

***After, ends***

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Art, Design & Architecture  
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## Abstract

*After, ends* is a survey of practice methods undertaken across a series of exhibitions, including *Covers* (2015), *Designs* (2015), *Theft: Prints and Drawings* (2016), and *Detraction* (2017). These exhibitions represent a developing queer feminist methodology of research and practice. The exegesis as a whole examines these methods and questions their success in achieving their stated ends. The first chapter introduces the reader to the tone of the text and outlines the relationship between this exegetical document and the work. The second chapter tells the story of the missing novels of Marguerite Pantaine, a French woman living in Paris in the 1930s. Her temporary violent delusions caused her to become the muse and model for a famous psychoanalyst. As a result of this encounter, Marguerite's novels were appropriated. In my work, I used this specific case of a woman's missing novels to speak broadly to issues of erasure and recovery in queer and feminist histories. This research drew on a number of literary sources and resulted in a curatorial project, *Disinterment* (2016).

Chapter three details my attempt to produce an allegory of queer desire by appropriating Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass, Or The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915 – 1923) in the exhibition *Detraction* (2017). This chapter also reviews the literature on Duchamp and reflects on the problems of interpretation caused by the naked exposed female figure in the work *Étant donnés* (1946 – 1966). I argue that the ambiguity of Duchamp's work has caused some authors to displace their anxiety over the unknown onto the female form itself. The final chapter turns to the question of what new methods my practice will now employ, given what I have identified as the limits of the previous works. In undertaking a critical reflection on my working methods, I have identified an over-reliance on art history and theoretical models in the production of my works. These methodologies have led to works burdened by obscurity.

The exegesis then asks, what happens if I move away from a continuous deferral to art history?

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## Declaration

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



Signature:

Print Name: ...Tamsin Green.....

Date: ...31/03/2019.....

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## **Publications during enrolment**

Tamsin Green, "Playing in the Master Bedroom: Claire Lambe at ACCA," *Art & Australia Online*, 2017

Tamsin Green, "Distant Measures: Mira Gojak," *Eyeline Magazine, Issue 86*, 2017

Tamsin Green, "Beach Phases" in *The Beach*, Nicky Broekhuysen and Joseph Griffiths, Curated by Sarah E. Davis, Vexer: Berlin, 2017

Tamsin Green, "Drawings, staged and reflected" in *Lynette Smith: Ambiguity (A number of drawings)*, Bus Projects: Melbourne, 2017

Tamsin Green, "Life Inside an Image: Matthew Buckingham, Gerard Byrne, Melvin Moti, Fiona Pardington, Elizabeth Price, Amie Siegel, Judy Watson, Monash University Museum of Art," *Art & Australia Online*, 2016

Tamsin Green, "A Circle Around A Circle: An Irigaray Conversation," *un magazine 9.1*, 2015

## **Conference Papers**

Tamsin Green, "Disinterment: Feminist Methods in Contemporary Practice," Women and Philosophy: History, Values, Knowledge: Symposium of the International Association of Women Philosophers, Melbourne, 2016

Tamsin Green, "Critical Methods: Fiona Macdonald and Therese Keogh," AAANZ Conference, QAGOMA Brisbane, 2015

## **Solo Exhibitions**

Tamsin Green, *Detraction*, Eildon Gallery, Alliance Française, Melbourne, Australia, 2017

Tamsin Green, *Section*, TCB Art Inc, 2016

Tamsin Green, *Theft: Prints and Drawings*, Alliance Française, Melbourne, 2016

Tamsin Green, *Designs*, The Other Side, Melbourne, 2015

Tamsin Green, *Covers*, Bus Projects, Melbourne, 2015

## **Curated Exhibitions**

*Concrete Air*, Amalia Lindo, Federation Square Screen Commission with Blindside A.R.I., September 2017 – January 2018. Curated by Tamsin Green

*Disinterment*: Barbara Campbell, Erin Crouch, Anne Ferran, Briony Galligan, Fiona Macdonald, Rosina Prestia, MADA Faculty Gallery. Curated by Tamsin Green. Supported by The Symposium of the International Association of Women Philosophers, 2016

## Thesis including published works declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

This thesis includes one original paper published in peer-reviewed journals. The core theme of the thesis is the method of contemporary fine art practice. The ideas, development and writing up of all the papers in the thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the student, working within the Fine Art Department under the supervision of Dr Spiros Panigirakis.

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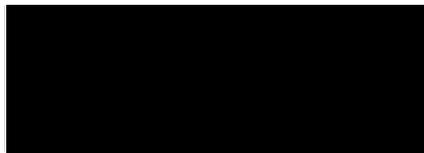


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The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the student's and co-authors' contributions to this work. In instances where I am not the responsible author I have consulted with the responsible author to agree on the respective contributions of the authors.

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## **Acknowledgements**

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***After, ends***

Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: Prone

Chapter 2: Disinterment

Chapter 3: The Waterfall

Chapter 4: The Grandmother Effect

Bibliography

Appendix

## Introduction

This document is an exegetical report on a series of exhibitions. In the past, I would have said my work is driven by historical and theoretical research. And this would have been true. In this text, I will demonstrate how I have mined art history for its oversights in relation to the feminine and then used these oversights as a place from which to produce artworks. For example, I will describe my investment in the historical figure, Marguerite Pantaine (1892 – 1981), a French peasant woman and writer who had a troubled relationship to the field of psychoanalysis. I told Marguerite's story through my work, *Theft: Prints and Drawing* (2016). I positioned this exhibition as having a restorative function. Through my work, I attempted to recover Marguerite from obscurity and also acknowledge the limits of this recovery. Art history and theory can be generative within art practice. Within the exegesis, art history and theory can also be deployed to defend the artwork and to explain the work's desired effects. It is not my intention to use theory to justify my work. Instead, I am interested in the failure of my work to achieve its stated ends—that is, to be restorative—outside of a very limited discursive field. If there is an experimental capacity within fine art research, then this capacity must include failure. This document is both a demonstration of my methods and a reflection on the limitations of those methods.

Chapter one introduces the tone of the exegetical text and my use of personal narrative content to augment what I came to see as an over-reliance on art history and theory to validate and motivate my art practice. The chapter title, *Prone*, is taken from the position of the woman in Carol Rama's erotic watercolour, *Appassionata* (Passionate) (1940). From this work and its associations, I extend the narrative of the exegesis recursively, presenting the personal alongside the academic as interconnected. Rama's work is expressive and cathartic, it mines the trauma of madness to produce images that are both threatening and celebratory. Reconsidering this direct representation of the insane asylum led me to take account of my grandmother's madness, drawing directly on her unpublished memoirs. The questions raised throughout the exegetical writing process included: Was my work becoming too obscure as a result of my practice methods?

Could I make work that was not completely dependent on art historical citations for its interpretation? And, to what extent was my practice repressing the personal, and re-directing this content through allegories and inferences?

Chapter two, *Disinterment*, tells the story of Marguerite Pantaine, and contextualises this research within a field of queer feminist methodologies. The chapter focuses on archival recovery and fantasy in relation to queer methods and considers the application of the term queer in the contemporary context. The original title of the exegesis was *Disinterment*, a term that implies the recovery of the body. I developed this term through a survey of feminist literary sources. I will expand on the implications of this term as they relate to a curatorial project of the same name, a project that brought together a range of intergenerational feminist practitioners. Chapter three, *The Waterfall*, explains the relationship of my work *Detraction* (2017) to Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass, Or the Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* (1915 – 1923) and its echo, *Étant donnés* (1946 – 1966). In *Detraction*, I attempted to appropriate Duchamp's allegorical representation of desire. Throughout these exhibitions, the bodily implications of my practice were drawn from literary and art historical sources. I was holding the work and the body at a distance. As I state in chapter one, the failure of my own body was missing from the narration of my work.

When I speak about the failure of my body, I am referring specifically to my experience of going through early menopause in the period prior to beginning this research. As I will show, this experience informed my work, but was not directly addressed in the work or writing. The repression was partly the result of trauma. As someone who is academically interested in the failure of femininity, drawing on queer theorists such as Judith Butler and Jack Halberstam, I was not sure exactly where to speak from when I encountered this failure. To think of woman through her capacity to reproduce is essentialism, and not a position I support. But to be declared non-reproductive was unexpected. In chapter four, I attempt to develop new methods in my work and research, to bring my body and its failing forwards to bear on the work and its interpretation. In this chapter, I look for, and fail to find, a specific kind of text; a queer

reading of menopause. I attempt to revise both the positive and negative associations with this term; the horror of decay, and the 'feminist' celebration of the 'crone.' I want to move away from the binaries of the natural and unnatural. I could not locate a text that performed in exactly the way I wanted, so I am making a final work, *After, ends*, as that text.

The exegesis is a dependent document, one that cannot survive apart from the artwork. The methods of the final work, the film-essay *After, ends*, involves a series of interviews and discussions on sexuality, fertility, and menopause, with the aim of re-making these terms. Orcas feature in the work because they, like humans, go through menopause. The negotiation taking place in the work centres on the question of how to represent these animals without fetishising their behaviour via an anthropomorphic model. I am not asking if orcas can serve as a good model for human menopause, but rather what incomprehensible desires infertile orcas can express. The success or failure of this work in re-making the term menopause will largely be decided by the audience. This exegesis does not attempt to argue on behalf of this artwork, rather it is an account of how the various failures and limits of the artworks catalogued in this text have led to the new methods of the final work.

## Chapter 1: Prone



Carol Rama, *Appassionata* (Passionate), Watercolour and pencil on paper, 23 × 33 cm, 1940

### Section 1

The figure of the woman has been pressed in the foreground. A cage-like structure, draped in weights and restraints, takes up most of the space of the painting. The whole scene seems to pitch forwards, and because of this incline, it is unclear if this metal cage is above or behind the figure. As the cage looms, it seems to echo the bed frame below. The figure has only just been released from this contraption. She

lies dazed, her eyes are unfocused, her irises turn inwards, and their hue is reddish. She is heavy-lidded and drowsy. She is prone, flattened and immobile, as if she were still restrained. She appears as a stain on the bedsheets. Her body is pink, and the sheets are cream, and together they make a warm place in the picture. The rest of the space is cool and institutional. There is a forest green strip painted halfway up the wall, a design that indicates a mid-twentieth century institution. The distinctive metal frame of the bed supports this sense of time and space. The scene reads as post-coital. The overall sense of the painting is of violent eroticism. The woman's lips are a red smear, simultaneously pursed and melting off to the side of her face. Her nipples turn upwards, her face rolls towards us, although she looks at nothing. She is wearing black heels, another restraining device, but is otherwise naked. A light covering of pubic hair is visible. These hairs echo a halo of sun-yellow flowers that appear to have grown out from her head. They are little buds on long stalks. As a mass, they make up a field of colour, either some new life springing forward or the after-glow of electro-shock therapy.

The central problem of an exegesis is the relationship between the text, the work, and the model of writing. This exegesis recounts the different tactics I have employed over the course of the last few years, beginning with my method of critical academic feminism.<sup>1</sup> I took art historical material, events, and objects, and subjected them to a feminist critique. I mined art history for its oversights in relation to the feminine. I sought to expose the use and suppression of women's bodies and ideas. I produced new versions of old works as a form of feminist correction.<sup>2</sup> This method was a form of appropriation.<sup>3</sup> My process was driven by an original violence or

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<sup>1</sup> This exegesis is a dependent text. Theodor Adorno's, 'The Essay as Form' is an interesting demonstration of the exegetical model's dependence on the artwork. Theodor W. Adorno, *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O'Connor. (Malden, Mass. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2000); Lea Vergine et al., *The Passion According to Carol Rama* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona 2017).

<sup>2</sup> I will expand on this method as it relates to the exhibitions *Covers* (2015), *Designs* (2015), *Theft: Prints and Drawings* (2016) and *Detraction* (2017).

<sup>3</sup> Sources for the history of appropriation include Rosalind Krauss, Douglas Crimp, and Louise Lawler and Sherrie Levine's photographic works. Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, First MIT Press paperback ed. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986). Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, ed. Louise Lawler (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993). Appropriation has played a critical role in contemporary Indigenous practice, for example in the works of Brook Andrews, Fiona Foley and Diane Jones. Richard Bell appropriates so-called 'authentic' Aboriginal art to show how this fictional authenticity is

oversite. But the sources used in my work were obscured by the process of production. In writing exegetically, I was obliged to re-narrate the original violence, as I will show in the Marguerite Pantaine case. Ultimately, I moved away from this model of critique. I resolved at a certain point not to begin a work by privileging a moment of historical violence.<sup>4</sup> This exegesis is a narrative about what I tried, and why it failed, and what I tried next. The recursive flow of this text is the model for the final work. In place of an appropriative method, I have been attempting to write from my own body.

I possess a sexuality outside of the criteria of fertility. A sovereign sexuality. I am outside the category of women thought of as biological potential. My sex cannot be exchanged within the terms set by prospective fertility. My sexuality is not part of a heterosexual contract. I operate outside the future orientation of the productive and reproductive.<sup>5</sup> I am an agent full of desires and contradictions. I am one of the many types of women that disrupt the category of women. I am motivated by anger and pleasure; the pleasure of the purposelessness of infertility and an anger I am exploring through my work. Within both my body and my work the logic of reproduction is refused, and the methods of my practice extend from this position. The texts that have stayed with me over time include Sara Ahmed's invocation of her lived experience in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), a text that finally persuaded me that I did not have to defer all ideas to the authority of French theory. Elizabeth Povinelli's writing from her body's weeping sores in *The Empire of Love* (2006), provided me with a model for putting the abject body forwards as an interpretive lens. I am also drawing on Donna Haraway's numerous interspecies feminist manifestos as models for the interconnected politics of existing as biological and economic matter, especially *Staying with the Trouble* (2016).

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sustained by a white art market. Richard Bell, "Bell's Theorem: Aboriginal Art—It's a White Thing!," *e-flux* 90 (2018).

<sup>4</sup> Not that I believe I can make a work that is original, I understand that "the text is a tissue of quotations" to quote Roland Barthes. Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, ed. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> This rejection of the reproductive futurism is echoed in Lee Edelman's anti-social thesis *No Future*. While I empathise with his ideas of rejecting the illusory promise of the future innocent child as a panacea for current ills, I find his work too dependent on Lacanian models of subjectivity. Edelman proposes the embrace of the death drive as an alternative path, one that will free the subject from an enslavement to the telos of the future. I will expand on my relationship with Lacan Chapter 2. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

These texts are personal, angry, direct, and visceral. They are not about art practice, art theory, or art history. They have their own distinct fields in anthropology, queer studies, and interspecies feminism. They have provided the model for the language of this text and I am indebted to them.



Julian Wasser, *Marcel Duchamp playing chess with Eve Babitz*, 1964

In the 1964 press photo for Marcel Duchamp's first North American retrospective at the Pasadena Museum of Art, Eve Babitz and Duchamp play a game of chess. Babitz, the LA 'It' girl, writer and memoirist, leads with her knight. She is naked. I do not think they are really playing the game, only posing. Chess was Duchamp's favourite pastime, he claimed he had given up artmaking in order to play chess. For me, this image sums up something about Duchamp's work, the erudite academic proposition of the chess game

sitting alongside the literalism of desire—the woman’s swollen breasts.<sup>6</sup> Babitz is aware of her enlarged breasts.<sup>7</sup> She appears to be angling them away from Duchamp and covering them with her forearms. We can see them in the photograph. At the time, Babitz had started sleeping with the director of the gallery, Walter Hopps, and taking birth control caused her breasts to swell.<sup>8</sup> The figure of the bride in *The Large Glass* hovers over the two players.<sup>9</sup> When I first saw Carol Rama’s prone woman under the mechanical contraption it reminded me of Duchamp’s bride. Rama’s woman, smeared across the bottom portion of the frame, seems like a perverse inversion of Duchamp’s pre-coital floating figure awaiting insemination by the bachelor machines below.<sup>10</sup>

I take birth control with irony. It provides me with some hormones I am missing. I am standing in the pharmacy on Franklin Avenue, Brooklyn, and the woman yells out “birth control,” she calls it out with a hard American ‘r’: birrrth con-trrrrol. Why so loud? Birth control is an ad hoc solution to the medical issues associated with early menopause, especially the potential erosion of my skeleton. The flip side is that this hormonal supplement causes blood clots that have to be managed with a perpetual low dose of the blood thinner rivaroxaban. In Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble*, the author tracks the origins of hormone replacement therapy back through the economies of horse farms, continuously pregnant mares, and urine extraction in North America.<sup>11</sup> She arrives at the story of her own menopausal condition through the leaky urine of her companion dog, who is prescribed synthetic estrogen in the form of DES (diethylstilboestrol). Haraway’s text shows how her body and her dog’s body are

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<sup>6</sup> Regarding Duchamp’s interest in base desires I am thinking of the literalism of his sperm drawings, numerous peep-hole works, and the erotic puns he gifted to his second wife, which I will address in Chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> [www.vanityfair.com/culture/art/2014/02/eve-babitz-nude-duchamp-interview](http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/art/2014/02/eve-babitz-nude-duchamp-interview)

<sup>8</sup> According to some sources, Babitz decided to pose in the photo to get back at the gallery director for not inviting her to the opening. [www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-sex-and-rage-of-eve-babitz](http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-sex-and-rage-of-eve-babitz). See also Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), 424.

<sup>9</sup> This *Large Glass* must be the reconstruction made by Ulf Linde’s for the exhibition *Rörelse i Konsten* (Art in Motion) of 1961 at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. The original shattered shortly after its first public exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in 1927. Bryony Bery, “Through the Large Glass: Richard Hamilton’s Reframing of Marcel Duchamp” *Tate Papers* 26 (2016).

<sup>10</sup> I will expand on this figure in Chapter 3

<sup>11</sup> Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

connected through biological and economic systems and how they are made complicit in the exploitation of other animals.<sup>12</sup> Haraway took Premarin before it was known to cause heart conditions and cancer.<sup>13</sup> I take Levonorg/Ethinylestradiol (estrogen and progestin). In Australia, I would just say ‘the pill’ and we would all know which one I was referring to. But ‘the pill’ is a term that does not seem to translate here, like *texta*, *jumper*, and *occy strap*. I do not want to have the words ‘birth control’ yelled at me because I do not want to be misrepresented as someone who needs to be protected from sperm.<sup>14</sup>

I came into the studio today to make something for myself. It is not my studio exactly, but it is where I work, a high-end babysitting club for well-to-do Park Slope families. It always smells like cleaning products. In the studio, talented children can learn about art history and take home their very own mini versions of it. Recently, we made Sigmar Polke inspired palm trees. In my Mini-Modern Masters Class, we discussed Pablo Picasso’s use of African Mask’s in the development of cubism—after the manager had me tape over the breasts in *Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1911).<sup>15</sup> The program imparts cultural capital to the young. Part of my job is demonstrating the creative project; another part is fixing up the children’s works for Instagram. There are now a number of our collaborative efforts proudly on display in the brownstone homes of the neighbourhood. While I work, I know there is a skinny blonde woman, the owner, sitting at home in Ohio with two kids and a husband, drawing an income from my labour. I met her once and she bought us all dinner. The enrolment fee per child over summer is \$700 per week and with around 30 kids, that is \$21,000 per week—minus rent in NYC. I make \$18 per hour minus tax. I am a body that works.

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<sup>12</sup> Haraway’s text is an interspecies analysis of her subjectivity that intends to argue for our “response-ability” within these multi-species systems of exchange. I will return to Haraway’s proposition to ‘stay with the trouble’ in the final chapter of this text.

<sup>13</sup> Donna Haraway, “Awash in Urine: Des and Premarin(Tm) in Multispecies Response-Ability,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 1-2 (2012).

<sup>14</sup> When I visit the doctor, I tell the same story. I had an auto-immune disorder that was affecting my kidneys (minimal change glomerulonephritis), causing edema and protein loss. This was treated with an immune suppressant, prednisolone, but I kept relapsing. I was given a dose of cyclophosphamide, a chemotherapy drug, that is the likely cause of my early menopause.

<sup>15</sup> In a class survey, five-year-old children generally agree that you shouldn’t copy another person’s art without asking them.

I came into the studio today to make something for myself. But I started to fall into the imaginary. I started to work on a colour wheel project. It is an idea I have for one of my other jobs, as an art therapist at a domestic violence shelter. This is a new job, and because it is work that I have not started yet, I am free to think about how good I will be at it. The colour wheel is a therapeutic device. It is not a formal colour wheel to help you pick out contrasting colours. You are supposed to mix the colours as you go, choosing what you like. As you paint you can think quietly about what you are reminded of. Look into the deep yellow and think about the sun, home, or beaches. If you like, you can annotate the colours with these associations. I paint a slice of grey for purely aesthetic reasons. I want to get to know these new people slowly. Colour feels like a good place to start.<sup>16</sup> I am not a qualified art therapist and the organisation is aware of this. I will be paid \$30 per hour, but it is only a few hours a week. When I first got to New York I got a job as a barista. I had never done this before, but I watched some YouTube videos, and it worked out fine. I made \$12 per hour, plus tips. What I have learnt is that the body is critical. The body is the point from which I encounter the world and the work. The body is connected, biologically and economically.<sup>17</sup> I am looking to make a work that comes from my specific subjectivity; from existing in this one particular body.

## Section 2

“The pain is not because the body has  
been wounded but because to make the body  
– or the assemblage –  
is a set of cascading wounds.”<sup>18</sup>

Elizabeth Povinelli is at a conference, but she cannot concentrate because of the diarrhea. She is not sure if she is suffering more from the original illness, a deep pus-

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<sup>16</sup> After writing this I came across a list of Carol Rama's colour associations that would form an interesting colour wheel, Yellow is for love, Orange is a compromise and makes her neurotic... Cristina Mundici and Rudi Ruchs, "Carol Rama," ed. Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (Milan 1998). 50 – 53.

