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Life-Drawing

Trauma and Intimacy in the Essay Qua Drawing

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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in

Fine Arts

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It thinks in fragments just as reality is fragmented and gains its unity only by moving through the fissures, rather than by smoothing over them.¹

¹ Adorno, 'The Essay as Form', 164.

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Abstract

Developing from a foundation of practice that included expanded field of drawing explorations, installation, and texts presented with gallery-based exhibiting, this research asks how an expanded practice of life-drawing—in which the essay operates in the capacity of a drawing—is valuable as a mode of representing experiences of trauma and intimacy within a contemporary visual arts context.

Through an engagement with autotheoretical practices, and through proposing the form of an expanded practice of life-drawing (as a parallel to life-writing), this research investigates the theorised experiences of trauma and intimacy, both separately and in tandem, as they relate to drawing and the essay. It particularly looks at the dissociation of trauma in comparison, and in relation to, accrued observation as a practice of intimacy.

This research also explicates the similarities between the essay and drawing, similarities that pull them so close, the essay can be sited within an expanded definition of drawing. To argue this, it investigates the effect of conceptual art and related commentaries on loosening understandings of drawing particularly, and art disciplines generally, away from traditional material concerns, allowing space for the essay in the capacity of a drawing.

It then proposes the essay qua drawing as valuable in embodying the relationship between dissociation and intimacy. The essay qua drawing addresses the way drawings and essays can inform, exacerbate, disrupt and enhance the experience of trauma and intimacy. Both drawing and the essay are almost definitionally involved with forms that relate to the experience of trauma (in particular, gap and fragment) and the experience of intimacy (as a practice of accrued observation).

The outcome is a novella-length personal essay presented in a limited-edition book that, in style, sits between artist-book and commercially published book.

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Introduction

Overview

Thesis statement: This research examines how an expanded practice of life-drawing—in which the essay operates in the capacity of a drawing—is valuable as a mode of representing experiences of trauma and intimacy within a contemporary visual arts context.

Form: This research defines an expanded field of life-drawing, in relation to life-writing (often aligned with autotheory). It explores the overlaps between the essay and drawing. Via these overlaps, and in relation to some premises of conceptual art, this research arrives at the essay *as being* a drawing, within an expanded field of life-drawing: that is, the essay *qua* drawing.

Content: Definitions of both the essay and drawing also overlap with theorised experiences of trauma and intimacy. Where, however, drawing as a predominantly pictorial (abstract or representational) visual arts practice can exacerbate the theorised ‘wordlessness’ of trauma, the essay *qua* drawing is here posited as an alternative mode of practice for representing the co-existence of intimacy and trauma.

The outcome is *Elsewhere, or At Sea*² a novella-length personal essay presented in a limited-edition book that, in style, sits between artist-book and commercially published book.

² Hereafter frequently referred to as *Elsewhere* in this exegesis document.

Personal context

I experience complex posttraumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) particularly (although not exclusively) from long-term developmental or relational trauma in childhood.³ In relational trauma, the events of trauma arise within the framework of developmental relationships, therefore, so do the triggers. So, rather than triggers being, perhaps, environmental (say, the oft-cited scenario of a backfiring car returning a veteran to the battlefield) the triggers of the relational trauma I experience are interpersonal: a misinterpreted hand gesture, an unsettling tone, a fleeting expression misread, an unfortunately worded sentence, a silence a beat too long.⁴

I have also had the privilege of being within a healthy, loving and intimate relationship since I was twenty years old. At—as of writing—thirty-nine years old, in simple terms, trauma and intimacy have neatly bisected the years of my life. And, while intimacy might get refracted through the lens of trauma through triggering, trauma is also refracted through the lens of intimacy via modes of recognition and articulation. Trauma and intimacy are set in constant conversation. For me, then, my relationship/s are a space where intimacy, care, friendship and love thrums against the long-term effects of relational trauma, and this has long informed the artworks that preceded and make up this research.

My practice of expanded life-drawing, based on and in modes of description and observation, has long been a language-based process of making sense of experience, even if it has only become more explicitly language-based as an outcome through this research. In this research, my drawings act as descriptions. But it is description that can be sited in language as much as

³ Please note: this paragraph locates my experience of C-PTSD and the triggers relevant to me. PTSD, complex PTSD, relational/developmental trauma and its triggers are more fully defined in relation to recent clinical literature in Theoretical Framework: Trauma.

⁴ This is an accurate representation of my experience of relational trauma's interpersonal triggers.

in broader image- and material-based outcomes. Among other meanings, *to describe* is to give an account of something in words, and to draw, to trace, to delineate,⁵ and it is in this straddling of language and drawing that I site this research. So, it is the gathering of marks on a page, be they marks and lines building an image, or lines of text, abstractly or narratively describing an experience. It is in siting my practice as a drawing practice with conceptual art influences, based on observation and within an expanded understanding of what form drawing can take, the essay can be understood as a form of drawing.

However, it is important to note that my position is as an artist with an expanded drawing practice, and so the direction of this research is from this position. It is not the intention of this research to suggest an extension of the literary practice of essay writing.

Dissociation is a key theme through this research. From the outset in *Elsewhere*, various forms and levels of my dissociation are linked both to forms of poesis (drawing, painting, writing) and as symptoms of PTSD. The simple reason why I do so is because dissociation operates along a continuum.⁶ In all parts of the spectrum, dissociation is the state of separating off from the present, but not all forms are problematic.⁷ In an everyday sense, dissociation means daydreaming or being lost in a book until something jolts you back to the present. More serious forms of dissociation act as a defence mechanism in periods of overwhelm, which includes reactions to traumatic events.⁸ And at the most severe is a diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder (DID), which can occur as a result of trauma.⁹ I locate my experiences of dissociation within the everyday where I get lost in imaginings of what I'm seeing as drawn or painted forms, and as a symptom of PTSD, but my dissociation has never been at the extreme ends of the spectrum.

The more complex reason for connecting dissociation with poesis was arrived at over the duration of this research: it is to set dissociation as a symptom of PTSD in relation to my positioning of intimacy as knowledge, considerably accrued, based on a practice of observation. Dissociation is posited as the mind 'splitting off' the traumatic experience,

⁵ Deverson, 'Describe, v.', 284; Weber, 'Describe, v.', 170.

⁶ MacCutcheon, 'Understanding Dissociation and When It Becomes Problematic'.

⁷ MacCutcheon.

⁸ MacCutcheon.

⁹ MacCutcheon.

leaving a gap or absence in the psyche¹⁰; poiesis is to: “[bring] something from concealment into the full light and radiation of a created work.”¹¹ Over time, I used this practice of intimacy to see, acknowledge, address, grapple with, and articulate the gaps and absences of dissociation, into forms of expanded drawing.

In implicit and explicit ways, this research is about the relationship between the mind and the body: specifically, the disintegration (through dissociation) and reintegration (through intimacy) in the relationship of the mind to the body in the aftermath of trauma experiences.

¹⁰ Davis and Meretoja, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, 13.

¹¹ Whitehead, ‘Poiesis and Art-Making: A Way of Letting-Be’.

Methodology and research inquiries

The methodology for this research is based in and arisen from studio practice. The research was developed over a series of experiments in different forms of expanded drawing practice, installation, performance and writing. Over its duration the research developed into an investigation between the personal and theoretical, in ways that align with autotheory. It arrived at the research outcome *Elsewhere, or at sea*, a novella-length piece of writing, positioned within a practice of expanded life-drawing, in the form of the essay qua drawing, presented as a limited-edition artist book.

Analysis of these studio experiments gave rise to three key research inquiries and propositions, which led to the outcome. While these are laid out sequentially below, it should be understood that the research was not as neatly chronological as this implies. There were overlaps, reversals and side-tracks along the way, as is consistent with an art studio practice.

1:

In its content, I position *Elsewhere, or at sea* as an articulation of the co-experience of C-PTSD and intimacy after childhood trauma.

This direction stemmed from analysis of early research experiments, where I observed that symptoms of PTSD were asserting themselves in ways beyond my control in the suite of drawings *An open love letter*. This gave rise to the first research inquiry and resultant proposition:

To study dissociation as a symptom of past trauma, and observation as a characteristic of intimacy, in order to explore their roles in an expanded practice of life-drawing.	This research inquiry proposes intimacy as a practice of observation to reinterpret dissociation from only obstructive, to a potential space for poesis.
--	--

2:

In form, I position *Elsewhere* within an expanded practice of life-drawing, that can encompass modes of writing.

Stemming in part from observing how trauma was manifesting in my drawings, I turned my research further towards modes of writing. The studio experiments that address this were the performed essay/installation works *To Essay (a relationship)* and *I have an idea for an exploded essay*. This gave rise to the second research inquiry and resultant proposition:

To explore forms of expanded drawing in a contemporary visual arts context that pushes from image and towards language/writing via the modes of observation and description.	This research inquiry proposes the essay qua drawing as part of an expanded practice of life-drawing. I combine this with the first research proposition to particularly position the essay qua drawing as a valuable mode of representing experiences of trauma and intimacy within a contemporary visual arts context.
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3:

Elsewhere, or at sea is an essay qua drawing, presented as a limited-edition artist book.

I observed that the experiments *To Essay (a relationship)* and *I have an idea for an exploded essay* were read by viewers primarily through the lenses of performance and installation, at the expense of the essay. This distracted the research away from the first two inquiries by concurrently: diverting from drawing as the root of this research; and undermining the role of the essay in this research. This opened the third research inquiry and resultant proposition:

To investigate a combination of drawing, writing and presentation techniques that support the proposition of the essay qua drawing in a way that maintain space for both the essay <i>and</i> drawing, whilst demonstrating the productive overlaps between them.	This research inquiry proposes the artist-book as a mode of presentation that sits efficiently between the disciplines of drawing and the essay. In concert with utilising techniques of drawing through the mode of essay writing, presentation decisions around layout, materials and scale of the artist book underscores the essay qua drawing.
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Outcome:

These three research inquiries and their resultant propositions then mutually support each other in *Elsewhere, or at sea* to effectively investigate the thesis inquiry: how an expanded practice of life-drawing—in which the essay operates in the capacity of a drawing—is valuable as a mode of representing experiences of trauma and intimacy within a contemporary visual arts context.

Exegesis outline

This exegetical document supports the studio-based research outcomes, via giving context for the research inquiries.

Theoretical Framework positions and addresses my first two research inquiries. This chapter has three main sections: Relevant Modes of Practice addresses autotheory (and, related to autotheory, life-writing) and conceptual art as key practices that umbrella this research. In Trauma and Intimacy, I discuss these as the personal context from which this research has arisen. And in Drawing and the Essay, I examine the relationship between writing and art, to then frame an argument for the essay qua drawing.

Review of the Territory examines a selection of artists with whom I see crossovers either with their practices or in particular artworks. I show where there is alignment with their works to this research and examine how and where my research diverges from theirs, establishing this research as unique in how it combines and addresses themes of intimacy and trauma via the essay qua drawing.

Research Outcomes opens with how and why this research developed from a practice engaged primarily with drawing per se, to the essay qua drawing as an outcome of expanded life-drawing. In the subsection of this chapter Towards *Elsewhere*, I go on to show how the primary research outcome, the work *Elsewhere, or at sea*, demonstrates the three research inquiries/propositions.

Conclude | To Shut sums up the above to propose *Elsewhere, or at sea* as an original contribution to the field.

Over the course of Theoretical Framework, I address the first research inquiry through showing that autotheory—as an interdisciplinary way of forming theory based on and through lived experience—supports articulation of the autobiographical in relation to the theoretical. I also explain the necessity of this particularly from the point-of-view of someone who is experiencing symptoms of C-PTSD from the research itself. Autotheory is addressed here primarily through Canadian writer and research Lauren Fournier’s work in this territory. I also suggest expanded life-drawing as a parallel to the practice of life-writing. This forms context to this research exploring the topics of trauma and intimacy, which I experience on a subjective level (as symptoms, as diagnosis, as sensation etc.) as well as research on a theoretical level. I further tackle my first research inquiry through defining trauma and intimacy as they are relevant to this research, via a selection of both clinicians and theorists engaged in these territories. This includes: looking at the similarities in form between trauma and drawing; Fournier’s positioning of intertextual intimacies as an autotheoretical practice; considering intimacy as risk and pressure in the articulation of trauma; and positioning intimacy as a mode of observation. I analyse early drawing experiments and identify how and where intimacy and trauma were occurring in them. This analysis addresses my first research inquiry and forms the basis of my first proposition.

Also, during Theoretical Framework, I examine how conceptual art expanded notions of drawing as a practice, and utilised words as and in artworks. This is looked at through analysis from British art historian and curator Tony Godfrey and British art historian Paul Wood, as well as looking at seminal texts from, in particular, American artist Sol LeWitt. I interweave the way conceptual artists challenged traditional notions of drawing with American art critic and theorist Rosalind Krauss’s ‘Sculpture in an Expanded Field’¹² to show the expansion of drawing practice already evident, and as a zone for further expansion to the essay qua drawing. Further analysis of LeWitt’s ‘Sentences on Conceptual Art’¹³ also helps reveal the stakes of this research: that is that the essay still retains its nature *as essay* within drawing, without collapsing into being seen only or primarily as a drawing. Building on Krauss’s proposition of ‘sculpture’ not being a privileged positive, in order to open space for further potentials with sculpture, I trace and identify the similar qualities of unfixed-ness that permeate attempts to define both drawing and essays. I traverse and form links between

¹² Krauss, ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’.

¹³ LeWitt, Gross, and Edwards, *Sol LeWitt*, 214–15.

multiple texts on drawing and the essay, from curators, art historians, essayists and theorists. I utilise these inherent equivocations to show how the essay and drawing might overlap to a fruitful middle ground, opening the possibility for the essay qua drawing as part of an expanded practice of life-drawing. This analysis addresses my second research inquiry and forms the basis of my second proposition.

In Review of the Territory, I canvas contemporary visual arts practices that articulate forms of intimacy and trauma. I then further articulate the problems of trying to position writing as a visual arts outcome. In particular, I look at the practices of Fiona Banner, Sean Landers, Tracey Emin and the exhibition *Drawing Time, Reading Time* as most clearly sitting at the nexus between drawing and writing. I look at Tessa Laird's *A Rainbow Reader*¹⁴ and Karen Green's *Bough Down*¹⁵ as significant works of writing that effectively straddle art and writing fields. Analysis of these practices provides a context of praxis for my third research inquiry, which was developed through further studio experiments, outlined below.

In Research Outcomes I introduce the long-standing relationship in my practice between art making and writing, and certain precepts of conceptual art. I go into greater depth about the stages of development in the experiments noted above, as I moved towards the research outcome.

In the subsection Towards *Elsewhere*, I then articulate three main parts of *Elsewhere, or at sea*: material expression, form and content. In Material expression, I outline the further experiments that occurred to arriving at the book-form for *Elsewhere, or at sea*. Based on these experiments, my examination of other artists' practices and my theoretical framework, I articulate the decision making behind the final presentation of *Elsewhere, or at sea*. This analysis addresses my third research inquiry and forms the basis of my third proposition.

To finish Towards *Elsewhere*, I explain how the first two research propositions are demonstrated in *Elsewhere, or at sea*. Form first articulates how, using certain precepts of conceptual art, *Elsewhere, or at sea* uses techniques of drawing in the mode of essay writing, to demonstrate the essay qua drawing. Content then articulates how autotheory supports an

¹⁴ Laird, *A Rainbow Reader*.

¹⁵ Green, *Bough Down*.

expanded practice of life-drawing, that uses the intimacy of observation to reconfigure dissociation into potential of poiesis.

Conclude | To Shut shows how these three research inquiries and subsequent proposals are enfolded together in *Elsewhere, or at sea* to mutually support the thesis statement. This gives rise to the research proposition that *Elsewhere, or at sea*, as part of an expanded practice of life-drawing, based in the accrued observation of trauma and intimacy, via the essay qua drawing, is an original contribution to the field.

Theoretical Framework

I. Relevant Modes of Practice

Autotheory

In my drawing practice, I examine the personal through an autotheoretical lens. In earlier works, the subject matter of the personal was about articulating forms of intimacy and love through drawing, in particular addressing my partner and my relationship that began in 2003. More recently this has extended to examining the negotiation between intimacy and trauma that occurs in my relationships more broadly. The reason for this is, for me, the site of trauma is relationships. Autotheory is a useful lens through which to understand the weaving of the personal and the theoretical throughout this exegesis and the research outcomes that it arose from.

Autotheory is a recent interdisciplinary approach to engaging with theory. While the term itself is dated to some point around 2015,¹⁶ the history of autotheory, it is argued, extends throughout the twentieth century.¹⁷ As it is contextualised in several of Canadian writer and researcher Lauren Fournier's texts, autotheory is an umbrella term for various forms of cultural production that, "[describes] the practices of engaging with theory, life and art from the perspective of one's lived experiences."¹⁸ Autotheory, as the word suggests, makes clear that the self is entangled with theory. "Autotheory points to modes of working that integrate the personal and the conceptual, the theoretical and the autobiographical, the creative and the critical, in ways attuned to interdisciplinary, feminist histories."¹⁹ The turn towards

¹⁶ Fournier, 'Sick Women, Sad Girls, and Selfie Theory: Autotheory as Contemporary Feminist Practice', 646.

¹⁷ Fournier, 643–45; Introduction: Autotheory as Feminist Practice: History, Theory, Art, Life in Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 1–70.

¹⁸ Fournier, 'Sick Women, Sad Girls, and Selfie Theory: Autotheory as Contemporary Feminist Practice', 643.

¹⁹ Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 7.

autotheoretical modes, Fournier argues, has arisen as a critique of the artificial division between the intellectual, objective and cerebral (often aligned with the masculine) and emotional, subjective and embodied (associated with the feminine), and the privileging of the former that is seen in Western theory and philosophy.²⁰

American professor Robyn Wiegman provides a useful background and complication of what could be considered the foundational assumptions behind both ‘the self’ and ‘theory’.²¹ First, she outlines the instability of the notion of self, through tracing both the problems of the genre of autobiography (and its related fissuring into memoir, testimonial and life-writing, to name a few)—in particular, the fallibility of memory and/or intentional fabrication making porous the supposed boundaries between fact and fiction—whilst also holding space for what autobiography does offer through being a genre most able to give voice to the forgotten and marginalised.²² “It serves a vital function as evidence in projects aimed at closing the gap between the disembodied man of universal western reason and the reality of the unaccounted or purposely subordinated living person.”²³ Second, defining the work of ‘critical theory’ as: “[entailing] both a radical critique of the individual, that figure of self-authorization that has been central to the historical advance of both liberal democracy and capitalism, and a complex retooling of the role that language, discourse, and representation play in the study of literature and culture,”²⁴ she goes on to point out the inherent contradiction of a highly-privileged canon of individuals whose name alone can virtually stand in for entire disciplines of theory (think, Derrida = deconstruction) focussed on the decentring ‘the self’. Wiegman argues: “The project of undoing the political and epistemological hegemony of the self-knowing individual has risked inscribing an agent-less world governed by the impersonality of language as a disembodied realm.”²⁵ After tracing resistance to this trend in critical theory through the works of theorists such as Gayatri Spivak and Judith Butler,²⁶ Wiegman returns to the recent attempts to define the field of autotheory, noting how as-yet unsettled the field, aesthetically, historically and theoretically, remains.²⁷ She picks up and emphasises, though, the thrust of autotheory as a, “distinctly feminist practice, extending second wave feminism’s

²⁰ Fournier, 2–3, 5, 43–44.

²¹ Wiegman, ‘Introduction: Autotheory Theory’, 2–9.

²² Wiegman, 2–3.

²³ Wiegman, 3.

²⁴ Wiegman, 4.

²⁵ Wiegman, 4–5.

²⁶ Wiegman, 5–7.

²⁷ Wiegman, 9.

commitment to putting ‘flesh’ on the universalist pretensions of established theoretical traditions by situating the story of lived experience in politically consequential terms.”²⁸

The drive of autotheory is to make explicit that the self and theory are entangled, in spite of the theory’s assertions to the reverse. Claims of theory’s detached objectivity recalls—for me—aspects of dissociation. In trauma, the key symptom is dissociation.²⁹ The nineteenth century French physician, Pierre Janet, defined the mechanism of dissociation in relation to an event of trauma as, in response to the horror of the experience, the mind ‘splitting off’ the physical, sensory and emotional experience from consciousness, leaving the event unintegrated in the psyche.³⁰ In more everyday parlance, to dissociate is defined as, “Disconnect or become disconnected; separate.”³¹ If dissociation is the state of being disconnected, I argue that, at the extreme, the resistance to recognising that theory is always interlinked with the embodied, the emotional and the messiness of human experience is fundamentally dissociative. As Fournier posits,

Autotheory can be approached as a practice that artists, writers, critics, curators, activists, and others tend towards as a way of coming to terms with ‘theory’—whether as the ‘master discourse(s)’ of theory and philosophy, to take the words of Luce Irigaray, or as the work of making theories—in relation to their experiential, affective lives and embodied, relational practices as human beings in the world.³²

In this framing of the dissociative nature of theory’s schism between the intellectual and experiential, autotheory can be understood as a form of reintegrating the body and the mind within practices engaged with theory. But while proponents of autotheory argue for readdressing and rethinking this relationship, it does not argue for a pendulum swing in the other direction. My understanding is that it is not to turn away from theory, but understand its inherent subjectivities, and the potential that comes from the relationship *between* the subjective and theoretical. As Fournier writes:

²⁸ Wiegman, 7–8.

²⁹ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 34–35; van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 66; Davis and Meretoja, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, 13.

³⁰ Davis and Meretoja, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, 13.

³¹ Deverson, ‘Dissociate, v.’, 307.

³² Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 6.

[...] theory, like so many other material *things*, can ossify into commodity status and circulate in ways that are colonizing and alienating, oppressive and destructive. Instead, we might remember the ways theory can *hold*—much as a vessel holds an effervescent tonic—ideas that are sparkly and excessive, nourishing and weird.³³

Related to this, autotheoretical practices are linked with citational practices. I address citational practices in general terms in the section Intimacy and as it relates to this research in Research Outcomes.

Expanded life-drawing

To begin to define the territory of drawing this research is invested in, I use the framing of expanded life-drawing. The purposes of using the term ‘expanded life-drawing’ for this research are manifold. In the first instance, I intend to bring to mind the art historical practice of drawing from the human form as a lens through which to address the broader forms of observation in relation to intimacy I apply in my research.³⁴ I have taught life-drawing (in the studio sense of students observing and drawing from a life model) on-and-off for nearly two decades, and teaching this practice, from the bounds of studio etiquette to observing the human form to the act of drawing itself, inflects itself in different ways on my drawing research. Beyond this, I am also interested in the literal sense of ‘life’ drawing, that is a practice of attempting to ‘draw a life’. As earlier discussed, in my research, this has often centred on the intersection of my husband’s life and my life within the setting of our relationship.³⁵ And finally I use life-drawing for this research as an adjacent position to the practice of life-writing, which is sometimes associated with autotheoretical practices. Life-writing is a term used by and/or for writers such as American writer, Maggie Nelson and American writer and filmmaker Chris Kraus to frame forms of autobiographical writing that

³³ Fournier, 109.

³⁴ This is addressed in Theoretical Framework: Intimacy.

³⁵ This is introduced in the Personal Context and earlier in Theoretical Framework: Autotheory.

do not strictly sit within the autobiographical or memoir genres.³⁶ Indeed, as Fournier, in relation to Nelson, writes:

Many artists and writers who work autotheoretically have articulated their desire to differentiate, even distance, what they are doing from memoir or autobiography [...] Life-writing is distinguished by its ontology as a practice—something active that one does in the present—rather than a genre, which is more static and fixed, shaped by preexisting categories and generic expectations.³⁷

Life-writing is a practice under which genres such as poetry, fictocriticism, blogging and the essay can be investigated.³⁸ However, life-drawing, rather than life-writing, is a more accurate way to encompass the various outcomes of this research. Via the above quote, I likewise position expanded life-drawing as a mode of practice via forms of active, present observation, rather than a genre of drawing. So, even where the outcome appears most abstract or only tangentially related to a traditional form of life-drawing, it is through an expanded understanding of observation that my work can be defined as life-drawing.



Figure 1 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The days we've been together*, 2018. Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Titirangi, Tāmaki Makaurau. Installation detail of *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter*,

³⁶ Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 14.

³⁷ Fournier, 14.

