't have to avoid sex any more!

I recall being aware of the three roles for you:- 1. friend, 2. researcher and 3., the background awareness of your experience as a counsellor.

Reading the bit where you refer to your sex life, I can actually remember how you looked and said that; it was very much a clear 'I am falling off the role wagon now and it's funny'. You laughed and leaned forward.

When I say, can you link the two things up, I am unsure if that is a question or a request. When you do your didactic pedagogue response, I think it changes tone as it goes along. It starts crisply and then winds down into the more personal with - back into your bedroom! I felt like it clarified what I was struggling with - I think?

I think you did share the experience in your life by the simple statement that you had been there - when I did the training my sex life was crap - and then helping me to clarify what was difficult about that (beyond the obvious!).

I think we were both searching to find an appropriate means of communication in what felt (to me) like a slightly uncomfortable situation. I think you were using all your skills where appropriate and I think it was helpful for me to have a bit of counselling along the way!

Letter from Gina, February, 1999.

Undoubtedly for Gina an awareness of Jean-as-counsellor haunted the interviews. When I began interviewing, I was focused on myself as an established member of the Rape Crisis movement and as a Rape Crisis trainer who had considerable input to many of the training sessions that women had attended. I was naïve about my self as a counsellor. In the development of feminist interviewing practice, I agree with Ribbens' (1989) call for interviewers to interrogate what it means to listen empathetically and for them to include an active emotional engagement. I agree that we need to treat and write about research participants with the utmost respect and compassion. Yet, this is so

close to the therapeutic principle of 'unconditional positive regard' toward clients that I am concerned with the particular complications in *this* situation. As women involved with the Rape Crisis movement, both the participants and myself, as interviewer, are fluent with the 'rules' of a counselling session during which personal information is discussed in considerable detail. In addition, all of the women interviewed know of my long history of involvement with Rape Crisis, all know of the existence of Jean-as-counsellor. I worry at the ease with which I became my counsellor self when the opportunity arose. I worry that this made participants more vulnerable to the sort of exploitation that Janet Finch (1984) and Judith Stacey (1988) warn against. I worry that when Gina writes 'I think you were using all your skills where appropriate and I think it was helpful for me to have a bit of counselling along the way', she may have been conned to speak beyond the usual boundaries of a research interview. I worry that I have conned myself by not consciously considering this aspect before the interviews began. I worry that the Rape Crisis Centre's awareness of this counsellor self was an important factor in the decision to grant permission for me to contact women for research purposes.<sup>5</sup> Yet, I realise that these worries are an indulgence caused by my chasing various selves - trying to round them all up into the text. There are times when I need to accept James Scheurich's (1997)

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<sup>5</sup> When I was negotiating to be allowed access to Rape Crisis Centre records, and to contact women who were no longer involved with the Centre, concerns were expressed as to whether some women might be uncomfortable or upset by being asked to take part in research. There was a recognition that the re-visiting of a life is at least as much an emotional as an intellectual experience - full of reparative possibilities but also potential problems. There was a consensus view amongst Rape Crisis members that I could be 'trusted' to handle emotional difficulties. Similarly, I was seen as trustworthy with regard to matters of both confidentiality and anonymity - again, attributes demonstrated through my counselling work within Rape Crisis.

insistence that the multiple intentions and desires of interviewer and interviewee can never be fully known. I need to be careful to not reify the many selves that inhabit an interview. These are not some fixed positions that I 'flick' between. Each self is a self-in-process, and each self resonates with the rhythms of other selves. Selves and subjectivities are constantly (re)constituted through language each time we speak. This is an ongoing process that must always spill beyond the confines of any interview interaction. Gina talks about how her awareness of me *as a friend* is shaped by her perceptions of my other personae - particularly that I have many years of counselling experience when we discuss 'personal difficulties'. In other words, each self, be it constructed during an interview or a conversation between friends, always already carries a trace of other selves. The interview is indeed a crowded place.

There is a requirement here to be alert to the specific parameters that boundary any particular instance of interviewing practice. This needs to be sensitive to boundaries that move beyond the time and place of the face-to-face interview interaction. As Bloom (1998, p.40) suggests: 'Power may fluctuate and vary depending not only on who is in the relationship, but on what is going on in both the researchers' and participants' lives and in the research process'. There is also a need to be alert to general parameters that contain stories, to explore what may be culturally problematic and what may serve to induce narrative difficulties or complexities. Carolyn Heilbrun (1989) suggests that women adopt descriptions that live up to conventional patriarchal notions of what it is to be female. Conventions limit the emotions that women are authorised to describe. She argues that women are deprived of narrative

conventions that allow complex identities and multiple selves. Power for women means 'the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter' (Heilbrun, 1989, p.18). Rape Crisis training provides women with a (the?) discourse essential for this type of feminist action, yet this is inevitably circumscribed by the culture of the Rape Crisis Centre - which is in turn enabled and constrained by other existing discourses. As Bloom (1998, p.63) argues when expression takes the form of personal narratives (even when it emerges from with/in a feminist politics) 'it may not yield the positive results of giving voice to women's experiences that the genre promises'. The smooth elements of a narrative may point to personal and cultural comfort (a readily accessible discourse), yet there may also be other 'lurking' stories within the narrative. Susan Chase (1995) uses the emergence of themes of inadequacy within an interviewee's story of professional achievement to illustrate how the limited character of the professional discourse constrains but does not silence the story of emotional insecurity. She demonstrates how themes surface throughout the narrative, but are not integrated into it. Particularly how narrative difficulties may be revealed in the form of hinted at but unarticulated experiences. She believes that interviewers need to be alert to these 'submerged stories' and to invite their telling. They should listen for 'gaps, silences, or contradictions', (Chase, 1995, p.19) and constantly reiterate invitations to the interviewee for her to tell the complexities of her story. Indeed Denzin (1997) argues that attending to these 'problematic' elements of narratives, such as apparent disjointedness and silences are the only way in which we can begin to probe the boundaries of culturally acceptable discourses:

The unsaid, the assumed, and the silences in any discourse provide the flesh and bone - the backdrop against which meaning is established. Intonation is the bridge between the speaker, the word, and the listener . . . Intonation creates the double voicedness of talk. It mediates and connects a speaker's meanings with the text of their talk.

Norman Denzin (1997,p.38)

During the interview narratives emerge that are related to experiences of Rape Crisis pedagogy but, as indicated above, they are also imbricated with the generation and presentation of self. Or rather, the self-in-process as the interview progresses. These are what Norman Denzin (1989) refers to as 'self stories'. These are 'told by an individual in the context of a specific set of experiences . . . They are literally stories of and about the self in relation to an event or an experience' (Denzin, 1989, p.186). This approach accommodates textuality and the constantly reconstituted selves of socially produced individuals, as it focuses on language in use (particularly on the formation and perpetuation of discourses speaking about and to each other through the stories told by individuals). Whilst this may be more frequently considered rightfully placed as 'analysis', I wish to emphasise here that this is *an orientation* within the interview as a space for telling.

### **Transcribing**

Together, the two speakers create a small, dialogical world of unique meaning and experience. This universe cannot be reduced to mere transcripts. It cannot be captured in logical structures not in the relationship between linguistic units.

Norman Denzin (1997, p.38)

... as living culture is cut up to become research data, the researcher is the witness with blood on his or her hands.

Michael Schratz & Rob Walker (1995, p.126)

The language out of which the interview is constructed is unbounded and unstable, slippery and ambiguous. I can not be confident of my purpose, the understood meanings of any questions I ask or answers I receive. Furthermore, I want to produce a transcription document that takes into account not just this slipperiness but also the relationship between writing and speech. Writing is not now and never has been a simple supplement to speech. Whilst the history of the metaphysics of presence conceives writing as a supplement to the 'naturalness' of spoken language, Jacques Derrida (1976) points out that we need to construct 'a new logic of the "supplement"' (p.7), in order to understand the place of writing. Clearly if I am constructing the interview process as always exceeding and transgressing its textual re-presentation then it cannot be captured or categorised. It is Jacques Derrida's concept of '*différance*',<sup>6</sup> combining the sense of the English verbs 'to differ' and 'to defer' that permits the articulation of speech and writing. *Différance* is that which always escapes, is deferred in the attempt to define absolute knowledge as presence. It concerns the undecidability, which resides in language and its continual deferral of meaning, the slippage of meaning which occurs as soon as one tries to fix any concept (Derrida, 1982). *Différance* is a play that defines the relationship between speech and language, but in a way that has nothing to do with binary

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<sup>6</sup> Susan Hekman (1990, p.24) states that: 'The concept of "*différance*" is the closest that Derrida comes to a foundational concept, but he is very careful to deny it any foundational qualities'.

oppositions. The transcript of an interview is not an equivalent of the interview telling. It is a supplement - in the sense of being both an addition and a substitution. For Derrida (1976) '*différance*' allows us to think about writing without presence, but also without absence. This moves to undo the closure of logocentric oppositions. *Différance* uncovers presence and absence not as polarities but as confused elements that inhabit each other. This is not some simplistic attempt to erase a difference; rather it is a rewriting of differences in non-oppositional terms. Transcribed speech is embalmed. The 'telling' of an interview is visual, theatrical, inflective and rhetorical. All this is lost in transcription (see Riessman, 1993). The new text takes on a hierarchical order and grammar - which are alien to speech. There is always a slippage between the interview and the interview text and hypertext. *If* in my attempts to represent an interview, I acknowledge that there is no stable 'reality' to be shown, and that '*différance*' allows for a writing without presence. *Then* the feminist emancipatory intentions of 'member checks' and 'negotiated interpretations' serve to prolong interaction rather than to work toward a 'more correct' textual interpretation.

After the opening interviews, sequential individual and group sessions allowed for a negotiation of meaning with research participants at every stage of the research process. Different types of interview are seen as allowing participants to perform different aspects of 'the overall story' (Morgan, 1993, 1997). People tell different stories in dyads from when they are in groups. The interaction within the groups was focused on materials generated from one-to-one interviews. However, these group sessions were *not* 'follow-ups' to

'confirm findings', they were opportunities for negotiation. Negotiation both gathers and disseminates information. In my on-going work with participants I offered interpretations and requested comments, but did not push towards making decisions or arriving at consensual stories. Participants remained informants but were also early audiences for the written text. It is not easy to produce a text which is both what the women want and sensitive to the 'crisis of representation' (see Lather (1996); Lather and Smithies (1997), for discussions of how they worked collaboratively with women to produce such a text for their book *Troubling The Angels: Women living with HIV/AIDS*). I believe, as do Ian Stronach and Maggie Maclure (1997), that we need to divest negotiation of its bargaining overtones, in order to 'think about negotiation as the 'rules' for inciting rather than settling disputes' (p.113). Therefore, whilst negotiation with participants entailed a collaborative effort to build empirically rooted method/theory/writing, it did not include a desire to work toward some consensus text that silenced dissenting 'voices'. There is recognition that all textual representations of the interview adopt fictive devices to perform an authentic account (Atkinson, 1990; Moore, 1993; Van Maanen, 1995b). This active involvement with the emerging text, attempts to work with interview transcripts not as 'findings' but as part of the research agenda (Richardson, 1990a, 1997).

The transcript can be no simple copy of what has already been. When the printed text re-replaces the spoken word, it 'is a construction, one of many possible slices or images of reality selected by the scribe. Its naturalness is a masquerade' (Denzin, 1997, p.42). The essence is that there is no one



interpretative moment - it occurs throughout the research process - including now as you read this text. That the final written text is overloaded with the myself/ves is inevitable. *All* texts are imbued with authorial presence. This complex re-view of the interview precipitates a rethinking of the textualisation of interview generated materials. There is a need to refuse the 'false order' (Scheurich, 1997) of explanation in order to foreground the indeterminate and the ambiguous. How then can the 'wild profusion', the 'ultimately indeterminate and indescribable' be written as (hyper)text? The answer must lie in a shimmying up to the difficulties and slipperiness of language, an embracing of indeterminacy as a rejection of the impulse to explain, for in 'explaining, we exclude the possibility of the *radically* heterogeneous' (Scheurich, 1997, p.67 quoting from Spivak). James Scheurich (1997) argues that in order to reconceptualise the re-presentation of interview materials researchers/writers need to enact a double strategy. Firstly, we need to highlight the 'baggage' that we bring to the research enterprise, although this can never be exhaustive. Secondly, we must place the open indeterminacy of the interview interaction itself in the textual foreground. He is clear (p.74) that this must go beyond 'merely announcing this indeterminacy in an introduction and then proceeding to name "reality"'. As researchers/writers we need to be constantly alert to illustrate the shifting openness of the interview and its interpretive moments (again we cannot do so completely). Hyper-reflexive electronic bricolage is part of developing new imaginaries for not only (hyper)textualisation, but also the process of interviewing. This includes acknowledging the creative/emotional/evocative process of producing

transcripts, and not just the appropriation of (hyper)texts as transcripts for research scrutiny.

In producing transcriptions of interviews I am aware of the need to be sensitive to how the process of transcription, the act of 'writing down', may affect research participants. As Ruthellen Josselson (1996, p.70) reminds us: 'No matter how gentle and sensitive our touch, we still entangle ourselves in others' intricately woven narcissistic tapestries. When we write about others, they feel it in some way'. 'It is one thing to engage in conversation and exchange ideas; another to observe in cold print, intimate biographical details interpreted by someone else, however empathetically' (West, 1996, p.212). Although Josselson and West are focused on the publication of interview generated materials, I contend that this awareness needs to influence the process of transcription, since in the everyday, written events (even if 'only' written electronically) gain an authority above that carried by memory or speech. I found that some women did not like to hear their own recorded voices, some were dismayed to see their speech mannerisms committed to print,<sup>7</sup> some were delighted by the weight a transcript gave to their words, whilst one felt that transcription 'lost who I was'.