<sup>17</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. I will address this text in chapter 4.

<sup>18</sup> Mathew Coleman and Kathryn Yusoff, "An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene," *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2-3 (2017).177

filled wound on her shoulder, or the cure, a cocktail of international antibiotics. She is trying to focus, and she is failing. She is attempting to be present at the conference, but the body forces its way in, debilitating and distracting her. I know about Povinelli's diarrhea because she writes about it in *The Empire of Love*.<sup>19</sup> She puts her own body forward in the first chapter of the text. The diarrhea is only part of the story, the pustulant wound is more important. The wound is a point from which Povinelli can track the faults of her body as a nexus of social and economic forces. As a critical anthropologist, Povinelli is writing on two distinct communities: radical queer communities in the US, and Aboriginal communities in Belyuen, in Australia's Northern Territory. She is attempting to write across her relationships within these communities, without reducing either of them. Her aim is to conceptualise different systems of love, relations, and intimacy at play in these distinct social worlds. As a whole, Povinelli's text sets out to describe how different bodies are subject to discursive and political forces; forces Povinelli describes as 'geontological power'<sup>20</sup>. The weeping shoulder sore is simply a means to make visible the way discourses "allow some bodies to be treated or left untreated."<sup>21</sup> The target of her text is the uneven distribution of life within liberal settler communities.

Povinelli's wound travels with her body. The pus-filled sore produces different reactions in different places. These reactions speak to the matrices of care across the settler colonial world and the differing expectations surrounding the health and viability of different bodies. By bringing her wound to North America, Povinelli exposes these differences. The Canadian and North American doctors are shocked and fascinated with the area of bubbling flesh. The near-hysterical reactions of northern hemisphere doctors speak to the extraordinary nature of the wound from one point of view. Povinelli describes these wounds as "volcanoes of rotted flesh, filled with greenish-yellow squish, and without a scab."<sup>22</sup> The arrival of this flesh in North America results in horror and reactionary tools, goggles, pliers, and bio-hazard containment. She explains the wound

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<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality*, ed. Press Duke University (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality*. 34

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 34

to the doctor, saying, “I am an anthropologist. The sores are endemic in the indigenous communities I visit.”<sup>23</sup> The explanation seems specific to the needs of the Western medical doctor. In her text, we have been told that Povinelli is more than a visitor to these communities. She is an intimate member of the Belyuen community.<sup>24</sup> The explanation offered to the doctor re-establishes a separation between the subject of the anthropological study (the Indigenous) and the speaker (the anthropologist). A proper scientific distance. But the presence of the sore counters this idea of distance and distinction in her methods. Povinelli’s form of anthropology is self-reflexive. She is a member of the Belyuen community and has grown up in this community. Her body shares a proximity and an infection. She is also continuously separate from the community members by forms of governance that impact their lives. For example, the ability to travel internationally because she has a birth certificate and passport.<sup>25</sup> Her own body guides us through the nexus of social and political forces she describes.

In contrast to the reaction of North American doctors, doctors in the Northern Territory see the sore as part of normal life. For non-Indigenous local doctors and nurses, the wounds are “just” streptococcus. They are treatable to some extent with a dose of standard antibiotics. These wounds appear at random in the bodies of their communities without any explanation. And no specific explanation has been sought for them. Aboriginal people have their own understandings and cures for the event of the sore. The Indigenous understanding ties the body into a larger narrative of geography and law.<sup>26</sup> They do not see the wound as extraordinary, rather it is ordinary and even expected. As Povinelli states, “The difference between ordinary and extraordinary illnesses are dependent on a biosocial spacing – often organised as a geophysical distribution of ordinary and exceptional bodies and of ordinary and exceptional life,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 28

<sup>24</sup> She became an anthropologist at the request of the community. Tess Lea and Elizabeth Povinelli, “Karrabing: An Essay in Keywords,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 34, no. 1 (2018).

<sup>25</sup> For example, the ability to travel internationally because she has a birth certificate and passport. [www.visibleproject.org/blog/elizabeth-povinelli-in-conversation-with-martina-angelotti-on-the-karrabing-film-collective-winner-of-the-2015-visible-award/](http://www.visibleproject.org/blog/elizabeth-povinelli-in-conversation-with-martina-angelotti-on-the-karrabing-film-collective-winner-of-the-2015-visible-award/)

<sup>26</sup> Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality*. 28 - 32

death, and rotting worlds."<sup>27</sup> Povinelli uses the terms geontological power or geontopower to describe the different governances of life and non-life. Geontological power has a relationship to biopower, which can be thought of as governing the biological matter of existence, by encouraging and dis-allowing forms of life. Michel Foucault describes biopower as power concerned with populations, and the control and development of subjects as members of a biological population.<sup>28</sup> Geontological power takes into account forms of being that straddle the divide between life and non-life.<sup>29</sup> The term 'geo' is taken from the earth sciences, and distinguished from bio (life science), while 'ontological' implies being.<sup>30</sup> The term indicates the possibility of agency and intentionality as extended to the geological.<sup>31</sup> For Povinelli, the term geontological is used to describe life as persisting within the ongoing extinction of Indigenous subjects, the rotting worlds they inhabit. This term has been derived from her experience of what she describes as the 'cramped' spaces of Indigenous survival.<sup>32</sup> The geontological is an attempt to avoid the crystallisation of the concept of biopower and to straddle the binary of life and non-life.<sup>33</sup>

The Karrabing Film Collective, of which Povinelli is a member, produces work that demonstrates these spaces of Indigenous survival as described by Povinelli. The digital films are also used by this community as a tool for developing agency. The collective is a self-directed collaborative undertaking by members of the Belyuen community, and the works of the collective are derived from the same geontological field as Povinelli's theoretical work.<sup>34</sup> The aim of this group is not necessary to produce artworks, but to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.32

<sup>28</sup> For a genealogy of the term as developed in relation to the writings of Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Giorgio Agamben, Achille Mbembe, Rosi Braidotti and others. See *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*. (Introduction)

<sup>29</sup> "I do not see geontopower as a power only now emerging to replace biopolitics. Instead, biopower (governance through life and death) has long depended on a subtending geontopower, a mode of power that polices and regulates the difference between the lively and the inert, and that has operated openly in settler colonialism and its related forms." "Acts of Life," *Artforum International* 55, no. 10 (2017). 320

<sup>30</sup> *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*.

<sup>31</sup> "Can Rocks Die" *ibid.* 31 – 56

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 6

<sup>33</sup> Coleman and Yusoff, "An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene."

<sup>34</sup> Povinelli is a member, but there is a limit on white membership. [www.visibleproject.org/blog/elizabeth-povinelli-in-conversation-with-martina-angelotti-on-the-karrabing-film-collective-winner-of-the-2015-visible-award/](http://www.visibleproject.org/blog/elizabeth-povinelli-in-conversation-with-martina-angelotti-on-the-karrabing-film-collective-winner-of-the-2015-visible-award/)

strengthen their community and improve their world and conditions. The event of filming is also an event of producing agency, practising dreaming stories, and connecting new generations to those stories through people and land. This activity can be seen in the film *When the Dogs Talked* (2014), where the group speculates about the presence of large bore-holes in the earth as they relate to a dreaming story. The form of digital film allows for the layering of multiple sites and stories and demonstrates the presence of dreaming stories in the lives of the protagonists. In *Saltwater Dreams* (2016), a boat motor breaks and the explanation and solutions include neglected ancestors, faith in Jesus, and a faulty wire; all of these systems of knowledge intersect in the material of the film. The filmmaking style of the collective has been described as 'Improvisational Realism'.<sup>35</sup> The haphazard nature of the films, with inconstancies such as characters being played by multiple people, is reflective of the constant disruption of the lives of the Karrabing.<sup>36</sup> The films are a material outcome derived from the precarity of Indigenous lives, which is also the field of Povinelli's work.

This exegesis is not concerned with geontopower, or biopower, or their relationship. I am not writing in the field of anthropology, and I am not primarily concerned with settler colonialism or extinction in my work. What I have taken from Povinelli's text is an awareness that the failures of the body can provide the lens for a critical engagement with the social and economic world. I have taken up a method of putting the body forwards, the body's wounds and putrefactions, its shortcomings and failures.<sup>37</sup> Povinelli speaks to the *carnality* of the body as "the socially built space between flesh and environment."<sup>38</sup> As Povinelli's wound travels it exposes the political and economic sociality that her body inhabits. I am drawn to her description of an indeterminate spacing of the body, as a space between life and non-life. She describes a state of persisting as alive after death, and of inhabiting a rotting world. These ideas resonate with my experience of the menopausal body. Especially a sense of persisting after

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<sup>35</sup> Lea and Povinelli, "Karrabing: An Essay in Keywords."

<sup>36</sup> For example, in *The Stealing C\*nt\$* (2015) where different characters discuss the relative amount of government fines they have accrued. Characters are sometimes played by different actors because of imprisonment, or other enforced absences.

<sup>37</sup> Many feminist authors, such as Luce Irigaray and Helen Cixous, have pursued the question of writing from the body. I will return to the specific problem of writing from the menopausal body in chapter 4.

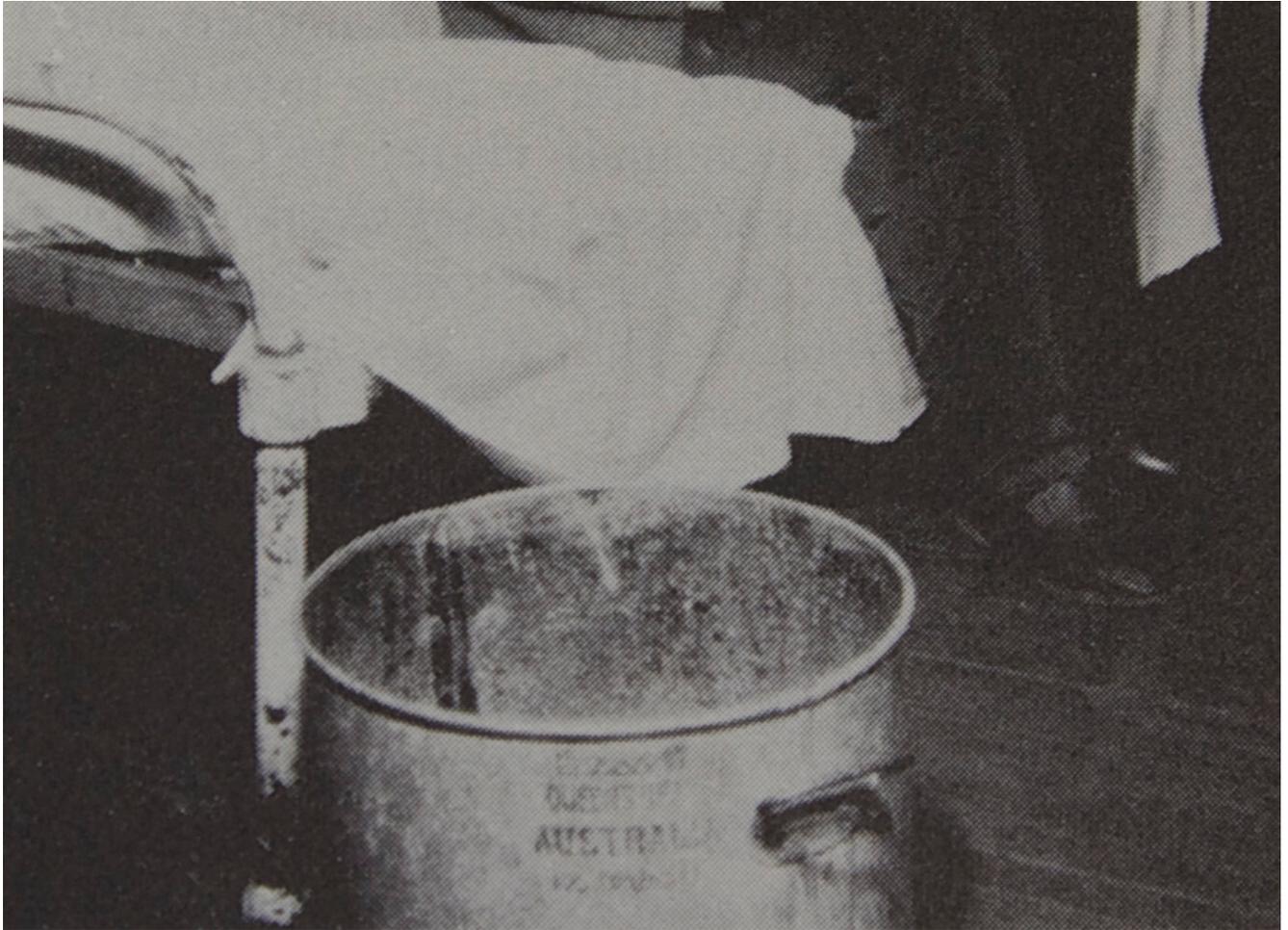
<sup>38</sup> Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality*. 7

death, as expired material, something *voided*. Like Povinelli, I would like to take seriously the ordinary suffering of the body. The site-specific status of the unfit 'female' body. I am interested in the differences between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and what is supported and disallowed by the social and economic spaces we inhabit.<sup>39</sup> I am putting forward the menopausal body as a lens through which to reconsider the social, sexual, and economic politics of artworks.<sup>40</sup> I am interested in how this uneasy status of the too early menopausal body, as old and young, viable and unviable, forms and deforms my subjectivity. This is the subject of my final work. This exegetical document is also a narrative about how I have come to tell this story in this way.

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<sup>39</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (London: Penguin, 1984).

<sup>40</sup> I will survey literature on the menopausal body in chapter 4.



Anonymous, *Sanitary Conditions: New Norfolk Asylum*, archival photograph, 1962

### Section 3

The bed frame from Carol Rama's painting is echoed in this image from the archives of the New Norfolk Asylum in Tasmania. In the foreground is a large metal bucket. The photograph is dark and unclear, but the sensation it delivers is of a dank and hostile place. The image has a grim affect. Someone is sitting on an unmade bed. The feet of a resident are visible, and they have hard polished shoes that don't quite fit with the context of the bed. The metal bucket has some words printed on it, but I can only decipher one, AUSTRALIA. I came across this image trying to fill in a gap in my grandmother's biography. She was interred in this mental institution in the 1960s, the same time this photo was taken. She wrote about her experience in an unpublished

memoir, but her narrative lacks detail. She deliberately omits the parts of the story that are shameful or traumatic. Especially when she enters into spaces of internment, spaces of madness, there are gaps in her story. Seeing this image in the archives gives me an uncanny sensation of recognition and revulsion.<sup>41</sup> I can see my grandmother's shame, a family shame. Madness, like menopause, produces an uneasy category of subjectivity. A borderline, or deforming, category. Being allocated to the category of madness can result in less autonomy, less agency, and potentially less empathy.

When I look at Carol Rama's works, I recognise the spaces that she represents. I first saw these works in a retrospective at the New Museum in New York in 2017. Rama has been characterised as an outsider artist, but this idea can be easily rebuked by her lifelong connections to collectors and her roles within artistic groups in Italy.<sup>42</sup> She was not widely known outside of Italy until she was included in a group exhibition curated by Lea Vergine in the 1980s. This exhibition, titled *The Other Half of the Avant-Garde*, sought to reinstate women's contributions to Europe's 20<sup>th</sup>-century art movements. The New Museum's retrospective, *Antibodies*, has further increased Rama's international status. Rama's work is often contextualised through comparisons with other women artists of the twentieth century, such as Louise Bourgeois, Nancy Spero, and Frida Kahlo.<sup>43</sup> Although she did not work with or communicate with these artists directly, their shared impulses towards the representation of a desiring female body serves to explain Rama's location within art history. Over Rama's career, her materials and methods shifted rapidly from early figurative personal works, to larger abstract pieces.<sup>44</sup> I am largely interested in her early work, and in unpacking the relationship between her biographical experience of madness and confinement, and its representation within the work.

Rama's early work relates directly to her experience of visiting an insane asylum. She was born into a comfortably well-off family in Turin, but economic hardship occurred

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<sup>41</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

<sup>42</sup> *Carol Rama: Antibodies* (New York: New Museum, 2017). 19. She is also photographed with Warhol in Mundici and Ruchs, "Carol Rama."; *ibid*.

<sup>43</sup> Vergine et al., *The Passion According to Carol Rama*. 36, 87

<sup>44</sup> She was briefly part of an Italian concrete art movement. *Ibid*.41

when she was still young. Her mother had a 'breakdown' and was committed to an institution. As a result of these visits, Rama states, "I began to make indecent drawings".<sup>45</sup> Rama turned the encounter into material for her work. She felt a kinship with the free erotic expression of the subjects interred in the asylum, with their lolling tongues and spread legs. Multiplied and fragmented body parts are a consistent feature of Rama's early work. Women are shown with stumps for limbs, confined in wheelchairs and other contraptions. Some of the figures stick out overlapping pointed tongues, others display multiple cocks in fan-like compositions. Rama's use of very light flesh tones and wet watercolour increases the sense of a bodily fluidity within her work. She has stated that her favourite organ is the tongue because it never ages; it is a part of the body that is always moist.<sup>46</sup> Rama has also been explicit about her intention to use her work as both a cure and an appeal to those who recognise suffering.<sup>47</sup> Rama states, "I paint by instinct and I paint for passion. And because of rage and because of violence and because of sadness. And for a certain fetishism. And for happiness and melancholy together. And especially for anger."<sup>48</sup> Rama's work revels in bodily and mental suffering and pleasure.

Rama's abject, uncanny, and erotic bodily forms can be contextualised in relation to the political climate of Italy at this time. Her work was censored in the 1940s because it was considered obscene and several of her watercolours were lost or destroyed.<sup>49</sup> The 'degenerate' sexuality of the work, its embrace of the failing and fragmented and disabled body, is a rejection of the normalising constraints of the political climate during the rise of fascism in Italy.<sup>50</sup> Rama's messy body is a rejection of the highly organised body idealised by these military regimes; a quality shared with many avant-garde artists. Hal Foster has put forward a parallel argument in relation to Hans Bellmer's doll works,

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.49

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.39

<sup>47</sup> Rama stated, "above all I paint to cure myself" quoted in *Carol Rama: Antibodies* 49

<sup>48</sup>*The Passion According to Carol Rama.*

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.50

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 27

where he states, “However elliptically, these works may even juxtapose a development of a military-industrial type body with a regression to a (pre)Oedipal (dis)organisation of the drives.”<sup>51</sup> This interpretation situates Rama’s work within the lineage of radical avant-garde artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though Rama was not directly linked to these movements, her early practice does share some surrealist impulses, the celebration or perhaps fetishization of feminine madness, and the rejection of social constraints.<sup>52</sup>

Rama’s work has been interpreted as a specifically feminine form of expression, showing women as borderless, or as “mutable, leaky, wet, and hard to contain.”<sup>53</sup> The body is oozing and contagious. This reading serves to re-contextualise Rama’s work as part of a continuum of feminist art practice.<sup>54</sup> Rama and Louise Bourgeois both present potentially threatening forms of the feminine. Bourgeois’s spider is a maternal figure, who menaces and protects.<sup>55</sup> Rama’s women have multiple tongues, snake-like phalluses, and amputated limbs. These are both powerful and abject forms of femininity. Jack Halberstam extends this interpretation of Rama’s fragmented forms of representation, stating that Rama’s work shows that, “the human body can be extended and reshaped by its contact with the landscape, with other animals, with history and with the shape of desires to come.”<sup>56</sup> The mutability of the subject across Rama’s work can be read as opening up the subject to alternative codes of embodiment, moving beyond the restraints of gender, and the human. Rama’s anachronistic use of figuration makes her re-appear as contemporary in this interpretation.

Rama re-directs the trauma of her experience towards a creative outcome. I have not found any record of Rama’s mother’s experience of madness or of the asylum. There

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<sup>51</sup> Hal Foster, "Armor Fou," *October* 56, no. Spring: High/Low: Art and Mass Culture (1991).

<sup>52</sup> See the 1<sup>st</sup> surrealist manifesto by André Breton and his novel *Naja*. André Breton, *Naja* (New York: Grove Press, 1960 [1928]). "Manifesto of Surrealism," (Paris: Editions du Sagittaire, 1924).

<sup>53</sup> *Carol Rama: Antibodies* 18

<sup>54</sup> Preciado argues against the over-emphasis on gender identity in the interpretation of Rama’s work, seeing this as a convenient art historical categorisation that reduces her output to ‘women’s art’ Vergine et al., *The Passion According to Carol Rama*. 22

<sup>55</sup> Mignon Nixon, "Bad Enough Mother," *October* 71 (1995).

<sup>56</sup> Halberstam in *Antibodies Carol Rama: Antibodies* 88

are points at which the interpretation of Rama's work romanticises the artist's relationship to madness. Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer states, "Madness demands autonomy, enormous energy, and total commitment."<sup>57</sup> This quote frames madness as an autonomous choice and a source of energy.<sup>58</sup> But madness can also be a state of exhaustion, the opposite of autonomous expression. Rama herself did not go mad, but she uses her association with this state.<sup>59</sup> For the artist, the work is part of a process of catharsis. But there is also the possibility that the work allows for the idealising of the insane asylum as a creative site.<sup>60</sup> While I admire Rama's work, my methods differ. I am more circumspect about translating trauma through the work.