³⁸ This list is constructed from the introduction and content layout of Brian and Eades, *Offshoot*, 1–10.

curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith. Typewriter marks on paper, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

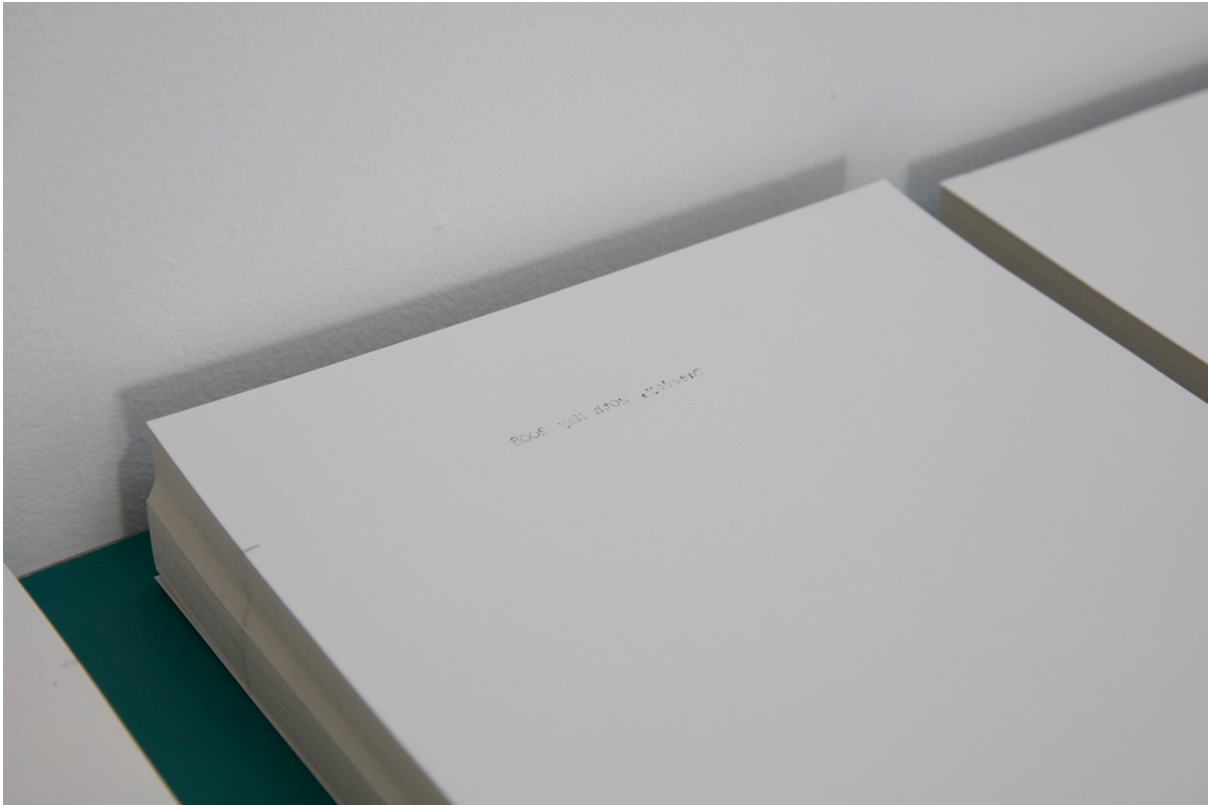


Figure 2 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The days we've been together*, 2018. Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Titirangi, Tāmaki Makaurau. Installation detail of *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter* curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith. Typewriter marks on paper, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

To take as an example the drawing *The days we've been together*,³⁹ the basis of the work is an observation of time both gathering and passing within a relationship, and how that can be understood through the form of a date on a page. The line of dates, incrementally changing through a stack of thousands of sheets of paper, describes an arc of time. And in that positive recording of dates, accruing and accreting, it engages with the negative space of what fades, what's left unsaid and unacknowledged, what came before and, ultimately, the fact it will end. In this, my definition of 'life-drawing' is loosened from the discipline where an artist draws a model. In *The days we've been together*, life-drawing is instead positioned as

³⁹ I discuss this work throughout this chapter, particularly in Trauma and Intimacy: Trauma as form, and discuss it more fully in Research Outcomes: *An open love letter*.

noticing and paying attention to and trying to account for (affectively as well as ‘objectively’), the shared time Justin and I have. *The days we’ve been together* has formal image-related concerns, particularly how the typewritten dates work as marks on the page, but the *description* in this work lies in how the words of the dates *describe* that span of time. The dates both mark out the temporal boundaries of our relationship, as well as giving an account of our relationship (albeit not a detailed one) in words.

The sense of expanded life-drawing as an active, lived practice went further in *Elsewhere*. Because of the proximity of writing *Elsewhere* to experiences I was having during the research, there was a similar immediacy, for me, in observing a subject and drawing it. *Elsewhere* unfolded as my experiences, and understandings of those experiences, were unfolding to me. The composition arose, and then responded to, and changed to accommodate, events as they occurred. And *Elsewhere* changed me too: it changed the way I looked at things, both literally and figuratively. The writing of *Elsewhere* was part of the lived practice of learning to negotiate the terrain between contextualising past trauma alongside intimacy, both personally and academically. Not simply a method of recording that time, aspects of the writing became part of the working-through process that then fed back into my experience. The relationship I was having *between* my lived experience and *Elsewhere* over the time of writing it was intense, involved and to an extent mutually evolving. It was intimate.⁴⁰

Henceforth, in relation to my research, ideas of life-writing can be read as implied when I use the terms life-drawing or expanded life-drawing.

I return to autotheory shortly, but it is useful here to also introduce conceptual art and my relationship to it.

Conceptual art

⁴⁰ These themes were first developed in Theoretical Framework: Expanded life-drawing, and will be further developed in Theoretical Framework: Intimacy.

This section is intended as a brief, non-exhaustive overview of conceptual art that pulls to the fore particular aspects of it which have been and remain important to this research.

Part of the issue with raising conceptual art is in the complexity of defining it. While its early tendrils trace back to French artist Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) and drew together influences and provocations from Dadaism to Abstract Expressionism, in a narrow sense, the conceptual art movement was defined by and peaked in the era between 1966 and 1972.⁴¹ Whether described as post-, neo- or late-conceptual art,⁴² or something more nebulous such as is traced in Wood's writing on conceptualism,⁴³ the long tail of conceptual art remains apparent in contemporary art. As Wood states:

Looked at in one way, conceptual art gets to be like Lewis Carroll's Cheshire cat, dissolving away until nothing is left but a grin: a handful of works made over a few short years by a small number of artists... Then again, regarded under a different aspect, conceptual art can seem like nothing less than the hinge around which the past turned into the present.⁴⁴

At the same time as acknowledging conceptual art's resistance to a neat definition based on a clear medium or style, Godfrey outlines in general terms four forms that conceptual art may take: the *readymade*—an everyday object that is asserted as art; an *intervention*—that is situating an image, text or object out of context to highlight the nature of that context; *documentation*—where the evidence (maps, charts, photographs etc.) that remains of the actual artwork is what is presented; and *words*, “where the concept, proposition or investigation is presented in the form of language.”⁴⁵ Godfrey goes on to outline the intermingled intentions behind the use of words in conceptual art as variously: as part of the project of dematerialisation; from a desire to communicate with a wider audience; as a way to be in the artist's head; to express a belief in the implicitly linguistic nature of all art; and as a rejection of the art market.⁴⁶ Overall, though, Godfrey goes on to state: “It is not language *per se* but language rammed up against visual appearances, including its own, that ultimately characterizes Conceptual art.”⁴⁷

⁴¹ Schellekens, ‘Conceptual Art’; Lippard, *Six Years*; Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, 6–7.

⁴² Emma Dexter in *Vitamin D*, 6.

⁴³ Wood, *Conceptual Art.*, 8–9 & 74–76.

⁴⁴ Wood, 6.

⁴⁵ Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, 7.

⁴⁶ Godfrey, 163.

⁴⁷ Godfrey, 351.

Additional to this, and pertinent to aspects of this research, Wood raises ‘repetition’, noting: “This interest in the repetitive, mantra-like strategy, pursued through and beyond obsession to a strangely still kind of meditation on time, constitutes a notable trend within the overall range of Conceptual art...”⁴⁸ Repetition as a strategy is evident (to name a small few) in the practices of Japanese artist On Kawara, Polish artist Roman Opalka and Sol LeWitt all of whom were earlier influences on this research.⁴⁹

To extend on these more material definitions, American writer and art critic Lucy Lippard writes: “Conceptual art, for me, means work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or ‘dematerialised’.”⁵⁰ American artist Joseph Kosuth frames it as: “Conceptual art, simply put, had as its basic tenet an understanding that artists work with meaning, not with shapes, colors or materials.”⁵¹ However, this statement was some years after publication of his more hard-line⁵² notions about conceptual art, such as, “The ‘purest’ definition of conceptual art would be that it is inquiry into the foundations of the concept ‘art’.”⁵³

The consistent theme throughout conceptual art was the primacy of the idea: idea comes first, and the form the artwork takes follows the idea. There are then manifold ways this notion of the primacy of the idea has been interpreted, from LeWitt’s framing for artworks based on mechanical application of the idea to his more material concerns, to Kosuth’s more ontological framing, and with various configuration of how much or little matters like the personal, the aesthetic, the object, the political, the emotional can work in relation to this mode of practice. “... as critic Lucy Lippard wryly remarked years later, there seemed to be as many definitions of conceptual art as there were conceptual artists.”⁵⁴ In his ‘Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,’⁵⁵ LeWitt opened with a sentence that Wood cites as canonical:⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Wood, *Conceptual Art*, 38.

⁴⁹ Repetition as a drawing strategy I used is addressed further in *Trauma and Intimacy*.

⁵⁰ Lippard, *Six Years*, vii.

⁵¹ Joseph Kosuth cited in Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, 14.

⁵² Godfrey, 13–14; Wood, *Conceptual Art*, 41.

⁵³ Joseph Kosuth cited in Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, 13.

⁵⁴ Godfrey, 13–14.

⁵⁵ LeWitt, Gross, and Edwards, *Sol LeWitt*, 208–11 Hereafter referred to as ‘Paragraphs’.

⁵⁶ Wood, *Conceptual Art*, 38.

In conceptual art the idea of concept is the most important aspect of the work. When the artist uses a conceptual form in art, it means that all the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.⁵⁷

As one of the founding texts on conceptual art, I have strategically used parts of LeWitt's 'Paragraphs' and to a lesser extent his 'Sentences on Conceptual art'⁵⁸ within my practice and this research. However, these two documents also contain statements and precepts that sit in opposition to this research. There is a consistent theme that the emotional, perceptual and subjective can be cleanly delineated within conceptual art from the rational, logical, objective and conceptual. To take a single example: "It is the objective of the artist who is concerned with conceptual art to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to be emotionally dry."⁵⁹ Given the content of this research, with its focus on themes such as intimacy, love and trauma, this is not an emotionally dry body of work. However, as discussed earlier in Autotheory, recognising the personal, embodied, experiential and emotional *in relation to* the conceptual and theoretical has the capacity of enriching, not compromising, practices. The focus on the 'emotional' in this research does not preclude it from having the potential of also being 'mentally interesting'. (It should also be noted that LeWitt himself had a complex relationship with conceptual art, distancing himself from its more theoretical tendencies, and preferring to label himself as a small-c conceptual artist.⁶⁰) As has been discussed, there are many ways to define conceptual art. Therefore, I apply it usefully as a generalised category to my research.

I have long used various processes and methods that borrow from and engage with conceptual art, and this has continued through this research. In the most apparent sense, the idea has taken primacy in my work, and the form has followed suit, meaning that rather than specialising in a specific medium, I have worked in multiple artforms, from drawing to video to performance to installation to artist-books and more. Indeed, some of the early threads of this research were an abandonment of making works in favour of performed essays where I

⁵⁷ LeWitt, Gross, and Edwards, *Sol LeWitt*, 208.

⁵⁸ LeWitt, Gross, and Edwards, 214–15 Hereafter referred to as 'Sentences'.

⁵⁹ LeWitt, Gross, and Edwards, 208.

⁶⁰ Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, 13, 153.

told viewers about artworks I had intended to make, but for various reasons, hadn't.⁶¹ Readymades, documentation and intervention have, at various points, arisen in this research, but, most importantly, words have buttressed it.⁶² This research seeks to make apparent how the boundaries between drawing and the essay can be seen as porous. To do so, it uses strategies and statements from conceptual art and artists to argue for the essay qua drawing. So, this research borrows heavily from conceptual art, so is a descendant from this mode of practice, but I do not strictly intend it as a piece of conceptual art.

Godfrey notes the fracturing of opinions between key artists of the conceptual art movement, arguing that, "Those who supported the most theoretical tendencies in Conceptual art have remained the most vocal, with the result that much that was poetic, witty or humorous has been, in comparison, underrated or neglected."⁶³ These theoretical tendencies of factions of conceptual art have at least been a part of the increased role of theory in art more generally; as Fournier notes, in art there was a convergence of burgeoning postmodern theory and the poststructuralist turn during the 1960s and 1970s, reaching a fever in the 1990s, and of which there is still something of a hangover that autotheoretical ways of working within art push back against.⁶⁴ In positioning his own book and his desire to emphasise the wider range of views on conceptual art (which dominant narratives obscure), Godfrey goes on to add, in something that I think resonates with autotheory, "[...] Conceptual art is concerned both with intellectual speculation and with the everyday."⁶⁵ And it is in this portion of conceptual art that might align with, or allow for, an autotheoretical impulse that I position my work in relation to conceptual art.

The reason that *the idea* became fundamental to conceptual art is encapsulated by Wood, and here leads again to autotheory.

If academic art had traded on its affinities with literature, and had been organised around narratives, modernism had been an art of sensation, something that aspired to undercut learning and literature at the level of emotions. Now the disarticulation of art from the intellect was beginning to appear increasingly suspect. Suddenly the Idea was king. The

⁶¹ This artwork, *I have an idea for an exploded essay* and its forerunner *Intimacy and the present tense* are explained further in Research Outcomes: Performed essays.

⁶² This is explained further in Research Outcomes.

⁶³ Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, 15.

⁶⁴ Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 108–9.

⁶⁵ Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, 15.

combination of the crisis of modernism and the proliferation of avant-garde gambits meant questions had to be asked about the ‘the object’ of art; and crucially, *not* by academics, critics, historians, philosophers and other interpreters, but by artists themselves. Theory, so to speak, became a practical matter.⁶⁶

Although this is a simplified narrative of this period of art history, it can still be instructive. It shows the reactive nature of this lineage swinging from extreme to extreme, of purging a dominant mode in favour of another mode that then becomes dominant, and in particular the swing from modernism’s emotional and perceptual to conceptual art’s favouring of the intellectual. It is against this backdrop that I see the usefulness of an autotheoretical read of conceptual art. As has been discussed, autotheory proposes not purging theoretical tendencies in favour of the subjective, but instead, as Fournier writes: “Art is neither purely conceptual nor purely intuitive... and autotheoretical works exemplify the capacity for an artist to work between these two poles.”⁶⁷ She goes on:

Artists, writers, critics, and scholars who gravitate to working in autotheoretical ways seem to be attuned, at least subconsciously, to the truth that theory is subjective, embodied, and material, and that there are limits to what it can do. Theoretical frameworks can be very useful in providing structure for abstract notions, scaffolding and developing ideas, and holding fluid concepts.⁶⁸

In the sense that autotheory is in part about considering the “master discourses” of theory and philosophy⁶⁹ from a first-person, embodied experience (as a counter to the resistance of theory/philosophy being discussed in only emotionally detached, objective terms), in this research, I have approached conceptual art as embedded in an expanded practice of life-drawing⁷⁰, in an autotheoretical manner. The subject of my artworks has frequently come from moments or frameworks of my life. In relation to the early part of this research, I specifically address ways of grappling with, observing and drawing aspects of my husband and my relationship. Through the course of this research, this has evolved into addressing symptoms of C-PTSD in relation to intimacy. Following, the relationship I have had with

⁶⁶ Wood, *Conceptual Art.*, 33–34.

⁶⁷ Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 109.

⁶⁸ Fournier, 109.

⁶⁹ Fournier, 6.

⁷⁰ I address this throughout Research Outcomes.

trauma research is personally involved: just as I do not disconnect the subject of love and intimacy from a contemporary conceptual art practice (in favour of an overtly theoretical conceptual art practice) I cannot detach my personal history as trauma survivor from the theory of trauma itself. Autotheory offers a way of positioning research that maintains a personal, embodied relationship to theory.

However, given certain privileges afforded to me, my relationship to autotheory is not uncomplicated. Key to autotheory is its engagement with feminist, and particularly intersectional feminist, thinking. “Indeed, the history of feminism is, in a sense, a history of autotheory—one that actively seeks to bridge theory and practice and that upholds tenets like ‘the personal is political’.”⁷¹ As Fournier (citing American theorist Stacey Young) says: “Young reads feminist ‘autotheoretical’ texts as ‘counter discourses’ and as the ‘embodiment of a discursive type of political action, which decenters the hegemonic subject of feminism’, that is, the white, heterosexual, cisgender woman with class privilege.”⁷² I readily acknowledge that I fit into all these categorises of privilege. Relatedly, I think it’s important to note that it is from these positions of privilege that my experiences of trauma are largely acknowledged and understood as trauma, and I have been able to access therapeutic support. In addressing the privileges afforded to Western experiences of trauma, it is noted: “Being recognized as traumatized is a privilege not equally available to all trauma victims. Asylum seekers, for example, are still treated with suspicion and their traumatic experiences are not as readily acknowledged as those of Western citizens who are victims of accidents, violent attacks or natural disasters.”⁷³ I work in autotheoretical modes but from the position of a white, heterosexual, cisgender woman with class privilege. This creates questions about how I can be ethically involved in this discourse. So, if I am operating within autotheory, I want to do so understanding and acknowledging the privilege I hold. This as an ongoing process.

⁷¹ Fournier, ‘Sick Women, Sad Girls, and Selfie Theory: Autotheory as Contemporary Feminist Practice’, 645.

⁷² Fournier, 647.

⁷³ Davis and Meretoja, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, 5.

II. Trauma and Intimacy

At first glance, the overall composition of *Elsewhere* describes an arc from trauma towards intimacy. The opening pages outline my experience of dissociation as a symptom of C-PTSD caused by traumatic events. The latter sections, and in particular the final pages, arrive at the embodied experience of intimacy and love. This arc mimics an ideal therapeutic outcome: that the trauma is worked through to the point that the symptoms of C-PTSD (such as dissociation) are lessened, triggers are dulled, experience is embodied, supporting healthy interpersonal relationships.

But in *Elsewhere*, intimacy is not separated from trauma; intimacy is always in relation to the experience of C-PTSD. While, at first glance, this broad structure sets up dissociation and embodiment as a binary opposition, which could imply a smooth, single-direction movement from ‘wounded’ to ‘healed’, the content of each of the distinct, major parts of *Elsewhere* demonstrates that intimacy and C-PTSD are in a continual, messy, and iterative relationship. The presence of one does not imply the absence of the other, and my experience is they are embroiled in near-continual operation with each other. Another way of looking at this is through shifting which way the lens is looking: whether intimacy is looked at through the lens of C-PTSD, or C-PTSD through the lens of intimacy. In different places, this lens shifts. Seen in that way, the structure of the arc is less predictable.

Through this research, I began recognising how trauma and intimacy were taking *form* in my drawings. This section gives separate definitions of both trauma and intimacy as they are relevant to this research. I build on these definitions, and introduce how these forms of trauma and intimacy were manifesting in the drawings: as gap, fragment, absence and unspeakable in relation to trauma; as observation, knowledge and accrual in relation to intimacy. Repetition (noted earlier as a motif of conceptual art) acts for me as a shared form

between intimacy and trauma. On the one hand, repetition *accrues*: the drawings that formed the early part of this research explicitly dealt with the accrual of gestures in the form of repeated marks as a way of acknowledging intimacy. The accumulated marks represent the small acts of devotion that amass in a relationship. On the other, these drawings were also implicitly, and also for a time unbeknownst to me, highly engaged with trauma-symptoms, that came through as forms such as fragments and gaps. On a subconscious level, I was using repetition to numb symptoms of trauma.

Through analysing how trauma and intimacy were occurring as both intentional and unintentional forms within the research, I was able develop this research towards an outcome where I could more purposefully use these modes in relation to each other.

Trauma

The definitions I provide in this section are based on and limited to recent⁷⁴ clinical scholarship around trauma. It is beyond the scope of this research to address the history of how trauma was or was not defined, and it is not the intention of this research to fully address therapeutic practices. For those reasons I address literary trauma theory as it relates to this research, but I do not attempt to provide a full overview of the territory.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, trauma is an exposure to a situation of extreme danger or threat: in brief, exposure to a death, a threat to life or of serious injury, or threatened or experienced sexual violence.⁷⁵ The traumatic event can be experienced directly or closely witnessed, and it can be experienced at a step removed (such as learning of a trauma experienced by a close friend or family member, or by first responders exposed to the trauma of others).⁷⁶ It is an event of deep helplessness and terror for which ordinary modes of making oneself 'safe' (say through fight or flight responses) are unavailable or do not work. "When neither resistance nor escape is possible, the human system of self-defence becomes overwhelmed and disorganised."⁷⁷ The trauma is a psychic wound (trauma literally meaning 'wound' in Greek⁷⁸) that causes a fragmentation of the self, "whereby trauma tears apart a complex system of self-protection that normally functions in an integrated fashion."⁷⁹ The trauma event is the stressor that can (but doesn't always) lead to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁸⁰ PTSD is a large cluster of symptoms spread across several categories.⁸¹ A

⁷⁴ That is, mostly since the 1980s, in line with the addition of PTSD to the American Psychiatric Association.

⁷⁵ Naomi Simon et al., *The American Psychiatric Association Publishing Textbook of Anxiety, Trauma, and OCD-Related Disorders*, 495; 'Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders'.

⁷⁶ 'Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders'.

⁷⁷ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 34.

⁷⁸ 'Trauma'.

⁷⁹ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 34.

⁸⁰ Naomi Simon et al., *The American Psychiatric Association Publishing Textbook of Anxiety, Trauma, and OCD-Related Disorders*, 494.

⁸¹ Naomi Simon et al., 495.

diagnosis of PTSD means the person experiences a certain number of symptoms from each category, the symptoms have persisted for more than four weeks after the stressor, and they have significant impact on the person's functionality (socially, occupationally, etc.).⁸²

It is that theorised the inability to reintegrate the event with the self, through being able to understand the trauma as in the past, and as a narrative that had a beginning, a middle and an end, means the trauma remains constantly in the present, and results in PTSD.⁸³ As Dutch psychiatrist and author Bessel van der Kolk puts it: "Dissociation is the essence of trauma. The overwhelming experience is split off and fragmented, so that the emotions, sounds, images, thoughts, and physical sensations related to the trauma take on a life of their own. The sensory fragments of memory intrude into the present, whereby they are literally relived."⁸⁴ So, trauma is an event that fractures the sense of self, preventing the person from integrating the event into the narrative of their past, and, through the effects of dissociation, the trauma remains present and relivable.

More recent definitions of trauma have expanded to include the effects of cumulative traumas, for example domestic abuse or POW-experiences, as well as repeated traumatic events that occur throughout some childhoods. These cumulative traumas result in what was proposed by American psychiatrist and author Judith Herman M.D. as complex-PTSD.⁸⁵ Relational trauma falls into the category of cumulative trauma. The link between relational trauma and PTSD is established by American psychoanalyst and author Daniel Shaw throughout his first chapter of *Traumatic Narcissism*, but is encapsulated in this: "These people typically experience significant depressive symptoms, which are actually post-traumatic symptoms of cumulative developmental, or relational, trauma... In development, to be recognized primarily as object—in other words, to be rigidly objectified—is to be cumulatively traumatized in one's efforts to consolidate the sense of subjectivity."⁸⁶ Or, as Herman puts it: "Repeated trauma in adult life erodes the structure of the personality already formed, but repeated trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality."⁸⁷ As I understand the distinction, where a single traumatic event can have a shattering effect on the

⁸² Naomi Simon et al., 495–99.

⁸³ Courtois and Ford, *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Children and Adolescents*, 143.

⁸⁴ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 66.

⁸⁵ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 115–29; Courtois and Ford, *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Children and Adolescents*, 143.