I felt early on in the research process that I could not have just one way to transcribe, that I needed to work with recorded materials in different ways. Indeed, some interviews have not been transcribed. These tapes have been digitally entered as multi-media sound wave files on the computer; they can then

be manipulated both within the qualitative data analysis package *Code-a-Text* and also within the multimedia publishing software *NeoBook* (I discuss both of these packages in more detail in the section on hypertext).

Riessman (1993, pp.56-60) suggests beginning with a 'rough transcription' to get words and 'striking features' into textual form. Thereafter it is possible to go back and retranscribe selected portions in more detail. I found that this approach did not allow me to access the nuances of the interviews in the ways that I required. When I carried out transcriptions, I did so in detail *first* for the whole interview, using a simplified transcription system adapted from the type used in conversation analytic research (e.g. Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). This was not some attempt to 'capture' in textual form the interview in its entirety, rather I sought to be able to see at an early stage of the research the interruptions, pauses, tempo and tone that shaped the interview interaction. The sorts of concerns that Susan Chase (1995) highlights and that I wished to pursue as part of a process of 'taking narrative seriously', are re-produced by such a transcription procedure. I could then move to a 'smoother'/'rougher'<sup>8</sup> transcription at a later stage if required. The following transcript extract shows the form of transcription used:

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<sup>7</sup> Printed text versions of hypertext transcriptions were made available to all participants - in whatever level of detail they requested.

<sup>8</sup> Smoother? Applying more of the expectations of the linear print form. Rougher? Reducing the amount of 'information' carried. Although recognising that meaning bears no simple relationship to information content (see Hayles, 1990).

### Transcription Notation

- >< Words enclosed by symbols spoken at a faster pace than the surrounding words.
- <> Words enclosed by symbols spoken at a slower pace than the surrounding words.
- = Words run together.
- { } Transcription doubt.
- xhhh Exhalation.
- hhh Inhalation.
- (tut) Dentalised 't'.
- Spoken with emphasis.
- ° ° Words enclosed by symbols more quietly spoken than the surrounding words.
- Abrupt ending.
- :: An extension of the sound or syllable it follows (the more colons the more prolonged the stretch).
- CAPS Words capitalised spoken significantly louder than the surrounding words.
- Font Words in different font spoken in characteristic manner as indicated in the transcript.

Tamsin I think it was probably one of the last groups that (pause) I I was- you know involved with. But whether it- But yet you see I really enjoyed the group. I can't think of the different names. But there were some real personalities there. You know we had such fun and we really did hhh. So I can say that an- and in that situation, we actually bonded quite well hhh three or four of us. °I can't I really can't remember names° you know but hhh we really bonded and talked and shared. As I suppose you do when you're in a learning situation. Like you know (tut) the sort of 'mmm God >I wonder what they're going to do this week'< or 'what do you think of that one?' and all this sort of thing.

Jean Right.

Tamsin And and groups do that so >I I think and I think I was< I don't think I was on the outside of the group.

Jean Hmm.

Tamsin      So I think yes it- I learnt i- it certainly was one of the steps towards more feeling uncomfortable. >And yet I < I know this sounds really gobbledegook yet I was not uncomfortable hhh I did bond with that group.

Moving to a 'smoother'/'rougher' textual form followed this approach of detailed transcription. Having produced a first version I would then 'revise not in terms of a possible audience, but by the protocols of the thing in front of me' (Spivak, 1993, p.190). As I have already stated, I arranged sequential individual and group sessions to facilitate negotiation of meaning with research participants at every stage of the research process. This facilitated transcription with an eye to the dynamic staging of the language. As part of this process, some participants were keen to have detailed transcriptions, others preferred a 'neatened' version, some wanted a tape, and some had no further interest after the interview. In attempting to build a collaborative research project, I did not see this as coercing or excluding women who wanted to limit their role. I feel it important that women who were not interested or able to take an active part in collaborative discussions are not silenced. Even (especially?) for these women, it has to be emphasised that interview transcripts are not 'findings' but are 'part of the research agenda'. Overall, when working with the move from interview interaction to tape recording to interview transcript I have endeavoured to be sensitive to the need to 'play around' with ways to re-present the interview's indeterminacy. I have been sensitive to the need to view this process as one of inscription and not one of description.

## **Electronic Scripting.**

As the speechless are given voice and the power to name and be named through progressive writing, the postmodernist theorist would disempower them by erasing their names, deconstructing their stories, undermining their ground for authority. A progressive-postmodernist rewriting, however, proposes that, because all knowledge is partial and situated, it does not mean that there is no knowledge or that situated knowledge is bad. There is no view from 'nowhere', the authorless text. There is no view from 'everywhere', except for God. There is only a view from 'somewhere', and embodied, historically and culturally situated speaker.

Laurel Richardson (1990a, p.27)

Before I move on to discuss the processes of crafting a hyper-reflexive electronic bricolage it is important to note how I position research participants. As a feminist with/in the postmodern I do have a commitment to these women as embodied individuals making sense of their lives. I also believe that no subject is its own point of departure, and that the construction of the research subject needs to be interrogated rather than taken as a pre-given or foundationalist premise (Butler, 1992; Lather, 1991). Subjects are constituted by discourse, not merely situated within it. I agree with Judith Butler (1992) that a simple assumption of agency places research subjects as instrumental actors who confront an external political field. However, if politics and power already exist at the level at which the subject and agency are articulated and made possible, then to presume agency is to turn away from an inquiry into its construction.

the subject is neither a ground nor a product, but the permanent possibility of a certain resignifying process, one which gets detoured and stalled through other mechanisms of power, but which is power's own possibility of being reworked.

Judith Butler (1992, p.13)

Here the subject is constituted by discourse but is capable of resistance with/in that constitution (Hekman, 1990). In my research practice I can trust these women to be active and fully competent (but constrained) storytellers. They are capable of recovering the complexities of their stories, yet acknowledging the permanent possibilities of this as constant process.

Liz Stanley argues that work on auto/biographies frequently implies that the complexities involved 'can only be recovered from *outside* the text and by specialist, uncommon, readers' (Stanley, 1992, p.105). She illustrates how Hannah Cullwick, a working class woman who wrote diaries in the mid-nineteenth century had a sophisticated 'theoretical' appreciation of the fractured differences of self and of the category woman. I agree with Stanley that complex categories are not solely the reserve of theoreticians/researchers. Here is Gina describing her complex understanding of her shifting self/ves:

Gina I'm aware that I have a chameleon like personality which I used to feel terribly embarrassed about. I used to apologise to people I was close to for my ability to change accent, and language, and intonation, and gesture -- depending on who I was talking to. Empathy to the nth degree.

Jean Yes.

Gina It's one of the other things that's changed as well over the last two or three years. I don't try to alter that any more. I think that's cool. I've started to see it as *more of a positive thing*. Julian thinks this is hugely dishonest and thinks that I should be really myself.

Jean Mmm.

Gina           And I said this is me that ability. It's about survival skills to fit in with the situation that I'm in. It's me, it's my character that's part of me. I can't not do it.

Furthermore, throughout the research process I have been aware of how these women (including myself), as narrators of these self stories, have all experienced the reflexive, life history based pedagogy upon which much Rape Crisis training is predicated. It is vital to consider how their stories have been transformed by the storytelling tradition of the women's movement (particularly in the area of sexual violence where personal testimonies have played an important political role in consciousness raising). Although the training inevitably shapes their stories, I do not believe that they are begot by it. Yet, we must attend to the shaping of stories emanating from the Rape Crisis experiences. Over the course of the research it became apparent that the tension between the 'cultural stories', accepted within the Rape Crisis Centre, and the 'collective story' (see Laurel Richardson, 1990a & b, 1994a, 1997), told by participants, was an important element (however close this veers to 'analysis') to be re-presented as part of this research text (see chapter 5).

But I am forgetting the linearity of textual manners. In producing a research practice as a feminist with/in the postmodern I have been attentive to develop an approach that is respectful of participants, but that also enacts the concerns raised in chapter 1 regarding the need to think/emote electronically. In order to address and expand these concerns, I have developed an euretic procedure that uses research generated materials with/in hypertextual inventive practices to script a performative theory (Ulmer, 1989, 1991, 1994; see chapter 1). To *do* something *with* found materials, rather than *saying* something *about*



them. This is a move to produce a positive engagement of tensions and contradictions. These hypertexts move in a variety of directions (remembering that 'directions' are hyper-scripted chorographically rather than topographically) that are intended as cross-cutting devices to illuminate diverse significances. I invoke my inability to reach closure as a strategy to acknowledge and perform the 'post-modernist tension' (McWilliam, 1993) created by the current climate of educational theorising. This approach takes seriously Norman Denzin's (1997) nine part thesis for interpretative inquiry with/in the postmodern (see Chapter 1,) and works with electronic scripting, as a method of inquiry. Here there is no insistence on a separation of scripting/writing and other empirical work. This approach accepts empirically generated materials not as 'data' but as part of the research agenda (Richardson, 1990a, 1997).

In the practice of this approach, I have not relied upon any single software instrument. As Eben Weitzman and Matthew Miles (1995) point out in their review of computer programs for qualitative data analysis, choosing appropriate software is no simple task. Furthermore, the choice of software is not merely one of selecting technical features. All technical options have conceptual and epistemological implications. Indeed Liz Stanley and Bogusia Temple (1995) in their review of qualitative packages found that those offering the most sophisticated array of data manipulation techniques were those that most pre-structured and limited data entry. Thus 'constrain[ing] researchers to analyze qualitative data as though it is actually quantitative data, by producing a form of hierarchically organized variable analysis and assigning significance in quantitative terms' (Stanley and Temple, 1995, p.185). In addition to this

specific concern I was keen to work with materials with/in electronic forms that move beyond their conceptualisation as 're-purposed print' (see chapter 1). I sought to attain maximum flexibility in both the types of materials that could be entered and the varieties of technical manipulations that could then be carried out. I recognised that my choices could not be reduced to the 'merely technical'.

I chose to move between different windows compatible software packages that claimed to offer the flexibility I sought. I have employed a 'conventional' qualitative software analysis package in the form of *Code-A-Text*, the electronic publishing software *NeoBook*, and my usual word-processor (during the course of the research upgrading from Microsoft's *Word 2.0* to *Word 97*). I will now detail my relationship with each of these packages.

I selected *Code-A-Text* over some of the 'big name' packages (e.g. *Ethnograph*, *Nud\*dist*, *Atlas Ti*) as it appeared to take seriously the multiple tasks required for the in depth treatment of narrative texts. For example, texts can include multiple font types and colours; texts can be merged, subdivided or restructured with ease; texts can be coded using multiple methods: content codes, categorical scales, numerical scales, open ended comments and direct annotations, multiple windows open simultaneously to juxtapose the different elements of the texts. *Code-A-Text* offers a high level of flexibility with regard to manipulating materials and is respectful of keeping large blocks of text together in an unstructured form. There is also an ability to save materials as audio files and to thereafter link text and sound at any time. The software's flexible system means that comments or other additional materials can be

attached to audio and/or text files. At the time at which I made my software selection it was the only qualitative data analysis package that allowed the direct manipulation of sound wave files (many other software packages do now permit this). *Code-a-Text* offers ways to include interpretative text, yet remains sympathetic to the pattern of priorities expressed by participants.

Liz Stanley and Boguisa Temple (1995) point out that researchers need to suspend any assumption that a dedicated qualitative analysis package is always the most appropriate software. My decision to use *NeoBook* and *Word* software was shaped by the requirements of flexibility and creative electronic framings of materials, as an active acknowledgement that my choice went beyond the technical. *NeoBook* is a software-authoring package for the creation of electronic publications. These consist of screen 'pages' onto which are placed text, graphics, interface controls, audio-links, etc. A compile feature allows pages to be assembled to form a fully-fledged *Windows* application. Such features are useful in allowing links to be made between multiple elements in the research process such that they can be recognised as complexly inter-linked and multi-influencing. *Microsoft Word* word processing packages provide a variety of facilities to qualitative researchers. *Word* allows for a number of features for the manipulation of text-based materials including automatic index generation, 'hidden' annotations, columnar text, multiple colours and font types, the ability to include graphical materials, together with the usual editing functions that are necessary for any textual manipulation work. Furthermore, as Stanley and Temple (1995) note, it is always necessary to use a word processing package to prepare texts for final dissemination.

The conjoint use of these three *Windows* compatible software packages allowed for the manipulation and movement of materials between files generated within each programme. This allowed me to create multiple links and pathways through the materials. This was the type of flexibility that was required if I was to attempt to move beyond print-based conceptualisations of 'analysis' to *do* something *with* data, rather than *saying* something *about* it.

## **Intertext:**

### *telling space*

#### **Consciousness Raising**

I sit with the grown-up women.

We call this consciousness raising.

We call this realising that nothing is personal.

it is nothing special,

it is the everyday,

it is ideology in action.

We numb our pain with patriarchy.

We go away to our lives - empowered to see differently.

Nothing changes.

But now we understand why nothing changes.

We understand that this is not of our doing.

just because a male philosopher has 'positioned himself as a woman' does not mean, for example, that he has to worry about being sexually assaulted if he walks across town or campus at night.

Bill Martin (1992, p.152)

There's nothing wrong with Uncle Albert.

And the parents,

'Uncle Albert's lovely.

He loves having the kids round.

And he gives them treats

Oh he's lovely Uncle Albert'.

Unaccompanied access.

And overnight stays and everything

and you're thinking 'well you know he did it to you'.

coming back to men

coming back to men

to men who rape

to men who sexually abuse

to men who emotionally abuse

coming back to men

I still feel anger.

## Chapter 5

### **RE-COLLECTING OUR SELVES (*‘Fractured and Authentic’: A Collective Story of Rape Crisis Pedagogy*)**

The problem is not what will count as an authentic portrait, but the assumptions that we make about personhood. We think of the problem as one of representation (the person as given, the portrait as problematic) and we struggle with forms of ethics, social interaction, data analysis and reporting that will ‘express’ the person, squeeze his essence from the body of data. But perhaps the problem is one of conceptualization, of making problematic what we mean by a ‘person’. Are ‘persons’ an ontological rather than a methodological problem?

Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure (1997, p.49)

For there are signs of newer and diverse stories in the making which shun unities and uniformities: reject naturalism and determinancies; seek out immanences and ironies; and ultimately find pastiche, complexities and shifting perspectives.

Ken Plummer (1995, p.133)

A course or an article [or a thesis text] composed euretically is concerned less with communication and more with inference: it is designed to create gaps, gaps in understanding. It might also provide some tools, devices, a rhetoric as guides for filling the gaps.

Gregory Ulmer (1991, p.5)

To have one font for all 'voices' flattens the visual experience and blunts the edge of the text (Derrida, 1985, 1986; Trinh, 1991, 1992). Different text fonts constitute different ways of releasing information and of undermining dominant monovocal modes of informing. In this chapter text for different registers of 'voices' are represented by different types of printed letters:

The 'voice' of a narrative crafted from the editing of interview transcripts is re-presented as **plain Palermo text**.

The 'voice' of dialogues as they appear within interview transcripts is re-presented as **Arial text**.

The poems crafted from interview materials are re-presented as **courier text**.

The 'voice' of reflexive consideration of this chapter as text is re-presented as **Times New Roman text**.

The 'voice' of interpretation (commentary?) is re-presented silently, seeping between the spaces/cracks/slippages between the words.

Providing spaces between the text blocks provides a visual pause, which may refigure the reader's awareness.

'Repetition sets up expectations and baffles them at both regular and irregular intervals. It draws attention, not to the object (word, image, or sound), but to what lies between them' (Trinh Minh-Ha, 1991, p.191).



Fran            They weren't actually very many [poems] that I didn't read and think 'oh gosh yes'. And then there's what comes before the poems about the assumptions that you make about what you're going to find . . . you make assumptions according to the person who you know has made them, cos you've made them, rather than written them.

Jean            Mmm.

Fran            You also make assumptions according to what they're about and what they're for. Because this isn't just poetry in terms of 'I've written a poem about', it's about and it's for.

Jean            For what?

Fran            It's a part of work for a PhD, whatever else it is and whatever else it might do. But the poetry is dead straightforward.

Norma          Direct.

Birgit          Dead there, yes direct. It had a very direct impact.

Fran            I think that's a good word there. I hadn't thought of that word but that's very descriptive of how these are very there.

Norma          Yes, yes.

Fran            The other thing about them is you ask what's left out. Err one of the things that strikes me is that these are definite constructions and they're not your own constructions they're constructions you've made out of somebody else's words. So, they are made. And in terms of what's taken

out it's a bit like errmm when you make a sculpture a three-dimensional thing.

Jean        Yes.

Fran        What it is, is as much to do with the space around it as it has the actual thing itself. And that actually kind of reflects the fact that you know that there are things in there that haven't been chosen by you [and so are not words in the poem] but which are somehow important. So you read between the lines and you can make it up. You could take any of the poems and you could make up dialogue in between the lines.

Jean        Right.

Fran        That would fill it out to make it (pause) more of a dialogue or maybe a long monologue. With all the umms and the errs and all the other things, the general sounds of the nose scratching and the fag lighting and the Crunchie [chocolate] bar gobbling.

Birgit      But that would change the meaning, the original meaning that the person had at the time of saying it wouldn't it?

Fran        Yes. Yes, which is nice.

Birgit      Unless somebody wants to object to it. Unless the original person who spoke these words objects.

Fran        This is say, Joan Smith's words. And then Jean messes around with it. So it's second removed to what she actually said. Then you are doing a third remove by imagining other

words back in. But once Jean has got it and bunged it on the page well then it's not Joan Smith's anymore is it?

Birgit Is it not?

Fran It's hers, then it's Jean's, then it's yours.

Birgit The reader's?

Fran Yes. That's who it belongs to. It doesn't belong to Joan Smith anymore.

Birgit But what if Joan Smith wants it to continue to belong to her?

Fran It's tough.

Birgit Isn't that robbery?

Fran Well she could take her to court (laughs) and see how far she gets.

\*\*\*

*there is a difference between reading and 'merely quoting'*  
*there is a difference between 'rendering intelligible' and 'understanding'*

\*\*\*

This chapter is a product of my relationship with research participants. This chapter is a product of my relationship with research participants, as ultimately I

selected text for inclusion and my 'voices' (for I recognise my-own multiplicity) are privileged - even when not explicitly printed. Indeed, as Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure, (1997, p.35) remind us, 'the writer is never more present in the text than when she seems to be absent, and the subject seldom less audible than when he seems to be speaking for himself'.

\*\*\*

A little like Dionysus, or Christ, the author must be dead before he can return.  
In a sense too, he must continue to be dead though he has returned.

Seán Burke (1992, p.30)

\*\*\*

In crafting this chapter, I am aware of my ethical responsibilities. I am tensioned between the postmodernist impulse to interrogate the author and challenge distinctions between fact and fiction, and the feminist impulse to 'give voice' to those who have been silenced. As I enclosed this chapter's title 'fractured and authentic' in the 'bite marks' of quotation I did so to indicate my acknowledgement of the textual construction of authenticity by means of quotation (Goldhill, 1993; Atkinson 1990). Rather than leave cracks through which 'the illusion of the authentic kept on leaking here and there' (Trinh, 1992, p.172), these 'bite marks' call attention to these leakages. As Trinh Minh-Ha (1991) writes:

Factual authenticity relies heavily on the Other's words and testimony. To authenticate a work, it becomes therefore most important to prove or make evident how this Other has participated in the making of his/her own image.

Trinh Minh-Ha (1991, pp.66-67)

Hence, authenticity becomes a textual accomplishment appealing to a 'reality' through conforming to the established rules concerning what 'the real' looks like. Trinh argues that this notion of 'giving voice' is a device to legitimate the form of the re-presentation. As Catherine Riessman asserts feminists need to be cautious about any desire to 'give voice':

We cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret. Representational decisions cannot be avoided; they enter at numerous points in the research process, and qualitative analysts including feminists must confront them.

Catherine Riessman (1993, p.8)

I believe that it is important to problematise conceptions of the non-discursive 'real' as some empirically discoverable world. To recognise how 'giving voice' acts to authenticate a text through the use of quotation. I am caught between validating the language of my text as referential, locating my subject in reality rather than in language, and giving way to a self-referential tide of textuality. I do not wish to fall into a paralysing 'languacentricity' (Lather, 1991, p.124). 'The World' cannot be reduced to language but it is forever inscribed within language. I am concerned to develop what Laurel Richardson (1990a, p.27) calls a 'progressive-postmodernist rewriting' that lessens my authority over the stories of others, but retains the responsibility of authorship. I do not wish to be

so busy processing women's words that I forget to hear their 'voices' (Yllo, 1994). I agree with Richardson (1990a, p.38) that 'writing strategies are not just literary or scientific choices: they are moral decisions'. I want to craft an authentic text in which all parties recognise themselves, and perceive their-own-stories of Rape Crisis pedagogy (ironically noting that this provides the most powerful warrant for my account). Although the connections between text and lived experience remain obscure, I do wish to generate a story that speaks to the logic and cultures of these women. Thus the discourse of 'voice' is employed, 'surrounding the term voice with quotation marks to indicate its metaphorical status' (Alldred, 1998, p.161).

This is a feminist praxis that builds on cultural identities that are not essentialised. This chapter (and the thesis as a whole) moves to discover knowledge about the stories told by participants and to recover and value knowledges that have been suppressed by existing social science epistemologies (e.g. as with Trinh's (1991, 1992) use of proverbs and stories). As the writer of this text, I am ethically charged to ensure that all participants recognise those aspects that concern them as valid within their own perceptions. That is to say, I wish to respect stories through privileging not their 'accuracy', but rather their ability to re-present that which the respondents wish to be told. I am interested in developing ways of accounting for Rape Crisis pedagogy by employing means accrued by 'individual women'. This writing/reading/scripting of participants' self stories is a way to fulfil responsibilities to the women involved without retreating into a 'patronising sentimentality' (Grumet, 1990). Yet, I realise that in order to do this I may have to risk the 'necessary invasions and

misuses of telling other people's stories' (Lather and Smithies, 1997, p.xiv). This chapter inevitably foregrounds the lack of confidence that any researcher must have in telling any story. No single story is/can be told. Here the 'unit of analysis' becomes the scene as it is recognised that: 'Stories and poems are written in facts, not about facts' (Denzin, 1997, p.208). In this research, I experiment, I *do* something *with* data, rather than *saying* something *about* it. There is only a series of poems, narratives and transcripts each of which must be taken on its own, yet each of which is embedded in what comes both before and after. The text tells a story, and at the same time unravels that story.

\*\*\*

Patti Lather (1991, p.123) in her chapter, *Staying Dumb?*, which explores empirically generated materials, writes of 'the many different directions I could have gone with it, the gulf between the totality of possible statements and the finitude of what is actually written or spoken'. She structures the chapter into four narrative vignettes, each of which tells the 'story' of her 'data' in a different way. As Michael Joyce (1991, ¶21) points out 'the trouble with hypertext, at any level: it is messy, it lets you see ghosts, it is always haunted by the possibility of other voices'. I am surrounded by ghosts, by the memories of the hypertext, by memories of the chapters never written, of the words never transcribed and, even, the words never uttered. I want to leave space for these 'ghosts', for I recognise that as readers we construct these whenever there is a gap in the text. Sometimes, these gaps are easily filled. For example, one paragraph ends with a person getting on a train, the next begins with the getting

off at their destination. The reader assumes that an uneventful train journey has occurred. Sometimes these gaps are less easily filled.

\*\*\*

I want to produce a text that can participate in multiple meanings without being reduced to just one. There is a danger of producing a text that does nothing more than ask the reader to interrogate her own techniques for sense making.

\*\*\*

In *Recollecting Our Selves*, I develop a multi-linear layered 'collective story' arising from the electronic hypertext (this is not to say that this is the only form of print text that could arise from hyper-reflexive electronic bricolage). I conceive of this text as a place where the complexities of the collective story of women recollecting rape crisis training can be heard. This is a story that refuses the technologies of Othering whereby homogeneous identities are constructed by means of constructing collective, homogeneous identities for Others (Fine, 1994a). In her typology of narratives Laurel Richardson (1990a, 1997) explains the 'collective story' in relation to the 'cultural story'. The latter speaks from participation in a culture:



Participation in a culture includes participation in the narratives of that culture, a general understanding of the stock meanings and their relationships to each other. The process of telling the story creates and supports a social world.

Laurel Richardson (1990a, p.24)

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people make their own discoveries

(Because I wouldn't describe myself as a trainer, I would describe myself as an enabler)

you've just got to be there  
the second you hear something,  
sense something,  
see them look at something,  
see them listen to something,  
see them hear something.  
So that you say 'yes'  
and help them on

\*\*\*

Jean           Right (pause) I just think about this- (tut) this sort of ethos of the Centre from the counselling viewpoint of errmm women making their own decisions about contacting the Centre and giving women space to work through their difficulties. How did that translate to actually running the training course d' you feel that the:: To how the participants on the course were treated?

---           xhhh yeah. That did happen, I think. You know there's a lot of space for you to talk about stuff and that and (pause).

I definitely felt that like a lot of the time right, it was quite clever (pause). Not winding people up but- sort of asking questions askin' difficult questions.

Jean Mmm, right.

--- (pause). You know like when you ask questions when you're counsellin' somebody sometimes don't you a very open-ended question which they can answer themselves. Which is very similar in a way to the training thing apart from it was a much much- It felt more errmm (pause) (tut) not aggressive I'm tryin' to think of the right word (pause) It felt rather much like the questions were asked and the people were left to sink or swim with it. Whereas when you're counsellin' somebody you're always ready there to (tut) err (pause) help them I dunno it's just a lot of a softer approach when you're counsellin' somebody d' you know what I mean?

Jean Yes.

--- The training group was quite harsh sometimes I think questions were asked (pause) and then people would go off and the training group would be left going like 'what?' >You know.< Left there to get angry and that.

\*\*\*

'The cultural story is told from the point of view of the ruling interests and the normative order' (Richardson, 1990a, p.25). However, the collective story is told from the viewpoint of those who are silenced or marginalised by the cultural narrative:

The collective story displays an individual's story by narrativizing the experiences of the social category to which the individual belongs, rather than by telling the particular individual's story or by simply retelling the cultural story.