In the 1990s my grandmother, Nita, was encouraged to write about her life as part of her work with the Thornbury Women's Association. She had a rushed marriage, the result of her complete ignorance of birth control. By the 1960s she was a depressed and isolated mother of three with an absent husband. She recalls her first incarceration and electro-shock therapy as follows:

One afternoon I started talking in an excited manner about my illustrious ancestors. Our friend and neighbour, Dr. Copeland, was called in and suggested I go to hospital. When I refused, he and Louis left the room together. When they came back they told me my friend Rex Hobcroft had been in an accident and was dying in hospital. 'Did I want to see him?' I changed into my beautiful red frock and let them drive me to the Royal Hobart Hospital... Why did Louis think up such a cruel plot? Was it out of jealousy? Iron bars at the windows: locked in with a mad woman screaming her head off!!! After several days of electric shock treatment, I escaped – took a taxi

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.11

<sup>58</sup> The COBRA art movement drew on the works of children and the insane.

<sup>59</sup> Griselda Pollock argues against a psychobiographical interpretation of Bourgeoise work in her text "Old Bones" in a way that parallel's an argument about the interpretation of Louise Bourgeois in a review of Claire Lambe's ACCA exhibition. Griselda Pollock, "Old Bones and Cocktail Dresses: Louise Bourgeois and the Question of Age," *Oxford Art Journal* 22, no. 2 (1999). Tamsin Green, "Playing in the Master Bedroom: Claire Lambe at Acca," *Art & Australia Online* (2017).

<sup>60</sup> The work of the surrealists idealised feminine madness, for example, Salvador Dalí, *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy*, Photo-collage, 1933.

home, only to be shunted back very promptly to the hospital. More shock treatment and suddenly the nightmare was over. But the old nightmare was still there at home.<sup>61</sup>

Nita received shock treatment over forty times in her life, mostly without anaesthetic.<sup>62</sup> The details of what took place during these incarcerations are almost non-existent in her writing. I get the impression, in reading the memoir, that her initial breakdown could have been avoided if she had been treated with more attention and care. The general attitude toward Nita, within her (my) family, was that she was at fault, that she was responsible for her state. This idea of responsibility served to decrease the amount of interest or empathy she was allowed.

I became interested in my maternal line of madness because of where I imagined my research was taking me, back when this exegesis was titled *Disinterment: The Missing Novels of Marguerite Pantaine*. But I came to understand that I was only ever attracted to Marguerite's story, which I have retained in the next chapter, as a substitute for this repressed maternal story of madness. Behind my grandmother's story of abjection was another story that was my own. Elizabeth Povinelli aims to demonstrate how attitudes—interest or disinterest, anxiety or dread, fault and innocence—form about “certain lives, bodies, and voices and, in the process, form and deform lives, bodies, and voices.”<sup>63</sup> To become mad can be to fall into a differing category, one that continues to deform the subject. It is not my intention to conflate the situation of the Belyuen people with the manic depression of a white Australian housewife, or with my own menopausal body. I am misusing Povinelli's text for my own ends, to think about how to position and articulate the viscera of the menopausal body as it moves between artworks, makes artworks, and writes exegetical texts.

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<sup>61</sup> Juanita “Nita” Green, “Blue Eye, Brown Eye,” (Melbourne: Thornbury Women's Association, Melbourne, 1995). Np.

<sup>62</sup> Electro-shock therapy is used legitimately for psychological conditions like depression and bipolar disorder, under anaesthetic. Vittorio Alessandro Sironi, “Origin and evolution of deep brain stimulation” in *Frontiers in Integrative Neuroscience*, 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality*. 35

The apparent subject of my 2014 exhibition, *Relax*, was a feminist reading of Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* through its formal relationship with other works by Albrecht Dürer and Gustave Courbet.<sup>64</sup> This exhibition was intentionally convoluted and obscured in its references. At the time, I was interested in obfuscation as a political strategy, a way to resist the easy consumption of the work.<sup>65</sup> As part of this work, I produced an image painted across a wall, that conflated different representations of the female body, substituting one woman for another, in order to emphasise a continuity of male of desire across art history. I applied an anamorphic twist to my wall drawing, which was indicative of the workings of the subconscious across these historical works. I was drawing on Jacques Lacan's use of the anamorphic in his analysis of the visual field. In Lacan's model, that which is outside the orders of the symbolic and imaginary, for example, the incomprehensible presence of death, appears in the visual field as an anamorphic stain.<sup>66</sup> In my wall work, I was implying that the presence of women (her *jouissance*) exists in this field of incomprehensibility.<sup>67</sup> The model of feminist critique employed here was subsequently developed in the exhibitions *Covers* (2015) and *Designs* (2015).<sup>68</sup> At the time, I was attempting to move away from a dependence on Lacanian models in my work. I was concerned that my work had been reduced to illustrating theory, and that analysing theoretical texts had taken the place of making works. Hence the poster: *Relax: There's plenty of time to return to the discursive origins of psychoanalysis*.<sup>69</sup> In the back room, a little hidden, was a hinged diptych. This work showed two portraits of middle-aged women, a psychologist and a gynaecologist.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Relax*, Techno Park Studios, 2014. See Appendix i.

<sup>65</sup> Tamsin Green, "Critical Methods," in *AAANZ* (Brisbane 2015).

<sup>66</sup> Jacques Lacan writes about this phenomenon in relation to the image of the skull in Hans Holbein The Younger's, *The Ambassadors*, Oil on Oak, 207 × 209.5 cm. (1533). His text is summarized and interpreted in Krauss, Rosalind E. Krauss, *L'amour Fou: Photography & Surrealism* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985). And Anne Marsh, *The Darkroom: Photography and the Theatre of Desire* (South Yarra, Vic.: Macmillan Art Publishers 2003).

<sup>67</sup> Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently*, 1st edition ed. (London: Routledge, 2013). Especially, "Fetishizing the Gaze and the Anamorphic Perversion" and Tamsin Green, "Still Moving Image: A Material Investigation of Visually," *Fine Art* (Melbourne: Monash 2009).

<sup>68</sup> Exhibitions: *Covers*, Bus Projects, 2015. *Designs*, The Other Side, 2015. I will write about these works in Chapter 2.

<sup>69</sup> See Appendix i.

<sup>70</sup> The psychologist refused to participate, understandably, so I used the mother of a friend as a substitute. This substitution played on the process of transference, where the subject acts out the relationship with the mother or father as projected onto the analyst. Instead, I played out my representation of the analyst, the portrait, using someone else's mother.

These portraits were done in a tonal realist style and could be seen from within the glass reception area towards the back of the gallery.<sup>71</sup> The word *Reception* floated in front of the women as you stood and listened to an audio recording of a discussion of the exhibition, which was a substitute for a catalogue essay.<sup>72</sup> The missing or hidden part of the work was my own body, prone under the binocular medical gaze of the gynaecologist and the therapist. The position of my absent body in front of the portraits echoed the prone women in the artworks I was critiquing, and the spread-out stain of the women under invisible constraint in Carol Rama's painting. When I think back on these works, I see my use of obfuscation as a form of self-defence, and a form of repression. What I have learnt from Povinelli is to bring the body forwards.<sup>73</sup>

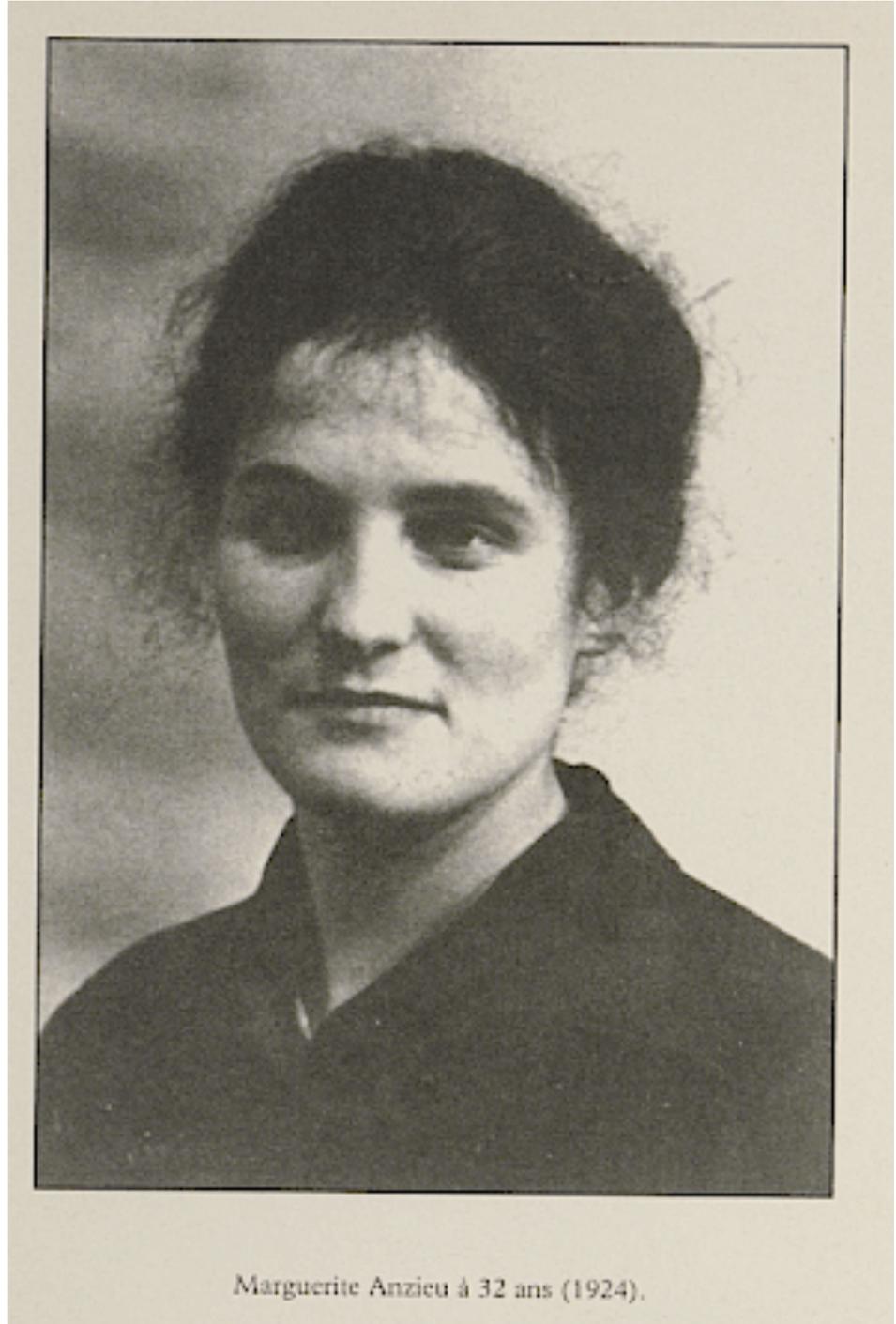
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<sup>71</sup> The gallery was in an abandoned daycare centre for immigrant children.

<sup>72</sup> Conversation with Imogen Beynon.

<sup>73</sup> What does it mean to assume that bracketing can "transcend" the familiar world of experience? Perhaps to bracket does not mean to transcend, even if we put something aside. We remain reliant on what we put in brackets; indeed, the activity of bracketing may sustain the fantasy that "what we put aside" can be transcended in the first place." Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, ed. Press Duke University (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). 33

## Chapter 2: The Missing Novels of Marguerite Pantaine



Marguerite Pantaine-Anzieu, 32 years old (1924)

This chapter will clarify my feminist methods as they relate to the story of Marguerite Pantaine (1892 – 1981), a woman who contributed to the history of psychoanalysis, but whose narrative was characterised by absence, erasure, and misidentification.<sup>74</sup> I developed these themes in the exhibition *Disinterment* (2016), where I brought together intergenerational feminist artists working on themes of invisibility and recovery.<sup>75</sup> Drawing on Marguerite’s story as a model, I will outline the general question of working with feminine absence as part of my practice and curatorial method. I will elaborate on these questions of absence, melancholy, and substitution; a method I described as *disinterment*, or a partial recovery.<sup>76</sup> This period of my work could be characterised by a kind of queer melancholy.<sup>77</sup> In response to Marguerite’s erasure, I drew on literary sources as substitutes for her missing words. This chapter is also a reflection on the limits of these existing methods as I move towards the aims of my final work.

The term *queer* is an impediment rather than a tool in my writing and work. As I am using the term, I need to make clear the specific categories of queer that I am referring to. But delimiting the term queer runs counter to its status as a placeholder for the indeterminate. The term originates in an effort to reject fixed categories of gender and orientation from within the historical Gay and Lesbian movement.<sup>78</sup> The queer opens up

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<sup>74</sup> Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997). Lisa Appignanesi, *Sad, Mad and Bad: Women and the Mind-Doctors from 1800* (Toronto: McArthur & Co., 2007). Jacques Lacan, *De La Psychose Paranoïaque Dans Ses Rapports Avec La Personnalité, Suivi De Premiers Écrits Sur La* (Paris: du Seuil, 1975).

<sup>75</sup> *Disinterment*, Barbara Campbell, Erin Crouch, Anne Ferran, Briony Galligan, Fiona Macdonald, Rosina Prestia, Curated by Tamsin Green, MADA Faculty Gallery, 2016.

<sup>76</sup> Anjali Arondekar et al., "Queering Archives: A Roundtable Discussion" *Radical History Review* 2015, no. 122 (2015). Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995). Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, 1st Harvard University Press ed. (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>77</sup> *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). And Melancholia: the mourning for an absent object. Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia* (London, New York: Penguin Books, 2005).

<sup>78</sup> "The field of queer studies emerged in part in the early 1990s out of a frustration with the limitations and exclusions of identity politics. Queer studies turn against the notion of fixed categories of sexual orientation and the essentialist gender categories that anchor them. In the collective effort to undermine a strict division between heterosexuality and homosexuality...." Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. 77.

the possibility of an undefined subject position, a “self-shattering” to come.<sup>79</sup> The queer could be limited to the concerns of self-identified queer subjects, their desires, economies, histories, and frustrations. But this is a very broad category. In recent iterations, the queer appears to question temporal linearity, the “chrono-normativity” of heterosexual life narratives, and the redemptive telos of the figure of the child.<sup>80</sup> Within this substrate of queer negativity and refusal, failure has been repurposed as part of a queer strategy.<sup>81</sup> The queer is figured as strategically occupying its negativity. Conversely, the queer provides for the utopian possibility of new social formations.<sup>82</sup> The queer attacks all norms to the point at which the queer has perhaps become shorthand for *critique*.<sup>83</sup> In seeking the position of the alternative, the term queer risks soliciting and consolidating the normative.<sup>84</sup> I cannot repress the queer, but the term’s broad use can result in the queer becoming a category of non-categorisation. In relation to the case of Marguerite Pantaine, I can narrow the scope of the term to a specific type of lesbian melancholy; sad dykes looking for lost friends and objects, quietly projecting their fantasies into the traumatic elisions of the ‘archive’.<sup>85</sup>

In 1931, Marguerite Pantaine approached the star of the play, *Everything Will Be Fine*,

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<sup>79</sup> Bersani, *Homos*. "Is the Rectum a Grave?," *October* 43 (1987).

<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Sam McBean, *Feminism's Queer Temporalities* (New York: Routledge, 2016). Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Edelman’s position ignores questions of race and assumes that all children have an equal claim to the future. James Bliss, "Hope against Hope: Queer Negativity, Black Feminist Theorizing, and Reproduction without Futurity.," 48, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>81</sup> Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>82</sup> Robert L Caserio et al., "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory," *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006). And José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). Shahani Nishant, "The Future Is Queer Stuff Critical Utopianism and Its Discontents," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 19, no. 4 (2013). "it is perhaps necessary to accept the pain of embracing, at least provisionally, a homophobic representation of homosexuality." Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?." 209

<sup>83</sup> "...it might seem that the values of queer theory would be the values of the postmodern, posthuman, post-metaphysical attitude in general. If our situatedness is, by definition, that which also counts as normal and normative, then theory *as such* might be intrinsically queer, as an attempt to deviate from, or pervert, that which appears self-evident, unquestionable and foundational." Claire Colebrook, *Sex after Life: Essay on Extinction*, vol. 2 (Open Humanities Network, 2014).

<sup>84</sup> Annamarie Jagose, "The Trouble with Antinormativity," *differences* 26, no. 1 (2015). The queer also meets up with the de-categorising aims of new materialism to explain the “queer behavior” of non-human agents. Barad Karen, "Nature's Queer Performativity," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 19, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>85</sup> Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*; Sally Newman, "Sites of Desire: Reading the Lesbian Archive," *Australian Feminist Studies* 25, no. 64 (2010). Barbara McBane, "Veronica's Ghost: Queer Time and the Porous Archive," *Art Journal* 72, no. 2 (2013).

(*Tout Va Bien*) in the Théâtre Saint-George in Paris. She took out a knife and attempted to stab the actress, Huguette Duflos, whom she believed was impersonating and persecuting her. The attempted murder failed. After this incident, the woman became known as “Aimée” in the case notes of a famous psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. Aimée was the central figure in Lacan’s 1932 dissertation, *On Paranoiac Psychosis in its Relations to the Personality*.<sup>86</sup> He used Marguerite’s case and her writings as the basis for his work. Lacan appropriated her life for his theoretical ends, but never identified her by her real name. He used the woman’s novels, family photos, and discourse as evidence to support his work. Despite Marguerite’s requests, Lacan never returned her novels; they have since disappeared into the archives and may never be found.<sup>87</sup> These novels are an absence within the narrative of psychoanalytic theory.

I am interested primarily in the lesson of the missing novels: the pattern into which Marguerite’s experience fits. The missing novels of Marguerite Pantaine have become a central analogy for the place of the feminine in the history of art and theory, where women are often the under-acknowledged material support for artistic and literary products.<sup>88</sup> Élisabeth Roudinesco states that Lacan’s patients formed a “mute palimpsest” beneath the theoretical structure of his work: a parchment onto which meaning has been ascribed.<sup>89</sup> My initial response to this absence in the archives was to treat the gap as generative. I embarked on a reading program that was directed by the general theme of feminine madness. I sought out a series of supplements for

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<sup>86</sup> Lacan, *De La Psychose Paranoïaque Dans Ses Rapports Avec La Personnalité, Suivi De Premiers Écrits Sur La*. This text has been partly translated in Michael Shepherd and John Cutting, *The Clinical Roots of the Schizophrenia Concept: Translations of Seminal European Contributions on Schizophrenia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). I am also drawing on Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan. And Appignanesi, Sad, Mad and Bad: Women and the Mind-Doctors from 1800*.

<sup>87</sup> Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. Roudinesco lists possible archival locations but has failed to find the documents.

<sup>88</sup> Griselda Pollock argues in *Differencing the Canon* that the “phallogical” structure of Western art history relied on the woman as ‘other’ in order to secure the centrality and superiority of masculine creativity. Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999). Since the 1980s The Guerrilla Girls have published gender-based surveys of art museums [www.guerrillagirls.com/projects](http://www.guerrillagirls.com/projects). In Australian see [www.countesses.blogspot.com](http://www.countesses.blogspot.com)

<sup>89</sup> Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Lacan: In Spite of Everything* (London: Verso, 2014). Marguerite can be compared to Freud’s Dora, Breton’s Naja, and the use of the Papin Sisters by Lacan and the Surrealists in the publication *Minotaur*, a phenomenon echoing back thought unlimited muses, odalisques. Patrick Mahony, *Freud’s Dora: A Psychoanalytic, Historical, and Textual Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Breton, *Naja*. Jacques Lacan, “The Motive of Paranoiac Crime: The Crime of the Papin Sisters,” *Le Minotaure* 3-4, no. December (1933). And Paul Crichton and Christopher Cordess, “Motives of Paranoid Crime: The Crime of the Papin Sisters,” *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry* 6, no. 3 (1995).

Marguerite's missing texts in the words of other authors. My processes involved collecting references as a way of identifying a pattern. I was interested in texts that could be considered classics of the genre, and I thought perhaps I could remake Marguerite from within this genre. I began with the Gothic short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) by Frances Perkins Gilman. This is a semi-autobiographical anti-psychiatric text. Gilman herself was diagnosed with 'neuralgia' and told that she must rest, give up all activity, especially writing.<sup>90</sup> The protagonist in the story has been given a similar prescription—complete rest and confinement. Alone in her room, she begins to notice a figure in the wallpaper. Beneath the patterns in the yellow wallpaper, she sees a doppelgänger. At first, she is fearful, but eventually she formulates a plan to dig this woman out, to free her. In the postscript to the story, Gilman states that she wrote this text as a warning to other women not to accept confinement, or the analyst's diagnosis, but to free themselves, as she freed herself through writing.<sup>91</sup>

Aimée's real name only emerged through a series of strange coincidences and doublings. Her estranged son became a pupil of Jacques Lacan at around the same time that she became a cook for Lacan's widowed father.<sup>92</sup> Aimée was the name that Marguerite Pantaine chose for the heroine of her novels. Lacan gave it back to her as a pseudonym. He used her own writing to conceal her. She herself was only the second Marguerite Pantaine, born to replace an older sister who had burned in the family hearth while wearing an organdie dress.<sup>93</sup> I came across Marguerite's story while attempting to expel Lacan from my work.<sup>94</sup> I read Élisabeth Roudinesco's biography of Lacan the summer before starting this PhD as a form of farewell. I couldn't let the idea of the

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<sup>90</sup> Appignanesi, *Sad, Mad and Bad: Women and the Mind-Doctors from 1800*. 121.

<sup>91</sup> This short story has been widely cited in feminist literary theory, especially throughout the 1990s. Barbara Suess, "The Writing's on the Wall: Symbolic Orders in 'the Yellow Wallpaper'," *Women's studies* 32, no. 1 (2003). and Janice Haney-Peritz, "Monumental Feminism and Literature's Ancestral House: Another Look at 'the Yellow Wallpaper'," *Women's Studies* 12, no. 2 (1986).