⁸⁶ Shaw, *Traumatic Narcissism*, 8.

⁸⁷ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 96.

self, cumulative traumatic events in childhood has the effect of preventing or distorting the formation of an integrated self, which is, in itself, traumatising, and later can manifest as C-PTSD.

Relieving symptoms of C-PTSD requires articulation: it is in part through language that trauma can be ‘moved through’ (the word articulation doing excellent double-time here). But different modes of articulation produce different emotional valences of representation. So, the research outcome *Elsewhere* has explored how to represent the effects of a trauma through drawing forms. How can trauma be understood in relation to gestural drawing or contour drawing? All this is to say, how can I draw trauma as a type of life-drawing? And also, why did drawing as the strictly visual arts practice in the early stages of this research not adequately succeed in representing trauma?⁸⁸

On distinguishing contour from outline, Greek American art teacher and artist Kimon Nicolaïdes defines outline as anchored in the two-dimensional: as diagrammatic or silhouette. Contour, though, he attaches to three-dimensions and to touch, “that is, it indicates the thickness as well as the length and the width of the form it surrounds. We do not think of line as a contour unless it follows a sense of touch, whereas an outline may follow the eye alone.”⁸⁹ In this, contour is understood as being simultaneously what is seen and what is unseen: as you move around the thing being observed, new parts of the contour reveal themselves.

While I can outline my trauma experiences through being able to state, “I experienced this or that,” the statement alone is limiting. Trauma, and especially relational trauma, is more than an outline: it doesn’t stop at a predictable boundary, as if reduced to a two-dimensional diagram. In therapeutically working through relational trauma, understanding it develops slowly. Like a contour drawing, over time you move around the trauma, and the forms of the trauma reveal themselves, through touching on various points of it, and understanding its different depths and lengths and widths.

⁸⁸ Aspects of this are also in Review of the Territory (in considering the work of other artists) and in Research Outcomes: Towards *Elsewhere* (in considering it further in my own research).

⁸⁹ Nicolaïdes, *The Natural Way to Draw*, 12.

Herman goes on to describe the triggers of relational trauma thus: “Ordinary interpersonal conflicts may provoke intense anxiety, depression, or rage. In the mind of the survivor, even minor slights evoke past experiences of callous neglect, and minor hurts evoke past experiences of deliberate cruelty.”⁹⁰ Recalling van der Kolk’s above description of dissociation, relational trauma stays unintegrated, present and can still be activated within the very thing humans require: healthy interpersonal relationships. “Because mammals need relatedness for their neurophysiology to coalesce correctly, most of what makes a socially functional human comes from connection—the shaping physiological force of love.”⁹¹ My experience of C-PTSD is that this is the particularly intractable impasse of relational trauma. Finding forms and modes of representing what can be the impasse of relational trauma via the composition of *Elsewhere* was a key aspect of this research. So, throughout *Elsewhere*, fragments of traumatic experiences are interwoven with fragments of other experiences: teaching, drawing, small moments of living a life, and interweaving two lives.

Trauma as form

I entered into therapy a year before formally starting this research. The works that were the earliest impetus for this research predate my seeking therapy, and so, through the parallel process of research and therapy I can track the ways gaining an understanding and working through the symptoms of C-PTSD shifted how I make artworks. Further, I see the ways the traumas that were as yet unacknowledged in me were shaping the works. Related to this, American theorist and author Cathy Caruth writes,

[...] trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on.⁹²

⁹⁰ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 111.

⁹¹ Lewis, Amini, and Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 218.

⁹² Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, 4.

By this, I can locate the ways the unassimilated—and unknown through being unacknowledged—traumas were returning in my works (as they were in my daily life). While early experiments towards this research spoke explicitly about intimacy, they were also implicitly involved in actions and dialogues that both unconsciously referenced and arose from trauma: the numbing effect of repeated mark-making; using the presence of these repeated marks to indicate gaps and absences; the outsized importance in the works of what is unsaid or wordless; their functioning as memento mori; their explication of distance. Trauma infiltrated the drawings in ways that I was unaware of, and, thus, not in control of.

In the following, I address some parallel forms in both trauma and drawing. I begin with assertions of the atemporality of both, and specifically the way past trauma infiltrates the present. I discuss how I was using particular forms of drawing as a defence against these incursions. This then frames gaps and fragments as forms of trauma-memory and drawing. Following, I address the ‘textual lacunae’ of trauma and the wordlessness of drawing to frame my decision to move this research to the essay qua drawing. Throughout, I address these forms as they relate to previous experiments for this research.⁹³

But, while I discuss how these forms of trauma can occur in drawing and in writing about drawing, I do not argue that all drawing is about or engaged with trauma. There are ways that definitions of trauma and definitions of drawing overlap, but rather than arguing a case for generalisable reading of drawing as mimetic of trauma, I am using this reading to background how and why this research shifted towards the resulting essay qua drawing.

The incompleteness and atemporality of drawing and trauma

Trauma is a wound in the past that repeats itself in the present. The hallmark of PTSD is the trauma’s incompleteness because of its atemporality: it disrupts temporality as the past forces itself vividly into the present. As Herman writes: “Long after the danger is past, traumatized

⁹³ Many of my artworks that fall outside this research also demonstrate what I am about to explain, but I have restricted to discussing only the works pertinent to this research.

people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present. They cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts.”⁹⁴ This temporality of a past event remaining persistently present echoes writing on the act of drawing. American art historian David Rosand writes: “The drawn mark is the record of a gesture, an action in time past now fixed permanently in the present; recalling its origins in the movement of the draftsman’s hand, the mark invites us to participate in that recollection of its creation.”⁹⁵ Dexter frames this in a similar way:

This is partly due to the attraction of drawing’s tautologous nature—drawing forever describes its own making in its *becoming*. In a sense, drawing is nothing more than that, and in its eternal incompleteness always re-enacts imperfection and incompleteness.⁹⁶

Because of trauma’s unfinishedness through remaining present in the psyche via symptoms like flashbacks and triggering, emotional numbing becomes a coping mechanism within PTSD. The tautology of the repeated gestures has been a recurring motif throughout my work: the rubbings that made up *The floor we walk on*, the typed dates of *The days we’ve been together*, or the continuous line of *A line that, in theory, could connect us*.



Figure 3 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *A line that, in theory, could connect us*, 2019. Studio experiment detail. Pencil on paper. Collection of the artist.

⁹⁴ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 37.

⁹⁵ Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, 2.

⁹⁶ Emma Dexter in *Vitamin D*, 6.

In 2014, in an interview for a magazine article, the writer asked me, “Can you tell me a bit more about the motivations behind some of the main aspects of your work, e.g. the recurring aspects of systems/tasks, books, negative space, etc.?”⁹⁷ Although I didn’t think much of my response at the time, as this research has progressed, part of the answer I gave has gathered weight in my mind:

Systems and tasks are rather difficult for me to talk about because it’s just one of my behaviours: I like doing repetitive tasks so I will be drawn to (or at least not daunted by) something that requires that type of activity. To talk about it directly, though, is something I don’t try to do [...] ⁹⁸

The reason I didn’t (or, at the time, couldn’t) answer the question was that overwork in the form of systemic, repetitive tasks was a form of emotional numbing for me. Van der Kolk outlines numbing as both part of the dissociative state⁹⁹ as well as a way of, “bracing against and the neutralizing unwanted sensory experiences.”¹⁰⁰ He goes on to describe various behaviours of traumatised people, from drug and alcohol addiction to work and exercise addiction, as, “[trying] to dull their intolerable inner world.”¹⁰¹ For me, the action of the repeated mark, accompanied by an audiobook or a podcast, dulled intrusive memories and thoughts; the steady rhythm of accrual was a bulwark against the persistent symptoms of C-PTSD I was then unable to acknowledge. I would habitually work through physical pain to the point of multiple, recurring injuries in my back and shoulders, because I didn’t want to think and feel. Van der Kolk also notes that these methods give a, “paradoxical feeling of control,” which was resonant with my experience: the more the symptoms of trauma asserted themselves, the greater the undertakings I set myself in my artworks and practice, until I reached crisis and entered therapy.

⁹⁷ Hanfling to Amodeo, ‘Hello!’, 2 October 2014.

⁹⁸ Amodeo to Hanfling, ‘Hello!’, 4 October 2014.

⁹⁹ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 72.

¹⁰⁰ van der Kolk, 265.

¹⁰¹ van der Kolk, 266.

I argue the theorised form of narrative failure, resulting in gaps and fragments in the PTSD memory can map closely onto some understandings of drawing's formal interrelation between surface and mark. In forming a distinction between painting and drawing, curators, theorists and artists often contrast painting's comparative all-over, full-surface coverage¹⁰² with the open-surface often found in drawing. As Rosand states:

By drawing we generally understand a pictorial structure more open than that of painting. Drawing tends to cover its supporting surface only incompletely; the ground retains its own participating presence in the image, just as the marks it hosts, and which so transform it, retain their autonomy. Ambivalence is an essential and functioning aspect of drawing.¹⁰³

The drawing often only partially covers a surface, setting up a formal collapse between mark and surface. If the marks on a page can be likened to an articulated observation, the surrounding blankness of the paper still informs the reading of the drawing. Blank areas of ground can be read as both image and absence in relation to the mark. Related to this, American art historian Norman Bryson writes of the potentiality for drawing to either accept or reject the painterly totality of form, instead, "[...] drawing has always been able to treat the whiteness of its surface [...] as a 'reserve': an area that is technically part of the image (since we certainly see it), but in a neutral sense—an area without qualities, perceptually present but conceptually absent."¹⁰⁴ Through this discussion of the relationship between surface and mark, fragment and incompleteness¹⁰⁵ drawing is almost definitionally involved in formal conversations about gaps and fragments, and the defining of presence through absences.

British academic Meg Jensen explains PTSD's mechanisms as a failure of the memory to process 'episodic memory' (which catalogues specific, episodic events) into integrated semantic memory (memory devoted to the general knowledge that enables someone to, say, tie their shoelaces without needing to recall the episodic event of learning). "This lack of

¹⁰² Emma Dexter builds on writing by Norman Bryson, Walter Benjamin and Michael Newman in *Vitamin D*, 6; Claire Gilman develops this line of thinking via David Rosand in Gilman, 'Drawing Time, Reading Time', 14.

¹⁰³ Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Norman Bryson in Zegher and Newman, *The Stage of Drawing*, 151.

¹⁰⁵ Incompleteness will be picked up on and developed in Drawing essaying drawing | essay essaying drawing

consolidation means that links do not develop and the memory of the event is created in an ‘inappropriately strong and affect-laden form’ that can neither be reflected on, nor fade in the usual way.”¹⁰⁶ Additionally, van der Kolk writes: “[...] processing by the thalamus can break down. Sights, sounds, smells and touch are encoded as isolated, dissociated fragments, and normal memory processing disintegrates. Time freezes, so that the present danger feels like it will last forever.”¹⁰⁷ All these support Janet’s proposed mechanism of the ‘splitting off’ of dissociation.¹⁰⁸ From this, part of what hallmarks memory for a person with PTSD is it comes in fragments, is filled with gaps and lapses, and it cannot be narratively integrated within the autobiographical narrative experience.

These dissociated memories are both there and not there. As American author Vivien Green Fryd writes, “‘Traumatic paradox’ exists because the experience often cannot be fully recovered but instead can exist in the mind and body as fragmented memories.”¹⁰⁹ In relation to a drawing, the surface a drawn mark sits on, which is, as Bryson posits, “perceptually present but conceptually absent” can be understood as the conceptually absent trauma’s perceptual incursion, through the symptoms of PTSD, into the daily life of the survivor. The surface fragments, breaks through, holds apart, the narrative quality of the accrued marks.

Addressing this collapse between mark and surface, *The floor we walk on* documented the entire floor of the house we owned in Auckland, through a series of rubbings.¹¹⁰ As a drawing form, rubbing is direct in the extreme: based on layers of touch—the paper touches the surface it records, the I rubbed the paper with the graphite—it is a visual representation of the haptic. But the image it produces is a disconcerting negative. Areas that would be shadow, say the space between floorboards, the dents and scratches, are highlighted as blank white page. So, absence and gap in this work is visually intensified, pressing forward rather than receding back.

¹⁰⁶ Jensen, *The Art and Science of Trauma and the Autobiographical*, 13–14.

¹⁰⁷ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 60.

¹⁰⁸ As initially discussed in Personal Context.

¹⁰⁹ Fryd, *Against Our Will: Sexual Trauma in American Art since 1970.*, 21.

¹¹⁰ I touch on this work throughout the remainder of this chapter, and full details can be found in Research Outcomes: *An open love letter*.



Figure 4 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The floor we walk on*, 2015. Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Te Whanganui-a-tara. Installation detail of *Something Felt, Something Shared*, curated by Emma Ng. Graphite on paper, dimensions variable. Collection of Chris Parkin.

To return to the example used earlier, *The days we've been together*, aspects of the collapse between surface and mark are taken to heightened levels: the typewriter was used without the ribbon, which had the effect of embossing, and even scoring the paper, forming physical breaks in the drawing. The presence of a typed mark was replaced with literal gap and absence. In both these works, this unintentional formal intensification of gap and absence is also analogous to the themes behind the works, which I develop shortly, and explain more fully in Research Outcomes.

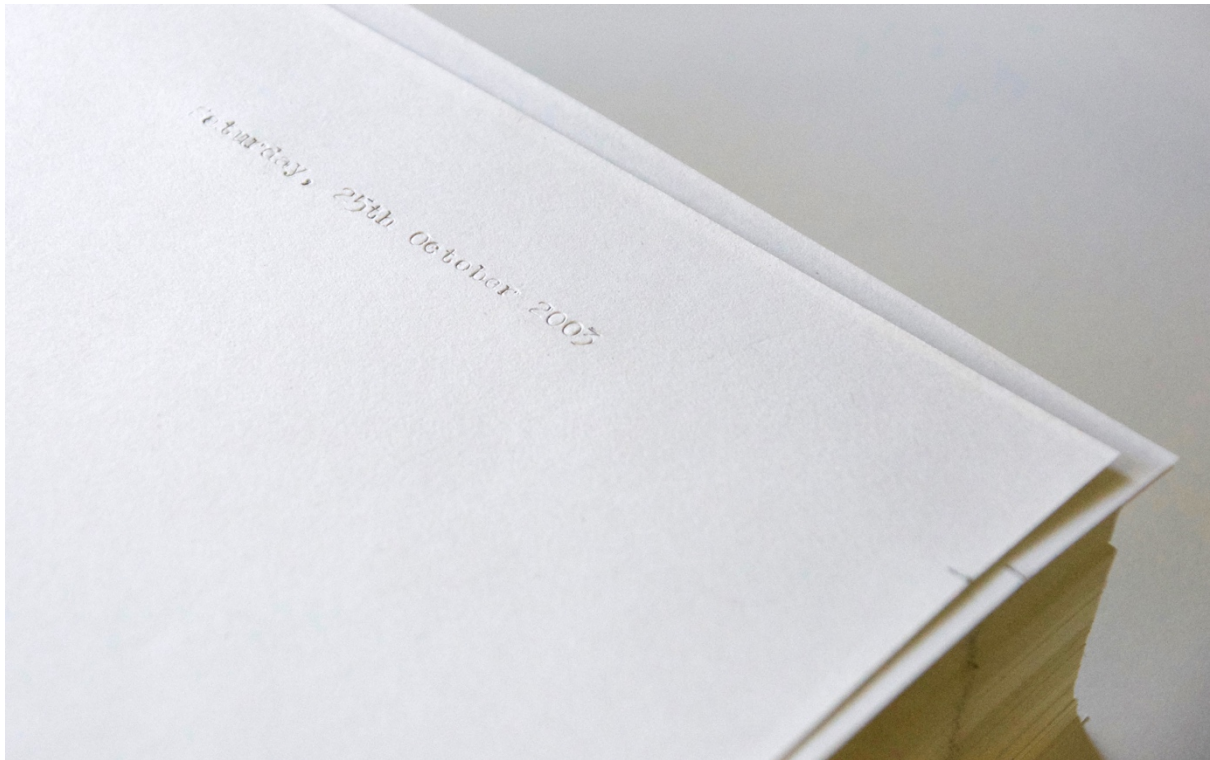


Figure 5 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The days we've been together*, 2018. Detail. Typewriter marks on paper, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.

The unsaid

Building from the gaps, absence and fragments are the relationship these forms have to the wordlessness of trauma. As van der Kolk writes:

Even years later traumatized people often have enormous difficulty telling other people what has happened to them. Their bodies reexperience terror, rage, and helplessness, as well as the impulse to fight or flee, but these feelings are almost impossible to articulate. Trauma by nature drives us to the edge of comprehension, cutting us off from language based on common experience or an imaginable past.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 43.

Early literary trauma theory, such as Caruth's, *Unclaimed Experience*, built from the premise of trauma's unutterability, reifying the unspeakable, the unrepresentable and the forgotten as primary symptoms of PTSD.¹¹² While more recent research into trauma, and, following, in literary trauma theory, have challenged the uniformity of the assumption of language's failure or the unspeakableness of the effects of trauma,¹¹³ the notion of language failing had resonance with my experience. It has taken time and practice to learn to frame words around the traumas that occurred in my childhood.

Both Jensen and Norwegian literary scholar Jakob Lothe further this in relation to what Lothe termed the "textual lacuna" of what is omitted: "... the fragments, lapses and silences of what is left unsaid."¹¹⁴ Both cite trauma testimony from Holocaust survivors, and what is unsaid that, nevertheless, speaks volumes even in the absence of words. Lothe describes this as: "This ellipsis approximates to a paralipsis—a textual lacuna that takes on a particular significance precisely because something is omitted."¹¹⁵ Lothe goes on to cite Meretoja, saying: "[...] the interplay between storytelling and silence is woven into their fabric so intimately that one does not exist without the other."¹¹⁶ But while there is more nuance in understanding trauma's relationship to the failure of language, articulation, as one part of a therapeutic process, can be a meaningful part of healing.¹¹⁷

Again addressing *The Days we've been together*, there is a paradox in its use of words. The drawing is made up of words, thousands of them, in the form of dates, but the presence of such a quantity of repeated, abstract words to 'describe' our relationship has the effect of spotlighting what was unsaid in the work. Relatedly, *The floor we walk on* presented an empty space, the negative of a marked and scuffed floor, to represent how a couple shares and houses a relationship. So, while my works were able to encapsulate something about intimacy, their largely wordless communication, their 'silence', shut down an examination of my movements between intimacy and trauma. Thus, while the silence of the form of drawing that I was using was suitable to articulate intimacy, the absence of language exacerbated the

¹¹² Davis and Meretoja, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, 18–19; Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*, 92.

¹¹³ Fryd, *Against Our Will : Sexual Trauma in American Art since 1970.*, 22; Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*, 6–7; Caruth, Brochard, and Tam, "'Who Speaks from the Site Of Trauma?': An Interview with Cathy Caruth", 48.

¹¹⁴ Jensen, 'Testimony', 72; Lothe, 'Narrative', 157.

¹¹⁵ Lothe, 'Narrative', 157.

¹¹⁶ Hanna Meretoja cited in Lothe, 160.

¹¹⁷ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 21, 230–47.

theorised failure of language in trauma. I could not articulate trauma through the absence of words in the artwork.

There was a methodological collapse: the two negatives couldn't make a positive; two forms of gaps, two absences of language—the experience and theorisation of trauma and the silence of the form of drawings I had previously engaged with, as expanded as that practice was—could not make an artwork. I needed writing, words, running and flowing in descriptive, narrative form, in order to make artworks that could negotiate the complex relationship between trauma and intimacy.

On the essay, German philosopher Theodore Adorno writes: “It thinks in fragments just as reality is fragmented and gains its unity only by moving through the fissures, rather than by smoothing over them.”¹¹⁸ As the epigraph to this exegesis, this quote became something of a north star for reorienting this research. Trauma was asserting itself as forms and actions in my drawings, but I wasn't in control of it.

A line that, in theory, connects us became a thread that traversed the course of this research as it moved from drawing per se, to the essay qua drawing. Over a series of iterations that predated the formal beginning of this research, and continued throughout it, the ideas behind this work gradually shifted course from a drawing that traded in the various trauma-forms outlined above, to becoming the first of the essays that makes up *Elsewhere*.¹¹⁹

As I turned towards the essay qua drawing, I began to modify accrual from the repeated mark, to a mode of intimacy, whereby accrual took place as a practice of observation. I was able to more consciously use forms like gap, fragment and absence, in the presence of articulation, to more fully realise the negotiation between trauma and intimacy.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Adorno, ‘The Essay as Form’, 164.

¹¹⁹ This is outlined in full in Research Outcomes: *An open love letter*.

¹²⁰ I address this in Theoretical Framework: Intimacy, and Research Outcomes: Towards *Elsewhere* when I more fully discuss the outcome of this research, *Elsewhere, or at sea*.

Intimacy

Intimacy is a knotty word to unravel, but the scope of its nuance and knottiness makes it dextrous within this research. Intimacy is not just an emotion, not just love, not just sex, not just proximity or privacy, not just friendship and not just knowledge, but all of these things in various shades and configurations.¹²¹

One part of the usefulness of the word intimacy to this research is that it operates as a nexus between frameworks of both knowledge and love. Love, the love between my husband and me, has been a subject thread that was an early impetus for, and has run through, much of this research. However, disaggregating love and intimacy—for, I will argue, the two are not synonymous—is important in this research as it gives scope to discuss intimacy as both a form of the research (in relation to how intimacy informs my definition of expanded life-drawing as a practice of accrued observation), and as content of the research (as part of the premises and narratives of my drawings).

In this section, I address intimacy in an unfolding way, holding open several ways through which it is used within this research. I first address a selection of relevant definitions of intimacy, in particular its position of privacy and closeness, and as close observation and knowledge. Based on privacy and closeness, I go on to examine the tension of intimacy as risk. The risk of intimacy is an inherent aspect of *Elsewhere*, particularly as I have negotiated, and continue to negotiate, the process of articulating my experiences to various ‘audiences,’ from the verbal disclosures in therapeutic and relational settings, to the close, limited readership of an academic setting, and as I begin to consider an audience beyond that. I then pick up on close observation and knowledge to flesh out my definition of expanded life-drawing.

¹²¹ ‘Intimacy, n.’, December 2018.

Intimacy is also a term worth spending time on as it is often invoked in writing about drawing: that drawing is in some sense inherently intimate, for example, from German curator and writer Christian Rattemeyer: “We value [drawings] for their immediacy, for the insights they offer into the process of the creative act, for their fragmentary, incomplete nature, their intimacy and directness.”¹²² It can be supposed this arises in part from the link between intimacy’s etymological root in meanings of ‘inward’ and ‘innermost’¹²³ and drawing’s history of and association with the assumed authenticity of the sketch and *primi pensieri* (that is, first thoughts).¹²⁴ As British curator Emma Dexter writes:

Then there is the other, elaborately cultured aspect of drawing, *not* based upon a theoretical or philosophical understanding of what drawing is per se, but on the areas of human experience that drawing has come to be associated with: intimacy, informality, authenticity (or at least with authentic inauthenticity), immediacy, subjectivity, history, memory, narrative.¹²⁵

While I cannot and will not account for the role of intimacy across the entirety of drawing, I will address the unfolding ways the term is relevant to this research.

Writers often pick up on the parallel, bordering on conflicting, meanings within intimacy of both ‘closeness’ and ‘privacy’. American philosopher Christopher Lauer positions this as intimacy’s inherent instability:

The *OED* offers as one definition of ‘intimate’ ‘that which relates to, or is indicative of, one’s deepest nature, that which is very personal or private’. What is most intimate in this sense is what divides one from others. And yet, when we strive for intimacy in a relationship, we strive for a dissolution of this division. What intimacy *wants* is thus contradictory.¹²⁶

Previous to Lauer, American cultural theorist and scholar Lauren Berlant’s *Intimacy: A Special Issue* went further, drawing out the simultaneously private and public nature of intimacies, in particular the public shaping that enforces hegemonic normalcies of hetero

¹²² Rattemeyer in Price, *Vitamin D2 : New Perspectives in Drawing*, 8.

¹²³ Akhtar in Kanwal and Akhtar, *Intimacy: Clinical, Cultural, Digital and Developmental Perspectives*, 6; Lauer, *Intimacy: A Dialectical Study*, 4.

¹²⁴ Hoptman, *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions*, 11.