Laurel Richardson (1990a, p.25)

\*\*\*

***Principles:***

1. *We are a confidential service and must always aim to make women feel secure about talking to us.*
2. *We believe everything which is told to us.*
3. *We treat all women equally regardless of race, age, class, creed, sexuality and ability.*
4. *We only accept first person calls from women and children. If other agencies wish to refer their clients to us, we ask them to pass on our opening times to the client. We will take information from the agency concerned about the client but will hold this in confidence.*
5. *We listen to whatever is said to us and accept whatever actions a woman has taken.*
6. *We make no judgements about women concerning their personal relationships, behaviour, level of responsibility etc.*
7. *We never give advice on 'avoiding rape', nor on how women should conduct any aspect of their lives.*
8. *We uphold the right of women to say NO when they want. By being involved in a relationship with a man, women do not give up this right to refuse any further sexual activity at any time. All parties in any sexual situation have the right to terminate say no to any respect of that activity which they do not agree feel comfortable with are not willing to participate in.*
9. *We refrain from giving personal opinions, even when pressed.*
10. *We are often an anonymous service. We do not pressure women to give us their names. They must know that they have the right to remain anonymous and may give us a fake name if this makes them more comfortable.*

11. *We aim to remove the guilt felt by many women who have been abused by stressing that they were not to blame.*
12. *We aim always to give women a positive image of themselves, distinct from that which is often fostered by society.*
13. *We must gradually give women the courage to explore the future and the options which lie ahead for them.*
14. *In cases of recent rape assault we must point out the options available immediately, depending on the circumstances:*
  - *A safe place to go back to.*
  - *A place to wash and change clothes.*
  - *Help in securing future accommodation.*
  - *Visit to GP.*
  - *Visit to special clinic.*
  - *Report to the police.*
15. *We do not specifically encourage women to report to the police but (in cases of recent assault) must at some appropriate time present this as an option. We must give details of court police procedures if asked so that women are able to make an informed decision about reporting. We will support women at all times through these procedures.*
16. *If questioned about issues of abortion and pregnancy we must not give personal opinions at any time but must put the solution back into the hands of the woman in question.*
17. *Women who have not completed the counselling course should not have access to information held in the office about specific women. This is only available to counsellors.*
18. *We must question the loyalties of any woman who wishes to become a counsellor and whose job could involve access to women being counselled e.g. police, social services etc.*
19. *All correspondence books should be signed out from the office if it is removed from [the Rape Crisis Centre] and returned as soon as possible.*
20. *When giving talks to groups we should adhere to all of these points. WE must be aware that there may be women giving the talk listening who have been abused and or men present who are abusers. Above all, we should not feel that we have to defend our viewpoints and principles - we have a right to hold them'.*

Rape Crisis Centre Principles (unpublished document)

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Those who taught me to read and write also taught me that it was not safe to write about matters which would make either them or me uncomfortable in a classroom context. Stories which never addressed issues such as sexual abuse reinforced this teaching. Hence I, like others, learned early to divide my self and my world into categories such as private and public, practice and theory, good and bad. Once this method of learning was internalized, it was easy for me to assume that my experience of abuse was neither important nor appropriate. Thus, as a child being taught to read, write, and talk, I learned that abuse was an unacceptable topic for discussion. I learned that some topics are good and that some are bad. I concluded, therefore, that if the subject matter was unworthy of discussion, then I too must be unworthy. Hence, I must be silent. How could I know otherwise?

Anne-Louise Brookes (1992, p.17)

\*\*\*

safety stuff

I can still feel the instances  
Either you cop out  
or open your big mouth.  
Stick your head over the parapet.  
Somebody says run.  
You start running  
You get half way  
and you're being fired at.  
I wanted to run back.

\*\*\*

Jean I can't manage to craft something from my own words.

--- Oh we can do that. As a Rape Crisis Centre for you.

Birth Pangs

(Was it the women? Was it what went on?)

It brought a lot of stuff up for me.

I wanted to be inside it and make sure things didn't go wrong.

An opportunity to control.

Bit of a power kick really.

I'M ALL KNOTTED UP.

Jean is trying to hang herself.

With her scarf - shall we explore this do you think?

I remember thinking that it was that boundaries thing that I felt I needed.

I'd made friends with women before.

It was important that I maintain that boundary.

Boundaries.

I tend to collect people around me.

Stress, stress, stress, yes stress.

It was very messy.

It was obviously odd for them that I suddenly changed.

Suddenly change. Changed my personality.

They liked me.

I felt this tremendous pressure.

Hold it all together.

Hold it all together.

The whole lot took a lot of holding together.

I used to be there and I'm not there anymore I'm thinking different, different.

Who's a survivor who's not a survivor.  
Why the fuck should I tell them if I'm a survivor or  
not.  
Why should I discuss anything in front of these  
people.  
How feminist is that then?

How feminist is what?

\*\*\*

--- It's not democratic major decisions weren't up to the group  
and quite right too in my opinion. Because you're not  
looking at what is for the greater good or satisfaction of the  
Centre you're looking at how do you provide the best  
service possible. But I still think it's important that you look  
at ways in which a greater number of people can own it.

\*\*\*

Richardson (1990a) argues that there are many collective stories in contemporary society which resist the cultural narratives about people and tell alternative tales. Some arise through social movements, though not all stories arise from collective organisation. Richardson contends that the collective story is important for cultural change. If people are made and make sense of their lives through the stories available to them, then they attempt to fit their lives to those stories. The prevailing cultural narrative available may be at odds with the life as lived or limiting or even destructive. A collective narrative may offer the patterns for new lives, and for the cultural story to shift. These transformative

possibilities are not individualised. They exist at the socio-cultural level by facilitating social identification of a group. They can serve to 'emotionally bind together a group' (Richardson, 1990a, p.26), which once linked may engage in social action on behalf of the collective (see Plummer, 1995). Although the collective narrative is about a category of people, the individual response to the collective story is: 'That's my story. I am not alone' (Richardson, 1990a, p.26). Yet, this impulse to action carries the danger that collective stories 'can become cultural stories, petrified and limiting, they too may be subject to future resistance and rewriting' (Richardson, 1995, p.217). These stories can provide the map (see chapter 1 for the need to re-think the concept of 'mapping') of ways in which the subject can be re-constituted. Yet, both map and territory are in constant motion. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that no collective story can be unshaped by the culture that it resists. Any collective story must be saturated with the hegemonic understandings of the culture in which it is embedded. We must always ask: 'Whose story is being told (and made) here? Who is doing the telling? Who has the authority to make their telling stick?' (Denzin, 1997, p.92).

\*\*\*

-- That's what my life experience has shown me. If you really want to belong is you have to buy a package of whatever it is that that group subscribes to. Which is certainly true of you know the lesbian feminist thing the whole kind of uniform. The you know the whole badge made so that you can be recognised - and it's true of the kind of new age contingent (pause). xhhh Errmm it's true of errmm the business woman (pause) working image and



environment thing at work xhhh and then I partly want to belong to those when I'm in them. And then I absolutely don't want to °buy into everything that goes with them°. So (pause) >I get bits from all of them< and end up not belonging to any of them, and I take a sort of perverse pride in it.

\*\*\*

The stuff I was going through at the time was having a massive affect. That period, of which the course was a part, changed me a lot and woke me up a bit I suppose and made me see things more clearly. I shifted to the point where I was doing the course. And then afterwards I was a totally different person.

I'd worked before with a group, which was about survivors of child abuse and that sort of thing. And I'd bin doin' workin', doin' business stuff and feelin' like I was not doin' anything worthwhile in the community for women.

It had been nagging away at me for ages that as part of my political consciousness and feminist consciousness I didn't do anything active. I'd done all that 'well hey it's about how you live your ordinary life'. But eventually I thought it was a bit of a cop out really, I should make a bit more effort.

I was in need, because of all the sort of changes going on with me. I think I'd had enough really of doing things for everybody else. I thought I'd do something for myself. And I thought it would be good to do something in a group learning situation.

\*\*\*

It just happened to be the first thing that I saw in the newspaper

I was looking for something,  
And there it was.  
I just saw it  
read it  
and it touched something  
meant something.  
Simple as that really.

\*\*\*

I took out a lot of stuff and looked at it. I analysed things to do with my marriage, the way I related to people and things to do with my family. All of which I thought I'd done before. I thought I was quite self analytical. It gave me a different perspective on it all. Very glib but to some extent licensed me to be selfish perhaps. It gave me a bit of reassurance and affirmation that it was all right to, for example, if you're talking Rape Crisis training about survival skills. For a survivor you know those

--- One of the questions was that do you- have you had sex with your partner (pause) if you haven't felt- if you haven't wanted to.

Jean Hmm.

--- And is that abuse? Ohh. (exaggerated xhhh) We couldn't agree on that one at all. (Laughs)

Jean (Laughs)

--- And somebody said 'oh no that's not abuse I've done that heaps of times' and I went 'ohhh- but'. It was there and I'd said it before I'd

lessons were equally applicable to survival skills of ordinary life to plug you're own gaps and deal with your own problems. So then I had to acknowledge certain things I did or certain things to do with my life were acquired survival skills as opposed to a core part of my character, and I don't think I'd ever made that separation before. Rape Crisis contributed to that. What I find now is that having analysed a lot of things I can't fool myself anymore I'm almost sad that I can't. For example, I analysed a lot of things about my relationship with my husband. Instead of just saying aren't I lucky and isn't this nice. And haven't I go a nice secure marriage and focusing on all the positive things about him. I looked at the negative things about the relationship and about him. And having looked at them, I had to act on them. I couldn't pretend they weren't there anymore. I couldn't tuck them away anymore.

even realised it. And they said 'well haven't you done it?' and I said 'well yes but that's not what we're arguing about. (Laughs) =

Jean = (Laughs) =

-- I'm arguing about- it's whether it's right or not. Yeah we all most probably admit that we've done it'.

Jean That's right.

-- 'but it's whether it's right or not in theory'.

Jean Yes. But have you done it since being on the Rape Crisis course?

-- No I bloody haven't. (Laughs)

\*\*\*

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-- No I bloody haven't. (Laughs)

\*\*\*

However, I also wish to emphasise that both the cultural story and the collective story are complex and shifting. The cultural story of the Rape Crisis Centre is not a single unified narrative. The Rape Crisis Centre is not a unified interest group - it is a locus of struggle. It consists of many cross-cutting interests and diversities. In any organisation at any given moment the members will be unevenly committed to preserving the *status quo* (Fine, 1992). Likewise, the collective story needs to take a form that allows for its diversity to be taken into account. I concur with Judith Squires' (1993b) assertion that we 'must recognise that solidarity is often achieved at the expense of a two-fold strategy of exclusion and assimilation, a denial of difference' (p.7). Sameness is asserted at the price of the exclusion of difference - this is a structure of dichotomy not unity. A radical diversity requires a shift away from concern with equality and sameness towards justice and difference. Consensus is thus rejected as a goal. For consensus 'is not completely innocent, since traces of force may be found in the history of any set of rules that attain and maintain binding effects' (Flax, 1992, pp.452-453). We must open spaces for a diversity of perspectives, which permits the consideration of marginal discourses. This collective story cannot be straightforward, it is diversely complex within itself. Whilst I perform some of the common themes that are important in forging an understanding of women's experiences of Rape Crisis counsellor training, I wish to retain an awareness of the significant differences between these tales. Care has been taken to retain these diversities and not to work toward some false consensus view.

\*\*\*

For this reason the collective story is multi-linear, this is a story that *positively* interrupts itself. Whilst I write of interruptions I am keen to retain some sense of these so-called interruptions being a necessary part of 'the story'. That is to say, the Rape Crisis training collective narratives require all these strands in order to 'make sense'. The text produced is overtly 'messy' (Marcus, 1994). It rejects closure. No interpretation is privileged over any other and no final authoritative account is presented. Here women's stories are acknowledged as diverse and multiple, but any descent into a raucous muddle is rejected. This is a technique that recognises the fluidity of meaning within storied experience.

I suggest that the collective story be read not as multilinear but rather as non-linear. That is to say, it rejects the linear relationship's proportionality. In a linear relationship the magnitudes of cause and effect generally correspond. Small causes give rise to small effects, large causes to large effects. Whereas, a non-linear relationship denotes an incongruity between cause and effect. Thus, a small cause can give rise to a large effect (see Katherine Hayles, 1990, for a discussion of the implications of this for literature and science).

\*\*\*

something of a catalyst

I

*that's a heavy load of self analysis*

I don't know that I can see it in isolation  
it was the trigger.  
That period changed me a lot  
woke me up a bit.  
I was in a process of self examination  
- a *gradual* one.  
with its stops and starts.

I was a certain age, and at a certain life stage.  
At the time. I thought  
what I was focused on was,  
more external things.  
bring them out into the daylight reassess them from  
a new perspective.  
I was focused on  
Umm, *myself*, for me.

II

*there was process and sorting*

When you're not a teenager anymore you're -  
you're very - umm  
my self esteem took a dip.  
my confidence took a dip  
I probably appeared confident and errmm -  
quite vulnerable  
*focus on your strengths,*  
*concentrate on your strengths*

Late seventies early eighties - so an atmosphere  
of 'HEY be positive'  
*positive* about yourself

Through my through my twenties  
focused on good things, sat on bits I wasn't keen on.  
As you get older  
you are more inclined  
to get out the stuff.

You decide either if you want to change it - or can  
or if you don't care  
and can live with it

*thank you.*

\*\*\*

The story of Rape Crisis training is a self story that is a collective story. A story that moves backwards and forwards through a woman's life. 'Speaking to' the Rape Crisis training in the context of **her** life moved between stories of **her** childhood though to **her** current situation. Trinh Minh-ha makes it clear that 'speaking to' is not a 'speaking about':

S/he who speaks, speaks *to* the tale as s/he begins telling and retelling it. S/he does not speak *about* it. For, without a certain work of displacement, 'speaking about' only partakes in the conservation of systems of binary opposition (subject/object; I/It; We/They) on which territorialized knowledge depends. It places a semantic distance between oneself and the work . . . 'Speaking to' the tale breaks the dualistic relation between subject and object as the question 'who speaks?' and the implication 'it-speaks-by-itself-through-me' is also a way of foregrounding the anteriority of the tale to the teller, and thereby the merging of the two through a speech-act. Truth is both a construct and beyond it; the balance is played out as the narrator interrogates the truthfulness of the tale and provides multiple answers.

Trinh Minh-ha (1991, p.12)



\*\*\*

*Connectedness*

some aspects of **her**  
story take the form of  
summarising-linear- narratives-which-track-chronologically-though-time

Yet

**she speaks to** the tale  
**her** story links events  
through personal significance  
not a temporal order

It unfolds in time, without being simply linear. This allows the speaker to retain the complex possibilities of the story. It's spoken form remains contingent as she moves through the story generating connections. Each time the story is told it 'unfolds' anew. The story structure is akin to the idea of the hypertext as informant, whose texture is revealed through interactive contours. The elements of the story are themselves shifting and multiple. Each mini-narrative changes with each telling, the speaker does not have a set of predetermined fixed stories that she can move between.

\*\*\*

---

I think I've gone back to the person I was before marriage  
and the kids and all the humdrum bit of life wore me down.

We always compromise. But I wonder who does the most compromising. And I think I did too much really.

Jean           Right.

---           And then I decided that I didn't want to compromise. And after- he's had twenty years of me compromising so it was a bit of a shock that. And I can't change back now can I? I can't take away all that training. All that awareness. All that thinking I've done.

\*\*\*

Even as I craft these stories, I know that this crafting is provisional. These words will always escape my text to complicate and exceed the directions that I impose. I am scripting possibilities.