<sup>92</sup> Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. And Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Anzieu writes on the place of odour in counter-transference.

<sup>93</sup> Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. 35. Naomi Segal, "The Other French Freud: Didier Anzieu – the Story of a Skin," CGJS (Sussex: University of Sussex, 2006).

<sup>94</sup> Psychoanalytic themes will continue in my work, but I am no longer interested in defending my work through a correct application of a Lacanian orthodoxy and its critiques. Green, "Still Moving Image: A Material Investigation of Visually."

missing novels go. For Lacan, the problem of Aimée is a problem of classification, how to systematise and categorise her case within his developing theory of the subject.<sup>95</sup> In his analysis of Marguerite, Lacan drew from a recent translation he had made of Freud's "Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality."<sup>96</sup> In this text, Freud made connections between paranoia, repressed homosexuality, and potential violence.<sup>97</sup> Lacan's diagnosis of Marguerite's mental illness includes a diagnosis of her sexuality, as Roudinesco states, "He showed that the patient's erotomania was linked to an element of homosexuality."<sup>98</sup> This is not to say that Lacan thought of Marguerite's sexuality as a disorder, but he included her repressed desire as a factor in her violent delusion.<sup>99</sup> Marguerite was described in the Parisian paper *Journal*, as "stubborn, hard-faced, accentuating her masculine appearance by wearing a starched collar over her sweater."<sup>100</sup>

For me, one of the main problems was how to get to Marguerite through Lacan, without allowing Lacan's analysis to dominate her narrative. Another ethical problem in my research was, to what extent should I retrospectively claim Marguerite as a queer subject? The desire to rescue subjects from documents that disdain them is a feature of queer archival work.<sup>101</sup> In an elementary sense, the archive appears to be a structure of authority that commands what must be preserved.<sup>102</sup> The process of recording is also always one of exclusion, or even repression. In this sense, the archive is divided

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<sup>95</sup> Roudinesco argues that Lacan made Marguerite's delusions appear more systematic than they really were. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. 44

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* p 32.

<sup>97</sup> Crichton and Cordess, "Motives of Paranoid Crime: The Crime of the Papin Sisters."

<sup>98</sup> Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. 48. "Meanwhile she had fallen in love again, this time with a female post office worker, Mademoiselle C. de N." *Ibid.* 35

<sup>99</sup> Regina Kunzel, "Queer History, Mad History, and the Politics of Health," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (2017). This paper details anti-psychiatry gay activism throughout the 1960s and 1970s and poses the question of what may have been lost in claiming the position of 'health'.

<sup>100</sup> Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. 33

<sup>101</sup> Susan Stryker, "Since so much of the archive available to queer historians is authored by people who judge, police, condemn, and punish nonnormative sexuality and gender, the methodology of reading against the grain is perhaps the key methodological strategy of queer history, as it is for other histories of marginalization" Arondekar et al., "Queering Archives: A Roundtable Discussion. ."

<sup>102</sup> "A science of the archive must include the theory of this institutionalization, that is to say, at once of the law which begins by inscribing itself there and of the right which authorizes it." Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). 4

between preservation and destruction. Despite the archive's supposed authority, many queer archival practices intentionally misuse this form.<sup>103</sup> Regina Kunzel proposes that there may be something queer about archives in "their excess and eccentricities, their sometimes erotic charge, the way they spark and frustrate our desires." Queer archival work is characterised as a response to traumatic absences, and a desire for recognition, which Anjali Arondekar refers to as the "search and rescue model."<sup>104</sup> In *Unruly Vision: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*, Gayatri Gopinath proposes a type of queer optics that can run counter to the oppression of colonisation to recover diasporic subjects from the normative structures of history. Gopinath begins with an image "Abed: a tailor."<sup>105</sup> She is arrested by a sense of recognition, a sense of knowing this subject. Drawing specifically on the work of Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari, Gopinath argues that queerness provides 'us' with an optics that allows modes of affiliation across difference to become apparent.<sup>106</sup> In the text, Gopinath posits that queer aesthetic practices can reach back across normative histories to discover submerged desires. I recognise Marguerite and sometimes I have an uncanny feeling that we are related.

A desire for a past can express a desire for a future.<sup>107</sup> Reina Gossett and Sasha Wortzel's *Lost in the Music* (2017), is an excerpt from a historically restorative project that draws on the life and works of Marsha P. Johnston.<sup>108</sup> A key figure in the Stonewall Riots, Johnston was an activist, performer, and self-identified drag queen. The film

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<sup>103</sup> This misuse of the archive is not an exclusively queer activity. Hal Foster draws on projects such as Tacita Deans *Girl Stowaway* (1994) to describe semi-fictional archival work. Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October*, no. 110 (2004). See Tamsin Green, "Review: Life inside an Image. Matthew Buckingham, Gerard Byrne, Melvin Moti, Fiona Pardington, Elizabeth Price, Amie Siegel, Judy Watson. Curated by Hannah Mathews, Francis Parker, and Helen Hughes. Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 1 October – 10 December, 2016," *Art & Australia Online* (2016). In the context of black studies and afro-pessimism, Saidiya Hartman reflects on the impossibility of recovering any material evidence of her connection to the Mid-Atlantic slave trade, instead positioning her own body as a type of archive through which to understand herself as having been made a stranger in a place she might have expected to feel at home. Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

<sup>104</sup> Arondekar et al., "Queering Archives: A Roundtable Discussion." 215

<sup>105</sup> Gayatri Gopinath, *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* 148

<sup>107</sup> Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*.

<sup>108</sup> I encountered this work as part of the exhibition *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon* (New Museum), a nominally queer exhibition. It is interesting that much of the critique of this exhibition was that the curatorial strategy was too indeterminate, or difficult to define. Holland Cotter, "When It Comes to Gender, Let Confusion Reign," *New York Times* 2017. Rindon Johnson, "Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon," *The Brooklyn Rail* 2018.

combines fragments, in the single work we see colour footage of Johnston's performances along with re-enactments of Johnston's work performed by contemporary trans\* actress, Mya Taylor. The original footage is marked by time and by the technological disintegration of its media. Johnston's image has become ghostly under the disintegration of the videotape, while Taylor's image is alive and bright. This contrast demarcates the two aspects of this project as both restorative and fantastical. As feminist historian Joan Scott argues, fantasy is always part of history. "The dead don't come back to life as they were," she writes, "but as we represent them."<sup>109</sup> Because queer history is full of absence, fantasy and desire can be productive tools. Johnston is said to have thrown a shot glass that shattered the mirror at the Stonewall Inn and signalled the start of the riots. This event is referenced on the reverse side of the film's projection screen, a shattered mirror. Whether or not this story is true is not as important as what the figure of Marsha 'Pay it no Mind' Johnston can mean for contemporary trans\* activists and artists as they work to make their history in the present.<sup>110</sup> The film blends history with performative fantasy.

Misrecognition is part of Marguerite's narrative. Lacan describes a woman who is dissatisfied with her status; stating that she suffered from delusions of grandeur, a desire to be a great writer and to escape her tedious life.<sup>111</sup> She was from a peasant background and had lower social class. She was employed as a postal worker.<sup>112</sup> At the time of the incident, she was living in Paris by herself, having left her husband and son in her rural home town.<sup>113</sup> Lacan describes relations within this marriage as frigid, and this frigidity as a source of tension. Lacan's image is of an injured woman dominated by

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<sup>109</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History*, ed. Press Duke University (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). 145

<sup>110</sup> The controversy over who has the rights to this story and the recent Netflix documentary on Johnston. [www.jezebel.com/who-owns-marsha-p-johnsons-story-1819347978](http://www.jezebel.com/who-owns-marsha-p-johnsons-story-1819347978)

<sup>111</sup> Roudinesco points out that in this she was Lacan's echo, he refused also his families rural trade, "dreaming instead of intellectual power and glory." Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. 47

<sup>112</sup> Lacan lists her occupation as a railway clerk, most likely to protect her privacy. Shepherd and Cutting, *The Clinical Roots of the Schizophrenia Concept: Translations of Seminal European Contributions on Schizophrenia*, .214

<sup>113</sup> Although she visited her son often, and the idea of protecting him from harm featured in her delusion. Marguerite suffered an earlier traumatic stillbirth, giving substance to her fear that something would harm her child. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. 38

other more competent figures, including her older sister and a more confident friend, whom she was in love with. For Lacan, the most important part of the analysis is that Marguerite/Aimée's paranoia was systematic and non-organic.<sup>114</sup> His diagnosis was of a form of self-punishing paranoia. In Lacan's narration of her life, Marguerite was replaced by what appeared to be more competent and ideal women. She externalised and attacked this imagined figure of the ideal in the form of the actress, "In striking the actress, Aimée struck her externalized ideal, in the same way that someone driven by passion strikes the unique object of their hate and love."<sup>115</sup> This violent action resulted in Marguerite receiving the real punishment of confinement, and this punishment effected a cure. After a short time in the asylum, Marguerite apparently recovered from her delusions. She became Lacan's confidant and his muse, and she disappeared beneath the name Aimée.

In *Feeling Backwards* (2007), Heather Love asks what might be achieved by embracing the forms of failure that have populated queer literary representations, and queer histories. Her text expresses a resistance to progressive and affirmative positions within contemporary queer theory.<sup>116</sup> She rejects the desire to move on from the past, from injuries to queer bodies, towards a celebratory future. Love reminds us of the (recent) abject nature of queer subjectivity. The disgust directed towards queer bodies.<sup>117</sup> She focuses on the association of queerness with melancholia, and on narratives of loss and tragedy in queer lives—impossible love, and loneliness. In taking up the negative as a

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<sup>114</sup> The intention of Lacan's thesis was to demonstrate the place of personality and experience in delusion, and to dismiss any organic or hereditary causes of these illnesses. *Lacan: In Spite of Everything* (Introduction)

<sup>115</sup> Shepherd and Cutting, *The Clinical Roots of the Schizophrenia Concept: Translations of Seminal European Contributions on Schizophrenia*, 225. (Translation of Lacan, *De La Psychose Paranoïaque Dans Ses Rapports Avec La Personnalité, Suivi De Premiers Écrits Sur La* ). You can read the seeds of Lacan's theory of the mirror stage in this analysis. Within Lacan's theory of subjectivity, the mirror phase is foundational fragmentation that occurs in all developing subjects. This is when the idealised image seen in the mirror appears whole in contrast to the messy uncontrollability of the lived body. For Lacan the image of the actress that is significant. Within his system, all desire is a form of misrecognition. *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, ed. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006).

<sup>116</sup> José Muñoz *Cruising Utopia* represents the propositional or utopian within queer theory. He calls forth queer collective form as a model for new idealised future relations. He sees a potential utopianism within the improvised spaces of queer communities: a future that is not yet existent, but one that rejects current conditions and draws strength from the relational. As the title suggests, *Cruising Utopia* focuses on gay male experiences and histories. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. Caserio et al., "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory."

<sup>117</sup> Not that transphobia or homophobia are in the past.

position, Love shares the attitude of Anna Cvetkovich and others.<sup>118</sup> In *Archive of Feelings* (2003), Cvetkovich describes her interest in the archive as motivated by histories of trauma. Cvetkovich states that this trauma results in the ephemeral and immaterial qualities of the archive she seeks to discover and to create. Love characterises her position as one of *backwardness*: a refusal to move on from the past. To support her use of this term, Love draws on a series of literary figures to demonstrate this sense of backwardness and melancholia. Love begins with Lot's wife, a biblical figure who turns to look back at the burning Sodom and Gomorrah, against God's prohibition. Lot's wife refuses to let go of her past without a backwards glance, but this glance freezes her in place as a pillar of salt. Alongside this case, Love lists the myth of Odysseus gazing back at the Sirens (while tied to the mast), the story of Orpheus' failed rescue of Eurydice from the underworld, and Walter Benjamin's allegory of the angel of history, blown backwards by the winds of disaster. These examples contribute to a sensation of *backwardwardsness* – looking back over loss. In her text, Love asks what politics might come from acknowledging this melancholia. She acknowledges the potentially paralysing effects of staying with loss, but her work argues for a queer sensibility that is not eager to move forward blindly, despite recent (apparent) political gains.

Love's literary evocations are allegorical. Her desire to recover the queer past exists within a structure that recognises that this recovery will be full of failure. She allows her text to be guided by these figures of melancholy.<sup>119</sup> Love draws on Maurice Blanchot's reading of the myth of Orpheus for this sense of melancholy.<sup>120</sup> Orpheus turns back to look at his love on the threshold of the underworld, his desire to see her outside of the realm of the living condemns her. Love states, "The failed attempt to rescue Eurydice is a sign of the impossibility of the historical project per se: the dead do not come back from beyond the grave, and this fact constitutes the pathos of the historical project."

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<sup>118</sup> Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. See also the analysis of representations of queer unhappiness in literature and film, "Unhappy Queers" in Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>119</sup> She states, "The history of Western representation is littered with corpses of sexual deviants." Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. 1

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 50

Love applies the myth to a general sense of history's confrontation with loss, and to the particular losses suffered by queer subjects. The recognition of loss and absence allows a space for fantasy within history. Queer projects can easily slip into fiction, as Cvetkovich describes in the absence of a recoverable truth, the queer archive bends towards reconstruction.<sup>121</sup> In Zoe Leonard's project *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* (1993 – 96), the artist invented a completely fictionalised archive of images for a 'lost' lesbian actress.

To describe the operation of desire and projection within queer history, Love draws on the analogy of the message in a bottle. Through a process of historical recovery past lives can, seemingly, be made to speak to a queer present. Through queer history or literary studies, lost subjects can be recovered from within their texts.<sup>122</sup> Love suggests that this reconstruction is in part futile and that some past subjects might resist recovery. The desire to recover the past is located in the fantasy of the contemporary researcher.<sup>123</sup> In *Sites of Desire: Reading the Lesbian Archive* (2010), Sally Newman reflects on the possibility that the lesbians she thinks that she can see in the photographic archives of Smith College are partly her own contemporary construction.<sup>124</sup> Love calls on Renée Vivien's translation of Sappho. This undertaking was described as an attempt to rescue Sappho's voice from the fragment of her text. In Love's reading, the idea that a rescue is taking place is misplaced. Love argues that Vivien was attempting a process of self-rescue, from the isolation that she herself felt in the early twentieth century. Vivien imagines herself addressed by Sappho, as a lover who is recognised across time. Love states that queer subjects may imagine that the figures from the past anticipate their contemporary interest, when in fact it is their own present loneliness that goes searching for kinship.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> "In the absence of the truth, the photographs, home movies, and films of popular culture, as well as contemporary reconstructions of them, become trauma's archive." Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. 262.

<sup>122</sup> "The effort to recapture the past is doomed from the start. To reconstruct the past, we build on ruins, to bring to life we chase after the fugitive dead." Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. 21

<sup>123</sup> "History – like the future – is a medium for dreaming about the transformation of social life." Ibid. 133

<sup>124</sup> Newman, "Sites of Desire: Reading the Lesbian Archive."

<sup>125</sup> Love "isolated, lonely subjects looking for other lonely people." Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. 36

After reading *Love*, I realised that Marguerite Pantaine may not want to be rescued by me. She may even have resisted my attempt to identify with her as a queer subject. Lacan saw the conditions that caused her violence towards Huguette Duflos in these terms. There is evidence in her scattered biography that some of her relationships with women were romantic. But my queer desire for Marguerite is my desire. My interest in her is made permissible by her failure. Her un-recoverability leaves space for fantasy. She was a subject that contributed to an intellectual undertaking without receiving acknowledgment. She failed to make an impact in her own time, despite struggling to create. I am attracted to this failure. Her failure is a point of identification for my own fantasies of belated *overlookedness*. I expected my artworks to operate like a message in a bottle, to communicate their own incommunicability, to hold back meaning and to resist easy recoverability.

*Theft: Prints and Drawings* (2016) was a direct attempt to make Marguerite's story known and translate her absence into my work. I found a fragment of her intended victim, the actress Huguette Duflos, acting out an attack in a film that preceded the incident by a few months. The film was called *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* (1931), a title that resonated both with Gilman's *Yellow Wallpaper*, and Freud's reflection on the colour yellow in the function of memory.<sup>126</sup> I produced a slowed and repeated section of this film to emphasise the strange desires it seemed to contain. I produced a large opaque yellow mirror to hang above the ornate fireplace in the gallery. In front of the mirror, I placed a candle into which I had infused fragments of organdie, the material that the first child named Marguerite Pantaine had burned up in.<sup>127</sup> A passage from Marguerite's lost novel, reproduced in Lacan's text, described a debauched scene outside a theatre. It seemed that Marguerite was either consciously or unconsciously referencing woodcuts of witches in this passage, so I produced a drawing based on a

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<sup>126</sup> "Screen Memories" in Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1966).

<sup>127</sup> The Eildon Historic Mansion was a rooming house from 1951 until it was bought by the Alliance Française and restored in 2007.

series of visual quotes.<sup>128</sup> I realised during the exhibition planning, that my grandfather had lived in the room above the gallery when it was a men's boarding house, after he eventually left my grandmother because she was mad.<sup>129</sup> When this fact was raised at the floor talk, I dismissed it.

In an earlier exhibition, *Covers* (2015), I mocked Lacan's apparent desire to cover-over and obscure women by drawing on another biographical incident. In the 1950s, Lacan purchased Gustave Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* (1866). Lacan commissioned the surrealist painter, André Masson, to design a cover for the work that would both reference and conceal the woman's erotic exposed body.<sup>130</sup> To make work for this exhibition, I snuck into the downstairs corridors of a psychoanalyst's office.<sup>131</sup> I used the heavily stuccoed wall to frottage the reverse side of two copies of Courbet's *L'Origine du monde*. I made two copies so that there would be no original, no singular origin. In the studio, I inverted the directional gaze of Courbet/Dürer/Duchamp by hiring a male model to pose for me in the manner of the *Origin*.<sup>132</sup> I spend many hours staring at balls, drawing. Like Masson's commissioned work, my re-presentation of sex became fused with an imaginary landscape. The anamorphic drawing that I began during the exhibition *Relax* was expanded to cover both walls, where it resembles a Rorschach test. The most common interpretation of this pattern was vaginal. The audience could no longer see the specific woman in the drawing because she had apparently been obscured by an essentialist symbol. Finally, I reproduced Masson's image, the cover, as a silk scarf that I gave to my mother to wear to the opening. As per my method of *Disinterment*, my aim was both to recover and maintain the obfuscation of the feminine source concealed in art history. My mum realised the joke, and after a few white wines put the scarf on her head and started loudly saying "I'm the original vagina" and "Je sui la mer", "the mother is the ocean." I had expected this.

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<sup>128</sup> I drew on prints by Albrecht Dürer, William Hogarth, Francisco Goya, and Hans Baldung Grier. See Appendix v.

<sup>129</sup> A little while later, I had a non-legally binding gay marriage in this room, wearing a dress made out of a larger version of my silk adaptation of Masson's work.

<sup>130</sup> Reportedly so his cleaner would not be offended. This painting was not in the same house that Marguerite herself became a domestic servant in.

<sup>131</sup> Light Projects was an artist-run space below a psychoanalyst's office that I co-founded in 2009. [www.light-projects.net](http://www.light-projects.net)

<sup>132</sup> I will expand on the connection in chapter 3

## ***Disinterment***

The term *Disinterment* operated in my practice as an expression of my allegorical method of partial recovery.<sup>133</sup> Allegory has been described in various ways in art history. As metaphors introduced into a continuous series, allegories have a deferred meaning.<sup>134</sup> As Craig Owens argues, allegories rely on conventional and mechanical association and therefore they have been treated as an undesirable form.<sup>135</sup> Owens valorises allegory as part of the postmodern project, as a point of opposition to Modernist formalism. The symbolic has the capacity to make meaning present.<sup>136</sup> The meaning of an allegory is always contextual, additive, and appropriative, and therefore open to fragmentation and disunity. Allegories are metaphors shot through with literalism.<sup>137</sup> The additive and associative methods of my work and research in this period can be described as allegorical.

In seeking substitutes for Marguerite's texts, I focused on feminist literary works that operate in relation to absences or elisions. In the *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys

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<sup>133</sup> Allegory also resonates in my thinking about the indeterminate nature of the term—the *feminine*. I am using the term the feminine to denote a question about subjectivity, a subjectivity that is still under formation. The term has a complex lineage. The 'feminine' is one point from which to trouble subjectivity: a point from which the question of difference enters into the question of the subject, as always the 'other' to that singular universal subject. Louise Burchill, "Becoming-Woman: A Metamorphosis in the Present Relegating Repetition of Gendered Time to the Past," *Time & Society* 19, no. 1 (2010). 81-97. A feminine subjectivity has to be retrieved from its former role as being represented, predominantly, by men and for men. As Luce Irigaray writes: woman, historically, having been described by and for men, and in relation to that term, so that, "no metaphor completes her." Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985). 229. Feminine subjectivity remains indeterminate, evolving and unfixed. The term resonates with the notion of the allegorical as this form is also open up to indeterminacy. The possibility of feminine self-representation raises the question of how women (or non-men) participate in an economy of desires. How can they represent their own desire, having been the object of desire?

<sup>134</sup> Joel Fineman, "The Structure of Allegorical Desire," *October* 12 (1980). 49-50.

<sup>135</sup> Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," *ibid.* published in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Stewart Bryson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>136</sup> Gombrich describes the symbolic in art as when, "the inward and the outward... are no longer distinct... The manifesting and the manifested is resolved into a concrete unity." "Icones Symbolicae" in *E. H. Gombrich, Symbolic Images* (London: Phaidon, 1972).