¹²⁵ Dexter in *Vitamin D*, 6.

¹²⁶ Lauer, *Intimacy: A Dialectical Study*, 4.

coupledom as *the narrative* of intimacy, at the expense of other possibilities, narratives, aesthetics, histories and so on. Berlant expands and problematises intimacy, articulating how its intentions of stabilising ‘a life’, carries within it a concomitant force of destabilisation:

[...] intimacy builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation. Its potential failure to stabilize closeness always haunts its persistent activity, making the very attachments deemed to buttress ‘a life’ seem in a state of constant if latent vulnerability.¹²⁷

And in his *Critical Closeness, Intimate Distance*, British writer and researcher Jon Cairns sets up as his methodology for analysing certain art projects an intimacy not based in closeness, and criticality untethered to the ideal of distancing, but as an entwining of each¹²⁸: “The parallelism of distance and closeness works out into an ‘intimate criticism’ that oscillates between the work and my contingent relationship with it.”¹²⁹ Acknowledging the possibility of different modes of intimacy within a critical context opens, for him, productive spaces of ambivalence, as a way of holding open complexities, rather than homing in on certainties.¹³⁰

In ‘Citation as Relation’, Fournier positions the practice of citation (the referencing of texts and people) in autotheoretical artworks and writing as, “a mode of intertextual intimacy and identification.”¹³¹ Through a reading of Nelson’s *The Argonauts*, with its mise-en-page citations, alongside its forerunner, French theorist Roland Barthes’ *A Lover’s Discourse*, Fournier defines this intertextual intimacy and identification as, “a way of reading, a way of writing and making work, and a way of referencing or placing *alongside*.”¹³² Positioning citations used in this manner as specifically autotheoretical, she goes on:

The artist’s life becomes a kind of ‘life-text’ to be cited alongside other citations as a way of developing and advancing a theory; self and life become material through which to explore questions, form theories, and ‘test’ them against other forms of evidencing, whether anecdotal, political, social, art historical, literary, pop culture, or some other form.¹³³

¹²⁷ Berlant, ‘Intimacy: A Special Issue’, 282.

¹²⁸ ‘Critical Closeness, Intimate Distance: Encounters in the Love Art Laboratory’, 240–43.

¹²⁹ Cairns, 242.

¹³⁰ Cairns, 241–42.

¹³¹ Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 135.

¹³² Fournier, 149.

¹³³ Fournier, 149.

In addition to the forms of evidencing listed above, Fournier also discusses the practice of lateral citation (that is, citing one's peer) alongside citing upwards (citing established scholars and philosophers), as a way of "destabilizing hierarchies of influence."¹³⁴ Fournier's framing of citation has been useful in contextualising my own use of citation in *Elsewhere*, where I have liberally pulled from numerous sources. I address this further in Research Outcomes: Towards *Elsewhere*. Further, the intertextual intimacy via citation Fournier proposes extends the scope of intimacy into a mode of reading and making. Her locating of intimacy as thus supports the role I see intimacy taking in this research, which I outline shortly.

Intimacy as pressure

Based on a series of workshops and symposiums, British academic Dr Joanne Morra and British artist and academic Emma Talbot's research project *Intimacy Unguarded: how the personal becomes material*¹³⁵ investigated a similar territory of when the personal is used as artistic material, and the inherent risks involved with this activity. Their exploration of the juxtaposition between the privacy of intimacy and the notion of 'unguarding' asks: "What do we risk in revealing, that is unguarding, the intimacies that constitute our lives, our actions, our thoughts, our traumas, our desires, our failures?"¹³⁶ Parts of this research project helped me identify the risks and pressures involved with intimacy in relation to the audience for *Elsewhere*.

The internal tension of intimacy's desire for both closeness and privacy have, and still do, permeate this project. The intimacy required in and requested by the articulation of trauma carries inherent risks. For me, the risks have evolved and changed over time, and are somewhat identifiable via stages of what Jensen writes about in relation to trauma testimony.

¹³⁴ Fournier, 154.

¹³⁵ Morra and Talbot, 'Intimacy Unguarded'.

¹³⁶ Morra and Talbot, 159.

These internal and external pressures can be categorized in roughly three ways: *memory effects*, the psychological and physiological negotiation between a traumatic event and the formation of a memory; *dialogue effects*, the interactions that arise in the act of telling one's trauma-memory-stories in intimate dialogue; and finally *procurement for specific audiences*, the process of identifying, collecting, editing, shaping, translating and making public a private experience of suffering via the practice of constructing representative 'evidence', aimed at certain listeners.¹³⁷

Through Jensen's writing more broadly, I have identified that *Elsewhere* is not a trauma testimony. While it does reference trauma events, the content is more centred on intimacy in relation to symptoms of C-PTSD. Also, as I discuss shortly, intimacy as practice formed the basis for how I undertook this work. However, it is important to understand the dissemination of *Elsewhere* in relation to aspects of trauma testimony, particularly Jensen's *dialogue effects* and *procurement for specific audiences*.

In my experience, articulating trauma risks intimacy. First taking place through intimate dialogue, the number of risks taken were fewer, but the intimate relationships I was risking were greater: *will my therapist minimise this experience? Help me? Further harm me? Will my husband blame me? Believe me? Still love me?*

Over time, circle of intimate articulation got larger as I began writing about these traumas and sharing them in different circles (to my writing group, to my supervisors). Though I still strongly value them, the relationships I was risking at this phase were less central. Alongside that, though, the number of risks I was taking built up.

But to tell someone about trauma demands from them they become secondary witnesses to it,¹³⁸ which I know from experience can be triggering, or traumatising in its own right. Telling someone may legitimately ask of them too much intimacy, too much closeness to my trauma. Repercussions of the intimacy of articulation feel like they abound in ways I'm still working through.

¹³⁷ Jensen, 'Testimony', 72.

¹³⁸ Fryd, *Against Our Will: Sexual Trauma in American Art since 1970.*, 23.

Based on these combined understandings of intimacy, I develop a further reading that is relevant to both my relationship to, and the audience experience of, *Elsewhere*.

Intimacy's contrasting meanings of closeness and privacy position the operations of intimacy on a boundary. I imagine this as the boundary between two inflated balloons, pressed together. Varying levels of intimacy have different effects: co-workers might bump against each other's balloon-surface, making little impact; intimate partners will push against those boundaries until the once-rounded individual balloon-surfaces flatten off and creak and squeak. Their surfaces touch, their proximity to each is affected by the other, even shapes and distorts the other, but they don't merge with each other.¹³⁹

In the case of this research, I see intimacy operating in a pressure between what is personal and private, and what is shareable and, thereby, to varying degrees, public. As described just previously, intimacy operates at the edge between people in intimate articulation of trauma. As I discuss now, it functions at the edge between an artwork and the viewer or reader. In the following section, I locate intimacy at the edge between me and the fractured-off, traumatised parts of myself.

British-Australian writer and theorist Sara Ahmed's drawing out of the word 'impression' fits with how I see the term intimacy working across the physical, the emotional, the psychological, and how it can be transferred to structures of making and reading art:

To form an impression might involve acts of perception and cognition as well as an emotion. But forming an impression also depends on how objects impress upon us. An impression can be an effect on the subject's feelings ('she made an impression'). It can be a belief ('to be under an impression'). It can be an imitation or an image ('to create an impression'). Or it can be a mark on the surface ('to leave an impression'). *We need to remember the pressure in an impression.*¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ This analogy is adapted from a piece of my writing for HAMSTER, a publication by The Physics Room. The original quote: "The relationship between my story and each of theirs is like two balloons being held together: they push against each other but remain separate. They have the effect of distorting each other without ever merging with each other." Amodeo, 'Two Hundred and Thirty Words for Dishonesty, Part Two', 65.

¹⁴⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 6.

In other writing, she says: “After all, to receive is to act. To receive an impression is to make an impression.”¹⁴¹ Ahmed’s construing of the press in impression informs my nascent and evolving understanding of what it means to give *Elsewhere* over to readers, in what Jensen positions as *procurement for specific audiences*.

More so than any other artwork I’ve made, in *Elsewhere* I have a heightened awareness of the way I am *pressing* onto the subjective experience of the reader. Through the decision to *describe* via words and language instead of image making, I ask the reader to form their own images, their own descriptions, of my experience in the private space of reading words. But, while I press my experience into theirs, our experiences don’t merge: their reading, their description, is informed by their own subjective experiences. The reader might people my essay with the people they know; their traumas and intimacies might be a screen overlaying my own. The reader is involved in an act of reciprocal intimacy, of pressing their experience into my own, that I can’t necessarily respond to with mutuality. And I am uneasy with this. Not because I see the readers’ subjective overlay of their experience with my own as a misinterpretation or failure, but because I understand I am demanding levels of intimacy from people with whom I don’t have interpersonal intimacy with.

The *procurement for specific audiences* is limited, at this stage, for the specific academic event of the PhD examination. Even within this close, closed academic setting, I am weighing up whether to embargo this research for a period. Furthering the audience of *Elsewhere* to something more public remains, to this day, an experiential process, and remains unresolved. The form this research has taken to this point, with *Elsewhere* as the primary outcome, is a single marker: one point within an ongoing, lived process, further situating *Elsewhere* more in relation to a lived practice of life-drawing, as opposed to more fixed genre such as memoir or as the evidence of testimony.¹⁴² I continue to work through if or how I would extend the audience of *Elsewhere*, beyond the limited edition of the ten artist books now extant, and for the purposes of this research event. While this meta-commentary on the PhD process might seem out-of-place, it constitutes an important future line of enquiry for how I further this research beyond the PhD.

¹⁴¹ Ahmed, ‘Happy Objects’, 37.

¹⁴² I here am referring back to Fournier’s earlier definitions of memoir, and Jensen’s definition of testimony.

I now focus on and flesh out the sense of intimacy as close observation and knowledge, as a basis for my expanded practice of life-drawing.

Intimacy: accrual as a practice of observation

A General Theory of Love proposes that love is physiological, and borne from three limbic-centred processes: limbic resonance, limbic regulation and limbic revision. Limbic resonance is akin to both being empathetic and also receiving empathy in turn. It is the ability to pick up on the emotions of another, while also broadcasting your own. (I argue intimacy can be situated in this part of the process.) Limbic regulation is the effect of this shared empathy on the physical systems of the body; the physical and emotional contact between people has the effect of regulating the systems of the body: “Because *loving* is reciprocal physiological influence, it entails a deeper and more literal connection than most realize. Limbic regulation affords lovers the ability to modulate each other’s emotions, neurophysiology, hormonal status, immune function, sleep rhythms, and stability.”¹⁴³ And limbic revision is how the patterns of love formed in early childhood can be revised either through therapy, or through the limbic regulation of an adult relationship (although limbic revision is not limited to these). So, where love requires a physical connection with different people, from infancy through to adulthood and old-age, intimacy is different. They go on to differentiate love as a physiological state from intimacy as a practice:

Loving is limbically distinct from *in love*. Loving is mutuality; loving is synchronous attunement and modulation. As such, adult love depends critically upon *knowing* the other. *In love* demands only the brief acquaintance necessary to establish an emotional genre but does not demand that the book of the beloved’s soul be perused from preface to epilogue. *Loving* derives from intimacy, the prolonged and detailed surveillance of a foreign soul.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Lewis, Amini, and Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 207–8.

¹⁴⁴ Lewis, Amini, and Lannon, 207.

In distinguishing something akin to a fling from the prolonged state of adult love, intimacy fits into the latter as the time spent, the process of, arriving at love. Intimacy is an aspect of love, but intimacy and love are not synonymous. Where Lewis et al argue that there is a physical interconnectedness required for 'love' that comes from limbic resonance and limbic regulation, intimacy is related, but distinct, and here likened to surveillance. From this, it can be argued that intimacy is structural to love. To flesh out intimacy as it relates to this research, I reposition surveillance as knowledge, considerably accrued, based on a practice of observation.

In relation to both close observation and knowledge, Canadian philosopher Lorraine Code's feminist epistemology offers a useful framework that draws a link between them and can go some way to describing intimacy as a structure of my definition of life-drawing. Code argues that knowledge develops in a constantly changing process of communication and interpretation; 'knowing' is not an on/off switch but admits degrees; it allows for the flux and change in the subject, making it unfixed and incompletable; and positions of subject/object are exchangeable through the communicative process.¹⁴⁵

To use the example of studio-based life-drawing, during a long pose, which will encompass a series of breaks, the model's body is communicating more than a static, unchanging form from which the students draw. Through the length of a pose, the model is silently communicating changing levels of strain and discipline across their body, which can be interpreted through marks in a drawing. As a drawing progresses, the drawer will understand more of what they're seeing, but what they are seeing is also in constant flux as the model's pose incrementally shifts, so the drawer's understanding needs to be in a perpetual state of revision. Relatedly, they also need to understand their own drawing, and how it relates to what they're seeing through their own idiosyncratic systems of marks and indicators. As the model takes breaks, the pose can change in more significant ways, meaning drawings have to allow for the flux of the form. And drawings are rarely 'completed'. The pose ends, and so the drawing has to as well, so the resultant drawing will move between areas of provisional knowledge and understanding, and areas that are notional and abstract. But while the drawing might capture something of the model, the model will have a more experiential, sound and lived understanding of the pose, to which the drawer won't have access.

¹⁴⁵ Code, *What Can She Know?*, 37–38.

While this example is particular to studio life-drawing, it can be applied to my practice of expanded life-drawing. In my research, life-drawing is an accrued understanding of something based on a period of close consideration. In this, intimacy is not knowledge-as-destination, rather it is knowledge-as-process. To draw in this way is to look, and to look, and to look again, and to notice and consider those similarities and difference between my understanding of what I'm observing (then rendered as a building of drawn marks, or words on a page) and the subject itself. Intimacy, congruent with knowledge, is temporal and in flux. It isn't a singular destination that is arrived at and stayed in. Rather, intimacy is a process, and is unstable: it changes and shifts and gathers nuances and sometimes can—or inevitably will, for whatever reason—disappear altogether.

Code's argument for a feminist epistemology in part analyses dichotomies that have marginalised women as "knowers". She argues the importance of *both* poles of each dichotomy rather than dismissing either or reversing the hierarchy.¹⁴⁶ The definitions of intimacy, too, move between dichotomies, while not relinquish the importance of either end of the polarity. Its meanings straddle dichotomies of mind and body (through meaning both knowledge and sex), emotion and cognition (through the qualities of friendship and love being set alongside observation and knowledge), subject and object (whereby intimacy is a communicative process, and each person takes the role of knower/known to the other), and closeness and boundaries, addressed above in Intimacy as Pressure and Risk.

But this boundary is also impacted by subjectivity. The fact that intimacy is an internal process delineates a boundary: there is a space in which intimacy operates, and the point that it can't get beyond. I am intimate with *my reading* of my husband, Justin—my reading of what I can know and understand of him—but not 'Justin' as he understands himself to be; he is intimate with his idea of me, but not 'me' as I understand myself. We can intimately share a physical space, like a home, but that closeness is always tempered by the boundary of knowing *to degrees*, not knowledge as an absolute.

¹⁴⁶ Code, 29.

While intimacy has manifold meanings, I return, here, to its definition as, “close observation or knowledge”,¹⁴⁷ particularly when used as a lens through which to understand my practice of expanded life-drawing. As outlined in the introduction, arriving at description in my drawings (whether through marks or words) is linked to the temporal nature of observation. This observation ties into notions of searching and trialling: as I draw, I search the form in front of me, trying to establish from fragments, small points of relation from which to build the form on the paper. Each mark is an essay towards understanding. Relatedly, for me, trying to capture something in language is also about feeling towards and testing, and is as fleeting, subjective and difficult as trying to capture it in pencil as a drawing. Nicolaïdes in part defines drawing as:

... a matter of learning to see—to see correctly—and that means a good deal more than merely looking with the eye. The sort of seeing I mean is an observation that utilizes as many of the five senses as you can reach through the eye at one time. Although you use your eyes, you do not close up the other senses—rather, the reverse, because all the senses have a part in the sort of observation you are to make.¹⁴⁸

However, even while lines or words build towards these descriptions, there are inbuilt gaps and absences. At its most simple level, in the time of my eyes flicking between the paper and the subject, in the translation from sight to the movement of my hand, there’s a gap between perception and act where memory and subjectivity take over. Likewise, there’s a gap between the embodied experience of sensation or emotion, and the shuffling of words into a sentence.

Bryson describes the temporal nature of vision that arises from the saccadic movements of the eye:

... what vision experiences is an image¹⁴⁹ distributed across discontinuous leaps. Each act of looking attends to a different area of the image and discloses a partial view, as vision transits through the image in endless stops and starts. Each view finds a different perch or purchase on the image, and successive views are strung together serially, in a flow of time.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ ‘Intimacy, n.’, December 2018.

¹⁴⁸ Nicolaïdes, *The Natural Way to Draw*, 5.

¹⁴⁹ While Bryson is specifically talking about images, the discussion is of the mechanics of the eye, so image can easily be substituted for anything, but in this case, the model.

¹⁵⁰ Bryson, ‘Intertextuality and Visual Poetics’, 184.

While this is specific to vision, I use it alongside Nicolaïdes expansion of observation to develop my idea of observation in relation to intimacy. So, in my expanded life-drawing, observation is the process. Description takes the form of accrued marks or words. But the gaps or failings or distance¹⁵¹ of or within observation doesn't arrive at something 'completed'. The description is provisional and unfixed. Questions still occur. For me, intimacy as a mode of processual observation is a continual grappling towards comprehension.

A practice of observation based on the above has helped me recognise and understand my experiences along the spectrum of dissociation, both in the moment of dissociation, and when reflecting on it. In a sense, I locate intimacy at the internal fracture that is trauma. Observing my dissociation offered a path to being intimate with my trauma, which moves me towards reintegrating childhood trauma. Iteratively looking at the trauma, seeing it, grappling with it, describing it, being able to engage with, is to be less and less beholden to it. This was a pathway towards me understanding how engagement with dissociation can be generative of poiesis.

Accrual is important particularly in relation to trauma. If trauma is an experience that shatters, accrual is what builds. Shifting my usage of accrual from the repeated gesture as a way of masking symptoms, to instead accrual as a practice of close observation, and as a mode of intimacy, shifted my ability to observe and understand the trauma symptom of dissociation from something that is formidably hindering, to a potential place for poiesis.

For me, poiesis in this instance is to address trauma as an undertaking of reclamation. Through the act of giving form to the memories of traumatic experiences that I've previously suppressed and resisted, I can reclaim them from the chasm of dissociation. And reclaiming them gives me the capacity to act on the memories rather than the memories acting on me. As they are reclaimed and take form, I make sense of them and move through them and fit them in as a collection of pieces that make up my life.

¹⁵¹ Gaps, absence and distance are further developed as themes in relation to trauma.

III. Drawing and the Essay

A skeleton is made up of two parts

A skeleton is made up of two parts: the axial and the appendicular. The axial skeleton is the skull, the ribcage, the sternum and the spine; the appendicular skeleton is made up of the bones of the limbs and the girdles that attach them to the trunk. The axial is central, core, the thing from which the appendicular skeleton hangs. The skeletal system is understood as a single system *while also* being two distinct skeletons—the axial skeleton and the appendicular skeleton—which are formed from the approximately 206 bones of the human body. The structure of the skeleton acknowledges how integral the interrelation each part is to the other, but also speaks about what is central and what hangs off it.¹⁵²

This conceptualisation of the skeleton—as at once a single system and two distinct parts—has framed my understanding of the relationship between artworks and writing, and following the essay and drawing, within this research. In form, I position the creative work *Elsewhere* as an essay qua drawing. That is, I argue in an expanded field of life-drawing, and in relation to life-writing, the essay can operate in the capacity of a drawing, and so *Elsewhere* can be considered within a life-drawing practice. In short, through the course of this research, I began to use essay writing as a form of life-drawing.

My intentions for this were two-fold: by understanding the axial and the appendicular as both a single system *and* two separate parts, it resists setting up drawing and the essay (or more

¹⁵² Greisheimer, *Physiology and Anatomy*, 72.

broadly visual art and writing) as a false dichotomy; and by attending to the two parts operating as a single system, it opens the possibility for the essay within an expanded drawing practice.

This section addresses the similarities between essays and drawing which can become areas of overlap. There are myriad ways the essay and drawing are different to each other, and this research does not suggest a complete collapse between them. Further, there is a specific direction of travel in this research: I am an artist using the essay qua drawing, it is beyond the scope of this research to suggest the essay in some way should encompass drawing. However, in a similar way overlaps between, say, drawing and painting are observable in the fluid middle ground between the disciplines, this research proposes a middle ground between drawing and the essay where the essay qua drawing is conceivable.

The output of this research is an essay. But it is an essay that contains the sensibilities and processes of drawing, and this places it within an expanded field of drawing. Instead of the essay being simply rendered into a recognisably drawn form,¹⁵³ I use the overlaps between the essay and drawing as the opening to the possibility that a piece of what is demonstrably writing can sit within an expanded field of drawing. In *Elsewhere*, consideration was given to how the composition might mimic the progress of a drawing; or how passages of writing might mimic types in a drawing—say, how can a scene operate as a gestural drawing?¹⁵⁴

A common simile in definitions of ‘interpolate’ is to insert illustrations into a text. It holds within this research to in a sense reverse this: the essay is inserted into the field of drawing. Rather than drawing absorbing the essay, I intend for an expanded field of life-drawing that has the capacity of interpolating the essay. That is, the essay holds space as itself (like the illustration in the text) while being part of the expanded field of life-drawing.

The aim is to hold both the essay and drawing, without a collapse whereby the essay is *drawn* (as in executed through an autographic mark), but where the essay is able to be understood within an expanded field of drawing. The essay as essay, but also, the essay operates in the capacity of a drawing.

¹⁵³ As might be seen in Fiona Banner or Sean Lander’s work, discussed in Review of the Territory: (Expanded life-)drawing and the essay.

¹⁵⁴ This is addressed in Research Outcomes: Towards *Elsewhere*.

Expanded field of drawing

I use ‘expanded’ in relation to the form or outcome ‘drawing’ can take, whilst still being engaged with the tradition of drawing. The expansion of what can be understood as drawing has strong historical precedent and here, I focus briefly on drawing’s relationship to conceptual art as a moment of expanding drawing’s definition, as well as developing my argument for an expanded form of life-drawing in relation to Krauss’s ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’.

In the catalogue essay for *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions*, American curator Laura Hoptman notes that, in line with the shifts in materiality prompted by conceptual art more generally, drawing, too, underwent a loosening from the space of the page: “[...] drawing seemed to be everywhere—in scarifications of the landscape, in site-specific installations, in performance.”¹⁵⁵ Hoptman goes on to note, though, that as drawing evolved into actions such as walking or scattering, artists still used the more orthodox pencil-on-paper as a means of visual record, as diagram or transcription, for what was otherwise fleeting or metaphorical.¹⁵⁶ “This idea of drawing as an analogue to activity became essential to the development of Conceptual art, and it continues today among post-1980s conceptualists as the preferred method of translating artful actions into art objects.”¹⁵⁷ This parallel release of drawing from paper, alongside then using drawing as a subsidiary but more long-lasting transcription or diagram or record of drawing-activity interestingly complicates the old lineage of drawing being the precursor to painting or sculpture.¹⁵⁸ These diagrams and records become a form of observational drawing to the drawing-as-act. Drawing both becomes the work and refers to itself, in an oscillation that follows Code’s exchangeability of the subject/object, addressed in *Intimacy*.

¹⁵⁵ Hoptman, *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions*., 11.

¹⁵⁶ Hoptman, 11.

¹⁵⁷ Hoptman, 11.

¹⁵⁸ This relationship of drawing to painting and sculpture will be dealt shortly with in *Drawing* essaying drawing | essay essaying drawing.