\*\*\*

I had this very tidy life

I had this very tidy life  
And then I shook it all up.  
I think about Shiatsu and Rape Crisis.  
one is physical and one is  
I'm not sure *what*  
those were the two things that I *did*  
those kicked in to all the other *changes*.  
neither turned out like I'd expected.

I kept holding in very tight  
Moving my body around let stuff out  
Someone took the cork out  
Rape Crisis was a channel

\*\*\*

very feminist right on girlies

in their jackets  
with their demo flags  
and all the rest of it.

these were *different* women

that *is* what I had been  
I had been stomping  
and fighting  
It was very different  
and it was *very* angry

\*\*\*

**She** came

seeking changes

**She** has changed

(home, family, job, life)

continuing as before

catalysed but unchanged

**She** makes the

change that is no change

The Centre

complexities shift 'the situation'

a pre-existing self

responds?

Expectations veiled in inclusive rhetoric.

isolated, judged

argued against not with.

**She** resists,

and in resisting

achieves the very goal The Training seeks to achieve.

\*\*\*

Audrey        They constantly relate back to us. If you are with them doing a session they are like children. They are constantly looking at you.

Jean            But you admit that you judge them.

Norma         Surely if they know that they are being judged they are going to make sure that they give the right answer.

Audrey        You can judge people by looking at them even if they give you the right answer.

Jean            And that's why they're looking at you like that.

Audrey        They've got each other they should be bouncing off each other. I would dearly love to get back to them coming together as a group.

Imogen        When you came you were making something [Addressed to Audrey who joined the Centre when it started]. But now people are different they now come to be turned into counsellors.

Audrey        But we shouldn't allow them to be fed like that.

Norma         It seems to me that one of the useful ways of learning something is by suggestions from existing members. And I think if you are the sort of person who will be fed then you will be fed.

\*\*\*

And you did feel, not on trial exactly

I'm sure that it wasn't true  
but I felt that  
not that you were being judged  
not that what you were saying was being watched

you said things  
you felt that the person was going  
'Tsk, well fancy her thinking that. I'll have to  
change her view on that before the end'

You went away thinking. 'God knows what they thought  
of what I said'.  
cos you didn't get anything  
- you didn't get any response -  
whenever you said 'is that right or wrong?'  
'there is no right or wrong'  
which I know there isn't.  
but it's not a good answer when you're worrying  
about what you're thinking or saying or feeling

\*\*\*

The collective story has been derived in collaboration with research participants. Trinh (1991, 1992) argues that it is necessary to resist verbatim quotes as these help the reader to assimilate a narrative as a realist text. However, I found, as have others (e.g. Jim Mienczakowski (1996) during his scripting of the ethnographically derived play, *Busting: The Challenge of the Drought Spirit*), that research participants had a preference for a text that adheres to the verbatim accounts gathered during the interviewing process. The collective story is entirely crafted from the verbatim accounts as represented by the interview

transcripts. Although I do believe that the deployment of poetry and the multilinear format, (both using the transcribed words of participants), do speak to Trinh's desire to undercut the realist text.

\*\*\*

Jean        I just have the impression that the training group you were in were all women who had sexual relationships with men.

---         Hmm. I don't know (pause). Well unless there was some of the group that didn't disclose any differently.

Jean        Certainly any lesbians who were in that group =

---         = Well they kept quiet. Didn't say anything. They'd be too intimidated to say anything.

\*\*\*

The unsaid, the assumed, and the silences in any discourse provide the flesh and bone - the backdrop against which meaning is established.

Norman Denzin (1997, p.38)

\*\*\*

It's sexy these days to talk about silence. We like to celebrate the unspoken, the unsaid, the unsayable. To cozy up to the abyss, the lacuna, the rupture, the *mise en abyme*. We are in love with the *aporoia*, the *differand*, the unknowable, the nonsymbolizable: these phantasms, these negatives, these slim deliriums have become our textual goddesses, our political deities.

Patricia Yaeger (1991, p.239)

\*\*\*



This tale is spun from the words uttered by research participants. Yet, in this use of quotations I am knowingly authorising the text in the sense of I, the author was there, and that a participant said this like this, and it can be documented. However, I am, in crafting the story as a collectivity, refusing to be seduced by the ever-present research fantasy of complete capture of 'reality'. Lather (1991) presents her students words in a deliberately de-contextualised and fragmentary way in order to resist the desire to reinstate a notion of transparency via the inclusion of copious identifying information such as class, race, age, sexual orientation etc. I agree that a knowing erasure of this sort can destabilise what it means to authorise by means of quotation.

**Who speaks?**

**She speaks?**

---?

**I write where it vibrates.**

-----

\*\*\*

I make use of 'She' and '---' instead of using pseudonyms for participants (as I did in chapter 3). I do not take 'She' as a generic pronoun universally applicable to all women who tell stories arising from the Rape Crisis training. I recognise 'Her' diversity, and in doing so intend to create an opening for the reader to move with my-own-text.

\*\*\*

#### Personal Views

It dawned on me  
I actually held views

|                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Personal views           | I was me                 |
| I'd been a mum           | I wasn't somebody's mum  |
| I'd been somebody's wife | I wasn't somebody's wife |
| I'd worked               | I wasn't somebody's boss |

I'd forgotten that I actually did think  
have-hold views on things

\*\*\*

'Voice' is a complex matter:

What is 'voiced' is also 'heard'.

People have to be ready to hear - and that is not determined by argument.

\*\*\*

This multiple and layered text uses experimental and evocative writing to weave together the many 'voices' of the research process whilst recognising the multiplicity of each strand to be woven. When I use the quotation mark surrounded 'voice', I recall that it is deployed, 'to indicate its metaphorical status' (Alldred, 1998, p.161). This is not some phonocentric acceptance of the 'absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being' (Derrida, 1976, p.12). I do not seek to imply that speech provides a privileged 'window into experience and its meanings' (Denzin, 1997, p.35). Speech is not transparent. To solely privilege voice, hearing and listening is to ignore the interactive components of the process. This chapter is structured so as to question itself in the uses to which 'voices' are put. This collective story is an attempt to create a text as a parallax of discourses where nothing is stable. This concurs with Denzin's re-visioning of qualitative research. He argues that a space and a 'voice' (re-emerging, bereft of it's meaning as presence (Derrida, 1976)) for those studied will never be found unless we embrace a new form of textuality that accept that research is not about stable observers producing stable pictures of a stable reality:

A way of writing that embodies a fundamental accuracy of statement about what is heard and felt will be cultivated. . . This writing will be organized by the principle that even if something did not happen, it could have happened. This criterion for truth means that what could have happened will happen in this text.

Denzin (1997, p.46)

This draws attention to the politics of knowing and being known. This text is written to foreground that both content and form communicate meaning, and to prompt questions about the authorisation of knowledge. Through refusing to seduce the reader with the appeal of familiarity and self consciously playing the author/reader/text symbiotic relationship I seek to 'both get out of the way and in the way' (Lather, 1996; Lather and Smithies, 1997), and thereby escape scripting a seemingly unmediated account of research 'voices' as 'events' and/or 'data'. Meaning is dispersed throughout the text, through the inseparable interplay of content-meaning.

\*\*\*

That's the bit you can't  
learn

If you can't relate to  
people

you can learn all the  
theory

you can learn all the  
paperwork

but if you can't get on  
with people

I know that people talk to me,  
but that's a very different thing  
to believing that having them  
listen to you can actually make a  
difference. I mean, in a social  
situation there's no agenda for

you're on to a non-  
starter.

that. There's no expectation that  
it's actually going to make things  
better.

\*\*\*\*

Jean Right. So d' you feel that  
the Rape Crisis training course  
showed you that you'd got it?

--- Yes.

Jean Rather than give it to you?

--- Yes. And I think of the  
people who I trained with some  
didn't have it.

Jean Right.

--- And they didn't have it at the  
end either.

Jean Yes right. (pause) So you  
could've said at the start who was  
going to be a counsellor?

--- I suspect that people have a  
pretty good idea.

--- One of the- the tensions with  
the course is that a lot of it is  
actually about awareness raising.  
And there's very little about specific  
skills to do with counselling.

--- Indeed, yes. Which leads  
you to think that the course is  
assuming that it comes naturally.

\*\*\*

Michelle Fine (1992) talks of her work with Jacqui Wade at battered women's shelters. The work was conceived as collaborative, however they ultimately generated a critical commentary about race and racism and about children - views that were not shared by their collaborators:

While they were the subjects of the research, the ones *for whom* the research was conducted, within the report which we wrote and narrated, they may have felt like objects. We discussed, negotiated, and traded insights. Yet there were 'moments of splitting and moments of critique'.

Michelle Fine (1992, pp.15-16)

I agree with Fine that it is important to recognise these moments of splitting and moments of critique. And that we need to provide context through the eyes of those women involved as a way toward acknowledging the painful difficulties associated with an inability to find a powerful, coherent and sustained set of 'voices'. Although we do not resolve questions of power, context, and meaning simply by revealing the multiplicity of women's 'voices'. It is nevertheless important that we recognise the frames which participants offer as stories are narrated.

\*\*\*

---

Rape Crisis isn't necessarily about feminism if you like. You don't have to be a feminist to be a counsellor I don't think. Well I think a lot of people when I trained didn't think they were. I mean it is for me, but coming from a feminist

point of view the issues that you discuss and all that is quite feminist. Which I think is why a lot of women have a problem with it I don't just mean on my training course I mean generally.

Jean            Yes

--                Because they didn't want to be classed as a feminist. 'Cos they saw them as the shaven headed. Doc Martened, spray painting sort of feminist uniform. They saw that was what feminists were.

\*\*\*

*How do I produce a text that invites the specificity of embodied individuals without a construction of presence? As Liz Stanley (1992, p.96) notes it is easy to embrace anti-realist principles but then 'slip into quasi-realist readings' of auto biographical materials. We must not forget that my own story biography is intimately interwoven with this telling. As researcher interviewer writer, my stories converge with those told to me. I am intimately part of this collective story.*

\*\*\*

I did not think

I did not think my husband was a potential rapist.  
I think there are men that you know aren't  
- you know - capable

*Gentle Men*

that I felt they wouldn't wouldn't do that.  
I mean - I dunno it's only my opinion.

\*\*\*

Answering the questionnaire felt like a test if you didn't come up with the right answer you weren't in. Just like a job application form. So obviously, you do try to kind of think of the right answers as well as it being your answer. And I think, where I wasn't sure whether it would pass, I may have tried to be clever with the wording. But it didn't work because then you were picked up on it afterwards in the interview.

\*\*\*



--- Mmm. It's not in depth is it? It's not real.

Jean Yeah.

--- You've done the course you know what's expected of you give it. It's quite heartening that I screwed up here and there really.

Jean So where d' you think you've screwed up?

--- errmm (pause) (looking). Well I can remember being blown away by the baby thing. Cos I got very up- I got very tangled (laughs) I remember writing this and thinking oh my God what am I trying to say here. Why didn't I think before I started writing?

Jean Oh yeah.

--- What would you say to a women who thought she might be pregnant as the result of a rape? (pause) Umm.

Jean And you've written nearly three quarters of a side =

--- = Yeah. = Practically a side of A4 On this very short and simple question (laughs). And you said to me err Gina is it possible that pregnancy might be a thing for you? At the interview.

Jean Mmm.

--- Umm which I suppose it was. It hadn't occurred to me even though I was aware that I was

For me, at least, my level of awareness was actually so much lower than my head thought it was.

getting into a pickle answering the question at the time I hadn't realised hadn't made the connection at all >It really blew me away when you said that because it's so obvious.< °It made me deal with made me think° oh God hhh can't keep avoiding that one then. I'd better (pause) errmm.

\*\*\*

Jean Did you- you feel that you were being kind of checked out by the existing Rape Crisis group?

--- Errmm yeah absolutely. Were you coming up to scratch on or not? Mmm obviously used criteria >which may or may not have existed.< I mean certainly didn't formally exist.

Jean Right.

--- But informally it exists doesn't it? (Laughs)

Jean I wouldn't like to comment. (Laughs)

--- You can look at a group of new trainees and say yes, yes, no, no, no, yes you know (pause).

Jean Shall we stop there? We'll stop taping [Tape off].

\*\*\*

**a 'world brimming with silence'**

Patricia Yaeger (1991, p.239)

\*\*\*

ON DECIDING TO NOT BECOME A COUNSELLOR:

--- But I think that there was a sort of scary thing around. Well I suppose I was frightened of failure. Frightened of ballsing up and it being such an important subject. I felt I'd rather answer the phone to somebody phoning up threatening suicide. I could cope with that the phone line now I could actually handle it almost without training. Whereas somebody phoning up saying they'd been raped. I do remember getting to the end and thinking I can't I really can't handle this, I'm frightened of mishandling this. Really frightened. Not because somebody phoning up on the verge of suicide would be any less important. But I suppose it's because it touches me as a woman. I just was so frightened of not doing the right thing.

Jean So what would you visualise happening if you didn't do the right thing?

--- (pause). About getting into trouble. That's a real childhood thing with me. Getting told off. Being hauled in front of Audrey.

Jean Right.

--- I could say like you know fucking up the rape survivor or whatever. But to be absolutely honest it's about me getting into trouble. Having to sit in front of maybe you know a team or a panel or two or three or whatever, and it be you know 'why did you?, what did you do that for?' You know I mean honestly that's it.

\*\*\*

For me, as a feminist activist, there have been many painful moments of splitting within this research process. I find myself unable to continue as a Rape Crisis trainer. I no longer believe that the Rape Crisis Centre adheres to the values that define 'my (current) feminism'.

\*\*\*

going to the pub?

going to the pub  
that was always good  
I wanted it to last longer.  
It felt naughty  
like we shouldn't.

Packet of crisps and a pint  
when we were meant to go home

they had the choice

We didn't segregate them.  
We said 'would anybody like to go to the pub?'  
When we went  
It was quite open  
But some people had commitments  
some chose not to come  
some people didn't feel comfortable

\*\*\*

Jean            One of the things that struck me that's really struck me  
when talking to people.