<sup>137</sup> Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism." In the presentation of this paper I drew on Artemisia Gentileschi's work the *Allegory of Painting* (1639). In this image Gentileschi appears as a literal painter and simultaneously a metaphor for painting. She can only achieve this double role because she is a woman and therefore a sign. Mary D. Garrard, "Artemisia Gentileschi's Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting," *The Art Bulletin* 62, no. 1 (1980).

imagines the prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, inventing a life history for the archetypal character of the madwoman in the attic.<sup>138</sup> The Sargasso Sea became a reoccurring allegory for the feminine in my work, as I will show. The sea, also known as the mid-Atlantic gyre, is situated between the circular currents of the north and south Atlantic. It stretches across the area associated with the Bermuda triangle. This sea is unique; it is the only sea without a land border. The Sargasso Sea is a sea surrounded by seas. Its limits are fluid. In Jean Rhys' novel, the sea is an analogy for a cultural divide. In the process of re-telling this story, Rhys reveals the colonial bias within the original text. In Brontë's text, the madwoman is wild like a beast, dishevelled and violent, she spits dead flies. The reasons behind her confinement, as told by her husband, are connected to her concealed heritage and mixed blood. His action in confining her is justified because he was tricked within this first marriage. The madwoman's death is necessary for Brontë's heroine to achieve her ends. Rhys' text seeks to give life to the character of the madwoman, to restore something of her home to her. Rhys gives her a new name, Antoinette. She inverts the story by omitting the name of the husband.<sup>139</sup> After reading Rhys' work, I considered rewriting Marguerite's novels for her.<sup>140</sup>

I was looking for archetypes or even stereotypes of feminine madness, disobedience, defiance, and confinement. I sought the common forms that would emerge through this broad theme in literature. I was drawn to the figure of Antigone.<sup>141</sup> In Sophocles' play *Antigone* (c 422 BC), the faithful daughter of Oedipus is punished for a transgression—she defies the law. Antigone refuses to accept King Creon's dictate that traitors should

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<sup>138</sup> These novels have their own fields of interpretation, in both a feminist and decolonising context. Trevor Hope, "Revisiting the Imperial Archive: Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea, and the Decomposition of Englishness," *College Literature* 39, no. 1 (2012). Deborah Kimmey, "Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: Metatextuality and the Politics of Reading in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea," *Women's Studies* 34, no. 2 (2005).

<sup>139</sup> Kimmey "Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: Metatextuality and the Politics of Reading in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea." 117

<sup>140</sup> Lacan notes that they were "well written." Shepherd and Cutting, *The Clinical Roots of the Schizophrenia Concept: Translations of Seminal European Contributions on Schizophrenia*. 217 The sea reappears across different parts of my work. In *Theft: Prints and Drawings* it was presented as a useless map. Appendix v.

<sup>141</sup> The figure of Antigone reappears across a range of feminist writing. See Sam McBean, "Dragging the not-yet: archiving Antigone", McBean, *Feminism's Queer Temporalities*. 25 – 48.

remain unburied—their bodies treated without funeral rights and left to the elements. In her defiance, she is expressing a vested interest. The traitor in question is her own brother, and not only a brother, but the son of her father Oedipus. This is a particular family relation. As Oedipus's son, Polynices (the unburied) is both brother and uncle to Antigone. Antigone pursues a perverse familial justice, as a counter to the letter of the law and the arbitrary restrictions of kings.<sup>142</sup> In *Antigone's Claim*, Judith Butler emphasises the specific relation between Antigone and her brother. He is not only a brother, but Oedipus's son, born of incest. This is a relation that Butler describes as queer.<sup>143</sup> Because of her resistance, Antigone is punished. Buried. Antigone is returned to the earth.

The pattern that emerged through these texts' centres on the theme of burial: women confined, suppressed, and impressed into circumstances. In Sara Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life*, she recounts the Brothers Grimm story of *The Wilful Child*, a child so disobedient that even after death her arm continues to spring up from the earth, until the mother goes to the grave to beat the arm down with a switch.<sup>144</sup> In Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, the character Ester Greenwood decides to overdose. So that she will not be discovered she conceals herself and covers her body with planks of wood, rubbish, and detritus. She makes her grave in the foundations of the family home. The 'Bell Jar' itself is a metaphor for downward pressure and confinement.<sup>145</sup> Burial is a reoccurring structural motif within this range of feminist literature. In response to the repeated themes of internment in the literary sources, I wanted to use my work to *disinter*, to dig up figures from the past.<sup>146</sup> I came to think of my practice as part of a process of disinterring, a term with a bodily inference. Disinterment indicated a form for the

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<sup>142</sup> Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life & Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). In this text Butler claims Antigone as a queer figure because of her specific relationships, and her expression of authority through defiant speech.

<sup>143</sup> Butler *ibid*.

<sup>144</sup> Sarah Ahmed uses this story as an analogy for the experience of living feminism: of the consequences of having and expressing one's wilfulness. Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham Duke University Press, 2017), 65 – 87.

<sup>145</sup> When the text was published in the US, Plath's name was covered up by the pseudonym Victoria Lucas. The character, Ester Greenwood, might be seen to stand in for Sylvia Plath so a second pseudonym was included to obscure her. Marilyn Boyer, "The Disabled Female Body as a Metaphor for Language in Sylvia Plath's the Bell Jar," *Women's Studies* 33, no. 2 (2004). 199 – 223.

<sup>146</sup> This question of feminism as a refusal to let go of the past is discussed in McBean, *Feminism's Queer Temporalities*.

recovery of feminine narratives that also acknowledged the limited capacity of that recovery. In Marguerite Pantaine's case, to disinter her also implied acknowledging the limited quality of my knowledge of her life and writings.<sup>147</sup> Disinterment was a form of representation appropriate to the central absence in the source material. I pursued this question and the possibility of a non-representational approach to feminism through the curated exhibition, *Disinterment*.<sup>148</sup>

Anne Ferran's project, *Lost to Worlds* (2001–2008), is a case study for the curatorial logic of *Disinterment*. These works seek to represent or recover mute subjects from an ellipse in the records. These photographic prints on aluminium show anonymous lumpen ground. Ferran located this photographic series in and around a historical site of confinement, a colonial prison for female convicts and their children, described as a 'female factory'. This was a place of misery, but the evidence of this history has now been largely erased. As Susan Best has argued, this work plays on the idea of the camera as witness, with the evidentiary qualities ascribed to photography being contrasted against the lack of evidence that remains at the site.<sup>149</sup> There is very little left to document. Ferran describes her process, in an interview with Geoffrey Batchen, as "peering into the place where the photos would be if anyone at the time had thought the subject(s) worth recording."<sup>150</sup> In this work, Ferran exploits the atmospheric conditions of the site and its absences to create an affective image, an image for ghosts. In

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<sup>147</sup> There are additional sources in French. Didier Anziue, *Une Peau Pour Les Pensées* (Paris: Clancier-Guenaud, 1988). Jean Allouch, *Marguerite, Ou L'aimée De Lacan* (Paris: E. P. E.L., 1990).

<sup>148</sup> *Disinterment*, Barbara Campbell, Erin Crouch, Anne Ferran, Briony Galligan, Fiona Macdonald, Rosina Prestia, Curated by Tamsin Green, MADA Faculty Gallery, 2016.

<sup>149</sup> Susan Best, "Witnessing and Untimely Images: Anne Ferran's 'Lost to Worlds'," *History of Photography* 36, no. 3 (2012). 326 - 336.

<sup>150</sup> Geoffrey Batchen, "The Distance That Cannot Be Photographed: Interview with Anne Ferran " *Flash (online)* 1.

showing mounds of earth, the artist evokes burial.<sup>151</sup> The brevity of these images is an invitation to the audience to look further.<sup>152</sup>

The purpose of *Disinterment* was to examine methods of contemporary feminist practice and curating within the context of a conference on feminist philosophy.<sup>153</sup> The exhibition was accompanied by a paper that attempted to explain this curatorial rationale and develop the specific works' relationship to the body, in some cases an absent body, for an audience of feminist philosophers, including my mother. My other intention in curating this exhibition was pedagogical, I wanted to bring the work of graduate students into conversations with other generations of feminist artists. The works I chose were distributed outwards from Ferran's project, they all had a tendency towards blankness and a preference for voided spaces. The refusal to represent can be understood as indebted to a feminist rethinking of the subject outside the domination of the ocular.<sup>154</sup> Briony Galligan's work cycled slowly, pushing the air of the room into a circular motion. Unlike the revolving office door that the work appeared to quote, there was no corporate efficiency to this work. This aimlessness was shared by Rosia Prestia's large yellow colour field piece. A text was embedded in the work that was hard to read, but through the artist's careful use of colour and optics, the text became clearer the longer you spent looking.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Photography itself is arguably a mournful practice, "photography is a certificate of presence and a token of absence", Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979). "Photography is a winter garden, like a *chamber claire* that lets in light in the winter and keeps alive artificially what should otherwise have died" Margaret Olin, in *Geoffrey Batchen, Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009). Roland Barthes, "each photograph always contains this imperious sign of my future death" *Camera Lucida* Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1993), p 97.

<sup>152</sup> I can't really think of violence associated with these sites in Australia without also considering our violent colonial history. Jessica Neath, "Empty Lands: Contemporary Art Approaches to Photographing Historical Trauma in Tasmania," *Journal of Australian Studies* 36, no. 3 (2012).

<sup>153</sup> The International Association of Women Philosophers [www.women-philosophy.org](http://www.women-philosophy.org)

<sup>154</sup> "Investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters. It sets at a distance, maintains a distance. In our culture, the predominance of the look over smell taste, touch, hearing, has brought about impoverishment of bodily relations... the moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality." Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985). 50 (check reference) Also the anti-ocular within the feminist criticism of the gaze drawing from Laura Mulvey.

<sup>155</sup> The text quotes from a business manual on developing more efficient subjects. The artist has been engaging in a long-running, undocumented, series of performative exchanges with a range of subject by offering (in person and via email) a forearm massage. This offer sets up an inter-personal exchange. Prestia Rosina, "Subtlety," (Melbourne: Monash University MFA 2017).

As part of my curatorial strategy, I reconstructed Barbara Campbell's performance work *The Machine, Oiled Again*, circa 1997. The performance as a whole critiqued the use of the female body as the unconscious matter of modernism.<sup>156</sup> In the performance, the artist lay naked and oiled under the stairs that lead to the art history department. Her body was mirrored by a running Singer sewing machine. During this performance, the artist showed her own slide test: an outdated pedagogical tool used by the art historian. The difficulty of curating this work for me was in re-staging something of the original performance through its fragments.<sup>157</sup> In Fiona Macdonald's re-drawing projects, the artist has continually accessed Eva Hesse's work through re-mediation. When Macdonald came across a poorly reproduced image of one of Hesse's late drawings in a collection of essays in the October files series, the artist read this lack of care as indicative of a wider phenomenon.<sup>158</sup> Macdonald has identified the serial nature of Hesse's work and has taken this as an invitation to repeat her forms.<sup>159</sup>

Erin Crouch's films retell minor histories, family incidents, memories, and dreams. Her cinematographic forms indicate a preference for the cyclic, not only in the video loop, but also in the movement of the 'figures' in the narrative of, *And then these three came back to Robert* (2015). In the digital film, bottles of Rid (insect repellent), salt shakers, and coke zero cans, are distributed and redistributed around a domestic glass tabletop. The artist's mother tells a story using these figures, one that reveals a complex familial arrangement. As a whole, the artworks in this exhibition do not seek to reconstitute their subjects as singular or self-identical, they avoid the potential violence of direct representation. What I have referred to as 'historical recovery', for example, in Anne Ferran's work, also applies to strategies within the exhibition. The histories of feminism

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<sup>156</sup> The title, *Machine oiled again*, refers to Duchamp's mechanical bride. Barbara Campbell, *Flesh Winnow: Six Performances 1997-2001*, the University of Sydney, ed. Laura Ginters (Sydney: Power Publications, 2002). Conversations with the artist.

<sup>157</sup> The potential un-reproducibility of performance is proposed by Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993)., and countered by Amelia Jones, "The Artist Is Present: Artistic Re-Enactments and the Impossibility of Presence," *TDR - The Drama Review* 55, no. 1 (2011). I explored these ideas in the exhibition, *Relay: repeat action over distance*, Kel Glaister, Therese Keogh, Katie Lee, Alex Martinis Roe. Curated by Tamsin Green, Firstdraft, Sydney (2011)

<sup>158</sup> Mignon Nixon and Cindy Nemser, *Eva Hesse* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).

<sup>159</sup> Fiona Macdonald, *Redrawing: Bronwyn Clarke-Cooles, Ben. Harper, Fiona Macdonald, thèRèSe Mastroiacovo, Spiros Panigiraki* (Melbourne, Vic.: RMIT University, 2008). Green, "Critical Methods."

are punctuated by forgetting.<sup>160</sup> Disinterment and recovery play out in the intergenerational, local, and genealogical strategies of the exhibition that abandons linear histories in preference for a looping partial circularity.<sup>161</sup>

The final text that I included in my list of substitutes for Marguerite's missing novels was my grandmother's unpublished memoir: *Blue Eye, Brown Eye*.<sup>162</sup> Here I hoped to find something like Marguerite's experience written in the first person. Both women were frustrated by marriage. Nita reports that she was completely ignorant of the facts of life when she found she was pregnant. She lost her place at the conservatorium, and any hopes she may have had of being a successful pianist. Nita describes her brief honeymoon with the words, "that night's experience of marital love was painful and disturbing."<sup>163</sup> Marguerite was discouraged from marrying by her family who argued that "her lethargy, her habitual daydreaming, and her craze for reading rendered her unsuitable for marriage."<sup>164</sup> It is perhaps the restrictive category of woman itself that Marguerite is alienated from, and this alienation and frustration can be re-claimed as queer. As Judith Butler argues, heterosexuality itself is always failing to sustain its own idealisation.<sup>165</sup>

### **The limits of my methods**

I was attempting to recover Marguerite in my work, but I was trapped in a cycle of reproduction. I could not get away from repeating the name Lacan, like some Freudian compulsion. In the exhibition *Detraction* (2016), I tried to shift the references of my works by naming other women as co-authors of the show and listing them on the

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<sup>160</sup> There are at least three different exhibitions claiming to be the 'first' women's art exhibition in Australia. Joan Kerr, *Heritage: The National Women's Art Book, 500 Works by 500 Australian Women Artists from Colonial Times to 1955* (Sydney: Roseville East, N.S.W.: Craftsman House, 1995). This text only addresses art after colonisation.

<sup>161</sup> Claire Colebrook, "Stratigraphic Time, Women's Time," *Australian Feminist Studies* 24, no. 59 (2009).

<sup>162</sup> She had one blue eye and one brown, it made her look crazy. Green, "Blue Eye, Brown Eye." no page numbers.

<sup>163</sup> This was a 'shotgun' marriage.

<sup>164</sup> Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. 37

<sup>165</sup> Butler, "hegemonic heterosexuality itself is a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations" Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993). 125. See also the idea of the failed performance of gender in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

poster.<sup>166</sup> The limits of my methods in achieving my aims were tied up in the model of research I was pursuing. The laboured historical references and the obscure formal connections I employed resulted in artworks that could only be ‘correctly’ interpreted if the keys to interpretation were provided. As Sara Ahmed states,

“Critical theory is like any language; you can learn it, and when you learn it, you begin to move around in it. Of course, it can be difficult, when you do not have the orientation tools to navigate your way around a new landscape. But explaining phenomenon like racism and sexism – how they are produced, how they keep being reproduced - is not something we can do simply by learning a new language.”<sup>167</sup>

Allegorical complexity had been my aim. By the time I came to make the work for *Detraction*, I began to realise the limits of this complexity. I was only making work for a very specific audience. The work was polite, and it was repressed. The stated intention of my exhibition, *Detraction*, was to ‘queer’ Duchamp’s allegory of desire: *The Large Glass, Or the Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* (1915 – 1923). But the term queer had become too amorphous. It was becoming obvious that my stated interest in melancholy and alienation were placeholders for an un-enunciated trauma. I had planned to make to digital video based on Marguerite’s story, and to undertake archival research in Paris.<sup>168</sup> Instead, I went to the US to see a work that had been haunting me, or that I had been haunting, Marcel Duchamp’s *The Large Glass* and its echo, *Étant donnés* (1946 – 1966).

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<sup>166</sup> Appendix vi.

<sup>167</sup> Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*. 9

<sup>168</sup> I was awarded a residency, but I said no.

### Chapter 3: The Waterfall



Marcel Duchamp, *Female Fig Leaf*, 1951, cast of 1950 copper-electroplated plaster original, (9 x 14 x 12.5 cm). Gift of Mme Marcel Duchamp, 1969. Collection of The Philadelphia Museum of Art.

I've been left alone in the vaults of The Philadelphia Museum of Art and I'm thinking about licking *The Female Fig Leaf* (1951). I don't think Duchamp would mind. In a special edition of *Boîte-en-valise* no. XII/XX (*Box in a Valise*) Duchamp gifted to his lover Maria Martins, he included a work titled *Paysage fautif*, or *Wayward Landscape*

(1946). The abstract anamorphic form on black satin was later revealed to be the artist's own splattered seminal ejection.<sup>169</sup> Maybe I shouldn't lick the Duchamp. Duchamp's *Female Fig Leaf* is a cast of a negative space—the cunt like slit on display in *Étant donnés*, Duchamp's final secret work.<sup>170</sup> *The Fig Leaf* appears to be based on the interior impression of the sex of a prone female figure. It is unclear what came first, the slit or its wedge. *The Fig Leaf* may have been a tool used to shape the woman, something used to hold her plaster form in place; or, *The Fig Leaf* is a cast taken from the woman after the work was completed. The title is ironic. In the well-known biblical story, fig leaves were used by Adam and Eve to hide their shame after they became aware of their nudity. Duchamp's *Fig Leaf* forms a fleshy speculum—it does not cover, it penetrates. This work has a number of editions in both clay and bronze, released prior to the unveiling of *Étant donnés* in 1969. The work was re-imagined as the *Wedge of Chastity* (1954), a sculpture given to Duchamp's second wife Alexina 'Teeny' Matisse. A work that sat on their dining table.<sup>171</sup> I went to the vaults to perform a particular kind of research, a long-form perceptual drawing of Duchamp's erotic objects as a way of observing and getting to know these forms.

I went to see *The Large Glass, Or The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915 – 1923) in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I had almost forgotten about *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage . . . (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas . . .)* (1946 – 1966). The work is in a nondescript room at the end of the gallery. The door to the room isn't large and the room is poorly lit with beige carpet. You might think it led to administrative offices or custodial equipment. But as soon as you peer into this space you see the heavy barn door. Illuminated by overhead spotlights, I recognised the worn, French farmhouse door immediately. There is a small stool in front of the door, just like the one you would kneel on in a Catholic Church. I assume this stool is for those who can't reach the rough peepholes in the centre of the door.

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<sup>169</sup> Elena Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016). 135.

<sup>170</sup> The full title: *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage . . . (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas . . .)*

<sup>171</sup> Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Marcel Duchamp and Ron Padgett (London, England: Thames and Hudson, 1971). 88. See also [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-wedge-of-chastity-t07281](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-wedge-of-chastity-t07281)

Peeping through these eyeholes, I think, *there it is! Is that all there is?* The view is frustrating. Even as you press your face into the wood, you can't quite see enough of the diorama. The broken brick wall that frames the figure obscures your view. The scale of the work is confusing, she is close and far away. You can't quite take it all in: your voyeurism is encouraged and frustrated by the architecture of the work.

Duchamp's work is a trap for the gaze.<sup>172</sup> His final secret work, *Étant donnés*, may appear to be exploitative. Behind the door, the work shows a naked splayed female body, one that is possibly dead, exposed and available for the curious viewer.<sup>173</sup> This woman is unable to return the gaze, as she has no head. Arguably the work amplifies the predatory and voyeuristic conditions of the museum itself. By offering up the female body for inspection, Duchamp sets a trap. This critical dynamic within the work has been observed by a number of authors. Rosalind Krauss describes how the work allows the voyeur to expose *himself* as a voyeur.<sup>174</sup> Amelia Jones uses the tools of psychoanalysis to argue that the apparent 'lack' of the woman in the work is a critique of the masculine construction of that feminine lack.<sup>175</sup> Elena Filipovic makes a claim for the status of *Étant donnés* as a form of institutional critique; she carefully demonstrates that a fundamental part of the critical structure of the work is Duchamp's investment in the specific exhibition conditions of the work.<sup>176</sup> The work exploits the feminine in order to critique that exploitation within the history of art. The work traps and exposes the predatory phallogical conditions of spectatorship, but it can only do so by using the woman as bait.

I came to Duchamp because he had been appearing in my work. I had been thinking about artworks that seemed to echo each other. I had been conflating these histories of

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<sup>172</sup> This situation is reminiscent of Jean Paul Sartre's description of looking through a keyhole in "Being for Others: The Look." In Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, ed. Hazel Estella Barnes and Mary Warnock (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>173</sup> Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, Post-Modernism (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>174</sup> Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).

<sup>175</sup> Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*.

<sup>176</sup> "Étant donnés is, quite simply, the reflexive culmination of a lifetime of institutional questioning, deliberately set within and working against the very structure of power that it seeks to question." Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*. 277 For a summary of the aim of intuitional critique see the writings of Andrea Fraser.

the gaze in my work. Looking from the perspective of the draftsman in Albrecht Dürer's woodcut *The Draftsman's Net* (1525) you would see something like the figure in *Étant donnés*, or the figure in Gustave Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* (1866). Hence my conflation of these views, and my substitution of Dürer's woman for the figure of the bride in my original wall drawing for *Relax* (2012).<sup>177</sup> Duchamp was aware of Courbet's work *L'Origine*, and of Lacan's ownership of this work.<sup>178</sup> In her text on Courbet, Linda Nochlin suggests a reading of VALIE EXPORT's *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969) as a response to Courbet's work.<sup>179</sup> I used a specific detail from EXPORT's performance document in my work, printed on a mirror, to face off with the frottage on the reverse of Courbet's *L'Origine*. This reading method was typical of my reliance on art history and theory to drive my work. I also attempted to reuse Duchamp's allegory of sexual exchange for my own ends, to queer *The Large Glass* by replacing Duchamp's numerous symbolic substitutions with my own signs drawn from feminist literature.<sup>180</sup> I wanted to realign what I saw as the predatory dynamics of Duchamp's *Large Glass* with an alternate representation of sexual exchange. Rather than represent the irreconcilable realms of the bachelors and the bride as two distinct and separate planes within a vertical structure, I produced a horizontal form, a field of echoes and repetitions that denoted a fluid 'queer' exchange.