A further influence on this research has been Krauss's 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', whereby, through a logical expansion of binaries, Krauss extends the possibilities of what can be considered sculpture, and as transitioning from a modernist framework and into a postmodern one.¹⁵⁹ Starting from a framework of 'sculpture' not being a privileged positive, but rather a form defined by what it is not—'not-landscape' and 'not-architecture'—Krauss then builds an expanded field of possibilities, which 'sculpture' is one peripheral term, "and one has thereby gained the 'permission' to think these other forms."¹⁶⁰ It is worth noting that, within what she has termed *marked sites* and *axiomatic structures* sit several artists and works that are also often situated within the expanded discipline of drawing, such as LeWitt and American artist Richard Long, and even works that are nominally drawing, such as American artist Walter De Maria's 1968 work *Mile Long Drawing*. All this is to note how porous the supposed boundaries of medium in general had become and remain still. To quote Krauss:

For, within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium—sculpture—but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium—photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself—might be used. Thus, the field provides both for an expanded but finite set of related positions for a given artist to occupy and explore, and for an organization of work that is not dictated by the conditions of a given medium [...] the logic of the space of post-modernist practice is no longer organized around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material.¹⁶¹

Relatedly, and relevant to drawing specifically, Emma Dexter writes: "We can have a very loose understanding of what drawing is, whatever the ground, or whether pencil, nib, or brush is utilized. Drawing is a feeling, an attitude that is betrayed in its handling as much as in the materials used."¹⁶² And in an echo of this, American art historian Anna Lovatt notes:

Instead of defining drawing in purely material or solely conceptual terms, we can think of it as a complex interplay of cognitive, somatic and material conventions. These conventions include processes of conceptualization and delineation, mark-making and erasure; particular

¹⁵⁹ Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', 41–44.

¹⁶⁰ Krauss, 38.

¹⁶¹ Krauss, 42–43.

¹⁶² Dexter in *Vitamin D*, 6.

supports, substrates and tools of inscription; and the tension between blankness and the trace. Drawing cannot be reduced to any one of these qualities—it is fundamentally relational and deceptively complex.¹⁶³

These commentaries, combined with conceptual art's general framing of the idea first and form second, set up a general argument for writing as visual art. We can also add this, again from LeWitt's 'Paragraphs on Conceptual art':

The idea itself, even if not made visual, is as much a work of art as any finished product. All the intervening steps—scribbles, sketches, drawings, failed works, models, studies, thoughts, conversations—are of interest. Those that show the thought process of the artist are sometimes more interesting than the final product.¹⁶⁴

These framings combine to set the scene for the essay qua drawing. While, though, this sets space for writing in a visual arts context, there remains an issue hinted at in LeWitt's 'Sentences on Conceptual Art': "If words are used, and they proceed from ideas about art, then they are art and not literature..."¹⁶⁵ In this estimation, the words become art and cede literature. That gives rise to a subsidiary question in this research of how to hold space for the essay *still as essay* in the essay qua drawing.

Writing, words, text exists within almost every definable discipline of contemporary art: within performance, photography and video art (select performance works of German artist Hanne Lippard; select video works of New Zealand artist Shannon Te Ao; select video works of New Zealand artist Sriwhana Spong; and select video works of New Zealand artist Marie Shannon, discussed in Review of the Territory); as text-based art practices or within painting practices (select paintings of American artist John Baldessari and New Zealand artist Colin McCahon; American artist Barbara Kruger's collages and Japanese artist Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit* both of whom are mentioned in Review of the Territory); and within conceptual practices, (select works of American artist Joseph Kosuth, Japanese artist On Kawara, French artist Sophie Calle, and New Zealand artists Maddie Leach and Julian Dashper). However, as writing is used within these other disciplines, its reading—both literal and figurative—is

¹⁶³ Anna Lovatt in *Vitamin D3 : Today's Best in Contemporary Drawing.*, 11.

¹⁶⁴ LeWitt, Gross, and Edwards, *Sol LeWitt*, 209.

¹⁶⁵ LeWitt, Gross, and Edwards, 215.

influenced, indeed often subsumed within, how the artwork functions as a performance, as a video, and so on. The work is also more likely to then be categorised as performance art, video art, conceptual art, etc., and not as, to follow that nominal form, writing art.¹⁶⁶ In all the above, I argue the writing becomes eclipsed by the other disciplines the artwork. Further, some forms of writing within art abound, but it largely abounds in what supports an art practice: the proposals, artist statements, docent labels, catalogue essays and monographs, to name a few.

This research intends to hold a place for writing *as writing* within an art practice. To fully investigate this question, I argue the writing in this project had to be positioned so much within ‘literature’ as it problematises its consumption as artwork. Its length as a piece of writing cannot easily be consumed within a gallery space; it doesn’t take a form of performance art or video art or other discipline; and I resisted using another conceptual flourish on the writing itself that would easily make the writing into a conceptual artwork.

The essay qua drawing’s complicating form became best embodied in the artist book. In its very name, the artist book positions itself with a foot in each camp of art traditions and writing traditions. I deal with this more fully, along with the other potential forms of presentation that I decided against, in Research Outcomes: Towards *Elsewhere*. However, at this point I turn to address the relationship between drawing and the essay particularly, as a case for the essay qua drawing.

Drawing essaying drawing | essay essaying drawing

My intention is not to categorically define either the essay or drawing, but to show those areas where the two overlap. These overlaps can seem anachronistic: I use, say, a definition of drawing that stems from the Renaissance, because even if that definition is now out-dated, it nevertheless feeds into how drawing operates nowadays.

¹⁶⁶ It is beyond the scope of this document to argue for ‘writing art’ more generally, this is just a *for instance*.

This section begins by tracing these overlaps through a selection of commentaries on both the essay and drawing, finding the reflections and parallels between the two. From these, I pull out and discuss a specific overlap in relation to my experience as a practitioner of both.

In the commentary around both essays and drawings, there is an inescapable sense that these two forms are perpetually suspended between various poles. For each, it is the slipperiness of form, tautly held, or shifting between, different points—provisional and complete, romantic and conceptual, thought and action—that practitioners and commentators revel in in discussions of essays and drawings.

Similar to Krauss's use of *not-landscape* and *not-architecture* in developing an expanded field of sculpture, the reason for tracing these internal equivocations is: by identifying the unfixed-ness inherent in definitions and understandings each, it allows an opening for how they might operate as a linked, expanded field.

American curator Bernice Rose notes, "For the Renaissance, drawing was both a poetic and scientific discipline with the highest intellectual credentials."¹⁶⁷ This sits as an interesting parallel to Adorno's assertion that the essay sits between art and science, not belonging to either: "Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done."¹⁶⁸ And this positioning as a discipline between two poles is echoed again in Dexter's framing of contemporary drawing: "Described crudely, contemporary art currently follows two main trajectories: the post-Conceptual and the neo-Romantic. Crucially, it is within the field of drawing that the inherent tensions and contradictions of these two directions are intriguingly played out."¹⁶⁹ In Fournier's situating of the essay in relation to autotheory (which situates between, among other poles, the self and theory), she writes: "Autotheory exists in the place between criticism and autobiography, which might be why it is so enmeshed, in different ways and to different effects, depending on the practice at hand, with the essay... Essaying and experimenting are both at the heart of

¹⁶⁷ Rose, *Drawing Now*, 9.

¹⁶⁸ Adorno, 'The Essay as Form', 152.

¹⁶⁹ Dexter in *Vitamin D*, 6.

autotheory as an aesthetic mode, where there are active and ongoing attempts being made to understand oneself and one's life in relation to others."¹⁷⁰

In their introductions to *Vitamin D* and *Vitamin D2*, Dexter and Rattemeyer respectively argue how, historically speaking, drawing's provisional nature has positioned it as both ubiquitous and indistinct. Dexter positions drawing as an almost definitional act of being a human: "Drawing is everywhere. We are surrounded by it—it is sewn into the warp and weft of our lives," and goes on, "Drawing is part of what it means to be human [...]"¹⁷¹ This enforces commentary by Hoptman when citing American artist Barnett Newman in the exhibition publication for *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions*: "... Newman swore that the first man, who happened to be an artist, made a line in the dirt with a stick, creating the first drawing and simultaneously the first artwork."¹⁷² Making a link between writing and drawing, British curator Kate MacFarlane posits "... all experience, including psychic, is experienced through language. Drawing is similarly foundational to human experience—to make a mark, with whatever material is to hand, is an innate drive shared by all."¹⁷³

However, in an interesting counterpoint to this, Rattemeyer posits: "Drawings that are premeditated as statements of significant heft and weight are rare, and more rarely still do we recognize them as masterworks in their own right, as shifters of historical discourse in a way that no other object could,"¹⁷⁴ later going on to say the only epochal drawing for him is, in fact, an act of erasure, American artist Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing*. This ghostly there-but-not-there positioning holds drawing in a stasis between importance and unimportance. Initially citing Virginia Woolf, New Zealand author Emma Neale writes of the essay, "As Woolf says elsewhere, compared to the poem or the novel, the essay is an almost formless form... In other words, there is not so much an essay *must* have. It doesn't need a narrative; it doesn't need prosody or line breaks; it doesn't even need an argument."¹⁷⁵ The common mutability at play in the above has been a compelling overlap for this research in understanding the potential porousness between the essay and drawing.

¹⁷⁰ Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*., 38.

¹⁷¹ Emma Dexter in *Vitamin D*, 6.

¹⁷² Hoptman, *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions*., 11.

¹⁷³ Macfarlane, 'Marking Language', 6.

¹⁷⁴ Price, *Vitamin D2: New Perspectives in Drawing*., 8.

¹⁷⁵ Neale, *Strong Words*, 8.

In considering trialling, attempting and searching in both essays and drawing, it's worth attending to the word essay itself.

Imagine a type of writing so hard to define its very name should be something like: an effort, an attempt, a trial. Surmise or hazard, followed likely by failure. Imagine what it might be to rescue from disaster and achieve at the levels of form, style, texture and therefore [...] at the level of thought. Not to mention feeling.¹⁷⁶

Defining both a literary form and the mode in which his works *Essays* (1580-1595) was written, French philosopher Michel de Montaigne used the richness of the French verb 'essayer' to imbue the title, and the books themselves, with essayer's various meanings: to attempt, to test, to exercise, to experiment.¹⁷⁷ So, built into the very name of the form, essay in a literal sense means trial, attempt. Indeed, Irish essayist Brian Dillon, goes on to note it is virtually a cliché for essays to open with a definition of essay: "The essay, so every article, treatise and lecture on the subject will inform us, is etymologically a test or textual sally with no pretension to the definitive nor ambition to exhaust its subject."¹⁷⁸ Dillon also extends the definition of essay to include the etymologically linked notion of assaying as well. In combination, essay and assay operate as both noun and verb within the discipline, and thus nominatively defining the form through notions of openness, trialling, working through, alongside the sense of diving deep to find that nugget of thought or feeling. As Adorno writes:

The word 'essay'—in which thought's utopia of hitting the bull's eye unites with the consciousness of its own fallibility and provisional nature—indicates something [...] about the form, the importance of which is magnified by the fact that it results not programmatically but as a characteristic of the form's groping intentions.¹⁷⁹

As poet and essayist Joan Retallack notes, "The German word for essay, *Versuch*, has "search" (*suche*)—seeking, tracking—embedded in it. *Versuch* is an experimental seeking whose writing—act and trace—accommodates clear directionalities and peculiar

¹⁷⁶ Dillon, *Essayism*, 11.

¹⁷⁷ Edelman, 'Michel de Montaigne'.

¹⁷⁸ Dillon, *Essayism*, 15.

¹⁷⁹ Adorno, 'The Essay as Form', 164.

contingencies.”¹⁸⁰ The essay, then, is a literary form invested, to a greater or lesser degree in searching rather than arriving.

In suggesting that the notion of the essay as a trial or attempt is only one layer of what an essay can be, New Zealand writer Ashleigh Young notes: “Some other possible meanings are: a swarm, a flourish, a preamble, a masterpiece, an amateur work... But maybe all essays—whether formal or familiar, literary or journalistic, academic or creative—enact the way that somebody’s mind can shape thought.”¹⁸¹ I want to follow up on this idea that the essay enacts the way somebody’s mind shapes a thought again in a different way shortly, but first is to notice how it relates to *primi pensieri*, and other earlier definitions of drawing raised in Intimacy.

This discussion of trialling and searching blends with notions of incompleteness that attach to both the essay and drawing. This sense of searching and incompleteness can also be seen in drawing’s traditional preparatory function in relation to painting and sculpture. Traditionally, drawing has oscillated between a mode used by artists to test and capture ideas before committing to final artworks, and a final work in its own right. Both Rose and Hoptman trace the shifting nature of drawing as *primi pensieri* and ‘presentation drawings.’¹⁸²

Unfinishedness, previously discussed here in Theoretical Framework: Trauma as form in relation to drawing also permeates commentaries about the essay. For instance, Adorno writes, “Luck and play are essential to the essay. It does not begin with Adam and Eve but with what it wants to discuss; it says what is at issue and stops where it feels itself complete—not where nothing is left to say.”¹⁸³ In a similar framing, Australian writer Astrid Lorange writes:

One of the formal distinctions of the essay is that it finishes; its duration is conceivably finite. But at what point does an essay finish? It is rarely a *dénouement*. There is rarely *one* moment of clarity (a scintillation, a lightning flash) that brings the essay into final be-ing. The essay is too slippery, too many things at once, to resolve finally.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Retallack, *The Poethical Wager*, 54.

¹⁸¹ ‘Ashleigh Young—5 Questions’.

¹⁸² Ashwin, ‘What Is a Drawing?’, 202; Hoptman, *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions.*, 11–12.

¹⁸³ Adorno, ‘The Essay as Form’, 152.

¹⁸⁴ Lorange, ‘The Essay As’.

As previously discussed, Rattemeyer and Rosand both raise the unfinishedness, or lack of closure in drawing. Furthering this, on drawing, Bryson writes:

Line gives you the image *together with* the whole history of its becoming-image. However definitive, perfect, unalterable the drawn line may be, each of its lines—even the last line that was drawn—is permanently open to the present of a time that is always unfolding; even that final line, the line that closed the image, is in itself open to a present that bars the act of closure. There *is* a final line, but the time of closing the image into a product, in the past tense, over and done with—that time of finally ending the image never fully arrives.¹⁸⁵

He explains this further with: “An immediate art then: The present of viewing and the present of the drawn line hook on to each other, mesh together like interlocking temporal gears; they co-inhabit an irreversible, permanently open and exposed field of becoming, whose moment of closure will never arrive.”¹⁸⁶ The essay and drawing hold themselves open by resisting full resolution, rather than closing off their presentness and immediacy through their similar, distinctive relationship to notions of the unfinished.

I see these commentaries closely relating to positioning of the essay as a form that is closely linked, or even between writing and thinking, or writing and reading. To take a few instances, DuPlessis writes: “These are works of ‘reading,’ for essays are acts of writing-as-reading.”¹⁸⁷ Lorange writes: “To compose an essay is to experiment: an attempt to approach the natural limits of one’s knowledge, ‘in time’, to engage critically with the experience of thinking, to essay, to wager. The presentness of the essay form asks: *what now*, and *now what*?”¹⁸⁸ She goes on: “The essay practices thinking-while-writing, a compositional process that moves knowledge forward to the limits of its language, *in language*.”¹⁸⁹ Adorno writes “The essay begins with such meanings and, itself being essentially language, it forces these meanings on further; it wants to help language, in its relation to concepts, to grasp these concepts reflexively in the way that they are already unconsciously named in language.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Norman Bryson in Zegher and Newman, *The Stage of Drawing*, 150.

¹⁸⁶ Norman Bryson in Zegher and Newman, 150.

¹⁸⁷ DuPlessis, ‘F-Words’, 17.

¹⁸⁸ Lorange, ‘The Essay As’.

¹⁸⁹ Lorange.

¹⁹⁰ Adorno, ‘The Essay as Form’, 160.

And to return to Young's proposition: "But maybe all essays... enact the way that somebody's mind can shape thought."

These, to me, suggest the essay as a generative site for the type of lived practice proposed by life-writing or, in this research, my expanded practice of life-drawing. Further, this positioning of attempting, testing, searching has echoes in writings on the process of drawing. John Berger describes a part of this process: "Drawing is a ceaseless process of correction. It proceeds by corrected errors".¹⁹¹ In this, he acknowledges that the process of drawing is one of seeing and reading what is being drawn in time, and recording, reviewing and revising those observations. As I wrote earlier in this document, for me, each mark of a drawing is an essay towards understanding. This aligns with my earlier discussions on accrual as a form of knowledge-building in intimacy. Relatedly, Rosand argues:

Drawing is a way of seeing and knowing, and the qualities of what is seen and known changes with the mode of drawing. Drawing records what has been seen and is known, but not after the fact: it is simultaneous with and, for the draftsman, identical to perception.¹⁹²

From this, Rosand establishes drawing as a form of knowledge-building that is, like the above definition of both intimacy and life-writing, active and present, synonymous with perception. This, in turn, is reflected by Adorno: "For the essay, unlike discursive thought, does not proceed blindly, automatically, but at every moment it must reflect on itself."¹⁹³ I draw from life: but by this I mean, I pull out, consider and try to make sense of things of a life that are observable to me, or experiences that are available to me, and that can then be extrapolated out in meaningful ways. This draws on Nicolaïdes aforementioned extension of what it means to see, via utilising as many senses as possible. This idea of observation is expanded, in my research, through broadening 'seeing' to something more akin to moving towards comprehension. It's the exclamation, "*I see...*" that comes from a process of grappling to understanding.

¹⁹¹ Berger and Savage, *Berger on Drawing*, 110.

¹⁹² Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, 110.

¹⁹³ Adorno, 'The Essay as Form', 170.

Theoretical Frameworks Conclusion

This section set out to address the first two research strands:

To study dissociation as a symptom of past trauma, and observation as a characteristic of intimacy, in order to explore their roles in an expanded practice of life-drawing.	This research inquiry proposes intimacy as a practice of observation to reinterpret dissociation from only obstructive, to a potential space for poiesis.
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And—

To explore forms of expanded drawing in a contemporary visual arts context that pushes from image and towards language/writing via the modes of observation and description.	This research inquiry proposes the essay qua drawing as part of an expanded practice of life-drawing. I combine this with the first research proposition to particularly position the essay qua drawing as a valuable mode of representing experiences of trauma and intimacy within a contemporary visual arts context.
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The first is addressed as thus: in developing the research towards exploring the negotiation between PTSD and intimacy, autotheory has offered an important framing for acknowledging the personal in relation to the theoretical. In particular, as I have engaged with, both creatively and academically, theories about trauma, symptoms of PTSD have inflected on every part of the research of trauma, meaning an objective, impersonal body of research was not possible. So, autotheory offers an important framing for the deep mingling in both this supporting document and in the research outcome *Elsewhere* of my personal experience with love, intimacy, trauma and healing, and the theories that contextualise them via an expanded life-drawing practice.

By investigating trauma, I was able to identify how it was asserting itself as uncontrolled form in earlier research experiments. Investigations into intimacy developed into proposing it as a practice of accrued observation, which I extrapolated out as both a way to draw my life (in an expanded sense) and also proposes as a pathway towards shifting dissociation from only obstructive, to a potential space for poesis.

I addressed the second strand thus: identifying trauma as a volatile element in my drawings meant developing the research towards language and writing. conceptual art's expanded forms of drawing, use of words and language in a visual arts context, and Krauss's 'Sculpture in an Expanded Field' became key frameworks for which to do this. A further refinement of this identified the essay and drawing as key forms between which exists a porous and productive middle ground, setting up the proposal of the essay qua drawing as part of an expanded practice of life-drawing. Via their crossovers and similarities, but with the addition of the essay's language-based foundation in the face of the unsaid in trauma, the essay qua drawing is proposed a valuable mode of representing co-experiences of trauma and intimacy.

This establishes four cornerstones through which I have identified particular visual arts practices as relevant to this research: trauma, intimacy, expanded practices of life-drawing and the essay. These relevant practices are discussed in the following chapter.

Review of the Territory

I. On literature

As my research sharpened focus on the relationship between drawing and the essay, this also sharpened my focus on my position in relation to writing and literature: I am an artist arguing for an expanded field of life-drawing, which can encompass the essay qua drawing. My position is as an artist first, not as a writer first. This creates a very specific direction of travel for this research, so one of the limits of this chapter is to focus on practices of artists that align with this. However, there are some key writers and writing practices I want to briefly acknowledge.

Essayists and writing practices

There are bodies of literature that are engaged with questions around writing after the epoch of conceptual art, or in the face of writing in the digital age. A key proponent that was an earlier influence on this research was American poet Kenneth Goldsmith and his book *Uncreative Writing*¹⁹⁴. The direction of travel in this instance is of Goldsmith as a writer drawing from conceptual art to interrogate the role of writing in the digital age. Given *Uncreative Writing*'s relationship with the strategies of conceptual art, it was a model which I could have followed if the research had continued in earlier forms (such as the drawings introduced in *Trauma as Form*). However, as the relationship between the essay and drawing

¹⁹⁴ Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*.

developed, Uncreative Writing became less relevant. So, while I find it an interesting as a field, it is ultimately not useful to this research.

During this research I have engaged with different writers, from essayists and memoirists to poets and art writers, to develop my understanding of the territory of the essay, and the form *Elsewhere* could take. Some of the most significant were: Annie Ernaux's *The Years*¹⁹⁵; Brian Dillon's *Essayism*¹⁹⁶; Rebecca Solnit's *The Faraway Nearby*¹⁹⁷; Leslie Jamison's two collections *The Empathy Exams*¹⁹⁸ and *Make it Scream, Make it Burn*¹⁹⁹; Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me*²⁰⁰; Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*²⁰¹; Anthony Byrt's *This Model World: Travels to the edge of contemporary art*²⁰²; Helen Rickerby's *How to Live*²⁰³; and various essays in both Lydia Davis' collection *Essays*²⁰⁴ and Zadie Smith's *Changing My Mind*²⁰⁵. However, these are works of writers engaged with the practice of writing, so while influential, they are not engaged with the essay qua drawing, or from a position as artist in relation to writing, so are beyond the scope of this chapter.

More relevant to this research is Chris Kraus's *I Love Dick*²⁰⁶ and Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*²⁰⁷. Both books have been cited previously in this document in relation to life-writing and autotheory. Both are engaged with the intricacies of relationships, and particularly romantic relationships, and in positioning themes like love and intimacy in relation to critical and theoretical practices and contexts. Nelson and Kraus both work at the nexus of art and literature, Kraus as writer, editor and filmmaker, and Nelson as a writer working across genres from poetry and essays to art criticism and art history. And both books have been important as models of life-writing from which I began to frame my understanding of an expanded practice of life-drawing. However, my various research outcomes, and in particular the framing of the essay qua drawing, focus on the relationship between drawing

¹⁹⁵ Ernaux, *The Years*.

¹⁹⁶ Dillon, *Essayism*.

¹⁹⁷ Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby*.

¹⁹⁸ Jamison, *The Empathy Exams: Essays*.

¹⁹⁹ Jamison, *Make It Scream, Make It Burn: Essays*.

²⁰⁰ Coates, *Between the World and Me*.

²⁰¹ Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*.

²⁰² Byrt, *This Model World*.

²⁰³ Rickerby, *How to Live*.

²⁰⁴ Davis, *Essays*.

²⁰⁵ Smith, *Changing My Mind*.

²⁰⁶ Kraus, *I Love Dick*.

²⁰⁷ Nelson, *The Argonauts*.

and writing, which is not the intention of either of their works. So, while important to the general framing, they are fundamentally different to my research outcomes.

Art history surveys of trauma in contemporary art

Vivien Green Fryd's *Against Our Will*²⁰⁸ and American art historian Nancy Princenthal's *Unspeakable Acts*²⁰⁹ both address representations of sexual trauma in American art, particularly addressing the period from 1970. It is not coincidental that representations in art of sexual trauma by survivors came to the fore in this period as feminist movements began clamouring for recognition of traumas, like rape, that are more typically (although not exclusively) inflicted on women and children.²¹⁰

Princenthal's work offers a history of this period of art, and in particular performance art, addressing how sexual violence was interrogated by artist such as Yoko Ono, Marina Abramović and Adrian Piper. Fryd's book similarly addresses American art practices that use multifaceted forms to talk explicitly and implicitly about, in particular, sexual trauma like rape and incest. Her book's scope covers: the narrative figuration in Faith Ringgold's twenty-one quilts that make up her *Slave Rape Series* (1972-73) and Kara Walker's multidisciplinary works (discussed in brief shortly) addressing the manifold traumas and violence—including sexual trauma—against African American people during the history of slavery, and the intergenerational trauma from that; the performances and conscious raising groups of the 1970s that, “helped define rape as a crime of aggression against and power over women,”; and contemporary performances and public art that again reassert the trauma of rape in the face of US president (and alleged sexual predator) Trump-era softening of rape on campus measures.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Fryd, *Against Our Will : Sexual Trauma in American Art since 1970*.