---              Yes.

Jean            Is that everybody talks about you know, (tut) what it's done  
for them.

---              Yes.

Jean            and how they've changed and how it's really good and all  
this and no one actually talks about how motivated they  
were to help people (pause).

---              Yeah, I errmm (pause) I'm not sure how- I don't think I felt  
that positive about that really.

\*\*\*

Jean            Are there any particular sessions that stand out for you?

{---            I wasn't there for the prejudices. I expect most people say  
                  that one. I wasn't there.}

There was one session that Audrey did. And I hated it because it was making me reconsider something that I was absolutely positive about. You had to think about a prejudice you held. We discussed what a prejudice was, for example a dislike of something not based on anything concrete. Then it kind of wandered round the room, and did the kind of you know sexism, racism, animal liberation, and got into people hitting their children in supermarkets, and those sorts of other bizarre things. And then it was picked up on and challenged [by the facilitator].

\*\*\*

Linden West (1996) in his work about the motivation of adult learners entering higher education, enquires as to what education means to them in the context of their lives past, present and desired futures. In this context he notes that 'our understanding of student motivation is limited because learners themselves have rarely been encouraged to reflect, in a flexible and longitudinal way, on their reasons for educational participation and learning

Jean Rath (1999) in her work about the stories of women reflecting upon Rape Crisis (RC) training, enquires as to what education means to them in the context of their lives past, present and desired futures. In this context she notes that 'our understandings of women's stories are limited because women themselves are encouraged to reflect, in a flexible and longitudinal way, on their reasons for participation in the context of past as well as present

in the context of past as well as present lives' (p.1). West's study involved a series of interviews with people as they 'progressed' through the education system. He discovered that the initially simple narratives often relating to vocational aspirations<sup>1</sup> (e.g. 'I want a degree in order to get a better job'), became more complex stories of 'frustration, fragmentation and marginalization in existing lifestyles; and of patterns of low self-esteem, disrupted education, family and personal unhappiness over a lifetime' (p.34). As he puts it: 'Becoming a lawyer was merely an opening gambit in a far more complicated tale' (p.35). He noted how research participants came to tell stories that connected disparate events, in childhood and later life, 'and wove them into new patterns of meaning beyond temporal specifics' (p.209). West proposes that we conceive of higher education as 'a space' in which students learn 'to compose a new life, a different story

lives' (pp.291-292). Rath's study involved a series of interviews with women as they re-called their experiences of RC training. She discovered that the initially simple narratives often relating to personal histories<sup>2</sup> (e.g. 'I wanted to train in order to confirm my survivor status'), became more complex stories of 'frustration, fragmentation and marginalization in existing lifestyles; and of patterns of low self-esteem, disrupted education, family and personal unhappiness over a lifetime' (West, 1996, p.34). As she puts it: 'The story of course participation was merely an opening gambit in a far more complicated tale' (p.292). She noted how research participants came to tell stories that connected diverse events, in childhood and later life, 'and wove them into new patterns of meaning beyond temporal specifics' (West, 1996, p.209). Rath proposes that we conceive of the RC training as 'a space' in which women learn 'to

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<sup>1</sup> West suggests that the students' tendency to tell of motivations related to paid work is not surprising given the Government emphasis on such motivations and the status attached to paid work, not to mention material gains traditionally associated with higher education.

<sup>2</sup> Rath suggests that the women's tendency to tell of motivations related to personal development is not surprising given the Rape Crisis Centre's emphasis on such motivations and the status attached to psychological health, not to mention the relationship gains traditionally associated with counselling work.



and a more cohesive self' (p.10). He conceptualises learners as 'life spacers', taking the risks necessary to alter the material conditions of their lives through the relationships attained through the education setting. West notes that some people are more able than others at becoming life spacers - more able to take biographical risks. Changing personal narratives are the way in which learners re-make their lives. Yet, this is no simple linear progression toward confident alternative 'identities' - rather 'a sense of education provoking ambiguous consequences including fragmentation between study and home, previous friends and current affiliations' (p.25). As they are driven by a sense that they simply could 'no longer continue as before' (p.25).

compose a new life, a different story and a more (or less) cohesive self' (pp.292-293). She conceptualises RC trainees as 'life spacers', taking the risks necessary to alter the material conditions of their lives through the relationships attained through the education setting. Rath notes that some women are more able than others at becoming life spacers - more able to take biographical risks. Changing personal narratives are the way in which women re-make their lives. Yet, this is no simple linear progression toward confident alternative 'identities' - rather 'a sense of education provoking ambiguous consequences including fragmentation between the RC movement and home, previous friends and current affiliations' (p.293). As they are driven by a sense that they simply could 'no longer continue as before' (West, 1996, p.25).

\*\*\*

Are there any particular sessions that stand out for you?

It's got to be the prejudices one (I)

I do very little  
very little indeed.  
it's like letting a Genie out of a bottle  
that prejudice session

It's got to be the prejudices one (II)

I always tell them  
put myself there  
tell them about my own  
Totally unreasoned prejudice  
Absolutely  
    Against  
        Any  
            Sensible  
                Foundation

It's got to be the prejudices one (III)

you get to that stage  
when the antipathy begins  
because you have to encourage them to understand  
it isn't  
anything to do with reason  
there is no rationality

perhaps the antipathy comes because  
they have to look at themselves

\*\*\*

Jean D' you think that there's a Rape Crisis ideal of how you're meant to change when you come on the course?

(Long pause)

Audrey You don't actually change. You develop, it's all there in the first place.

Imogen But how far does development have to go before it becomes change?

Norma I was thinking of that plasticine character on the telly (pause) Morph on the telly.

Imogen Morph.

Norma Yes and he was on a children's programme and he would change because he was made of plasticine. They could make him change from a man into a teacup or a table or a whatever

Audrey I don't think the comparison's relevant.

Norma It is a bit of an adventure Audrey (pause) at what point does Morph become a teacup?

Imogen Oh God, there's going to be a poem title 'Morph'.

Audrey Making a comparison between plasticine and spiritual and intellectual development =

Norma It's just an analogy.

Audrey No. It's not. It's not the same, not appropriate.

Imogen So what is development like?

Audrey We are talking about developing what is there. It's not change you see. You don't change.

Imogen I changed.

Audrey No you didn't.

Imogen Oh Audrey!

Audrey You didn't change.

Imogen I did.

Audrey You didn't change you developed. You developed and you extended =

Imogen Sorry, but no.

Norma You can't tell Imogen what she thinks she has done.

Imogen Look I can turn into a teacup.

(Laughter)

Imogen I felt like I'd changed.

Audrey No you didn't.

(Laughter)

Imogen      No, hang on hang on a minute. No Audrey I did definitely change.

(More laughter from the group)

Audrey      No.

\*\*\*

When I got there

It killed some of those dreams  
Those fanciful seventies child ideas of  
How I'd *like* to live

Made me face up to my own skills  
Bit depressing really.  
By showing me what it was really like  
It showed me how hard it is  
to be useful.  
How difficult it is,  
how *difficult* it is  
to do it well

[Christopher Sharpley and Ian Ridgway (1993) found that trainee counsellors' self assessments were not a good predictor of counselling skills. Indeed, they found that in certain circumstances trainee confidence was a predictor of poor skills.]

\*\*\*

Norma        You are forever the same person. You can't change where you came from.

Imogen       And what you were is so fundamental to what you are now.

Audrey       You can hone what you have.

Norma        The rest of it depends on how you personally interpret the word change because it can be used in a variety of ways and it's really odd cos you're both really saying the same thing.

Imogen       Yes.

Norma        But you [Audrey] are not allowing Imogen to use the word change.

Imogen       I think you are right, we are saying the same.

\*\*\*

It made me think about things that I sort of knew anyway. It made me bring them out into the daylight and reassess them from a different perspective.

\*\*\*

The feminist thing that equality and the power imbalance between men and women. And men's attitudes to women in general and the effects of pornography and that kind of thing. I think that whatever we discussed like that, I always felt that I was never quite with that completely I always felt I was sort of a bit further down the road

\*\*\*

Imogen I didn't think the things before.

Audrey You didn't think them but you probably felt them.

Imogen Hmm. Not consciously.

Audrey Only when you had a forum to express them did you consciously look at them.

\*\*\*

sittin' with these grown up women discussin' these  
issues

I do know.

I *do*.

I don't know how to say it

but I do *know it*

And I've known it since I was about six

I know about this

and I know about this

and I couldn't put it into words

and I couldn't tell people what I wanted to say

and I didn't feel like anybody took me seriously

and I didn't

that's what I mean

that's what I mean about bein' grown up.

\*\*\*

During the interviews, I learned to take care with the use of the word 'feminism'. For some of these women, their Rape Crisis work had little to do with what I would label as feminist concerns. It had to do with a sense of experiencing some alteration that enabled them to behave in ways other than before the training.

\*\*\*



*The construction of selves in selecting and transforming the educational experience.*

She recounts a serendipity  
of response  
powerful, multiple,  
a complex unconscious  
- 'guardian angel' -  
directs **her** significances retrospectively

'surface stuff'  
Reveals an unchanged core  
**her** 'true self'  
unseen the controlling, subconscious,  
'I'  
lingers beneath the surface and the image,  
'flows around' but refuses to address  
directly

\*\*\*

You know, you forget that just being you is doing  
the job

perhaps if we can hang on to the end  
perhaps it'll all be revealed at the end

Then suddenly we're there on the phones  
doing it . . . thinking  
'I can't remember changing into a counsellor'

\*\*\*

Jean           Is there a particular feminist process °of this training d' you  
think?°

---           °Process, process of training° I hesitate to- I mean you see  
little articles every now and again in the press about  
feminists and their- they have these three from America  
haven't they who are- fighting each other like mad and- Yes  
I mean they you know some bits I think yes and some bits I  
think well d' you know d' you have to do that. And some  
bits I don't think are valid at all but I can't remember what  
they are. I expect- women (pause) I suppose now I'll have  
to start using the word women instead of people. I prefer to  
use the word people.

\*\*\*

For me it was New Age Travellers

I absolutely hated New Age Travellers  
but at the end I came out and thought,  
'yeah that's ridiculous'  
And it went away and then I didn't anymore.

Cos she said 'why?'

And I said 'well they don't pay taxes like everybody  
else, and they claim state benefits, and they don't  
work you know, and they sponge off society and they  
don't contribute in any way'.

And she said 'well that sounds like the Queen, and The  
Royal Family . . . so d' you hate them as well?'

(and I thought 'well no I don't')

and she said 'well why not? Because all the arguments  
you've got for hating New Age Travellers it's the same  
for royalty'.

And I went 'hmm'.

\*\*\*

Jean            One of these poems is about your dad.

---             Oh right.

Jean            Called 'my dad'.

---             Oh. (Pause whilst reading)

My Dad

and in his day girls didn't get raped  
and there wasn't all the assaults  
and there weren't perverts  
and there weren't paedophiles.  
and it just didn't go on you know.

---             That's it, yeah absolutely.

Jean            (Half laugh). It is also - cos when you were talking about  
your dad your kind of voice changed.

---             Yes.

Jean            Talking in quite a different accent. And I actually  
recognised it as quite similar to how my mother sounds.

---             Oh really.

Jean            How my mother speaks.

---             Does she believe this?

Jean            She believed in all this yes.

--- Well when we did the part of the training where you know the bit about believing everybody and no matter what circumstances you still- There's no justification for being raped part of you is your mum and dad saying 'oh well she was a tarty trollop' you know no wonder it happened to her.

Jean (Laughs)

--- And when you're little you take all that on board don't you and you when you grow up you go 'ohhh and there must've been some reason you know'.

Jean Right.

--- But you you're not necessarily thinking that it's just there in your mind influencing how you think (pause) and I'm sure that's why some people give up because it- (pause) if you go through it thoroughly I it's quite tiring and thought provoking and some people don't like that. Don't want the unsettled bit do they? You know, it's easier not to think about some things too much (pause).

\*\*\*

it becomes very intense as well.

it's like you're challenged  
it's like being hailed by meteorites  
and your original views  
are there.  
but then a load of other stuff comes in

there wasn't time to get in touch  
the facts came in.  
one dutifully wrote them down

like now when we talk  
this tape isn't long enough.  
by answering questions  
you don't remember  
but it brings you to remember.  
you see exactly,  
you get in touch.  
not getting angry,  
just in touch.

the tape's finished  
things are to the surface  
but it's over.

the course does that.  
by the end it's final.  
there wasn't time  
you were left getting in touch with something, but not  
really quite sure what you were getting in touch with.

## **Intertext:**

### ***opening space***

*I need to include the following poem that I wrote in 1996.*

*It is a route for me to make emotional sense of the research process.*

*When I read it I can feel the words creep over my skin.*

*I can taste their brittleness, almost to the point of gagging.*

*This poem is a convenient opening space.*

*The poem can be read as the futile search for a reality, as a particular response  
to the transition from feminist collective working to academic hierarchical  
thinking.*

*It may address my concerns as a feminist activist who perceives her work to be  
compromised by an association with the academy.  
Symbolically it frames both the beginning and the end of my research. It enables  
me to make some sense of both.*

I dream of a giant spider holding me.

Just holding me.

I bring my hands together to squeeze the spider's brittle body.

It resists

And then explodes into dryness.

The legs friction against the small hairs of my arms as they fall away.

I am covered with a fine ash.

## Chapter 6

### END POINTS

Inevitably, a work is always a form of tangible closure. But closures need not close off; they can be doors opening onto other closures and functioning as ongoing passages to an elsewhere(-within-here). Like a throw of the dice, each opening is also a closing, for each work generates its own laws and limits, each has its specific condition and deals with a specific context. The closure here, however, is a way of letting the work go rather than of sealing it off. Thus, every work materialized can be said to be a work-in-progress. The notion of a finished work, versus that of an uncompleted work requiring finishing, loses its pertinence. What needs to be reconsidered are these widely adopted and imposed forms of closure whose main function is simply to wrap up a product and facilitate consumption.