In Duchamp's *The Large Glass*, the mechanical bride stands for the root cause of desire, as well as its potential future satisfaction. This is a frozen scene, referred to as a delay in glass.<sup>181</sup> The work shows the moments before the act of consummation, the bride's stripping. The artist and art historian John Golding, writing in the 1970s states that, "The Bride is the summation and embodiment of all female figures in Duchamp's

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<sup>177</sup> Appendix i.

<sup>178</sup> Stephan Banz, "F for Forestay Waterfall," *Public Journal: Art Culture Ideas* 56, no. Attendant A to Z (2017). 47 – 63 Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*. 460

<sup>179</sup> Linda Nochlin, *Courbet* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007). EXPORT plays with the exposure of the real thing in place of the image. Kathleen Wentrack, "Female Sexuality in Performance and Film: Erotic, Political, Controllable? The Contested Female Body in the Work of Carolee Schneemann and Valie Export," *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 83, no. 2 (2014). There are parallels between EXPORT's gesture and Claire Lambe's birth images at ACCA Green, "Playing in the Master Bedroom: Claire Lambe at Acca." This feminist gesture also carries through Carolee Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* (1975), and even Lynda Benglis' 1974 *Artforum* advertisement.

<sup>180</sup> Appendix vi.

<sup>181</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*. 11

work.”<sup>182</sup> In Duchamp’s notes, the bride appears to omit a stimulant, a “timid power” through her “love gasoline”.<sup>183</sup> She is the weak cause of desire in the bachelors below. Duchamp states, “The Bride accepts this stripping by the bachelors, since she supplies the love gasoline.”<sup>184</sup> The bride is passive, mute matter, and she awaits her purpose within the heterosexual exchange.<sup>185</sup> The work shows the frustrations of the potential sexual exchange, unconsummated and fixed in glass. The forms of bachelor machines are based on archetypes of masculine roles: postman, police officer, soldier. They are referred to as the mallic moulds (a pun on phallic). The ‘Nine Shots’ that hit the realm of the bride appear to be bullet holes that have missed their mark, an analogy for misfired ejaculate. I read *The Large Glass* and *Étant donnés* as echoes of each other, as pre- and post-coital works.

*Étant donnés* is a gift of the Cassandra Foundation. It was important to Duchamp that the benefactors who funded the donation of the work to The Philadelphia Museum of Art changed the name of their foundation to evoke this mythical figure.<sup>186</sup> Hence the full title of the work can be read as:

*Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage . . . (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas . . . )* Mixed media assemblage: (exterior) wooden door, iron nails, bricks, and stucco; (interior) bricks, velvet, wood, parchment over an armature of lead, steel, brass, synthetic putties and adhesives, aluminum sheet, welded steel-wire screen, and wood; Peg-Board, hair, oil paint, plastic, steel binder clips, plastic clothespins, twigs, leaves, glass, plywood, brass piano hinge, nails, screws, cotton, collotype prints, acrylic varnish, chalk,

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<sup>182</sup> John Golding, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (New York: Viking Press, 1973). 15

<sup>183</sup> Marcel Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York, N.Y.: Da Capo Press, 1989). 39

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* 44

<sup>185</sup> (Although Duchamp’s notes indicate the bride has the potential for orgasm). *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> The William and Nora Copley Foundation was renamed. Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*. 209

graphite, paper, cardboard, tape, pen ink, electric light fixtures, gas lamp (Bec Auer type), foam rubber, cork, electric motor, cookie tin, and linoleum. 242.6 × 177.8 × 124.5 cm (1946 – 1966). Gift of the Cassandra Foundation 1969.<sup>187</sup>

Cassandra is a figure in the story of the Trojan war.<sup>188</sup> Her gift was to speak true prophecies. But she would never be believed.<sup>189</sup> Duchamp's work comments on the deceptive power of mimetic representation, the illusion of perspective, and the voyeuristic qualities of the museum. By referencing Cassandra, Duchamp is telling us that his work will be misread.

The figure in *Étant donnés* is made up of at least three women. The original body belonged to Duchamp's lover, the artist Maria Martins. His wife Teeny supplied the cast of the arm after the original broke. She also worked with him in secret. Mary Reynolds contributed to the techniques used to produce the flesh-like qualities of the body.<sup>190</sup> It was on a holiday with Reynolds that Duchamp first spied the waterfall that makes up the background of the diorama.<sup>191</sup> At some point, the hair of the figure was changed from dark brown to blond, in step with Duchamp's newer lover. A component of the work that has been considered across a number of texts is the unusual anatomy of the prone woman, her pussy. The slit appears too long, too high on the body, perhaps a little too far to the right. It also seems too simplistic, a simple gash rather than a series of enfolding lips. The form appears like a wound that has healed over. Why would a work that involved so much meticulous detail, composed in secret over twenty years, foreground and spotlight this anatomical inaccuracy? Perhaps there is no single reason but there is no denying that the pussy is out of place. It is also bald. Duchamp detested body hair and had his first bride shave hers off.<sup>192</sup> This baldness could be the result of

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<sup>187</sup> [www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/324.html](http://www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/324.html)

<sup>188</sup> Duchamp may have seen Euripides version of this play in 1961. [www.toutfait.com/issues/issue\\_2/Notes/metcalf](http://www.toutfait.com/issues/issue_2/Notes/metcalf)

<sup>189</sup> There is an equivallance between gift and poison, or curse. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: Norton, 1967).

<sup>190</sup> Reynolds had developed techniques using leather as part of her bookbinding process Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*. 235 Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*. 462

<sup>191</sup> Banz, "F for Forestay Waterfall."

<sup>192</sup> "He had an almost morbid horror of all hair" Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*. 281 The absence of hair gives the work a potential pre-pubescent reading.

the casting process. Rather than seeking to solve the work's secrets, I am interested in other authors' reactions to this mystery of the wayward cunt.

In a recent special edition of *Public Journal: Art Culture Ideas*, focusing on the works of Duchamp, Francis M. Nauman uses the enigma of the female form as an occasion for speculation around the true cause of the evident flaws in her form.<sup>193</sup> He declares, "who amongst us can stand in judgment and critique the accuracy of a vulva?" before proceeding in that task. He admits that on his first viewing, he was too naïve to notice that something was amiss, but he has now returned to the subject as a man of experience, as one who has "read up on the subject." While "few viewers" are "sufficiently familiar with this part of a woman's body" to see something inaccurate, Nauman positions himself as a man in the know. He has even gone to the effort of finding a "brave" model willing to "assume the position." But Nauman's model is quite young and flexible, she is up to the challenge. This leads to one possible solution to the problem of the improper pussy. It could be that the original model herself was just a bit too old, and she had "given birth to five children." The fault is then not with the artist but with his source material. As Nauman helpfully points out: "with the onset of menopause, hormone levels drastically decrease and, as a result, all components of the vulva—the mons pubis, labia, and even clitoris—shrink considerably in size." The other faults in form can finally be explained by the protruding buttock of the aged lover, "an inevitable effect of gravity on an aging body." But Nauman also observes that the viewer doesn't need accuracy to see the thing for what it is: "a vertical slit in a woman's body that possesses an orifice to allow for male penetration."<sup>194</sup>

Clearly, there is something in Duchamp's work that some men cannot quite make sense of. The female body causes problems. This is especially the case when it does not conform to masculine expectations of the erotic, for example, when the body is withheld or has become too old to be fertilized. When femininity fails.<sup>195</sup> Duchamp's work allows

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<sup>193</sup> Francis M. Nauman, "Notre-Dame Des Desir: Gynomorphism in *Étant Donnés*," *Public Journal: Art Culture Ideas* 56 (2017). All quotes from this text.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> This idea of the failure of femininity will be developed in the next chapter. Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*. 4

for these readings.<sup>196</sup> The ambiguity of Duchamp's work forms a trap. This trap is activated when authors attempt to solve the work, or to provide a definitive explanation for it. These authors, unable to fully determine the meaning of the work itself, have displaced this specific anxiety on to the general anxiety of the mystery of woman and her sex. Academic solutions to Duchamp's work include the evocation of the artist's secret desire for incest, the ravages of menopause on the female form, and woman's sexual frigidity as possible solutions to the work/woman. It is not insignificant that Duchamp anticipates that the work will be misinterpreted. In 2017, the artist Serkan Ozkaya claimed to have finally solved the work by reading *Étant donnés* as a camera obscura, one that reveals a secret image – boobs.<sup>197</sup> Direct exposure to the female body leads to a type of blindness in interpretation.

Duchamp's woman with an 'open pussy' can be seen as part of a continuum, a series of other peepholes.<sup>198</sup> The viewing device itself may be more significant than what it reveals. A lost work, *The Green Ray* (1947), was a small peephole in a velvet curtain that revealed an image of the ocean at night with a distant horizon.<sup>199</sup> This work was originally exhibited as part of the surrealist exhibition, *Hall of Superstitions* in 1947. Duchamp was partly responsible for the exhibition design. He enveloped the walls in velvet, creating a 'womblike' structure. He created a number of exhibitions or viewing situations that enveloped the body of the audience. Filipovic argues that Duchamp's use of string, coal, and other installations techniques attempted to "shattered the typical institutional distance between the body and vision," in order to insist on the erotics of vision.<sup>200</sup> In *Green Ray*, the horizon has a different type of vanishing point to the one

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<sup>196</sup> Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," *Aspen* 5 + 6, no. The Minimalism Issue (1967). Duchamp argues for the interpretation and evaluation of the work as the responsibility of the audience.

<sup>197</sup> The artist used a reconstructed version of *Étant donnés*' peepholes as a light source for a camera obscura, after a long recording process, a "secret" image emerged that you could peek at behind a black velvet curtain, and it was boobs. Serkan Ozkaya, *We Will Wait*, Postmasters Gallery, October 21–November 25, 2017. [news.artnet.com/art-world/duchamp-etant-donnes-secret-serkan-ozkaya-1103216](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/duchamp-etant-donnes-secret-serkan-ozkaya-1103216)

<sup>198</sup> Duchamp "my woman with open pussy" quoted in Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*. 366

<sup>199</sup> *Green Ray* illuminated seascape peephole. Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*. 185. and Juan Antonio Ramírez, *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even*, {English ed.} ed. (London: Reaktion Books, 1998). 228

<sup>200</sup> Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*. 134

revealed in *Étant donnés*, but they share allegorical inferences.<sup>201</sup> The legend of “green ray,” as described in the story by Jules Vern, is a semi-mystical optical event. If you continue to watch the setting sun as it passes the horizon, you can sometimes see a flash of bright lime or emerald green. If you witness the flash of light, then you will have a truth revealed to you. Normally, this is some romantic truth.<sup>202</sup> Duchamp's lost peephole plays on the idea of a promised knowledge, a form of knowing connected to a vanishing point. The horizon line is an allegory for the limits of the known.<sup>203</sup> The implications in *The Green Ray* are romantic. But the dynamic of the knowable and unknowable can also be transferred to a more visceral analogy for the female body.

The dynamic of an active male and a passive female are expressed in *The Large Glass*. Golding states, “The *Bride* is a slightly absurd character, and she is not particularly likeable; she is a bitch, a tease and a flirt.”<sup>204</sup> This is a fairly extraordinary reading of the *Bride*'s culpability within the frustrated exchange. She is the cause of desire and yet she refuses to fulfil it, making her simply a bitch in Golding's view. The proposition about women's sexuality is revealing. If the woman arouses desire in men, then she must also provide for its release. Women do not own their desires or their desirability. The quote continues:

But she shines with the pale, impersonal beauty of some primeval moon goddess, and she carries about her an air of authority that springs from the fact that she recognizes herself as the true descendant of Flaubert's *Salammbô*, of Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's *Axel* and his *Eve Future*, of

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<sup>201</sup> Éric Rohmer, *Le Rayon Vert (the Green Ray)*, *Green ray* (London:: FremantleMedia and Arrow Films distributors, 2003). Perhaps reminiscent of Sigmund Freud's description of female genitalia as the “shock of nothing to see.”

<sup>202</sup> Jules Verne, *The Green Ray* (Holicong, PA: Wildside Press, 2003). Tacita Dean's work *The Green Ray*, 16mm film, 2', 2001.

<sup>203</sup> Jean Suquet described the vanishing point as the line between the two horizontal plains of *The Large Glass*. He states, “the horizon is the imaginary line that the gaze cannot pass, just as the horizon limits the view of the traveler, garments limit the gaze of the voyeur. Even better: when one moves towards the horizon, it recedes at the same rate that one advances. Duchamp represents the *Bride*'s dress slipping from her shoulders as the horizon slipping away. She will be stripped bare, but we will never see her nude.” Thierry de Duve, *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991). 89

<sup>204</sup> Golding, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. 53

Mallarmé's *Hérodiade* and perhaps most immediately of Laforgue's *Salomé*.<sup>205</sup>

These women, drawn from literature, are a cast of seducers. Many of them are imagined as oriental, and all their characters are written by men. In most cases, they meet violent ends. Golding goes on to accuse the Bride figure of an essential frigidity.<sup>206</sup> Perhaps he wished a violent end for her? The Bride is the cause of desire in the bachelors and therefore has a responsibility towards their desire. In contrast, Golding reads the female figure in *Étant donnés* as, "fleshy, naturalistic and desirable."<sup>207</sup> He approves of her. Golding sees the male presence in Duchamp's final work as embodied in the lamp that the prone woman holds aloft in the diorama. Golding sees Duchamp as the light.<sup>208</sup>

Arturo Schwarz proposes to solve the mystery of Duchamp's work through the artist's incestuous desires for his sister, Suzanne<sup>209</sup>. He interprets the *Unhappy Readymade* (1919) as an expression of Duchamp's sorrow at his sister's marriage. This work was an assisted readymade. The instruction was to hang a geometry textbook on a balcony so that it would become weathered. Schwarz reads the geometry textbook as an allusion to lost school days, a happy youth before brother and sister were separated. Another reading of this work would be that the readymade subjects a representation of Euclidean geometric space to the processes of entropy. Schwarz states that it is "obvious" that Duchamp's earlier painting, *A Young Man and a Girl in Spring* (1911) is also a manifestation of this desire for incest. This is partly based on the inscription on the back to 'ma chère Suzanne'—my dear Suzanne. Schwarz points out that in the inscription 'chère' (dear) and 'chair' (flesh) are homonyms—so the word dear is really an evocation of the word *flesh*. Schwarz sees this linguistic play as a code, a statement of Duchamp's desire to be *of one flesh*, in a biblical sense. Duchamp's wife Teeny

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid. 53

<sup>206</sup> Defined as the failure to achieve orgasm through penetration, relying on clitoral stimulation.

<sup>207</sup> Golding, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. 70

<sup>208</sup> For the associations between light and truth in the history of western thought. Green, "Still Moving Image: A Material Investigation of Visually." I drew extensively on the work on Martin Jay in the exegesis.

<sup>209</sup> Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Marcel Duchamp, 2nd rev. ed. ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1970). Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*. 53

Duchamp was not impressed with Schwarz hypothesis.<sup>210</sup> Duchamp, typically, was unconcerned.

In 1959, Duchamp created another artwork that depended on the viewer's body and that appeared invisible when first approached. For the exhibition *Eros*, Duchamp used a doorway to partly obscure a cage containing a number of laying chickens and straw. A sign in the cage read 'Coin Slot.' As the exhibition went on the cage began to stink. Duchamp had created a "dirty corner", or coin slot, colloquial terms for vagina in French.<sup>211</sup> This work implies a more hostile attitude towards the female body. Anxiety and hostility are also expressed in an early sketch of the bride where she is attacked and pulled apart by menacing mechanical bachelors.<sup>212</sup> In his personal life, Duchamp was critical of the drudgery of married life. He mocked the dreary Sunday promenade of the middle-class man and heavily pregnant wife in an early cartoon.<sup>213</sup> He is reported to have kept his lovers at a distance. Mary Reynold's papers would have told us more about Duchamp's attitude to their relationship, but they were destroyed after her death by Duchamp.<sup>214</sup> Thinking through Duchamp's work from the lens of the visceral, the now-famous *Fountain* (1917) and standard urinal, has also been described in feminine terms. This piece of plumbing has been read in an idealised sense as a seated Madonna, and a body with flowing curves.<sup>215</sup> But as Calvin Tomkins notes, this implies that it is "an object with female attributes that serves as a receptacle for male fluid."<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> *Duchamp: A Biography*. 53

<sup>211</sup> Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*.197

<sup>212</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*. 96 Duchamp reports a dream in which the Bride "had become an enormous beetle like insect which tortured him atrociously with its elytra." Ibid. 101

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. 41

<sup>214</sup> Susan Glover Godlewski, "Warm Ashes: The Life and Career of Mary Reynolds," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996).

<sup>215</sup> There is also a queer reading of this choice of object. Paul B. Franklin, "Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* and the Art of Queer Art History," *Oxford Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (2000). Duchamp's alter ego Rose Sélavy can be interpreted as a queer performance.

<sup>216</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*. 186



*Le Surrealism*, Magazine Cover, 1956

*Étant donnés* operates as a trap for the gaze in the context of the museum. I don't want to solve the work. As I sketched this *Fig Leaf* in the storerooms at The Philadelphia Museum of Art, it reminded me of cliffs, or of the caves in Jules Vern's story *The Green Ray*. It appears to be a crooked landscape or an outcrop, a wayward landscape. When the work was photographed for the covers of *Le Surrealism* in 1956, the photographer manipulated the light of the image so what was inverted appears as a positive, at Duchamp's request.<sup>217</sup> The fleshy protrusion of the sculpture appears as a negative cut. In the photograph, the work echoes the waterfall where Duchamp is reported to have

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<sup>217</sup> Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*. 240

originally conceived of the *Étant donnés*.<sup>218</sup> Perhaps the reason for the strange shape of the cunt is that it is a subtle formal reference to this waterfall. The waterfall is one of the missing parts of the *Large Glass*. Some of the parts of the *Large Glass* in the original sketch and plans are omitted in the final work.<sup>219</sup> Having been left out of this original allegory of desire the waterfall returns in this inversion. Something left out that returns as an echo.

The indeterminacy of Duchamp's allegorical work seemed appropriate to my attempted representation of the feminine in my work. My aim was to re-use this allegorical heterosexual exchange for my own ends. I wanted to reclaim the work by replacing its numerous symbolic substitutions for sex and desire with my own signs drawn from feminist literature. I inserted two inverted Antigone(s) in place of a singular bride.<sup>220</sup> Rather than the mechanistic chocolate grinder, I drew again on a representation of the un-bordered space of the Sargasso Sea. I created a horizontal form, a field of echoes and repetitions, in place of the vertical form of the original work, with its two irreconcilable realms for the bachelors and the bride. The discursive field of Marcel Duchamp's works includes a pretty extraordinary array of gender-based prejudices. In many ways, his works anticipate these readings. The problem with my reappropriation of Duchamp's *Large Glass* was that it took on the work one-dimensionally. I only considered the *Large Glass* from the perspective of its allegorical representation of a frustrated sexual exchange. I did not consider all the literal implications of the work, and the sexism of many of the art historical readings. I could attempt to expose and critique these prejudices through my work. But then I would be trapped in a cycle of reproduction. As with my critique of Lacan's use of Marguerite, I would be caught repeating the original violence that I sought to redress. I wanted my work to operate like Duchamp's work, to lay down traps for future readers and to engender curiosity. But I am not like Duchamp. He had a guaranteed life pension from his father.<sup>221</sup> He was

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<sup>218</sup> The waterfall is near Gustave Courbet's cottage. Banz, "F for Forestay Waterfall."

<sup>219</sup> *Large Glass* technical drawing. [www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/54149.html#](http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/54149.html#)

<sup>220</sup> Antigone's name implies anti-generation. Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life & Death*.

<sup>221</sup> Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*. 277

always described as charming. He was very patient.<sup>222</sup> In retrospect, my attempt to repurpose Duchamp's work in *Detraction* failed because it remained allegorical. I wanted to speak directly to Duchamp's representation of a frustrated attempt at insemination, but I did not.

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<sup>222</sup> While working on *Detraction* I was working full time at Priceline Pharmacy in Balaclava, because my contract as a lecturer at Monash University was not renewed. I was also looking after my dad (who has polio). I kept thinking about Duchamp's capacity for laziness, and the way this laziness is celebrated in accounts of his life. *Marcel Duchamp: The Afternoon Interviews*, First edition. ed., Afternoon Interviews (Brooklyn, NY: Badlands Unlimited, 2013).

## Chapter 4: The Grandmother Effect

Making an artwork that directly addresses issues of menopause seems like a terrible idea. But if I have learned anything over the course of this research it is that I need to be direct. My melancholic deferral to literary analogies and obscure historical moments have led to work that is impenetrably polite and ultimately unsatisfying. In taking up a new attitude, I am drawing on Haraway's proposition to "stay with the trouble."<sup>223</sup> But my research into this term is itself troubled. Across biomedical and sociological texts, the trauma of infertility and early menopause appears to be linked to the subject's attachment to an essentialist notion of femininity, women as reproductive.<sup>224</sup> In a survey of young Norwegian women who had recently undergone hysterectomies, subjects were grouped as either attached or unattached to the associations between femininity and fertility, and therefore characterised as experiencing different levels of trauma in relation to their missing organs.<sup>225</sup> These texts begin with the presumption of a negative association with infertility and menopause,

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<sup>223</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*.