²⁰⁹ Princenthal, *Unspeakable Acts*.

²¹⁰ Jensen, ‘Testimony’, 67; Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 28–32.

²¹¹ Fryd, *Against Our Will : Sexual Trauma in American Art since 1970*., 24–26.

There are multiple crossovers between these books, including their focus on artists such as Walker, Jenny Holzer, Suzanne Lacy and more. However, the project of Fryd's research is to go beyond the insight of, "sexual violence in art as subject and subtext... to argue specifically that such works of art confront, represent, reenact and negotiate trauma."²¹² This makes Fryd's book of particular interest to this research.

The artists she addresses most commonly use forms of figuration, symbolism and performance to, as Fryd positions, 'work-through' their trauma. Fryd says of 'working-through,' "It enables the traumatized person to gain critical distance from the past and the possibility of coming to terms with trauma, although wounds often cannot heal without leaving scars or residues from the past—the aftereffects of trauma."²¹³ To address this, Fryd examines how certain artists use the forms of trauma to show how it is intentionally embedded into the artworks. As she writes: "I show that the artists considered here often manifest it in formal distortions, narrative and visual ruptures and gaps, compulsive repetition of images and themes, and technical imperfections."²¹⁴ This observation from Fryd, which I read after tracing the manifestations of trauma forms in my own drawings, is a fascinating alignment in our research. As Fryd states: "*Against Our Will* has the distinctive aim of increasing public awareness about how works of art since the last quarter of the twentieth century interrogate sexual violence."²¹⁵ Testimony and witnessing are a key aspect of Fryd's research, and she defines it as:

... Viewers of an artwork that addresses trauma... become witnesses, albeit belated ones, enabling the artwork to provide testimony in visual and written form for various audiences both public and private... The act of bearing witness enables the survivor to be heard by the listener, recasting the trauma as a performative act in which, as Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas explain, 'the listener becomes witness to the witness,' sharing the burden for 'the sake of collective memory'.²¹⁶

Fryd goes on:

²¹² Fryd, 19.

²¹³ Fryd, 24.

²¹⁴ Fryd, 22.

²¹⁵ Fryd, 27.

²¹⁶ Fryd, 23.

... Individual trauma can enter into the collective archive to affect those not directly affected by the initial trauma... The reader, viewer and/or listener of a traumatic narrative not only bears witness to the narrator's account but can also experience his or her own secondhand trauma.²¹⁷

In the chapter 'Testimony' for *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*,²¹⁸ Jensen writes that testimonial narratives follow a recognisable three-part arc: "... The first 20 per cent speaks to the time before the victimization, the core 60 per cent is concerned with details of suffering and the final 20 per cent recounts the time after when justice and/or recognition is sought for and/or gained."²¹⁹ In this chapter she fulsomely outlines the history, definitions, forms and risks of testimony, particularly in relation to forms of legal testimony. This chapter helped shape my understanding of the relationship that *Elsewhere* has to testimony, when I consider the role of the reader to the work, which I touched on in Theoretical Framework: Intimacy, and I address further in Research Outcomes: Towards *Elsewhere*.

There are two key divergences from both Fryd and Princenthal's books and this research: the first is while *Elsewhere* touches on childhood trauma generally and sexual abuse particularly, the primary focus of *Elsewhere* is not to focus on the index events of trauma to create a form of testimony, as outlined by Jensen, but instead to address the multifaceted interrelation for me in dealing with the aftermath of trauma, that is C-PTSD in relation to intimacy. Further, *Elsewhere* is interested in the effects of forms of dissociation as both destructive, and potentially generative of poiesis, and the hinterland between these two points.

Second, the works these authors address focus mainly on forms of figuration and performance, both of which this research has turned away from. The works that do deal with texts (such as the works of American artists: Suzanne Lacy's book *Rape Is* (1972)²²⁰, Jenny Holzer's *Truisms* (1977-79)²²¹ and *Lustmord* (1993)²²², Barbara Kruger's *Your Body Is a*

²¹⁷ Fryd, 23.

²¹⁸ Jensen, 'Testimony'.

²¹⁹ Jensen, 71.

²²⁰ Fryd, *Against Our Will: Sexual Trauma in American Art since 1970.*, 30–31.

²²¹ Fryd, 153.

²²² Princenthal, *Unspeakable Acts*, 231–33.

Battleground (1989)²²³), do so in ways that are fundamentally different to what I propose via the essay qua drawing.

²²³ Princenthal, 122.

II. Visual Arts

As discussed in the conclusion of the previous chapter, I have identified four cornerstones to this research, the interrelations between which form the basis of this research: intimacy, trauma, the essay and an expanded practice of life-drawing. The following artists are addressed because their work or practices sit at the nexus of some or all of these cornerstones. Another decision behind this selection is where the artist book has formed a key part of the works. This section is structured from the more generally relevant practices or artworks, before moving towards increasingly relevant works. It begins with examples dealing with trauma and intimacy, then addresses examples at a nexus of (expanded life-)drawing and writing, before considering more closely the book as artwork.

Trauma and Intimacy

Representations of trauma and intimacy occur throughout the visual arts. The traumas represented in these practices can be individual or collective. Intimacy is understood as complicated and mediated: by trauma, by grief, by politics, or just by the fact that interpersonal relationships *are* complex. While this non-exhaustive collection of artists and practices are important foundations to my interrogation of these themes, they fall outside the scope of this research for reasons that I outline accordingly.

Two performance works of Japanese artist Yoko Ono and Serbian artist Marina Abramović form interesting mirrors: Ono's *Cut Piece* and the first performance of Abramović's *Rhythms O* (1974). In a chapter tellingly titled 'Looking for Trouble', Princenthal draws these two works together as performances that engage with different valences between the artist's

vulnerability and the latent violence of the audience to (in very different ways) reproduce still-pernicious myths of sexual violence (a defining element of trauma).²²⁴ At various points, both artists have also explored themes of intimacy (notably Abramović's *The Artist is Present*) but this research diverges with the practices of both these artists. Abramović is a performance artist, and this research moved away from a performance-based outcome, the reasons for which are outlined in Research Outcomes: Performed essays. Ono's work has, at times, centred on the use of words, such as her book of instructions for artworks, *Grapefruit*, but the intention of *Grapefruit* diverges significantly from my research outcomes.

In painting and drawing, American artist Kara Walker and South African artist William Kentridge express the intergenerational trauma of, respectively, slavery in the USA and apartheid segregation in South Africa. Walker's figurative works have centred on the motif of the silhouette, and have used multiple disciplines from, painting and drawing to magic-lantern shows, sculpture and animation. As Princenthal notes, the form of the silhouette, "[reprises] a genteel art popular in the Victorian era."²²⁵ Walker uses this 'genteel' form to illustrate the fundamental brutality and trauma of slavery.²²⁶ Because of her engagement with figuration to represent trauma, my research significantly diverges from Walker's practice.

Kentridge's *Drawing for Projections* (1989-2011) are a series of animated films made over twenty years and meditating on the fraught history of apartheid South Africa.²²⁷ Begun towards the end of apartheid, traversing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and beyond, the works are intertwined with the cultural and intergenerational trauma of apartheid. On this, Kentridge has said:

I have never tried to make illustrations of apartheid, but the drawings and films are certainly spawned by and feed off the brutalized society left in its wake ... I am interested in a political art, that is to say, an art of ambiguity, contradiction, uncompleted gestures, and uncertain endings.²²⁸

²²⁴ Princenthal, 36–46.

²²⁵ Princenthal, 234.

²²⁶ Fryd, *Against Our Will: Sexual Trauma in American Art since 1970*, 223; Princenthal, *Unspeakable Acts*, 234.

²²⁷ Maksud, 'William Kentridge'.

²²⁸ 'William Kentridge: Ten Drawings for Projections'.

This series is of interest to this research because of their very particular form of drawing. To create the animated sequences, Kentridge uses a mutual process of marks and erasure. Each film is constructed from a series of charcoal drawings, within which Kentridge carefully recorded the subtle erasures and re-drawings to create stop-motion movement. This pendulumlike process of accrual and erasure speaks eloquently of trauma-memory, outlined in *Theoretical Frameworks: Trauma as form*. Traces of previous marks can never be fully erased, meaning a palimpsest of the past marks reverberates through the present-time in the films. For me, this series is a powerful attestation of drawing as a form almost definitionally entwined with trauma. My research separated from Kentridge's practice, though, as I moved away from drawing as such, towards the essay qua drawing, as a more flexible form through which I could directly investigate personal trauma. Relatedly Kentridge's films centre on fictional characters to address collective trauma; *Elsewhere* centres on personal experience of individual trauma.



Figure 6 | William Kentridge, *Drawing for the film History of the Main Complaint*, 1995–96. Charcoal and pastel on paper, 80 × 120.6 cm. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, gift of Susan and Lewis Manilow, 2001.28. Photo: Nathan Keay. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery. © William Kentridge

In modes of sculpture and installation French artist Louise Bourgeois and Cuban-born American artist Felix González-Torres have been of interest to this research, for their close entwining of trauma and intimacy. González-Torres has been important to this research because of his contribution to the canon of the intimate couple in art. His broader concerns dealt with the political and societal discrimination against the homosexual community, how this created the woeful response to the AIDS epidemic, and the complex interplay between the personal and collective trauma as both witness and victim of the ensuing AIDS crisis.

González-Torres' work frequently centred on his relationship with his partner Ross Laycock, who died of AIDS complication five years before González-Torres did. This was so much so, it has been noted, "Overall, González-Torres' work is well and truly organised around an autobiographical project, but a two headed, shared autobiography".²²⁹ Love, the same illness and death entwined González-Torres' autobiography with Laycock's biography. Through pairs of clocks and pairs of lightbulbs, his works used the form of the synchronised pair falling, ultimately, out of sync to acknowledge this. González-Torres' work addresses the intimacy of their individual and shared stories, exemplifying, for me, the exquisite tension of intimacy's proximate boundary.

To pick up again on Berlant's examination of intimacy:

... Minor intimacies have been forced to develop aesthetics of the extreme to push these spaces into being by way of small and grand gestures; the wish for normalcy everywhere heard these days, voiced by minoritized subjects, often express a wish not to have to push so hard in order to have 'a life'.²³⁰

And this was no more so than in the political, and correspondingly public criminalising what ought to be personal and private: consenting, adult love. González-Torres' works' brief, untitled titles parenthetically contained the pathos behind what's not said directly. This indirectness was intentional. But it was not indirectness as hiding; it was indirectness as subversion. As he explained: "Two clocks side by side are more of a threat to power than the image of two guys giving each other a blow job because it cannot use me as a rallying point

²²⁹ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 51.

²³⁰ Berlant, 'Intimacy: A Special Issue', 285.

in its struggle to obliterate meaning.”²³¹ Writing on this, Foster et al note: “In his art, then, González-Torres attempted to carve out of heterosexual space a lyrical-elegiac place for gay subjectivity and history.”²³²

In forms of conceptual art, González-Torres found a methodology to talk about the personal and public trauma of the AIDS epidemic, as well as his private love in the face of the political oppression. “[He employed] what could be called the vernacular of Conceptualism—in which ideas of time, repetition, tautology, measuring, synchronicity/asynchronicity, quoting, using everyday objects etc. abound—and they charge it with a politico-emotional investment that transcends these methodological concerns.”²³³ At first glance, there’s a sweetness to the works’ forms—baby blue curtains, scrambled piles of candy, strings of lights. Second glance shows time running down; stacks being eroded; candies being taken. As González-Torres stated:

Freud said that we rehearse our fears in order to lessen them ... [so] this refusal to make a monolithic sculpture, in favour of a disappearing, changing, unstable and fragile form was an attempt on my part to rehearse my fears of having Ross disappear day by day right in front of my eyes.²³⁴

González-Torres’ practice has been an important touchstone for this research in understanding the intense interweaving that can occur between experiences of trauma and intimacy. My research is distinct from González-Torres’ work because of the ultimate form *Elsewhere* took of essay qua drawing. Also, González-Torres’ interlacing of public and private intimacy, and public and private trauma and its still-relevant political commentary means his practice has a far broader scope than the private look at intimacy and trauma *Elsewhere* seeks to explore.

Bourgeois’ work is a complex interweaving of a spectrum of experience, from childhood trauma through to motherhood. She explored these themes largely through figuration and symbolism in painting and sculpture through a practice influenced by surrealism. Bourgeois’ troubled childhood is often cited alongside her work through anecdotes that, to me, hint at the

²³¹ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, pp 55-56.

²³² Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 610.

²³³ Heiser, *Romantischer Konzeptualismus*, 80.

²³⁴ Collins, *Sculpture Today*, 289.

possibility of C-PTSD: “... Her father had installed his mistress in the family home, systematically undermining the self-esteem of his wife and daughters.”²³⁵ Other art historians talk of her eventually “escaping” him, and note her art, “[oscillates] between suggestions of damage and reparation.”²³⁶ While Bourgeois’ examination of her childhood trauma is an important forerunner to this research, her use of symbolism and her predominant engagement with sculpture and installation mean this research moves away from Bourgeois’ practice.



Figure 7 | Marie Shannon, *What I Am Looking At*, 2011. Still. Single channel, digital video, 7 min 10 sec. Courtesy of the artist © Marie Shannon. Image sourced: <https://www.circuit.org.nz/work/what-i-am-looking-at>

Selected text-based videos of New Zealand artist Marie Shannon (the suite *What I’m Looking At* (2011), *The Aachen Faxes* (2012) and *The Rooms in the House* (2016)) and British-Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum (*Measures of Distance*) address aspects of intimacy. In each the intimacy is mediated through different lenses, in Shannon’s case, grief after the death of her husband, and in Hatoum’s case the trauma of separation from her family caused by war.

²³⁵ Hipkins, *After Modern Art: 1945–2000*, 152.

²³⁶ Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 500.

Shannon's work is relevant to this research because of the strategy of the removing the visual representation in favour of text. In the place of images or objects, she positions writing as the artwork. Each of these text-based videos is a pared back, restrained response to grief, flicking between the mundanity and the monumentality of the loss of her late-partner, the artist Julian Dashper. Made over a five-year period and beginning two years after his death, the tenor shifts between each. Shannon sorts through the contents of his studio the year after he died in *What I am Looking At*; she edits his faxes in *The Aachen Faxes*; and as Shannon readies the family home for sale, in the textual exchange of *The Rooms in the House*, she and Leo (her and Dashper's son) wander through their memories of the spaces and things of the house the three of them shared. Intimacy, and the long tail of grief interweave through these works.

Hatoum's *Measures of Distance* uses layers of words: a taped conversation between her and her mother; the Arabic text of a series of letters from her mother moving over the screen; and Hatoum reading, in English, the texts of these letters. The imagery in the film starts as abstract, shadowy, almost painterly close-ups that slowly pull back, over the course of the video, and resolve into a series of still images of her mother's naked body. The relationship between the fragments of images and the multiplicity of texts takes something like the forms of trauma discussed in Theoretical Frameworks: Trauma as form. Her mother's letters speak of longing and love while revealing intergenerational trauma from war and exile over multiple generations. Of this work, Hatoum says:

Although the main thing that comes across is a very close and emotional relationship between mother and daughter, it also speaks of exile, displacement, disorientation and a tremendous sense of loss as a result of the separation caused by war ... the work is constructed visually in such a way that every frame speaks of literal closeness and implied distance.²³⁷

While Shannon and Hatoum's works are instructive in how they address intimacy and trauma through a predominance of words, they diverge from my research outcomes because of their positioning as video works.

American artist Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* offered a model of how parts this research might have developed, had I continued with essays performed in relation to

²³⁷ Mona Hatoum cited in Manchester, 'Mona Hatoum: Measures of Distance'.

installations of found objects, such as *To Essay (a relationship)*²³⁸. Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* explores the mother/child relationship, tracing the first six years of her son's life, from birth to language acquisition, ending when he could write his own name.²³⁹ Described as, "... An art project that exists somewhere between a psychoanalytic case-study and an ethnographic field report,"²⁴⁰ the six parts of work were made up of over a hundred individual 'plaques.' These plaques wove various types of images and texts together, from the child's vests, nappy liners, scribbles, and hand moulds, to Kelly's diaristic reflections, transcripts of conversations with her child and pieces of psychoanalytic theory.²⁴¹ *To Essay (a relationship)* was a two-part work: an installation of found objects related to Justin and my life, and an essay that played over headphones. The text of the essay traced aspects of our relationship through these objects. This work shares some similarities with Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* as tracing a relationship through the form of various types of text and found object. However, as my research developed away from the found object, works such as this became less appropriate to the research.

(Expanded life-)drawing and the essay

The following artists are selected for this section based on where I see aspects of expanded life-drawing, and/or writing. This is often (but not always) additional to themes of trauma and intimacy, and I have noted this where appropriate.

²³⁸ These works are dealt with fully in Research Outcomes: Performed essays.

²³⁹ Wood, *Conceptual Art.*, 72–73.

²⁴⁰ Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 574.

²⁴¹ Wood, *Conceptual Art.*, 72–73; Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 574; 'Post-Partum Document, 1973-97'.

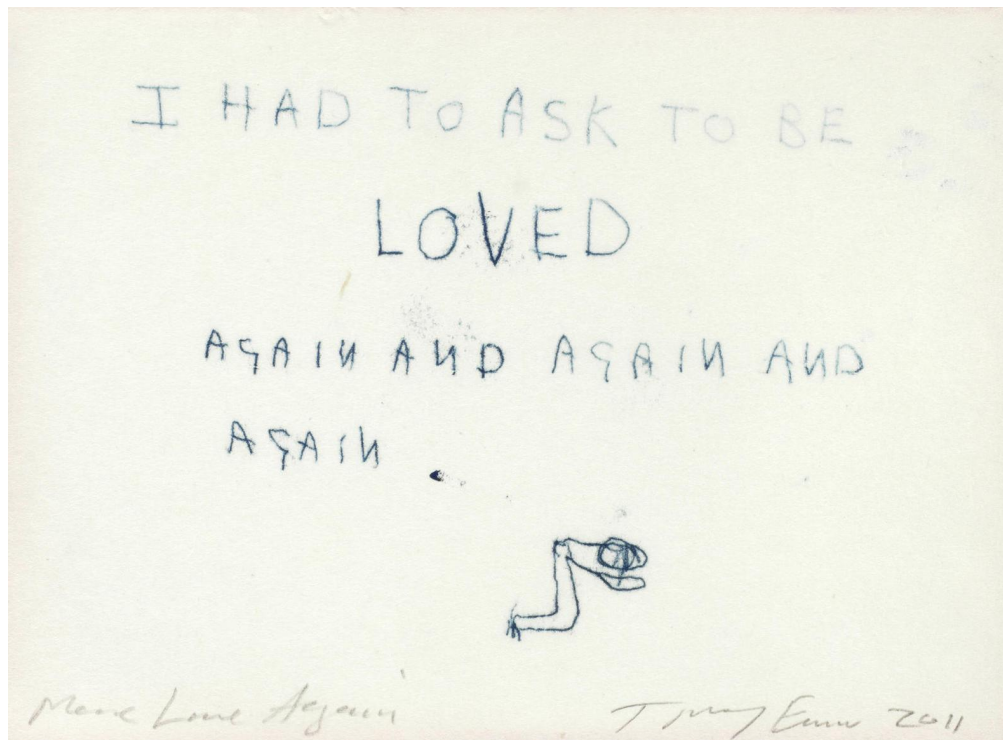


Figure 8 | Tracey Emin, *More Love Again*, 2011. Monoprint on paper, 15 x 20.5 cm. © Tracey Emin. DACS/Copyright Agency, 2022. Image sourced: http://www.artnet.com/artists/tracey-emin/more-love-again-LiZ8OQqQBEY6kylSfQ__Mg2

Tracey Emin

British artist Tracey Emin's confessional and autobiographical practice spans multiple disciplines, from painting to film to sewn appliqué. Here, though, I briefly focus on her various monoprints, which she has been making since the 1990s. These works are relevant to this research via their immediate, diaristic nature, which gives fragmented glances of Emin's life, memories and experiences. This could be considered a form of what I have outlined as expanded life-drawing. I am not able to speak of this body of works in its entirety, so am addressing a selection of them that typifies what I have been able to access, namely: *More Love Again* (2011), *Fuck You Eddy* (1995) and *Terribly Wrong* (1997).

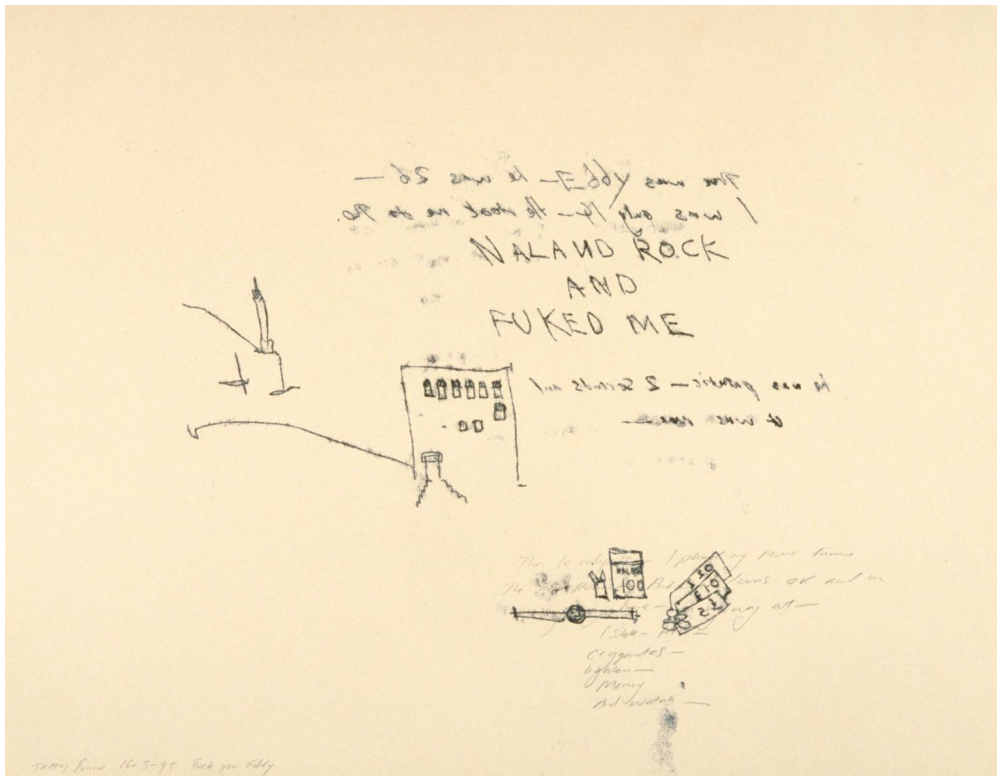


Figure 9 | Tracey Emin, *Fuck You Eddy*, 1995. Monoprint on paper, 58.4 x 75.2 cm. Tate Collection. © Tracey Emin. DACS/Copyright Agency, 2022. Image source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/emin-fuck-you-eddy-p11569>

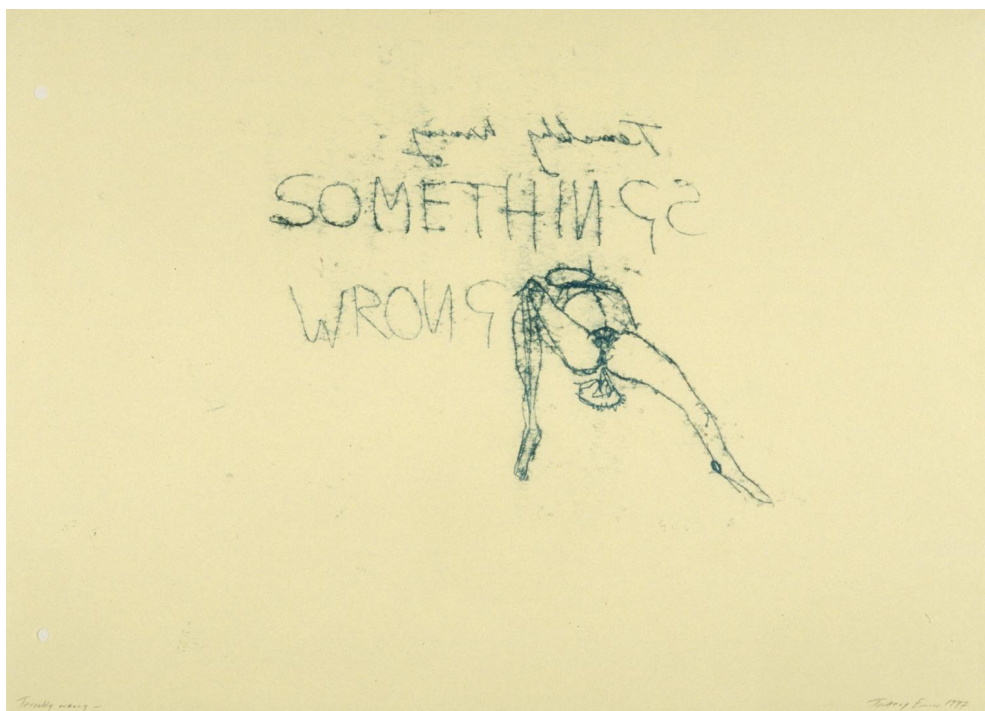


Figure 10 | Tracey Emin, *Terribly Wrong*, 1997. Monoprint on paper, 58.2 x 81.1 cm. Tate Collection. © Tracey Emin. DACS/Copyright Agency, 2022. Image source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/emin-terribly-wrong-p11565>

A monoprint is a one-off form of print, as opposed to other forms of printmaking whereby multiples of the same image can be produced. In this way, for me, the monoprint—and particularly the way Emin uses it—has some affinity with the kind of immediacy and authenticity I have noted in relation to drawing, but also some marked differences, as I will go into shortly.²⁴² The outputs of Emin’s monoprint practice are sometimes purely images, sometimes purely text, and frequently combinations of both. Emin’s monoprints use handwriting rather than typography, which, in relation to her works it has been argued: “The use of handwriting contributes a personal and intimate element, which cannot be recreated through typography, revealing errors and imperfections, representing the private self through the intimacy of script.”²⁴³ The relationship between handwriting and drawing are picked up further in relation to Sean Landers’ work and the exhibition *Drawing Time, Reading Time*. Because of the need to write in reverse in monoprints, Emin’s handwriting is often stilted, individual letters frequently backwards. This then is occasionally overlaid with her more flowing hand, sometimes still in reverse as in *Fuck You Eddy*. The effect is the writing is sometimes difficult to make out, another theme that is further explored in relation to Fiona Banner and Sean Landers.