Trinh Minh-ha (1991, pp.15-16)

Quality . . . you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things *are* better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes *poof!* There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it doesn't exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really *does* exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously some things are better than others . . . but what's the "betterness"? . . . So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding anyplace to get traction. What the hell is Quality? What *is* it?

Robert Pirsig (1974, p.187)



A Last Chapter needs to be written, and so we have the mirror problem of The Introduction. I need to chase the fraying ends of the unruly fabric of this text, and yet I know that it is not possible to make a clean-cut conclusion. I can only provide a tentative ending, for participants (and the reader, and I) carry on their lives and continue to tell/make stories 'about' themselves and the experience of Rape Crisis pedagogy. Remember that this text is a crowded place, and that its meanings reside in relation to it and not in the text itself. The women who populate the researching/writing/reading of this text are not fictions, they (and the reader, and I) live by and through stories. How can I write to honour this continuation? How can I write so that the text both swallows and spits forth the reader in the same motion?

Josie Arnold (1994) ends her doctoral thesis with a section labelled '*No conclusion*',<sup>1</sup> this ending 'does not aim to conclude, but to put into further play explorations central to this dissertation' (p.3). Like her, I refuse The Conclusion. I do know of other ways to end. One of the things I 'do' is storytelling. Not to my children, not to my friends (although I do to both of these), but to 'audiences'. Collections of people who hand over cash. Who *ohh* and *ahhh*, laugh at all the right places, cry at all the right places and clap at the end. So, this final chapter is 'about' the about-ness of that. What it is like to stand up front, to be the somebody whom everybody is watching. We all know that it is over and I cannot script anything that has a wisp-chance of changing what is/has

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<sup>1</sup> She is not the only one to adopt this formula. Indeed Petra Munro (1998) similarly ends her book *Subject to Fiction* with a final section titled '*No conclusion*'. And yet there is a weariness to this textual device, I have some sympathy with Sara Ahmed (1998, p.191) who comments: 'I have read enough conclusions about the impossibility of making conclusions'.

already been. As Kay O'Connor (1996) laments in an afterword to her poem *Glossary of Validities*: 'If the poem does not succeed without these words, these words cannot succeed even with the poem. If I were you, I wouldn't read them'. For 'I' am always already dead, at the far side of the stage beckoning for you to join in a wave of farewell, and a final bow that has to be taken lest we forget our manners and do not get off the stage when and how we should.

In acknowledging that it is time to 'get off the stage', to shape a closure of this text, I want/need to attend to its status as the performed *tale* of the CATTt introduced in chapter 1. Through the adoption of Gregory Ulmer's re-readings of Jacques Derrida, I have located this research/text as an experiment. It arises from practice that 'works at the edges of what is currently available' (Lather, 1993, p.673). Ulmer (1989, 1994) emphasises that his text is experimental, offered not as a proof or assertion of truth but as a trial or test. He reiterates throughout that his texts should not be taken as examples or as recipes, rather they may be read as 'an evocation of the attitudes and strategies of a specific practice' (Ulmer, 1994, p.41). He therefore reminds us that a method may prove impossible to practice but still be a powerful learning experience (an interesting point to bear in mind for this as an approach to doctoral research/writing). Ulmer (1994) argues that those who choose to try it are the only ones capable of determining the value of the versions of practice arising from his texts. And so, having made this 'choice' (which I argued in chapter 1 is a forced choice) I must attend to the 'outcomes' of this experiment.

the blank type  
moves to the page  
withering as it  
is placed  
where it does not belong  
careful prose  
conforming by the edges  
of the words  
removing all the corners and  
rubbing itself bare  
until it bleeds

I need to write *to* how we may determine the value of this research practice. For my-own-text to retain its verisimilitude, I am bound<sup>2</sup> to query any simple re-view of this research/writing. Having offered a tale to address different ways of doing/knowing feminist qualitative research with/in the postmodern, I do not desire to slip into 'analysis' in this ending chapter. In accepting

Denzin's (1997) nine part thesis, I admit the need for a reflexive form of writing that turns ethnographic and theoretical texts back 'onto each other' (Denzin, 1997, p.xii). I must turn the text back upon itself to inscribe a reflective practice that is no simple return to 'my-self'. In order to signal the size and complexity of the move instigated by feminisms' inventing research/writing with/in the postmodern, I am required to inscribe reflective practice through '[t]urning toward otherness, being responsible to it, listening in its shadow, [being] confused by its complexities' (Lather, 1996, p.539).

This twisting of texts back upon themselves through invitation to otherness addresses 'the crisis of legitimation' as to how qualitative studies are to be evaluated in the contemporary, postmodernist moment (e.g. Fonow and Cook, 1991; Lather, 1991, 1993; Schratz and Walker, 1995; Denzin, 1997; Scheurich, 1997). This speaks to the need to rethink our research practices not

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<sup>2</sup> And do not forget, as explored in the intertext *naming space*, the diversities with/in the word 'bound'.

merely with regard to carrying out empirical research and writing texts, but also with regard to judgement of validity. How can I determine the value of the research practices/outcomes invented here?

### **Bounding validities**

I, like James Scheurich (1997), favour a position that recognises the irrevocably political and value laden process of ascribing validity/authority. Here forms of legitimation see validity as a 'boundary line' (Scheurich, 1997), a strategy for the policing of particular regimes of truth:

Validity became the line of bifurcation for a two-sided map. On one side of the map was the research which had passed the test of validity (i.e., was valid); on the other side of the map was that research which had not passed the test (i.e., was invalid), along with aspects of 'reality' that had not yet been researched. Validity as a set of practices within the conventional social sciences is, thus, the name for the boundary line separating research that is acceptable from research that is not and from the, as yet, unresearched.

James Scheurich (1997, p.81)

Scheurich (1997) points out that the numerous and apparently different constructions of validity are all masks that conceal a singularity of purpose. Validity serves as a warrant of trustworthiness, constantly reproducing 'the same validity concerns within new paradigms' (p.83). He argues that even 'successor validities' (e.g. Lather, 1991, 1993) deploy validity as a criterion of judgement, an either/or division between trustworthy and untrustworthy, the acceptable and the unacceptable. Validity must be recognised as a discourse of and about

power. Scheurich (1997) maintains that this function of validity as a boundary line defining inclusion and exclusion (by whatever criteria) is 'a "regularity" in the discursive practices called research . . . that transgresses the apparent differences or supposed incommensurability between conventional social science and even the "more radical recastings" of postpositivism' (p.84). The power of this discourse lies in the policing function of validity, the ability to divide the good from the bad, and the emancipatory from the oppressive. However, this neglects how historically boundaries are deployed to 'exclude that which questions or attacks the paradigmatic status quo as well as views outside the understanding available to the status quo. In other words, validity boundaries are always already ideological power alignments. They always create insiders and outsiders' (Scheurich, 1997, p.84). Validity is then about Othering, through explaining (i.e. through valid research) we exclude the possibility of the radically heterogeneous. Scheurich insists that as the Same/Other power binary appears to be endemic to virtually all constructions of validity, so it can be construed as a procedure whereby 'the Western knowledge project' determines:

whether the Other has been acceptably converted into the Same, according to a particular epistemology. The world is the raw, untamed Other, as in raw data and as in rejected, invalid research. It must be cooked into a valid research-based theory so as to be visible and knowable; the coarse, untheorized, polyvocal Other is considered to be insufficient unto itself. It must be given meaning and appropriate form.

James Scheurich (1997, p.85)

Validity defines what can and cannot be accepted as knowledge. It 'cooks' the data of the Other, re-forming by valid theories to make it palatable,

unified, the Same. This bifurcation 'divides the privileged Same from the as yet untheorized Other', it 'establishes the "valid" domination of the Same over the Other, that delineates the conditions under which the Other can be validly incorporated into the Same' (Scheurich, 1997, p.87). Validity is deployed as a move to appropriate the Other, not to increase knowledge. For Scheurich this recognition of validity prompts us to seek 'new imaginaries of validity' in order to undermine this dualistic appropriation of the Other:

Such imaginaries suggest a doubled strategy. On the one hand . . . to unmask and undermine the dualistic regularity that unknowingly shapes our validity practices across the different paradigms. On the other hand . . . to highlight, support, celebrate polyphony, multiplicity, difference(s), the play of the Other. These new imaginaries need to reconstruct 'validity' or 'truth' as many sided or multiply perspectival, as shifting and complex.

James Scheurich (1997, p.88)

Laurel Richardson's (1994a) suggestion of developing the crystalline as the 'central image' for validity may be one route to developing such alternative imaginaries:

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 colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose. . . . In postmodernist mixed-genre texts we have moved from plane geometry to light theory, where light can be both waves and particles.

Laurel Richardson (1994a, p.522)

As researchers we need to find ways to interact with Others without transforming her/him into purely one's own (the Same). Yet, as I mark out Richardson's route, I am concerned that having any 'central image', no matter how beautiful or succinct, may fatally compromise this project. I agree with James Scheurich (1997, p.88) that to 'simply lay out such imaginaries is, in an important sense, to reproduce practices of the Same. That is . . . to prescribe for/of the Other'. New imaginaries need to retain a play of difference, whilst being alert to the dangers of persistency of the Same in appropriating 'the new' to re-make the Same-Other binary. We require a proliferation of marginalised 'voices'. This is an imperfect weapon, but it is one capable of wounding the bifurcated maps of validity, within which one side is better than the Other, and the diversities of Other-ness are forever subsumed by the Same. To re-make validity is to make a space for the participation of the polyphonous Other that accepts the necessity of dissent, and that recognises dissent is not inevitably a clamorous riot of polyphonic difference, but may be a mumbling, a whispering or even a silence.

Therefore, Denzin's (1997, p.9) call for sets of criteria that 'flow from the qualitative project, stressing subjectivity, emotionality, feeling, and other antifoundational criteria' (see Ellis and Flaherty, 1992; Richardson, 1993), cannot be an appeal to the already-ness of the logic of the Same. I agree with Scheurich that what is called for in our discussions of validity is a tumultuous conversation that embraces the uncontrollable play of difference. We can no longer revert to a 'world-out-there' from which we can craft a valid/invalid understanding as a route to legitimation. There are no transcendent rules of

validity, once it is recognised as irrevocably political and value laden. Indeed, Denzin (1997) refers to validity as 'the researcher's mask of authority', and assumes that the term validity in the 'Sixth Moment of ethnography' is replaced with the words authority and legitimation. This is a move that recognises the process of inscribing validity/authority. However, I am more in agreement with Patti Lather's (1993) argument about the need to retain the term 'validity'. She asserts that instead of jettisoning 'validity' as 'the term of choice', we need to retain it 'in order to break with the signs that code it' (Lather, 1993, p.674), and thereby re-make validity as 'an incitement to discourse'. For this reason, I do take issue with Schuerich's (1997) dismissal of 'successor validities'. As Lather (1993) emphasises, we need to recognise such validities as *ephemeral* 'counter-practices of authority' (p.687) as a strategy to prevent them congealing to form either/or recipes for judgements. She asserts that this knowing deployment of the unfixed term validity allows us to take account of 'all the baggage that it carries plus, in a doubled-movement, what it means to rupture validity as a regime of truth' (Lather, 1993, p.674). She (1993) provides a '*Transgressive Validity Check-List*' (p.685), naming voluptuous, rhizomatic, paralogical and ironic validities. It would be possible for me to 'take up' the invitation of this checklist. Indeed, I could argue that the outcomes of this research would be favourably judged by these criteria. *But* Lather is also careful to name her text as a 'checklist that mimics checklists' (p.686). The list is a simulacrum, and as such is both useful and futile, in existence only through use and only through the acknowledgement that it must be modified or even discarded during any possible enactment.



Attempts to formulate transcendent rules for the grounding of work in the 'real' are acknowledged as textual devices employed as warrant of a text's authoritative representation of the social world under investigation. These new imaginaries of authority and legitimation must permeate the entire research process. Thus whilst Ulmer (1994, p.39) suggests that 'results' of filling the slots of a CATTt may be evaluated in at least two ways: Firstly, by assessing what is learned while designing the method, and secondly by examining what sort of text the method generates. This is no simple move. What I have learnt is that to fill the CATTt spaces as described in chapter 1, is to produce research/writing that always asks for me to give more as researcher-writer-reader. It is to produce a textual tale, which demands that I return to it again and again. It cannot be swallowed in one gulp, nor can it be cleanly spat forth<sup>3</sup>. For the research participants, and for me, it 'works' (is working) as a text intimately related to Rape Crisis pedagogy and the self stories that shape themselves around this con/text. It 'speaks' both for and to the experiences narrated. Yet I am increasingly aware of the ways in which I have restricted (gagged to silence) this tale arising from the hyper-reflexive electronic bricolage. I have been (too) respectful of the existing, accepted boundaries of qualitative research. I have only played with/in texts generated directly through the research process. Most noticeably, I have not re-scripted the texts homophonically (Ulmer and Derrida's practice), and so I have not pushed the text to as many meanings as I could. Inserting too little, rather than too much. How different would this performance

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<sup>3</sup> And so I gag on the text. Knowing that gag has to be pushed to all its possible meanings. I gag to choke and retch. I gag to silence certain speech, and I gag to comic effect, hoaxing and joking as I play with the crafting of hypertext onto the printed page.

tale be if the mystical aspects had been prioritised? How different would this text be if the materials of the intertexts and of the chapters were transposed?