<sup>224</sup> Nick Hopwood, *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). This text provides an extensive history of the term and links reproduction to the evolution of capitalist production in the writing of Fredrick Engels (Introduction).

<sup>225</sup> Kari Solbrække, "Absent Organs - Present Selves: Exploring Embodiment and Gender Identity in Young Norwegian Women's Accounts of Hysterectomy," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 10 (2015).

aging, loss of 'femininity', and loss of sexuality.<sup>226</sup> This presumption is often implicitly heteronormative.<sup>227</sup> I am looking for images outside of these discourses.<sup>228</sup>

Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) responds to the present and looming environmental disaster.<sup>229</sup> Haraway identifies two tendencies in relation to the coming catastrophe, either a hope for future salvation, or a disappearing into despair and cynical sense of doom. In place of these two options, futurity or melancholy, she proposes a thick present-ness, the necessity of *staying with the trouble*. As Haraway states, "Staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or Edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters and meanings."<sup>230</sup> For Haraway, being present involves a deep material responsibility to our non-human kin, and an accountability to the material and economic entanglements of different bodies. Haraway begins the chapter *Awash in Urine* with her aging dog's prescription for DES (diethylstilbestrol). The carcinogenic history of this synthetic estrogen causes her a sense of feminist anxiety.<sup>231</sup> From this reflection on her animal companion's aging condition, Haraway moves to her own use of Premarin, prescribed to prevent heart disease after menopause. She details the animal-industrial complex

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<sup>226</sup> For example, "PM (early menopause) may be particularly distressing for young women, especially if it affects their plans to have children." Maureen Boughton and Lesley Halliday, "A Challenge to the Menopause Stereotype: Young Australian Women's Reflections of 'Being Diagnosed' as Menopausal," *Health & Social Care in the Community* 16, no. 6 (2008). 568

<sup>227</sup> This premise allows the authors to reveal surprising findings, including that for many heterosexual and lesbian subjects the cessation menstruation was met with indifference or even seen in a favorable light, "One lesbian participant...registered no sadness or grief at the ending of her periods." She states, "Because it's messy, it's a hassle, it's not nice to have cramps when you have it, it's not nice to be moody. . . You can't even do your exercise routine because you've got these. (Cliona, lesbian)" Abbey Hyde, "The Ending of Menstruation: Perspectives and Experiences of Lesbian and Heterosexual Women Authors: Abbey Hyde, Jean Nee, Etaoine Howlett, Michelle Butler and Jonathan Drennan," *Journal of Women & Aging* 23, no. 2 (2011).168 *ibid.* 166

<sup>228</sup> If you go to [www.youngmenopause.com](http://www.youngmenopause.com) you will see a group of slim smiling ladies wearing pastel exercise clothes, I presume they are on the way to yoga. Another image on this site is of a young woman holding a clock over her abdomen. Biomedical texts on the topic of menopause tend to focus on its pathological status, the disease state of menopause, and its relationship to other conditions including cancer, osteoporosis, weight gain. For example, Sara Fulden, "Early Menopause Association with Employment, Smoking, Divorced Marital Status and Low Leptin Levels. Authors: Sara Fulden and Ztekin Kemal and Elebi Grbz," *Gynecological Endocrinology*, 2011, Vol.27(4), p.273-278 27, no. 4 (2011).

<sup>229</sup> In using the term trouble Haraway is in conversation with Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. (Introduction)

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.* 1

<sup>231</sup> For the trouble history of this synthetic estrogen as its carcinogenic legacy. Susan Bell, *Des Daughters: Embodied Knowledge and the Transformation of Women's Health Politics* (Philadelphia Temple University Press, 2009).

required to manufacture this substance through the large-scale harvesting of urine from repeatedly impregnated mares. Taking this Premarin, Haraway states, opens her up to an accountability to the horses, ranchers, scientists, and activities connected by the story.<sup>232</sup> The trouble, in my case, is the term menopause itself, the word and its associations.

The medicalisation of infertility, or *barrenness* has a long history. Rebecca Flemming has tracked medical cures for involuntary childlessness back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. She shows that whatever the hypothetical cause of infertility during its early history, this condition was consistently figured as treatable.<sup>233</sup> In popular culture, infertility is de-naturalised and pathologised. In their analysis of the popular 1980s CBS science documentary *The Human Body*, Luis McCarroll demonstrates how all deviations from the norm of the heterosexual reproductive couple are treated with a hushed pathos through the show's narrative and cinematography: "The cell-like quality of the hospital rooms, with ceilings often visible, contributes to the atmosphere of guilt, sadness and incompleteness. Ultimately, the return to fertility and normality brings the couples outdoors into "nature" or into the brightly coloured corridors that lead to the exit of the hospital."<sup>234</sup> The recent naturalisation of IVF technologies, which are available to queer subjects, is arguably predicated on the de-naturalisation of infertility.<sup>235</sup>

The medicalisation of menopause increased rapidly with the identification of 'sex hormones' in the early twentieth century, and the ability to synthesise these hormones

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<sup>232</sup> Haraway, "Awash in Urine: Des and Premarin(Tm) in Multispecies Response-Ability." 313

<sup>233</sup> Flemming also argues that despite recent scholarly interest in infertility, this subject is often treated as if it had no history. Rebecca Flemming, "The Invention of Infertility in the Classical Greek World: Medicine, Divinity, and Gender," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, no. 4 (2013). Hopwood, *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day*.

<sup>234</sup> Luli McCarroll, "Dissecting the Body Human: The Sexes," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 4, no. 2 11 (1983).88

<sup>235</sup> "Representations of IVF typically reproduce, and condense, familiar narratives—from the naturalness of reproduction and the universal desire for parenthood to the value of scientific progress and the benefits of medical assistance—and the success of IVF is in turn offered as proof, or evidence, of how these logics fit together." Sarah Franklin, *Biological Relatives: Ivf, Stem Cells, and the Future of Kinship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). 6. Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Laura Mamo, *Queering Reproduction: Achieving Pregnancy in the Age of Technoscience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

from the 1930s.<sup>236</sup> Research into the function of sex hormones was often predicated on the natural differences between the sexes.<sup>237</sup> The presumption of a natural difference led to the de-naturalisation of menopause as a pathological disruption to the proper status of femininity.<sup>238</sup> By the 1960s “HRT (hormone replacement therapy) could be presented as facilitating the maintenance of ‘natural’ femininity.”<sup>239</sup> The marketing of rejuvenating and restorative hormone therapies was predicated on the fear of the loss of sexual desire and feminine allure.<sup>240</sup> Such that, “no woman can be sure of escaping the horror of this living decay.”<sup>241</sup> The language of fear persists in both contemporary medical literature and in alternative ‘natural’ therapies.<sup>242</sup> Feminist responses to the medicalisation of menopause argue that the framing of menopause as a pathology controls and disempowers women.<sup>243</sup> Feminist authors dispute medical authority and reclaiming the power to speak for the *natural* female body. A number of feminist authors reject the disease state of menopause and replace this configuration with the claim that, “Menopause is normal and healthy.”<sup>244</sup> Menopause is re-empowered by being described as ‘glorious’, and as a time of reconnecting to the earth and to women’s ‘core’.<sup>245</sup> Within

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<sup>236</sup> Nelly Oudshoorn, *Beyond the Natural Body: An Archaeology of Sex Hormones* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>237</sup> Kadji Amin, "Glands, Eugenics, and Rejuvenation in Man into Woman a Biopolitical Genealogy of Transsexuality," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (2018).

<sup>238</sup> “They (biomedical scientists) demonstrated that menopause represents a breakdown in the body’s ability to produce a regular menstrual cycle. This breakdown socially constructed aging women’s bodies as deviant and unruly, requiring medical surveillance.” Bell, *Des Daughters: Embodied Knowledge and the Transformation of Women’s Health Politics*. 15 Celia Roberts, "Sex, Race and ‘Unnatural’ Difference: Tracking the Chiastic Logic of Menopause-Related Discourses," *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004).

<sup>239</sup> "Sex, Race and ‘Unnatural’ Difference: Tracking the Chiastic Logic of Menopause-Related Discourses."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>240</sup> Roberts *ibid.* 33 Roberts goes on to demonstrate how the medical necessity of HRT is a western phenomenon that is often contrasted against a presumption of a more natural non-western femininity. See also Julie Prebel, "Engineering Womanhood: The Politics of Rejuvenation in Gertrude Atherton’s *Black Oxen*," *American Literature* 76, no. 2 (2004). Robert A. Wilson, *Forever Feminine* (Pocket Books 1966).

<sup>241</sup> Wilson quoted in Renate Klein and Lynette J Dumble, "Disempowering Midlife Women: The Science and Politics of Hormone Replacement Therapy (Hrt)," *Women’s Studies International Forum* 17, no. 4 (1994). 330

<sup>242</sup> Justine Coupland and Angie Williams, "Conflicting Discourses, Shifting Ideologies: Pharmaceutical, ‘Alternative’ and Feminist Emancipatory Texts on the Menopause," *Discourse & Society* 13, no. 4 (2002).

<sup>243</sup> “Medicalizing menopause had the effect of extending medicine’s control over women’s experiences, individualizing and privatizing their experiences, and strengthening cultural norms about the ‘proper’ behavior of aging women.” Susan Bell, "Changing Ideas: The Medicalization of Menopause," *Social Science and Medicine* 24, no. 1987 (1987). 540. Bell also makes clear that the subject of these early medical interventions were middle-class women from nuclear families who sought treatment for menopausal symptoms.

<sup>244</sup> Nancy Worcester and Mariamne H Whatley, "The Selling of Hrt: Playing on the Fear Factor," *Feminist Review* 41, no. 1 (1992).

<sup>245</sup> R. Gardner, *Celebrating the Crone: Rituals and Stories*. (1999, St Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.) quoted in Coupland and Williams, "Conflicting Discourses, Shifting Ideologies: Pharmaceutical, ‘Alternative’ and Feminist Emancipatory Texts on the Menopause."

these discourses the word 'crone' is reclaimed and celebrated, but only as a natural evolution from the feminine roles of 'maid', and 'mother'. Women who choose HRT are figured as dupes of the patriarchy.<sup>246</sup> My menopause is not natural, but chemical. I do not take HRT to maintain the illusion of an essentialist notion of femininity. I do not refuse HRT out of some misguided notion of naturalness.

I am looking for a text that I cannot find, a succinct queer critique of the idea of menopause. Not all feminist writings on reproduction fall into the trap of essentialism. Sarah Franklin, for example, argues that "the most important connection between feminism and reproduction should thus be in overturning the reductive and deterministic associations between women, pregnancy and childbirth."<sup>247</sup> Queer and trans\* writers have consistently worked against the restrictive standardisation of gender norms.<sup>248</sup> Drawing on Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam states, "Where feminine success is always measured by male standards, and gender failure often means being relieved of the pressure to measure up to patriarchal ideals, not succeeding at womanhood can offer unexpected pleasures."<sup>249</sup> I am just one of the many types of subject who happily fail at femininity. The existence of synthetic hormones shows that the borders of the human, animal, and technological are no longer stable. In the text "On Menopause and Cyborgs" Kwok Wei Leng presents Haraway's figure of the cyborg, and its commitment to post-gender irony and perversity, as a way out of the binary of the natural and unnatural.<sup>250</sup> The maintenance and augmentation of gender, in both heteronormative

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<sup>246</sup> Germaine Greer even states that, "HRT users are more likely to dye their hair, wear bright colours and make-up than women who reject it." Germaine Greer, *The Whole Woman* (London, Sydney: Doubleday, 1999). 187 quoted in Coupland and Williams, "Conflicting Discourses, Shifting Ideologies: Pharmaceutical, 'Alternative' and Feminist Emancipatory Texts on the Menopause." 437

<sup>247</sup> Sarah Franklin, "Feminism and Reproduction" in Hopwood, *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day*. 639

<sup>248</sup> "The disruptions of the old patterns of desire that the multiple dissonances of the transsexual body imply produce not an irreducible alterity but a myriad of alterities, whose unanticipated juxtapositions hold what Donna Haraway has called the promises of monsters physicalities of constantly shifting figure and ground that exceed the frame of any possible representation." Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 10, no. 2 29 (1992).168 and Special Issue: GLQ forum on sexuality & gender. Annamarie Jagose, "Thinking Sex/Thinking Gender," *GLQ* 10, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>249</sup> Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*. 4 Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

<sup>250</sup> "The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence... Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the recourse for

and queer/trans\* contexts, is tied into the fate of horses. Marion Laval-Jeantet and Benoît Mangin, or *Art Orienté Objet*, are self-described militant ecologists whose performance work blends the biology of horse and human. For a 2011 performance, Laval-Jeantet performed live with a horse after receiving a series of transfusions of plasma drawn from the horse's blood.<sup>251</sup> The performance augments the body without the presumption of any restorative or normative goal, the work relies on the affective presence of this augmented body.<sup>252</sup> Leon Hilton states that this performance "advances a nonreproductive, nonheterofillial, and perhaps even queer kind of ecological vision".<sup>253</sup>

I am making a digital film work that features orcas. The work is a kind of collage, a collection of filmic essays, interviews, and scenes, gathered around questions on the perceptions of menopause. The work does not intend to educate its participants, or to change the conversation. It is a survey of images, opinions, and terms that gather around a word. In making my work, I am trying to re-make the term menopause. I am interested in the ideas of the people that surround me, students, shelter residents, teachers, and children in my immediate social and economic field. For ethical reasons, I cannot interview some of these subjects, but I still want my work to be specifically located and sited. One of the main populations I am interviewing are adult students from City Tech in Brooklyn. Specifically, students who I have recently taught, but whose grades I am no longer responsible for. These students have taken a course on the history of photography and have therefore had some conversations about the ethics of representation in film and photography. Topics we covered included documentary ethics

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appropriation or incorporation by the other." Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association, 1991). 150 Kwok Wei Leng, "On Menopause and Cyborgs: Or, Towards a Feminist Cyborg Politics of Menopause," *Body & Society* 2, no. 3 (1996). "Do cyborgs get mitral valve disease or go through menopause? Of course they do." Haraway, "Awash in Urine: Des and Premarin(TM) in Multispecies Response-Ability." 311. Coincidentally, we are making cyborgs in my junior manga drawing class this week.

<sup>251</sup> The artist states, "in the days following" the injection, "I had the impression of being extra-human. I was not in my ordinary body. I was hyper-powerful, hypersensitive, hypernervous, very fearful, with the emotionality of an herbivore. I couldn't sleep. I had the feeling, a bit, that I was possibly a horse." Leon J. Hilton, "The Horse in My Flesh: Transpecies Performance and Affective Athleticism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 19, no. 4 (2013). 488

<sup>252</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*.

<sup>253</sup> Hilton, "The Horse in My Flesh: Transpecies Performance and Affective Athleticism." 490 The horse-woman-cyborg can be figured as queer in the sense of "not committed to reproduction of kind and having bumptious relations with futurities." Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. 105

and the construction of poverty, the colonial archive, gender and representation, and questions about the veracity of images, informed consent, and ownership and authorship. As an educator, my job is to equip students with critical tools, including the tools they might need to negotiate their participation, and the option of refusal.<sup>254</sup> Negotiating the ethics of participation is part of the work.

Menopause is present only in humans, orcas, and long-finned pilot whales.<sup>255</sup> The ‘grandmother affect’ refers to a theory about the evolutionary utility of menopause in mammals.<sup>256</sup> The theory states that older women who no longer have to care for their own children can contribute to the health of the group, passing on knowledge and experience. Older female orcas become pod leaders. The orca is an attractive image. But the ‘grandmother affect’ serves to naturalise the process of menopause only as it serves as a biological utility, a deferred intergenerational maternity. Reproduction by proxy. In *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* (2016), Vinciane Despret delivers an A-Z of our constant misconfiguring of animal behaviours as either positive or negative models for our own sexual ethics. The apparent monogamy of a rodent, the vole, can be used to naturalise this state for human ends.<sup>257</sup> This tendency to justify the naturalness of heteronormativity via its apparent appearance in nature is also noted by Halberstam.<sup>258</sup> In the case of penguins, the queer pairings of these animals in captivity could only be recognised after the events of gay liberation had taken

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<sup>254</sup> The details are listed in their contracts. They will be compensated for participation and have received their final grades.

<sup>255</sup> Rufus A Johnstone and Michael A Cant, "The Evolution of Menopause in Cetaceans and Humans: The Role of Demography," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 277, no. 1701 (2010).

<sup>256</sup> Kristen Hawkes, "Human Longevity: The Grandmother Effect," *Nature* 428, no. 6979 (2004). This argument is contested in A Friederike Kachel, "Grandmothering and Natural Selection. Authors: A Friederike Kachel and L S Premo and Jean-Jacques Hublin," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 278, no. 1704 (2011).

<sup>257</sup> The vole's secret infidelity relieves him of this moral duty. "Here one may fear for the vole. His depravities and infidelities could relieve him of the task of transforming a model of social conformity into a natural model; the inventiveness of his ways of being faithful, or not, is worth him being newly involved in our stories. Not that these stories, I'm afraid, have much chance of interesting him." Vinciane Despret, *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016). 69 I realise that the field of animal studies is large and developing, and I am only touching the very edge of it in this last chapter.

<sup>258</sup> "We bolster our sense of the rightness of heteronormative coupledness by drawing on animal narratives in order to place ourselves back in some primal and "natural" world." Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*. 35

effect.<sup>259</sup> The homosexual behaviours of primates were also underreported, because scientists did not want to be accused of this tendency themselves, by association.<sup>260</sup> Despite wide variations in animal sexual activities, the solution to unexpected animal behaviour is often reduced to a slavish dedication to the laws of genetic reproduction, so that “beings become blind imbeciles determined by laws that escape them.”<sup>261</sup> These narratives further reinforce the naturalisation of reproduction.<sup>262</sup> In place of these moralising and naturalising discourses Despret states, “Nature is invited to a political project. A queer project. It teaches us nothing about who we are or what we ought to do. But it can feed our imagination and open our appetites for the plurality of usages and modes of being and existing.”<sup>263</sup> So, rather than asking if orcas can serve as a good model for my menopause, I might ask, what incomprehensible desires do infertile orcas express?

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<sup>259</sup> “Q FOR QUEER: Are penguins coming out of the closet?” in Despret, *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* 131 - 137

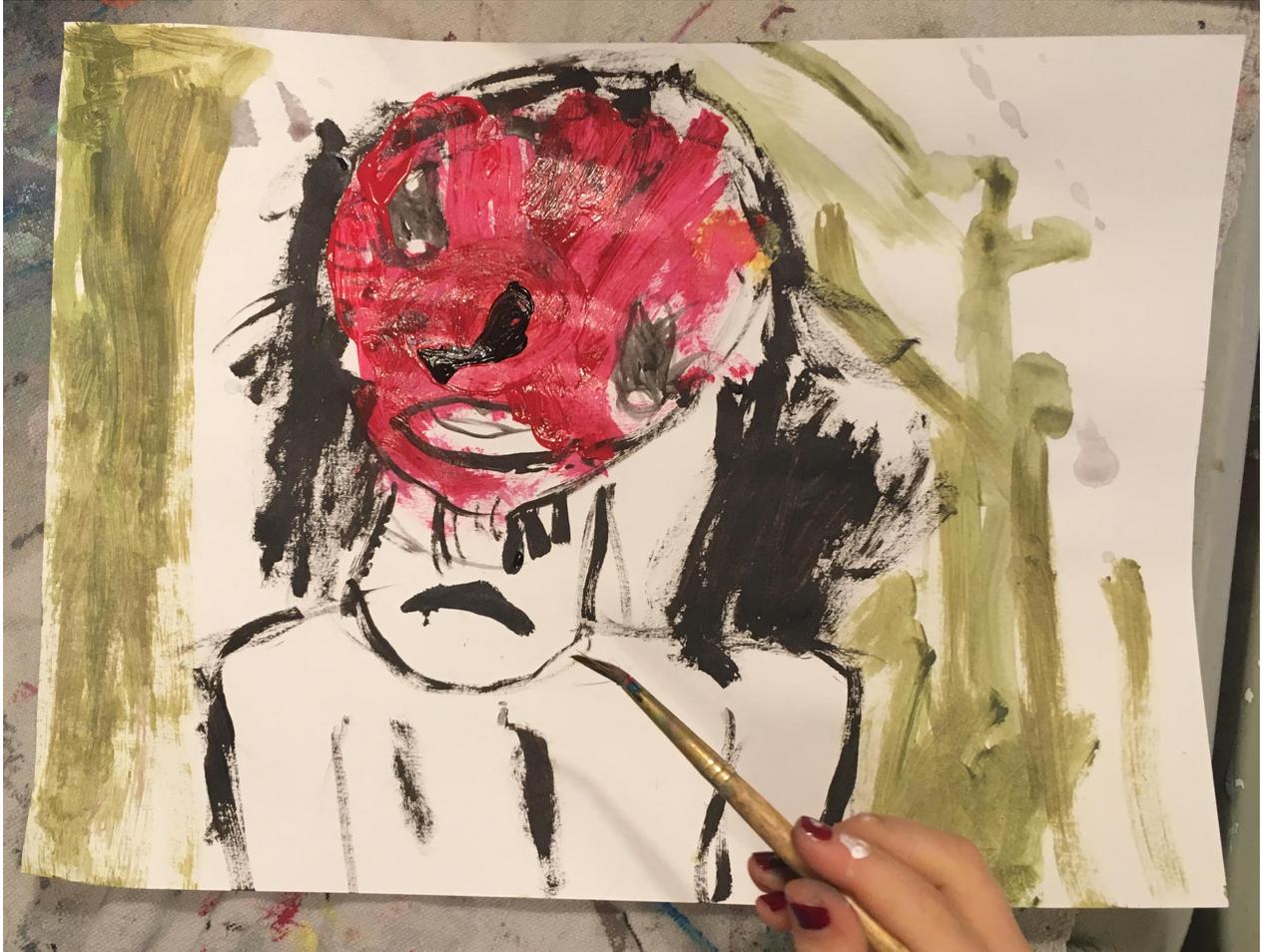
<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.* 133

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.* 136

<sup>262</sup> Haraway describes this tendency as evolutionary functionalism Donna Haraway, “Animal Sociology and a Natural Economy of the Body Politic, Part II: The Past Is the Contested Zone: Human Nature and Theories of Production and Reproduction in Primate Behavior Studies,” *Signs* 4, no. 1 (1978).