Emin’s works are startling and raw, the subject matter revealing experiences of rage, loss, grief, trauma, and deep, lingering need for love. Collectively, what’s been called their diaristic nature has an unfiltered immediacy that come across—at first glance—like jagged shards of a life. This is, I believe, interestingly complicated by the effort it takes to write in mirror image for a monoprint so passages of the writing read mostly the correct way. As with Jensen’s stages of testimony²⁴⁴ addressed in *Intimacy*, Emin’s mediation, editing and shaping these works for an audience talks interestingly about what I outlined earlier as some of the risks of intimacy, particularly in the articulation of trauma. Emin uses the trope of raw, intimate, immediate communication, like a note crying out for help, but her use of the monoprint and the layers of process that mediate these communications shows her awareness of herself as artist making works for a visual arts audience.

²⁴² Establishing any sort of hardline between drawing and printing, or going further into discussions about the nature of print is not the purpose of this document, this is only to note this as one of many interesting overlaps between printing and drawing.

²⁴³ Girling-Jones, ‘The Self and Text’.

²⁴⁴ Jensen, ‘Testimony’ As previously discussed in *Theoretical Framework: Intimacy as pressure*.

While I can draw links between Emin's monoprints and this research via her monoprint's use of language and the way they traverse subjects of trauma and intimacy, my research diverges from Emin's because the essay as form is different from the way Emin engages with writing. Further, as I go into shortly, this research is engaged with displacing autographical marks, such as handwriting.

On Kawara

This section focusses on On Kawara's *Today* series, and tangentially acknowledge series such as *I Got Up*, *I Met*, *I Went*, *I Read* as a form of expanded life-drawing. On Kawara's reserved but expansive oeuvre covered within this selection are conditioned by a key internal contradiction: in all their brevity and repetition his works *insist* on his presence, while he remained physically absent from the work. He gave no interviews, never attending openings and was rarely photographed.²⁴⁵ But all the while his daily-accruing body of works acted like a Morse code message from somewhere else, tap-tap-tapping away over a five-decade period, stating—figuratively and literally—I am still alive. And while his works systematically and intentionally recorded a few dry and mundane parts of life, en masse, they speak eloquently and poignantly about a life lived.

The paintings in On Kawara's *Today* series consisted of the date painted in the language and format of the country he was in at the time;²⁴⁶ each came in a presentation box with an article from the local newspaper attached inside the lid. A less widely known part of the series was his subtitling of each painting. The subtitles, a mix of newspaper headlines and personal details of his life, aren't shown publicly with the paintings.

Mar. 11, 1966 "The killer of Wendy Sue Wolin, 7, is still hiding some where." [*sic.*]

Mar. 20, 1966 "Taeko kissed me. I asked her 'are you all right?'" [*sic.*]

Mar. 21, 1966 "Spring has come and the lost H-Bomb in Spain sinks deeper into the sea."²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Holte, '29,771 Days: On Kawara's Workload.', 7; Curnow, 'Autobiography: Does It Have a Future?', 15.

²⁴⁶ When in countries that didn't use the Roman alphabet, Kawara would substitute with Esperanto.

²⁴⁷ This selection of subtitles from Jung-Ah Woo, 'On Kawara's "Date Paintings": Series of Horror and Boredom', 66 & 67.

Jung-Ah Woo argues these odd and contradictory rules of the *Today* series challenge notions of meaning within the work:

... The seemingly arbitrary mixture of newspaper headlines with the artist's intimate details of the everyday resists any attempt to construct a coherent meaning or to determine the intent of the *Date Paintings*... Usually, only the *Date Paintings* themselves are exhibited in public, with their meaningless, tautological language foregrounding their existence as serial objects. The bland surfaces and mechanical system of numbering of the *Date Paintings* suppress the chaotic presence of death and suffering in the subtitles.²⁴⁸

On Kawara's time-based works such as his *Date Paintings* and *I am still alive* series were important to the development of the drawings previously discussed, in particular, *The days we've been together*, and *A line that, in theory, can connect us*. However, I delineate a difference between our practice because On Kawara's focus was primarily on his life, and my work is focussed on aspects of a relationship. My work, too, is more explicitly focussed on 'emotional' themes such as intimacy and trauma. While these themes are locatable in On Kawara's work (such as in the subtitles of the date paintings) they are latent. Latterly, as my research outcome moved more towards the essay and drawing, On Kawara's work has become less integral to this research.

Fiona Banner

British artist Fiona Banner's work is relevant to this research given its broad interrogation of text in, as and through art. Starting at art school, Banner used language as a medium to contend with, as she terms it, "the impossibility of the image... Increasingly, it seemed I couldn't get into making art through working with imagery," she says. "I started with words, in order to renegotiate a subject—at least for myself—by looking at it in different forms."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ Jung-Ah Woo, 67.

²⁴⁹ Le Brun, 'War and Words'.

A significant proportion of her practice is involved with the artist book and various modes of publication, as well as text-works that take the form of painting or sculpture or performance.

A significant part of Banner's practice is her 'wordscapes', her term for handwritten or printed text retellings in her own words of movies, drawn from popular culture to porn.²⁵⁰

One such work is her artist book, *The Nam*, which offer an interesting parallel to my dual use of the word 'description' in relation to drawing (addressed in the introduction). *The Nam* is a thousand-page, moment-by-moment written description of several fictional movies about the Vietnam War. *The Nam* and other of her works like this have been talked about in relation to Uncreative Writing, which is a distinct difference with this research.²⁵¹ In their anthology *Against Expression*, Craig Dworkin and Goldsmith note: "The text makes no distinction between films or scenes, instead creating an epic, nonstop onslaught of language."²⁵² They go on to argue that, in spite of Banner's mechanical writing process, her subjectivities remain apparent in the writing.²⁵³

However, it is in both Banner's choice of subject and her process of writing I see key differences with this research: my research is based on the personal, and, where it does describe media such as movies or artworks, it does so within this personal context.



Figure 11 | Fiona Banner, *Nude Performance*, 2010, *Other Criteria* book launch. Photo by Ashley Buttle. Courtesy of artist © Fiona Banner. Image source: <http://fionabanner.com/performance/nudeothercriteria/index.htm?i26>. Full photograph shows nude model to the right of the image.

²⁵⁰ Princenthal, 'The Body of the Text.'

²⁵¹ Perlow, 'The Conceptual War Machine: Agonism and the Avant-Garde'; Dworkin and Goldsmith, *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*.

²⁵² Dworkin and Goldsmith, *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*, 60.

²⁵³ Dworkin and Goldsmith, 60.

Another related strand is her series of performance nudes as a mode of expanded life-drawing, of which I will address two in particular as examples: *Split Nude* (2007) and *Nude Standing* (2006). Banner's 'performance nudes' draw on the temporal and linguistic nature of life drawing, and do so in a way that can be situated as expanded life-drawing. Through describing the act of herself looking at a model, her work acknowledges the temporal roots of a drawing: that is it takes place *in time*, experientially for the artist and (in this case) for the person posing for her. This relates to Bryson's noting of saccadic vision establishing the temporality of drawing.²⁵⁴ But this established temporality is largely overridden by the spatial experience of viewing the drawing: the viewer can mostly take in a drawing with a single glance, belying the temporal roots.

The performance nudes are interesting to this research because, even at its outset, the writing is hinged between art and literature: in place of a drawing of a life model, the viewer encounters a description of what the artist is observing: a blow-by-blow, experiential, in-the-artist's-head description. But what the viewer first encounters is something that looks like a drawing—undeniably a text-based drawing, but a drawing, nonetheless.

²⁵⁴ See Intimacy: arrucal as a practice of observation.

ONE LEG COCKED. HER ARSE SWAYING OUT LEFT
 SO THE SKIN FOLDS WHERE HER RIBS MEET HER HIP
 FACE SOAKED IN SHADOW HALF INDIVISIBLE FROM HAIR
 LIGHTLY SWAYING FROM LEFT TO RIGHT. SHADOW SHIFTING
 LIGHT COMING DOWN ONTO THE CROWN OF HER HEA-
 D, AND FOREHEAD. HAIR FALLING DOWN OVER HER SHOULDER AN
 IF SPILLED. FOREHEADS SO THAT HER EYES IS COVERED, THE OTHER EYE
 JUST BY SECTED, JUST BLINKING, FLASHING WHITE WET EYE, SMEARE
 D SHADOWS SHINING UNDERNEATH, FRINGED DARK. SKIN AT THE
 LEFT EYES EDGE, SHATTERING INTO A ZILLION CREASES TO
 MAKE TINY BLACK LINES, RESTORED FOR AN INSTANT HER EYES
 FLASH CLOSED, LIPS PALEST VEIN BLUE, SO THIN, LIPS JUST
 TOUCHING, SEPERATED BY A PUCE SEAM, NOT SMILING, BUT
 ALMOST, KNECK, THIN, MAUVE, BONY, CHEST LIFTING AND FALLIN
 G AS THE AIR PASSES THROUGH IT, FROM HEAD TO TOE SHE'S
 HALF CLOAKED IN SHADOW, SO IT'S HARD TO DIVIDE HER FRO
 M THE SHADOW BEHIND. BLUE, GRAY, BROWN, ALL COLOURS ROLLED
 INTO ONE. BRIGHT COLOURLESS HIGHLIGHT STRIKES HER OTHER SIDE, SIL-
 VER ON HER CHEST AND STOMACH. LIGHT CRACKING BETWEEN HER LEGS
 WIDENING TO A TRIANGLE, ENDING AT THE FLOOR. FEET APART
 SUCKED TO THE FLOOR. TOES TURNING OUT JUST SLIGHTLY.
 SHADOW ARCHING UP THE INSTEP. VEIN SNAKING UP TOP OF THE FOOT
 BUSTING THROUGH THE SKIN, DISAPPEARING THEN APPEARING AGAIN
 AT THE BONY ANKLE, CALF CURLING UP TO HER THIGH. AND HER PUPES
 DENSEST SQUIGGLE OF CURLING HAIR, STRAGGLING OUT ONTO HER SMOKE GRAY
 THIGH. PINK SKIN BEHIND, DARK PURPLE, RED BROWN, WHATEVER, SHADOW RUNNING
 G DOWN HER INNER THIGH, TAPERING AS IT GETS TO HER KNEE, THEN BLOOMING O
 UT ONTO HER CALF AND RUDDY ANKLE. UNTIL IT MERGES WITH THE POOL OF B-
 LACK ON THE FLOOR. SHE'S LEANING BACK ONTO THE HEEL OF HER FOOT, SO THAT TH
 E WEIGHT RINS ALONG HER LEG, AND UP HER SPINE, LEAVING THE LEFT SIDE OF HER
 BODY TO HANG LOOSE. ARM DANGLING SLACK AT HER SIDE; THE AIR DARK BETWEEN HER HA-
 ND AND HER THIGH. FINGERS SO BONY AND RUDDY COMPARED TO THE RUDDY WHITE THIGH. YE
 INS POPPING THROUGH THE SKIN LIKE FLOURESCENT ROOTS. THE OTHER HAND RESTING ON
 HER HIP, FINGERS SPLAYED ON THE WHITE FLESH. EVERYTHING, EVEN THE SHADOW BEH
 IND BREATHING WITH HER AS SHE STRETCHES AND CONTRACTS
 STOMACH RISING AND FALLING UNEVENLY, ALMOST INVISIBLY WITH EVERY LITTLE BREATH.

Figure 12 | Fiona Banner, *Nude Standing*, 2006. Pencil on paper. 231.8 x 182.2 cm. Collection of Museum of Modern Art. Courtesy of the artist © Fiona Banner. Image source: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/102559>



Figure 13 | Fiona Banner, *Split Nude*, 2007. Ink, transfer lettering and household paint on board. 209 x 134 cm. Tate Collection. Courtesy of the artist © Fiona Banner Image source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/banner-split-nude-t13681>

They are drawings because Banner is invested, in a visual sense, in an attention to materials, to tone, to surface, to placement, to positive and negative space, to composition. (I go on to discuss in Research Outcomes: Towards *Elsewhere* how I use these forms in *Elsewhere*, but via the writing itself.) The viewer reads all these drawn qualities in the encounter of the glance, before going on to *read* the words themselves. Further, as Princenthal points out:

Most viewers will surely demur (there is a lot to read, and it is both heavily repetitive and hard to make out), choosing instead to bring only selective passages into focus. That way, the writing shades, in peripheral vision, into illegibility—put differently, it slips from text to image.²⁵⁵

Indeed, unreadability comes through as theme in a number of Banner's text works, including the aforementioned *The Nam*. In the following section I pick this up in relation to the exhibition *Drawing Time, Reading Time*, where, through the selection of works, it is implied that unreadability is a condition for the work being legible as drawing and not writing. So, these observational, descriptive pieces of written life-drawing become encapsulated in the form of 'drawing' primarily.

In summation, the use of text and writing in Banner's work is distinct from this research because of my exploration of the personal, as well as my intention with the essay qua drawing of not collapsing the essay into an explicitly 'drawn' form.

Sean Landers and *Drawing Time Reading Time*

This section addresses the 2013/2014 exhibition *Drawing Time, Reading Time*, and in particular the treatment of artwork within the show that most clearly straddled the disciplines of art and literature. *Drawing Time* was a group show bringing together an international selection of artists, "... engaged in exploring the relationship between drawing and linguistic communication as distinct yet interrelated phenomenological gestures."²⁵⁶ This exhibition is

²⁵⁵ Princenthal, 'The Body of the Text.'

²⁵⁶ Gilman, 'Drawing Time, Reading Time', 13.

pertinent to this research because of its focus on the relationship between drawing and writing. An examination of it goes towards explicating the curatorial limits of how writing can be brought within a contemporary art context. However, my research argues for a more permeable boundary between drawing and the essay. While the show involves nine artists and explored themes that are broadly pertinent to this research, I focus on *[sic]* by American artist Sean Landers as the most directly relevant.

Landers's work *[sic]* (1993) is a 451-page manuscript, described in the *Drawing Time* catalogue as a stream-of-conscious text.²⁵⁷ The work has a dual existence—as a printed artist book (which I have not had access to), and as a two-dimensional artwork—and is in relatively current circulation as both. To first address the latter, for *Drawing Time, Reading Time* the handwritten sheets of *[sic]* were displayed on a wall, in a grid format, with each page of the confessional able to be seen at a glance, in the way a viewer will commonly, although not exclusively, associate with the viewing of contemporary drawing in particular and two-dimensional artworks in general.



Figure 14 | Clair Gilman (curator), *Drawing Time, Reading Time*, 2013-2014. The Drawing Center, New York. Installation view. Image courtesy of The Drawing Center.. Image source: <https://drawingcenter.org/exhibitions/drawing-time-reading-time>

²⁵⁷ Gilman, 18.

The viewer encountered a wall hung with pages that look to almost flutter like flags. The edges of the yellow sheets adjoin each other, and each is toned slightly darker in the middle where his handwriting sits between the legal-pad margins. The pages form a fragile, fragmentary colour-field that can be gently shifted in response to air convections moving in a viewer's wake. At the same time, the work also toys with the monumental structure of the grid, recalling the imposing forms of minimalism. As noted in the catalogue, *[sic]*: “trades reading for writing, and the temporal axis of conventional reading for the instant apprehension of drawing and image.”²⁵⁸ This is all to say that through its clear references to historically important and recognisable art forms (in particular the grid and the colour-field) Landers makes his writing legible—first and foremost—as an artwork.



Figure 15 | Sean Landers, *[sic]*, 1993. Ink on paper, dimensions vary with installation. Collection of the artist. Image courtesy of The Drawing Center. Image source: <https://drawingcenter.org/exhibitions/drawing-time-reading-time>

In *[sic]* he further establishes the writing specifically as a drawing: he hand-wrote the confessional, thus establishing the relationship between *autograph* and *autobiography*—a self-told personal narrative through a self-made mark. This self-made mark sets up an active dialogue with drawing as a graphic act. To this, the curators of *Drawing Time* note: “Indeed,

²⁵⁸ Gronlund, ‘Decodable Signals’, 27.

filtering language through the indexical mark and an author's guiding hand is key to each artist's approach."²⁵⁹ From this, I also read that this is key to the curators' approach: that to establish a link between drawing and linguistic communication, the group of artists selected are *physically implicated* in the production of the work in a way that nods to traditional notions of what it is *to draw*. The acceptance within this art exhibition of the linguistic communication aspect of each work hinges on the notion of the hand.

This gives rise to the question: what would the implications be to the curators choosing to display [*sic*] in a way that was more legible as writing? Perhaps as a stack? Perhaps as a bound book where the viewer might turn the pages? Could readings of the relationship between drawing and writing have been complicated in further, more productive ways, had the work been displayed in a less art-legible manner?

Through all this, the viewer reads that the work is firstly a drawing and not a piece of literature because the curators have used the signifiers of verticality (the work is hung on the wall in a gallery), the glance (the work can be taken in spatially, in its whole form, in a moment, similar to Banner's performance nudes), the grid and colour-field (nodding to movements such as minimalism), and the implied artist's hand.

Additionally, he and the curators intentionally use the overwhelm of a wall of words to toy with notions of unreadability. Within Landers' [*sic*] he dares or teases the reader for how they might or might not read the work, throwing to the fore the tension of the act of reading within the gallery space. As noted by the curators:

On the one hand he begs his audience not to be 'skip around readers,' while on the other he asserts: 'The majority of this will be nearly unreadable. That doesn't matter, don't read this. It doesn't matter what it says just that it is. You see?'²⁶⁰

As discussed in relation to Banner, different forms of 'unreadability' is a common feature in the works selected for *Drawing Time*.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Gilman, 'Drawing Time, Reading Time', 19.

²⁶⁰ Gilman, 19.

²⁶¹ Such as Allen Ruppersberg's drawings of books, some open to pages with illegible texts, others just the covers; Nina Papaconstantinou's carbon copy transcriptions of entire texts onto a single sheet of paper; and Mirtha Dermisace's invented grahisms, that mimic the visual flow of text, whilst remaining firmly image.

SAY FOR INSTENCE THAT I
THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS WORTH DESCR-
IBING EVERY UGLY DETAIL^{OF} AND
THAT I WAS DECEIVED ENOUGH TO
THINK THAT MY JERKING OFF IN MY
STUDIO WAS SOMETHING HIGHER THAN
WHAT IT IS. THAT EVERY MOMENT I
SPEND IN SELF LOATHING OR SELF
PITY WAS SOMEHOW SOMETHING FOR
YOUR CONSUMPTION. THAT I THINK
~~BY~~ MY WRITING AT MY TABLE,^{ON} MY
PERPETUAL HORNINESS MY THIRST
FOR FAME AND MONEY WAS AN OK
REASON TO SET OUT ON YET AN
OTHER EXCERSISE IN SELF IDOLISATION,
SELF REVERIE, ULTIMATLY SELF LOVE.
OBUOUSLY I THINK IT'S OK BECAUSE I'VE
JUST BEGUN AGAIN, I'M NOT EVEN WARMED
UP YET BUT I CAN TELL THAT I'VE GOT
A GOOD LONG PIECE STEWING. I KNOW
THAT ALREADY YOU HAVE SEVERAL PROBLEMS
WITH MY PERSONALITY ALONE NEVER MIND
THE ART THIS IS. BUT IF I CAN PIN POINT
THEM BEFORE YOU DO THEN SOMEHOW I GET
FORGIVEN. I'LL LET IT OUT OF THE WAY
RIGHT NOW SO WE CAN REACH EMPTINESS
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WHEN I WAS A KID
1.

Figure 16 | Sean Landers, *[sic]*, 1993. Ink on paper, dimensions variable 451 parts, each 27.9 x 21.6 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York. Image source: <https://drawingcenter.org/exhibitions/drawing-time-reading-time>

In its printed artist-book form, *[sic]* retains the hand-written format, including corrections and amendments.²⁶² Thus, even in book-form, the work is still using the trope of handwriting as an autographic mark to circle back its referencing to drawing. By using the title *[sic]* alongside maintaining the manual corrections extant in the sheets, Landers also uses the trope of ‘authenticity’ that comes from first-draft writing. As argued in relation to Emin’s work, and relevant here: “The display of handwriting invites the viewers, strangers, into an intimate part of the artist’s life, allowing a realm of vulnerability to be opened, ultimately revealing the private self.”²⁶³ The combination of first-draft writing, and handwriting signalling ‘the artist’s hand’ layers the twin axioms within both writing and drawing as modes of authenticity. If the parameters between drawing and language are, partially but also in a real-world-usage sense, defined through exhibitions such as this, the curators of *Drawing Time* have chosen to underscore the importance of the link between drawing and the artist’s hand, as noted above.

I agree with the curators, who write: “the nine artists in *Drawing Time*, *Reading Time* do not question writing or drawing’s integrity as distinct disciplines, each with its own parameters. Rather, they investigate ways in which each discipline has a dual character, and how, when considered together, they reflect upon and complicate each other.”²⁶⁴ However, where this research diverges from the exhibition is the necessity of filtering language through the autographical mark. With the exception of Carl Andre’s typewriter work, all the works—however engaged with language and writing they are—are all hand drawn. In a note to their exception of Andre, they state: “Although not made by hand, one can think of some typewritten marks as indexical in that the inky impressions bear the weight of a hand gesture. Indeed, manual typewriting is an intensely physical act.”²⁶⁵

In this exhibition, the fact of the drawn mark, including the tangential autographical mark of the typewriter, acts to contain writing as drawing within a visual arts context. While the exhibition does explore the ways drawing and writing complicate each other, my research is interested in the further displacement of what is traditionally understood as an autographical mark. As I discuss further in Research Outcome: Towards *Elsewhere*, *Elsewhere* explores

²⁶² Gilman, ‘Drawing Time, Reading Time’, 18.

²⁶³ Girling-Jones, ‘The Self and Text’.

²⁶⁴ Gilman, ‘Drawing Time, Reading Time’, 14.

²⁶⁵ Gilman, 19.

autographic drawing processes through a predominantly written form. In this research, and different from both the curators, and the artists in this exhibition, I intend to push further at that boundary of drawing, by displacing the autographical mark *into* the essay form.