I don't like sharp facts that bundle onto the page  
I don't like the weight of words too self-grand and heavy to mean anything  
I don't like the shallowness of the frank stare into the blank face  
I don't like eyes fluttering to accommodate nothing but themselves  
I don't like your careful critical judgements with their standard prose and straightjacket-manners  
I don't like who we are when we seek to make ourselves seen by the gaze that does not know  
I don't like the wizened twists of tales woven from the irrefutable and taken down to solidity  
I don't like where the text goes when it not allowed to move and its breath is held steady

Furthermore, there is an explicit problem regarding expectations of the academic thesis text. Does a print academic text arising from this method of hyper-reflexive electronic bricolage 'work'? Here I am not so confident of my answer, and indeed am aware that if it did fully 'fit' within academic textual boundaries it would have failed as an experiment to generate diverse ways of knowing materials. To pursue our imaginaries we have to return to Gregory Ulmer's (1989, 1994) notion that we do not yet have the forms for what must be re-presented (see chapter 1). We need to be impudent, to include the non-sensical and the inappropriate. We need to invent 'new' approaches that are not too respectful of the 'old' stories.<sup>4</sup> If we are to invent feminist research with/in

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<sup>4</sup> And all this writing of new-ness gnaws at me. As Trinh Minh-Ha (1991, pp.232-233) states: 'one does not so much invent the new as provoke new relationships'. This is not the new-ness of invention as creation, this is the new-ness of invention as provocation. Taking the acknowledged and then provoking

the postmodern we need to forgo legitimation by applying 'the stamp of reason' (Ulmer, 1994, p.164). If an inventive research practice 'requires the broadest possible criterion of what is relevant' (Ulmer, 1994, p.6), then we *require* validities that may be logocentrically 'faulty'. We need to include the, seemingly, illogical and absurd as materials from which to fashion a future in which the significance of their (un)reasonable interconnections may be understood. This is not to make use of the concept of emergence to mask a 'half-baked' proposal. There is no move to adopt 'the modernist trick' of promising that 'a fully baked one will be along shortly' (Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p.151). This is not some promise that a final resolution of these juxtapositions will eventually be 'arrived at'. Rather it is to keep research/text open as a way of knowing. The division between form and content is not permitted to prevail, and a generative quality is retained throughout the entire research process, including our judgements of any value. Everything is kept in motion through the recognition of the constant need to reiterate the question '*Where do you draw the fine line between "anything goes" and "anything may go" (when nothing basic is taken for granted)?*' (Trinh, 1992, p.259).

### **Mapping Validity**

How does this constantly reiterated question relate to the mapping of validity? Let us return to Scheurich's 'bifurcated map'. What sort of map is this? How might we invent an alternative map to enable us to pass comment

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new relationships. For this is a new-ness under erasure. An embrace of 'the new' that recognises its imbrication with 'the old'.

upon this CATTt (that still goes on)? What would it mean to our maps of the trustworthy and the untrustworthy if we recognised that the two could not be cleaved? What would it mean to map validities where the map does not correspond to the territory? What happens to validity when it emerges from a chorographical rather than a topographical map?

Lather (1991) argues that feminist researchers must work to create spaces where debates over power and knowledge production are able to call into question what had previously been accepted as 'wisdom'. As writers of the 'tiny moral tales', that Denzin (1997) urges us to script, we recognise that we are transiently constructed embodied subjects. Validities mapped through chora open 'spaces' for the questioning of received wisdom and for the negotiation of diverse meanings. As a contribution to knowledge this research/text reconceptualises the space with/in which we generate our knowledges. Here validities are not taken as markers/reference points, they *are* what is being contested. To script a print text arising from the electronic frame is to invent chorographically. Chorography gathers information into an unstable set held together by a pattern that is the trace of understanding. Furthermore, I want to incite understanding in (at least) three different modes. Firstly, there is understanding wherein information/a concept is grasped, secondly there is understanding as in an empathetic knowingness, and thirdly there is the understanding that is forged as part of a dynamic negotiation. Understanding is a complex and ongoing process. The diversities of understanding in this thesis text are always in motion. This is the process of the chorographical sense of the research/text. Perhaps the imaginaries of mapping validity chorographically

would be able to attend to different understandings. This map charts the impossibility of abstract validities, as social identities necessarily affect all understandings and judgements of the world (and here is the move that interlaces the assembled chorography and the mystory).

This shift from topos to chora facilitates a re-thinking of the Same-Other relationship. For there is a danger in this discussion of validity of reducing the debate to being that of sameness *versus* otherness. Here legitimation can only occur by paralogy - which forms the basis for both a new validity and a new ethics aimed at the production of dissension rather than consensus. Thus, validity is always context immanent arising from the locality of communicational interaction. Yet, as Sara Ahmed (1998) argues, paralogy (local dissent) does not have to be set simply against meta-prescriptions (universal consent). She argues that 'the setting up of difference and heterogeneity against meta-prescriptions and universality is reductive. To privilege difference against totality is to keep the opposition in place' (Ahmed, 1998, p.48).

This shift from topos to chora facilitates a form of address that speaks to Denzin's (1997) antifoundational criteria that arise from the qualitative project, but which does so without appealing to the already-ness of the logic of the Same. Working chorographically is one way in which we might think through how to engage with unrepresentable otherness without setting up a false opposition between immanent and universal forms of legitimation. In this re-made space, the Other cannot be reduced to a figure that is a referent to the real. Here we

always admit the proximity of 'the Other' to recognise that 'the engagement with otherness depends upon the critique of the autonomous self-present subject and a recognition of the inter-subjectivity of being-in-the-world' (Ahmed, 1998, p.58).

### **Getting Smarter?**

As I noted in chapter 1, feminism through embracing teletheory as scripted through the practice of choreography and the mystorical genre is explicit that it is making a creation, not a discovery. Following the invention of feminist research with/in the postmodern as witnessed by the CATTt of this thesis, the required act of ending must be a reflexive move to 'read out' epistemology from practice. Yet, as Lather (1993) argues, any reading out is undermined by our recognition that the 'field of practice' is 'heavily inscribed with habit and sedimented understandings' (p.674). Thus, as I have laboured to do something with rather than to say anything about, I have become unsettled by the possibility of reading this as a duality at the centre of Gregory Ulmer's work. I have recognised that to do something with is to inevitably say something about. When I re-read Derrida, rather than working from Ulmer's re-readings, I position myself in relation to his practice in *Glas* (Derrida, 1986). Where he does something with the texts of and about Jean Genet, he uses them as 'generative forms' (Ulmer, 1985a, p.xi) for the production of his-own-text. He does this in order to say something about both literary theory and philosophy - particularly as these texts are placed in the columnar format to facilitate 'the element of contagion' (Derrida, 1986, p.1) with his deconstruction of Hegel's texts. There is no intended direction within this motion; Derrida is finding the

direction by means of *Writing*. I read this as ultimately also Ulmer's practice, although the saying something about may not be an easy understanding (see above). Derrida's texts constantly enact a double move that places together the seemingly incommensurable: 'one probably does not have to choose between two lines of thought. Rather, one has to meditate upon the circularity which makes them pass into one another indefinitely' (Derrida, 1982, p.173). His *Writing* is a practice that performs doing something with as always already saying something about:

The stake of the signature - does the signature take place? where? how? why? for whom? - that will be treated practically, in passing: an indispensable preliminary to the explanation of (for example 'literary') formality with all the muscled judges who interrogate it from apparently extrinsic instances (question about the classified - biographical, historical, economic, political, and so on - subject). As for general textuality, perhaps the *seing* represents the case, the place for (topically and tropically) overlapping the intrinsic and the extrinsic.

Jacques Derrida (1986, pp.3-4)

And so feminist qualitative research with/in the postmodern in doing with/saying about cannot fully escape an epistemological 'reading out' that is always already undermined by the practice that we name 'analysis'. And so as a 'final' act of my-own-text, I must place under erasure the act of erasure in chapter 2 whereby thesis text becomes ~~thesis text~~.

\*\*\*

What is it like to stand up front, to be the somebody whom everybody is watching?

Well it is like this. It's hot and bright and there are people and they look at you. And some look happy and some look sad, and some look as if their husband/wife/partner/lover/best friend has forced them to come against their better judgement. And some look really keen and ready to listen, and for some reason that I do not understand they usually sit with a reluctant partner somewhere on the left at the front. So, that's what it's like when you first walk on and you don't know anyone. That's what it's like before you get to know them, before you are sure of whether they know how to behave and you are still wary of their good will and they are still wary of yours. And then later, you know them all and they act the parts you ask of them according to the terms of the agreement as a 'good audience'. And you know who to look at, look to, for the meaning of what you are saying, because you do not know. The words just leave your mouth and fly away into the audience seeking to hit upon their meanings. And you see the woman at the back right - at the *very* back - too faraway to see the colour of her eyes. She has brown, slightly frizzy hair, and her face is pink and scrubbed, and you know that she is crying and that she knows that you know, but that's OK. And nobody else in the audience has noticed, and you alter the story ever so slightly *for* her, *to* her because you know that she is there and somehow you can be together in front of all these people without them knowing/noticing. And then it's over and they all applaud and are gone and so are you. Left with a certain nothingness that cannot be grasped, and can only be filled by the next-timeness of the next time.



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The reader who is thoroughly versed in a particular area of scholarship may be able to infer a great deal about a text on the basis of its title and its references - almost to the extent of merely reading the substance of it to confirm initial expectations.

Paul Atkinson (1990, p.45)

Arnold, Josie J. (1994) "Postmodernist-Feminism and Education a Textual Performance," unpublished Ph.D. Unpublished Dissertation, Deakin University, Geecomng, Victoria.

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We live in both/and worlds full of paradox and uncertainty where close inspection turns unities into multiplicities, clarities into ambiguities, univocal simplicities into polyvocal complexities.

Patti Lather (1991, p. xvi)

Bochner, Arthur P. and Carolyn Ellis (1996a) "Taking Ethnography into The Twenty-First Century: Introduction," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 25, 3-5.

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people are desperate to find more rigorous ways of dealing with data, they are fed up with being accused of being soft and woolly, and they are looking for ways to demonstrate to their colleagues that they have gone through a rational process.

A CAQDAS user quoted in Raymond Lee and Nigel Fielding (1995, p.32)

Collins, Peter (1998) "Negotiating Selves: Reflections on 'Unstructured' Interviewing," *Sociological Research Online* 3, <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/3/3/2.html>>.

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rather than turning our backs on theory and taking refuge in experience alone, we should think in terms of transforming both the social relations of knowledge production and the type of knowledge produced.

Chris Weedon (1987, p.7)

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Theories about language which claim that it is free to be interpreted in any way whatsoever are allies and precursors of state terrorism.

Katherine Hayles (1990, p.126)

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when an audience is responsible, responding, invited, in other words, to coinvestigate, then positionality is shared with it. Audience and investigator: it's not just a binary opposition when an audience really is an audience.

Gayatri Spivak (1993, p.22)

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The new writer stirs up the world, objectivity is a fiction, and the writer's story (mystory) is part of the tale that is told. The writer has a theory about how the world works, and this theory is never far from the surface of the text.

Norman Denzin (1997, p.283)

Kelle, Udo, ed. (1995), *Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis: Theory, methods and practice*. London: Sage.

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Invention begins in the encounter with one's own text or with those of others . . . invention consists in a writer's attempt to defend against culturally strong texts by appropriating and improving them.

Sharon Crowley (1985, p.98)

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Texts are discursive bits whose edges, boundaries, beginnings, and ends are marked only by the conventions of reading and bookbinding. Texts are occasioned by other texts. They are produced in order to be read, to be rewritten, and hence to generate other texts. The overt reference or subject of a text is irrelevant; covertly the text is an emblem of the desire to write and a display of one's capacity to insert one's pen into the textual flow. Texts are produced simply because it is necessary that they be, although if one wished to be more specific, one might allow that texts appear because of the human desire to compete with the father, the will to overthrow his text in a fruitless but noble quest to end once and for all the proliferation of meaning by writing the last word.

Sharon Crowley (1985, p.93)

Mayes, G. M., E. F. Currie, L. Macleod, J. B. Gillies, and D. A. Warden (1992), *Child Sexual Abuse. A Review Of Literature And Educational Materials*.

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<http://noel.pd.org/perforations/perforations.html>.

It is not a matter of deciding what one intends . . . by the box. What matters is not *what* I am putting in these containers, but *that* the boxes are organizing the release of information.

Gregory Ulmer (1991, p.6)

Munro, Petra (1998), *Subject to Fiction: Women teachers' life history narratives and the cultural politics of resistance*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

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'identity' is a double-edged weapon - not useless, but dependent on the context, sometimes risky - and that the closeness between an identity and a derogatory identification may, again always in specific contexts, resemble that between being a subject and the process of subjectification. 'Women' can also suffer from too much identification. Yet an aspect of any feminism in formation *is* that collective self-consciousness of 'being women,' and to deny the force of that elective identification would be mistaken, as mistaken as the supposition of its necessary fixity.

Denise Riley (1992, p.122)

Neumann, Mark (1996), "Collecting ourselves at the end of the century," in *Composing Ethnography*, Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, eds. London: Altamira Press, 172-98.

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my scholarly voice is challenged continually by my activist voice, which asks, So what? How does this apply to real women's lives? As we debate theory and method, millions of women are being battered, and many are being murdered by their intimate partners.

Kersti Yllö (1994, p.234)

Pewsey, Elizabeth (1997), *The Dewstone Quest*. London: Dolphin Paperbacks.

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Every insight was both a doorway and a mirror - a way to see into their experience and a way to look back at mine.

Michael Schwalbe (1996, p.58)

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It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced.

Joan Scott (1992, p.26)

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Facts can be told; events can be narrated; but experience cannot be shared, for the cloth out of which it is woven has been destroyed.

Katherine Hayles (1990, p.238)

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every thesis is . . . a prosthesis; what affords reading affords reading by citations (necessarily truncated clippings {*coupres*}, repetitions, suction, sections, suspensions, selections, stitchings {*coutres*}, scarings, grafts, postiches, organs without their own proper body, proper body covered with cuts {*coups*} traversed by lice).

Jacques Derrida (1986, p.168)

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While we are not the authors of the ways we understand our lives, while we are subjected to regimes of meaning, we are involved in discursive self-production where we attempt to produce some coherence and continuity.

Patti Lather (1991, p.118)

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The final rule: No text can do everything at once.

Norman Denzin (1997, p.287)