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Choices of care in the third stage of labour.

A Foucauldian discourse analysis.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Philosophy in Health Science at Massey  
University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

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2004

The Road goes ever on and on  
Down from the door where it began.  
Now far ahead the Road has gone,  
And I must follow, if I can,  
Pursuing it with weary feet,  
Until it joins some larger way,  
Where many paths and errands meet.  
And wither then? I cannot say.

*The Fellowship of the Ring.*  
J.R.R Tolkien.

## ABSTRACT

For the majority of women, the culmination of pregnancy and birth is the arrival of the baby. The third stage of labour, or the birth of the *whenua*, is the completion of labour and the end of the pregnancy. This time of birth is largely disregarded but can be decisive in the postnatal health of the women.

This study examines the third stage of labour focussing on the choices made by women regarding their care with particular reference to the information used by women and midwives to assist choice. The project places the birth of the *whenua* within the labour continuum, and within the context of the participant's life experience.

The philosophy of Michel Foucault suggests that power and knowledge within discourse gives rise to truths and provides authority for statements and actions within the discourse. This project utilises Foucault's definition of discourse and is used to discern the varying discourses, and to locate possible dominant and emergent discourses, within the specific data collected and presented in the thesis.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thank you to my supervisor Cheryl Benn who patiently would not let me give up, even when I said I wanted to, who has encouraged and kept me from the rambling and woolly thoughts that I love to indulge in. Without her my doubts would have overwhelmed me.

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## INTERTEXT

### *A little recitation entitled.....*

I would love to say that I am a poet. What I will say is that I write some kind of poetry and my efforts have accompanied my thesis writing and have, at times of difficulty and doubt, eclipsed it. I have written since I was an angst-ridden teenager and am heartily glad to say that none of those ovular works remain. I was encouraged to offer my poetry in this thesis by my supervisor and by reading Elizabeth Smythe's work. The poems form an intertext, a commentary on my thesis journey. These reflections on my educational journey are every bit as important as the conclusions reached. I have been frustrated, despondent, alarmed and amazed: I have never been bored. My postgraduate education has been a journey to a different place, a place with multitudinous numbers of doors and rooms. The more doors I open, the more doors and the more rooms appear to sight. Academic writing is very much a discipline to me, with little room to *believe* or *feel*. In poetry, as in midwifery, what is believed and felt is very important and I consider that we ignore them at our peril, even in the measured world of the university degree. In my poetry the writing, the meaning and emotion are all very much mine and the only reference my own experience.

## *For Susan*

Hey there

Remember that teenager that was attached  
to the guy you married?

Not very pretty and well perhaps maybe just about  
fit to talk to who thought

you were definitely the wrong

person for the job and

*I do not see*

what he sees in you?

Remember seriously

bad taste jokes

food, animals

(‘Cos you were a veggie and I just couldn’t resist.....)

Remember—

That one about—no don’t...

laughing so hard I thought that I would

die, stop breathing, no don’t

stop talking...

Words polished, faceted

like diamonds  
edged so sharp even  
deep cuts were clean.

Remember days driving  
listening watching learning  
how your world revolved  
as you honed away  
the pain of not having or having too much.  
Finally seeing  
what he saw in you.

Hey there  
I remember that autumn day  
centred within me—  
tucked under my heart like  
a love note beneath my pillow—  
a spun-glass meeting  
the approach of an ending  
the start of my beginning.

*Kate Alice, 2004*

*Hey, Mum; Hey, Susan—EFD.*

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