<sup>263</sup> Despret, *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* 69

## Conclusion



Elodie, *Self Portrait*, acrylic on paper, 2019

In the last chapter of the exegesis, I was looking for a particular text, a queer reading of menopause. I wanted something succinct that argued for a revision of the associations with this term, or perhaps even proposed a different term. I wanted something that did not fall into the traps of the heteronormative or subscribe to an essentialist feminism. As I have shown, there appears to be a link between the investment in femininity and the relative trauma of menopause. This link results in a limited space for anti-essentialist mourning. If I am happy to be failing at femininity, where does that leave me in relation to early menopause? From what position do I speak? The idea of the orca as a menopausal agent is one possibility. But drawing on

the orca runs the risk of anthropomorphising that animal's desires. The figure of the cyborg is another option, this figure opens up a space outside of the binary of the natural and unnatural. But I don't want to fall into old habits of illustrating the theoretical.

The work, *stories* (2014) (Appendix i.), is a framed list of Roman Emperors from a 1970s art history curriculum found in a filing cabinet at Monash University, juxtaposed with a framed image of a cave. This work is a good example of the problem of illustrating the theoretical. When I made this work, I thought that its meaning was pretty obvious. If you have read Luce Irigaray's re-reading of Plato's myth of the cave in *The Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) you might recall Plato's description of men being excavated from the womb-like form of the cave and set free under the light of the sun, or truth. Irigaray reads this philosophical origin myth as indicative of a refusal to acknowledge the female body as the original origin. She argues that Plato was covering over a maternal debt with the deeds of men.<sup>264</sup> The intention of this work was to speak to a knowledge binary in the art history and theory curriculum, identifiable 'great' men of history juxtaposed with the unknowable dank materiality of the cave/body. I don't think anybody got the joke. If you look very carefully at the ink wash drawing *Marguerite's story* (2016) (Appendix v.) and you have an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of printing, you might recognise direct quotes from Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholia I* (1514), Hans Baldung Grien's *The Witches* (1510) and Francisco Goya's *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (1797 – 1799), plus a few references to William Hogarth and others. I don't know exactly what I was attempting with this work, other than demonstrating that I knew more than my audience. My work was not always completely impenetrable, in critique groups with graduate students the general themes were uncovered. My methods were partly the result of making work in and for the university. These works anticipated a correct reading from an informed audience.

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<sup>264</sup> Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*. 294

Now I am sitting in the adjunct staff alcove at City Tech waiting on a student who needs to re-sit their mid-term because a section of ceiling collapsed on their mother. This afternoon I have Pre-K science, which is mostly just about adding food colouring to things, then Manga with eight 10-year-old students, then junior science. For Manga, we will be designing our own cyborgs using cut-up pictures of machine parts, organic matter, old cartoons, and the outlines of bodies. The questions I will put to the class are: what is a cyborg? What are the origins of your cyborg? What powers or abilities does your cyborg have? Does your cyborg have a nemesis? I think the student's collages will be better than any interpretation of Haraway's cyborg that I could produce. I am always moving between different applications of art practice, as education, as a therapeutic object, and as 'work'. These borders are porous, and sometimes I am asking the same questions in each separate scenario-does it communicate, is it ethical, what questions do we have? Elodie's self-portrait does not occupy the same discursive field as the works of Carol Rama, but it is a powerful abject representation of desire. This is also an artwork also needs to be left alone, like the behaviour of penguins, the artworks of children are not a model.

This text is full of bodies, prone and disinterred, beginning with Carol Rama's erotic embrace of the spaces of madness and continuing through the queer erasure of Marguerite/Aimée. I am still concerned by the misuse of figures such as Marguerite Pantaine and her stolen words. But I have moved away from a melancholic retrospective methodology. In framing my research, I have begun to bring my own body to bear on the work and writing. This is an ongoing project. Over the course of the exegesis I have attempted to move on from the logic of reproduction, from critiquing and repeating the violence towards the feminine contained within the histories of art. I can mock the absurd sexist readings of Marcel Duchamp's work, but I don't need to make an artwork about this phenomenon. I cited Povinelli's wounded shoulder because of the way that the sore guides her through the uneven distribution of life within colonial settler communities. I am trying to locate myself, or to orientate myself, a subject relieved of the possibility of a future biological potential.<sup>265</sup> I am

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<sup>265</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology : Orientations, Objects, Others*.

making work in the social and economic world that I am embedded in, the *trouble*. Because I could not locate a text that gave me what I wanted, a queer re-reading of menopause, I am making a final work, *After, ends*, as that text.

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## Appendix

- i. Tamsin Green, *Relax*, Techno Park Studios, 2014
- ii. *Disinterment*: Barbara Campbell, Erin Crouch, Anne Ferran, Briony Galligan, Fiona Macdonald, Rosina Prestia, MADA Faculty Gallery. Curated by Tamsin Green. Supported by The Symposium of the International Association of Women Philosophers, 2016
- iii. Tamsin Green, *Covers*, Bus Projects, Melbourne, 2015
- iv. Tamsin Green, *Designs*, The Other Side, Melbourne, 2015
- v. Tamsin Green, *Theft: Prints and Drawings*, Alliance Française, Melbourne, 2016
- vi. Tamsin Green, *Detraction*, Eildon Gallery, Alliance Française, Melbourne, Australia, 2017

## Appendix i.

Tamsin Green, *Relax*, Techno Park Studios, 2014

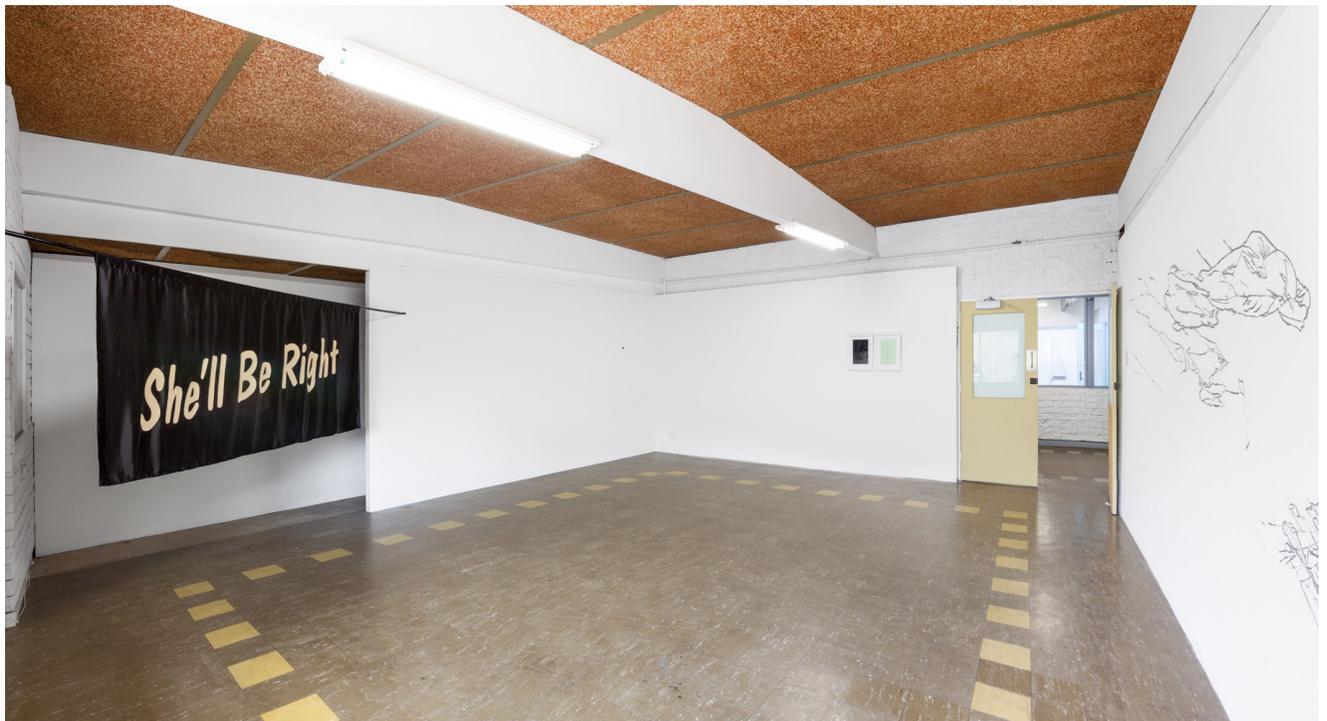
This exhibition took place at Techno Park Studios in Williamstown, Victoria. The space was founded by Kim Donaldson. [www.technoparkstudios.com](http://www.technoparkstudios.com). The exhibition preceded the PhD research, but a number of relevant themes and methods were initiated in this work.



Tamsin Green, *Relax: There's Plenty of Time to Return to the Discursive Origins of Psychoanalysis*, Poster, digital print, 59 x 84 cm. Approximately three-hundred distributed around Melbourne, Victoria.



Tamsin Green, *Relax: There's Plenty of Time to Return to the Discursive Origins of Psychoanalysis*, Poster, digital print, 59 x 84 cm. Affixed the exterior wall of Techno Park Studios.





Tamsin Green, *Installation views: Wall drawing*, acrylic, dimensions variable, 2014





Tamsin Green, *Relax*, Installation view, 2014



Tamsin Green, *Relax*, installation view showing the work *Gifts*, a diptych of a psychoanalyst and a gynecologist, oil on board, 50 x 42 cm each, hinged. The psychologist refused to participate, so I used the mother of a friend as a substitute.



Tamsin Green, *Gift*, oil on board, 50 x 41 cm.  
Reinstalled in the gynaecologist's and photographer's homes.



The exhibition also included a restored 12ft dingy sail-boat, moored in the Kororoit creek. Photographs by the artist.

## Appendix ii.

*Disinterment*: Barbara Campbell, Erin Crouch, Anne Ferran, Briony Galligan, Fiona Macdonald, Rosina Prestia, MADA Faculty Gallery. Supported by The Symposium of the International Association of Women Philosophers, 2016. The exhibition was presented alongside a paper "Disinterment: Feminist Methods in Contemporary Practice."







*Disinterment*, Installation views, MADA Faculty Gallery, 2016



Anne Ferran, *Lost to Worlds 05.11*, 2009, digital prints on aluminium, 60 x 60cm, edition of 3



Fiona Macdonald  
*After Right After (series 3)* 2008



Barbara Campbell  
*Machine oiled again*, 1997

lambda print, 154 x 120 cm

Fragment of performance re-staged



Erin Crouch, *and then these three came back to Robert*, digital video, 2' 35", 2015

**Appendix iii.**

Tamsin Green, *Covers*, Bus Projects, Melbourne, 2015



Tamsin Green, *Covers*, Installation view, Bus Projects, Melbourne, 2015



Tamsin Green, *Landscape*, Lithographic.  
print, 24 x 32 cm  
Abstracted from life drawings of a scrotum



Tamsin Green, *Measure*, mounted digital  
print, 100 x 3 cm



Tamsin Green, *Cover*, frottage, 46 cm x 55 cm (unframed)



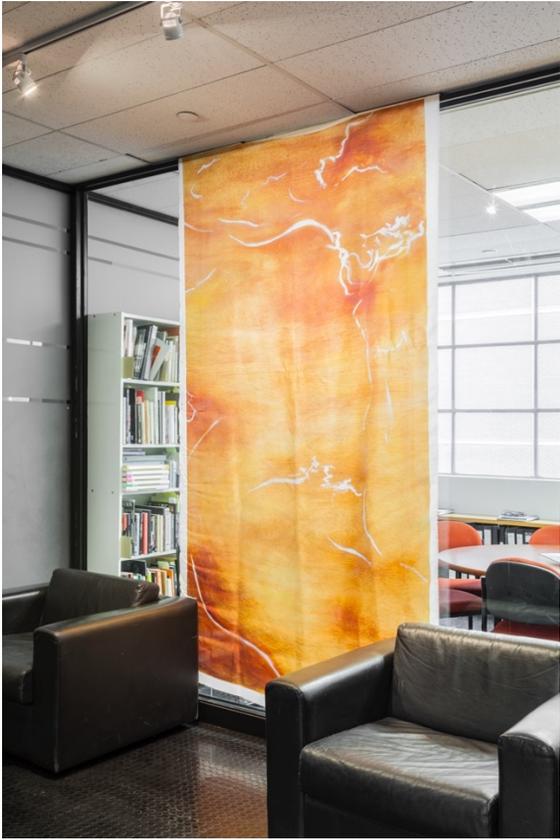
Tamsin Green, *Gift*, Digital silk print, 120cm x 60cm

**Appendix iv.**

Tamsin Green, *Designs*, The Other Side, Melbourne, 2015



Tamsin Green, *Mirror Panic*, screen printed mirror 46 x 55cm



Tamsin Green, *Cover*, Digital silk print  
140 x 220 cm



Tamsin Green, *Landscape*, Drawing,  
60 x 82 cm, framed



Tamsin Green, *Lachlan Sleeping*, di-bond mounted digital print, 21 x 34cm.  
Lachlan sleeping under the portrait of his mother, from the exhibition *Relax*.

**Appendix v.**

Tamsin Green, *Theft: Prints and Drawings*, Alliance Française, Melbourne, 2016



Tamsin Green, *Yellow Mirror*, Installation view with candle, ink, turpentine, wax, and organdie, dimensions variable.



Tamsin Green, *Theft: Prints and Drawings*, Installation view





Tamsin Green, *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, digital video, 3' 10" looped, rear-projected onto tracing paper.



Tamsin Green, *Theft Prints and Drawings*, Installation views



Tamsin Green, *Marguerite's story*, ink and wash on board, 52 x 80 cm

“Coming out of the theatre one night I saw a procession go by. The main figure was an old hag whose thighs must have been entered by millions over the years. There she was with her retinue of parasites. Procurers and pimps, in the form of journalists. Her flabby body was perched on top of one of the carriages. Beauty, I heard one of her followers say to another, lies in the coccyx; generously in the groin; intelligence in the little toe.

I was told that this was how things went on round here. All I could see was a she-wolf made up to be a queen; following her there was an evil goddess wearing a dog-skin; then came the rest of the rest of the retinue poisoning the air with their foul breath; bringing up the rear was a she-goat who had just come out of the National Theatre with a wet rose in its mouth, all sticky and with a wig on its horns, whom the journalists were making eat all the pretty flowers in Paris.”<sup>266</sup>



Tamsin Green, *A sea without a shore*, altered screen print and di-bond mounted photograph, dimension variable. Re-installed in a group exhibition at *The Other Side*, 2016.

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<sup>266</sup> An excerpt from Marguerite Pantaine’s novel translated in Shepherd and Cutting, *The Clinical Roots of the Schizophrenia Concept: Translations of Seminal European Contributions on Schizophrenia*, . 218

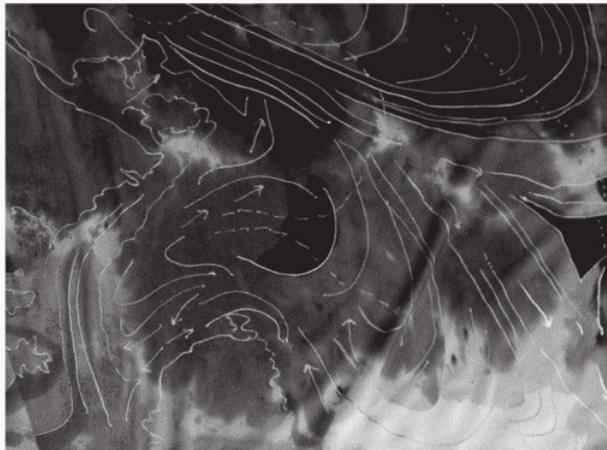
**Appendix vi.**

Tamsin Green, *Detraction*, Eildon Gallery, Alliance Française, Melbourne, Australia, 2017

**DETRACTION**

Antigone  
Mother Courage  
Augustine  
The Mechanical Bride  
—inverted  
Nita Green  
The Wide Sargasso Sea  
Various Venuses

**June 28—  
July 28  
2017**



**Exhibition  
organised by  
Tamsin Green**

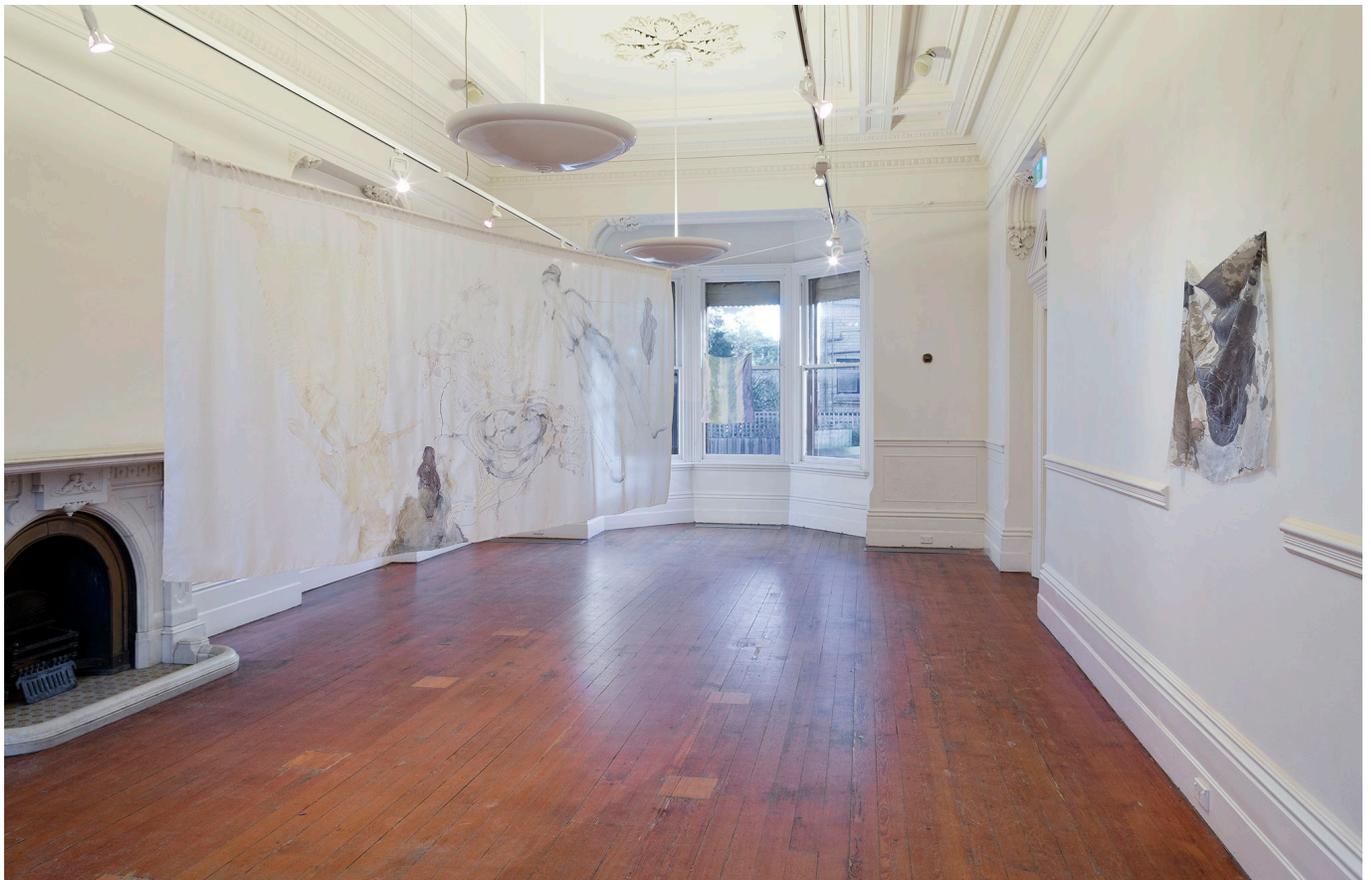
Alliance Française  
De Melbourne  
51 Grey Street  
St Kilda 3182

This project has been supported by the City of Port Phillip through the Cultural Development Fund

Exhibition poster designed by Symon McVilly



Tamsin Green, *Sargasso Sea (test)*  
gutta, wax, silk satin, 120 x 70 cm



Tamsin Green, *Detraction*, Installation view



Tamsin Green, *Detraction*, detail showing the work *Detraction*, ink, gutta, wax, silk, 120 x 240 cm



Tamsin Green, *Cave*, screen printed mirror, 42 x 42 cm



Tamsin Green, *Sad pride flag*, ink, silk, 48 x 62 cm



Tamsin Green, *The Sargasso Sea*, Ink, gutta, wax, silk, 120 x 130 cm

All image credits Christopher Crocker, unless otherwise stated