Book works

Bookworks, the 2019 Monash University Museum of Art exhibition,²⁶⁶ was an illustrative example of how books, and to a lesser extent text/writing, function in an exhibition setting. I identified in the show certain paradigms of book-in-exhibition engagement. These categories are fluid (and not exhaustive beyond the realm of this exhibition), and works can sit across several categories, but I provisionally define these categories as: book as vehicle for performance; book as instruction manual for artwork creation; book as collected artefact; book as deconstructed artefact; and book as vehicle of typographical examination. I found, though, that the show was less invested in the writing within the books, and more in how books can activate the space of the exhibition in manifold ways.

This, combined with examining the artist book in Fiona Banner's and Sean Landers' practices above, as well as further awareness of examples of the artist book in conceptual art practices (including such examples as On Kawara's *One Million Years*; American artist Mel Bochner's *Working Drawings and other Visible Things on Paper not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art*; Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit*) went towards sharpening my focus on examples of books that sit more firmly at the nexus of art and writing. From here, I identified New Zealand artist and writer Tessa Laird's *A Rainbow Reader* and American artist and writer Karen Green's *Bough Down*.

²⁶⁶ Full documentation of this exhibition can be found here:
<https://www.monash.edu/muma/exhibitions/previous/2019/bookworks>

Tessa Laird's *A Rainbow Reader*²⁶⁷ is a work of creative non-fiction Laird first developed as part of her Doctorate of Fine Arts (2009–2012).²⁶⁸ It was later published as an artist book and was part of the public programme for the 2013/2014 exhibition *Freedom Farmers* at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.²⁶⁹ For this research, I discuss the edition released for *Freedom Farmers*, but I discuss it in relation to Laird's thesis and exhibition for her DocFA.

Part of Laird's aims for her DocFA was, "to make writing as significant as studio practice."²⁷⁰ As Laird states: "Writing and research are a pivotal part of my practice, constituting a body of work which parallels and complements, but doesn't necessarily explain, my studio outcomes."²⁷¹ She expands on this, stating: "Enhancing the status of writing within the Doctorate of Fine Arts, I hoped to demonstrate that writing itself is an artform ... Within the art world, however, writing about art is too often relegated to the position of explanation, put into its very own straightjacket of sense."²⁷² For this, Laird's work *A Rainbow Reader* is an important touchstone to this research: both our research aims include making writing a significant part of a studio practice, both of us identify a similar gap with how writing exists in the visual arts, and we both have put forward a written work for our DocFA/PhD.

In her thesis, Laird situates her writing as fictocriticism. Laird uses this definition to describe the form: "When criticism is well-written, and fiction has more ideas than usual, the distinction between the two starts to break down."²⁷³ Drawing again from her thesis, Laird goes on to acknowledge the importance albeit challenge of fictocriticism is owning the first-person within the critical.²⁷⁴ Laird describes *A Rainbow Reader* as six different self-portraits in relation to the six different colours, whereby the method of fictocriticism, "... *condenses* objectivity and subjectivity."²⁷⁵ Laird's positioning of fictocriticism has, for me, strong

²⁶⁷ Laird, *A Rainbow Reader*.

²⁶⁸ 'Tessa Laird Publication'.

²⁶⁹ 'Tessa Laird Publication'.

²⁷⁰ Laird, 'Sheshnag's Coloured Canopy', 33.

²⁷¹ Laird, 33.

²⁷² Laird, 33.

²⁷³ Citing Stephen Muecke Laird, *A Rainbow Reader*, 34.

²⁷⁴ Laird, 'Sheshnag's Coloured Canopy', 34–35.

²⁷⁵ Laird, 35.

resonances with aspects of autotheory. Indeed, Fournier cites fictocriticism as part of the literary lineage of autotheory, and one that is still pertinent to current autotheoretical practice.²⁷⁶

The book itself is a series of six saddle stitched sections, the cover of each the colour that section addresses: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. The sections are glued together by their covers, forming the final book. Each section of *A Rainbow Reader* is a vivid and discursive piece of writing that moves fluidly between the personal, and theoretical, artistic, literary, historical, cultural references.

For her DocFA, Laird presented the exhibition *Sheshnag's Coloured Canopy* which included a vast series of screenprints and linoprints (*Scales of the Serpent*) and ceramic objects. Of particular interest here is the ceramic series *Unpacking My Library (Clay Tablets)*, a representation of Laird's bibliography for her DocFA crafted from clay. As observed by Kate BrettKelly-Chalmers in relation to a similar body of clay-crafted book representations for *Freedom Farmers*: "A beguiling material alchemy is at work here: books are transformed into objects, information turned into stone, and words made into weighty things moulded by human hands."²⁷⁷ But it is perhaps Megan Dunn's commentary on the showing of this body of work at Objectspace that articulates something of the resistance to the written word in artists' exhibition projects:

The clay books represent three years of Laird's reading, much of which was undertaken during her doctorate at Elam. Covers on colour abound. I like the way her research has been restored to the surface, rather than depth. Laird offers us the world of appearances. Each book is nothing more (or less) than its cover. At the moment art schools seem so preoccupied with theory and research, it's no wonder the idea often looms larger than the object itself. Artists are always talking about their practice and their research. It can become quite po-faced, as though art is a terribly seriously enterprise that should only be taken seriously.²⁷⁸

"Restored to the surface, rather than depth," feels like an erasure of what is integral to Laird as a practitioner. Laird's thesis aims, her long bridging of art and writing, her practice as a

²⁷⁶ Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 2 & 18.

²⁷⁷ BrettKelly-Chalmers, "'Freedom Farmers' At The Auckland Art Gallery".

²⁷⁸ Dunn, 'Direct from the Kiln'.

fictocritical writer, which is in essence a literary form of genre-bending that fits, in my estimation, seamlessly into a practice that is inherently discipline-bending (between art and writing) is essentially about depth. *A Rainbow Reader* taken in combination with her clay bibliography is a very, very different work to the clay bibliography on its own. The clay bibliography alone invites, in part, a surface-based, object reading. Through this Dunn arrives at the position of Laird's research being "restored to surface". However, the clay works set in relation to *A Rainbow Reader* sets up a complex interplay *between* surface and object on the one hand, and writing and research on the other hand, and holding both as equally significant parts of Laird's studio output.

Dunn's commentary, taken alongside the curatorial decisions in *Drawing Time*, builds a picture of how writing is received when it is the output of a visual arts practice. In my reading, and in a different way to the curators of *Drawing Time*, Dunn's commentary highlights the ambivalent reception of writing positioned as art.

My position has evolved over the course of several experiments to a degree further than Laird's research: it is to interrogate when the writing becomes the studio practice. I extend on Laird's positioning of making writing as significant as studio practice by making the output of this research the writing, without additional work that would more readily anchor the research in a visual arts context. In another extension, I position the essay as a form of drawing, in an expanded field of life-drawing. I argue not just for the inclusion of writing forms in a visual arts context, but also that the overlaps between the essay and drawing allow for the essay to operate as drawing.

Karen Green (*Bough Down*)

American artist Karen Green's work *Bough Down*²⁷⁹ is an important parallel to my research as the work that maps most clearly against *Elsewhere*.

²⁷⁹ Green, *Bough Down*.

Written five years after discovering her husband's body after his suicide, the work is most often discussed as an exploration of her grief. Additionally, it has been addressed as a drug narrative,²⁸⁰ and through my own reading, I also see evidence of it as a trauma narrative, but one where that trauma rubs against a lost intimacy. Trauma and grief in turn refract love, as Green reckons with anger, depression, meds and becoming a patient at the same hospital her husband spent time as a patient. In relation to genre and discipline, it is variously categorised as a collection of poems, as prose and poetry, as a prose-poem, as an artist book and as an artwork. This variety of categorisations of discipline alongside its themes places *Bough Down* in the overlap this research addresses. I look at this more fully shortly, but first consider the experience of being a reader/viewer of *Bough Down*.

Bough Down is a modestly sized, stitched, case-bound book, the pages are a heavy and creamy paper stock. The content is a combination of representations of Green's mixed-medium collages interspersed in the pages between her writing. The initial publication of *Bough Down* included a limited edition of 25 books containing an original collage. The pieces of writing are uniformly justified in the page, with deep side and top margins, 31mm each, almost as wide as the 80mm blocks of text. The bottom margin fluctuates with the length of the piece of writing. The deep margins around the pieces of justified text inflect on the text itself, making it appear, to me, more image-like on the page, and setting up an interesting relationship to the collages.

Green's collages are made up of, as her publisher describes: "pages torn from both beloved and obscure books; bits of love letters, medical records, condolences, and paper refuse; old postage stamps and the albums which classify them,"²⁸¹ and her interventions include paint and drawings. The un-uniform, but visually linked collages echoes the un-uniform, justified blocks of writing fragments. The snippets of collaged writing flow from the collages and into conventional text on the page.

While the images' sizes are more irregular than the text, the scale of them is always sympathetic to the text's grid: sometimes smaller than the grid, but always within that space. The intentionality of the visual interplay between the writing and the collages means I am

²⁸⁰ Nelson, 'Untied, Undone'.

²⁸¹ Pearson, 'New Siglio Title: Spring 2013 Bough Down by Karen Green', 10 January 2013.

pulled into considering the page spreads as diptychs, while also seeing the writing and collages as two forms of text requiring reading.



Figure 17 | Karen Green, *Bough Down*, Los Angeles: Siglio, 2013. Scan of internal spread. Image removed for copyright reasons.

There are the occasional breaks in the book where even the page numbers are left out, making the absence of anything on the page as assertive as the regular irregularity of justified text and images. The blank sheets are a negative space that ask to be reckoned with as much as the collages and writing.

Each piece of writing on each page is in a sense stand-alone: sentences never flow between the pages. Having discrete fragments of writing that don't flow between pages, means that, in my reading, the writing can be treated as both a whole piece, and a series of episodes. A reviewer wrote about treating the book as a collection of poems, first only dipping in and out of it, and only later reading it as a whole work, start to finish.²⁸²

The interplay that Green has created between the dustcover the book itself is also important to note. The stock used for the dustcover is similar to a tracing paper: transparent, but cloudy.

²⁸² Sparks, 'Karen Green's *Bough Down*'.

The title, *Bough Down*, is a printing of what looks to be a collage, the words traced in pieces of thread. Beneath the dustcover, a collage of words on the cover project through the semi-opaque paper. This combined with the sensitive placement of text, collage and empty pages, suggest an acute awareness of the book not just as object but as a sculpture that the reader/viewer moves through.

The episodic, fractured structure is part of how I read this as a trauma narrative. Writing on another trauma narrative, American writer Sonja Livingston observes:

As we learn more about the ways early and pervasive stress can overwhelm the nervous system and transform a survivor's ability to organize and process experience, the fragmented form seems an accurate reflection of the shape some lives take. When trauma collides with narrative—inasmuch as narrative can exist in chaos—perception is upended, resulting in stories that aren't always orderly. Characters fade in and out. Settings shift and fall away. Events are shuffled and connected more by emotional and metaphorical association than by logic or a straightforward timeline.²⁸³

The fragmentation of the writing, as well as the shift in tenor from text to image, aligns with a trauma narrative. As Green discovered her husband's body, it is reasonable to assume that trauma is bound up with her grief, and the fragmentation of the writing, the gaps and absences, support this reading. Green writes: "I worry I broke your kneecaps when I cut you down. I keep hearing that sound."²⁸⁴ Phrases like this—the acknowledgement of repetition of sensory information from a traumatic event—help situate elements of *Bough Down* as a work that is anchored in trauma as well as grief. Relatedly, I see the inclusion of images as having another important crossover with trauma: the page following this quote is a collage. As the stark acknowledgement of the repeated trauma-memory devastates, Green then moves to the more sensorially immediate form of the collage, in something similar to, albeit not the same as, van der Kolk's framing of dissociation.²⁸⁵

Reviewers have disagreed on the effect of the inclusion of Green's collages in the work. Two such examples are:

²⁸³ Livingston, 'Waxing Episodic'.

²⁸⁴ Green, *Bough Down*, 29.

²⁸⁵ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 66.

The non-verbal collages offer a welcome zone of abstraction, delicacy, and beauty. While I think the book would be the lesser without them, it is also the case that I never found them as compelling as the written text. There's just so much plain old great writing here, one scarcely needs the visual element...²⁸⁶

And—

A few critics have questioned the necessity of the collages, suggesting that they distract from the harrowing beauty of the text. I wonder why anyone would think so. They speak as much and as eloquently as Green's words. Looking at them, I am reminded of a line in Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*, where she confesses, 'This is a case in which I need more than words to find the meaning'.²⁸⁷

While the differing opinions are interesting in themselves, I am more interested in the fact of them at all. This question of including or excluding the collages sits, for me, as something of a reversal to my earlier read of the axial and appendicular between drawing and writing: the collages have the potential to be read as peripheral to the centrality of the writing.



Figure 18 | Karen Green, *Bough Down*, Los Angeles: Siglio, 2013. Detail of collage. Image source: <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2013/12/19/karen-greens-bough-down/> Image removed for copyright reasons.

²⁸⁶ Nelson, 'Untied, Undone'.

²⁸⁷ Sparks, 'Karen Green's Bough Down'.

For me, rather than interpreting the collages as zones almost of sans-textual respite, or beyond-words expression—which the above two opinions allude to—I see the relationship between the text and image as urgent movements through visual and linguistic forms of grappling with the manifold languages of trauma.

Green's work is a flowing combination of prose, poetry and representations of visual art pieces. As a piece in its totality, writing and art are interpolated and incorporated into each other in various ways. It hovers at the intersection of a piece of writing and a visual artwork. The writing is engaged in similar (although by no means the same) themes of the coexistence of trauma, grief and love. But while there are ways this research and Green's work *Bough Down* are similar, there are key differences. My research proposes the writing itself as a form of drawing. I eschewed having drawings visually represented (that is, printed) in the book, instead using techniques of drawing to inform the writing. While both Green's and this research includes an original artwork (for Green, a collage, for this research, the charcoal surface inside the dustjacket), the intention of my dustjacket is less for it to be valued as a stand-alone, original drawing, and more to disrupt certain traditional notions of drawing, as discussed in Research Outcomes: Towards *Elsewhere*.

Conclusion of Review of the Territory

This chapter went part of the way towards investigating my third research inquiry:

To investigate a combination of drawing, writing and presentation techniques that support the proposition of the essay qua drawing in a way that maintain space for both the essay <i>and</i> drawing, whilst demonstrating the productive overlaps between them.	This research inquiry proposes that the artist-book as a mode of presentation that sits efficiently between the disciplines of drawing and the essay. In concert with utilising techniques of drawing through the mode of essay writing, presentation decisions around layout, materials and scale of the artist book underscores the essay qua drawing.
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Examination of these practices helped identify the space of the artist book as an appropriate mode of representation for the essay qua drawing. However, it also underscored what I saw as some problems with situating writing as art generally, and the essay as drawing in particular. Further research through studio practice was required to resolve this, which I outline in the following chapter.

Research Outcomes

I. Marginalia of practice

Predating this research, a key (albeit less acknowledged) aspect of my practice was the relationship between the artwork and the writing that scaffolded it. The writing went towards arguably peripheral parts of my practice: artist statements, proposals, my website. But I never saw that writing as marginal. I was always invested in it with as much, if different, attention as the artworks themselves. I termed this writing the marginalia of my art practice.

My process of making works echoed parts of artist LeWitt's 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', where: "When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art."²⁸⁸ I planned the work, made all the decisions I could and executed it, either to the point that it was finished, or it revealed itself to be unfinishable. If there was variance or play in the artwork it was what you might find in a machine: limited, within a very bounded set of parameters (such as where I made a small enough mistake in the execution that I didn't feel it was necessary to replace that component). Finishing the artwork closed it off. The artwork would then be a unit unto itself in a way that I increasingly felt was unproductive to this research, particularly as my thinking around intimacy and trauma developed. After though, I would put myself in dialogue with the work with via writing. Writing held the possibility for a greater level of play that took place beyond the artwork. This writing would then be the impetus for other works, which, in turn, I would write about.

There were three main phases to arriving at the research output, *Elsewhere, or at sea*, and the essay qua drawing. While there were significant chronological overlaps between these phases, it is useful to divide them out as a way of illustrating the progress of the research. I discuss each of these phases in detail in the following section.

²⁸⁸ LeWitt, Gross, and Edwards, *Sol LeWitt*, 208.

The first phase was the suite of drawings titled *An open love letter*. These works are to a greater or lesser degree recognisable as drawings, and my writing was still very much peripheral to them. They do, however, exemplify the idea of an expanded practice of life-drawing, as introduced in Theoretical Frameworks: Expanded life-drawing.

The second phase, *Performed Essays*, involved two essays that were exhibited in relation to installations and performed by me.

The third phase began as an essay collection that was decoupled from more recognisable visual arts gestures (such as drawing, or as part of an installation or performance). This collection became the basis for *Elsewhere, or at sea*. I first go through the experiments I trialled for *Elsewhere*, before discussing the final work.

II. *An open love letter*

The early stages of this research were developing towards a suite of drawings titled *An open love letter*. This included three main works: *The floor we walk on*, which predates but is fundamental to this research; *The days we've been together*; and the various experiments towards the unfinished drawing, *A line that, in theory, could connect us*. I discuss the first two works because analysis of them showed how symptoms of C-PTSD were unbeknownst to me infiltrating my research into intimacy, and, after realising that, seeing that my drawing practice as it was could not support the full territory of understanding intimacy in relation to C-PTSD.²⁸⁹ Following, the iterations of *A line that, in theory, could connect us* demonstrated, instead, the close ties between writing and drawing that already existed in my practice and could be utilised in articulating the complexity of living between intimacy and C-PTSD.

²⁸⁹ Prefaced in Theoretical Framework: Trauma and Intimacy.

All three works initially sought to engage with love and intimacy critically through art, through addressing the relationship between my husband, Justin, and me. Our relationship has enjoyed the privileges that come from both being white, heterosexual and financially secure. We have a largely functioning relationship. Not perfect (what relationship is?) but very much good enough. I used an ‘open letter’ because I want the works to play in the territory of what is particular to a single relationship at the same time as being common to many relationships. The works are personal in that they reference Justin and me, but they also recognise things shared by other couples.

An open love letter intended to address the inadequate placeholders people construct to acknowledge the intangible thing that is a ‘relationship’, and the poignancy of their inability to fully encapsulate a relationship—these days we’ve been together; this list of addresses we’ve lived at; the places we’ve gone; the distance travelled; the spaces dwelt in; the beds slept in; the words spoken; the ideas shared. An accrual of placeholders. “‘Things’ implies a multitude of colloquial considerations ranging from the significant to the incremental build-up of banal everyday circumstances into a more substantial whole.”²⁹⁰ All of these things are meaningful, but all are slightly inadequate to the relationship they are intended to make meaning for. *An open love letter* is one way of viewing love: through the mess of shared objects, through the accumulation of shared time, through a shared negotiation of space.

*The floor we walk on*²⁹¹ is a 94m² drawing of the floor of our house in Auckland. It was a series of over a thousand graphite rubbings, recording every accessible centimetre of the texture of the 1950s bungalow’s floorboards, creating a 1:1 drawing of the floor, compiled into the separate rooms, and contained in purpose-made covers. The work was thematically engaged with the intimacy between us as a couple, and the space where that intimacy was, for a period, housed. Relatedly, there was an intimacy in the process of the rubbing: as a form of drawing, it is centred on touch, press, impression. The paper touches the surface it records; the graphite touches the paper and forces it into the contours of the floor, forces the paper to briefly take the form of the floor; I held the graphite.

²⁹⁰ Jameson, ‘Narrative and Subjectivity at St Paul St Gallery’.

²⁹¹ Although created prior to formally beginning this research, it was an early impetus for it and has been pivotal to its development.



Figure 19 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The floor we walk on*, 2015. Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Te Whanganui-a-tara. Installation detail of *Something Felt, Something Shared*, curated by Emma Ng. Graphite on paper, dimensions variable. Photo: Andrew Matautia. Collection of Chris Parkin.



Figure 20 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The floor we walk on*, 2015. Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Te Whanganui-a-tara. Installation detail of *Something Felt, Something Shared*, curated by Emma Ng. Graphite on paper, dimensions variable. Photo: Andrew Matautia. Collection of Chris Parkin.

The days we've been together is a series of 4000+ sheets of paper, each of which marks a date that Justin and I have been a couple. As partner to *The floor we walk on*, the dates of *The days we've been together* offer a boundary, from *there*, to a perpetually moving *here*, where the relationship temporally exists. Each date is typed out on a separate sheet of paper using a typewriter without a ribbon; the strike of the keys embosses, or even cuts, the dates into the paper. The line the date sits on shifted down the page with each passing year, and the right edge of each sheet had an indexical line that also shifted down the page. It was initially intended to be an ongoing work: I would continue to mark each of our days.

However, as addressed in Theoretical Framework: Trauma, while these drawings were able to express ideas around intimacy, it became apparent that unacknowledged trauma was asserting itself through the drawing form. It also became apparent that the research needed capacity to address head-on the co-existence of C-PTSD and intimacy in this relationship.

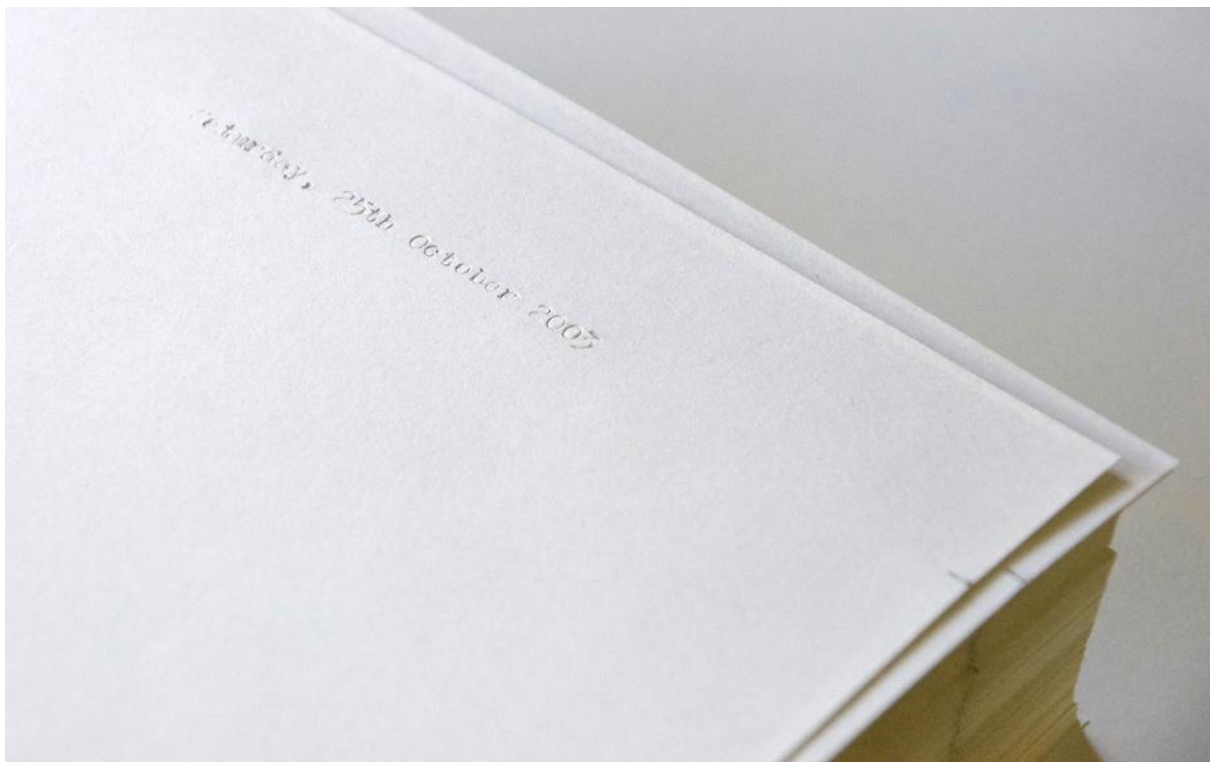


Figure 21 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The days we've been together*, 2018. Detail. Typewriter marks on paper, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.

So, while *The floor we walk on* was engaged with the sense of touch, of presence, of intimacy, there's also the inescapable press of the absent: the space of the rooms, the missing punctuation of furniture, the weight of the walls, the ceiling, and the way we lived in those rooms. The drawing's rigorous documentation of only the floor of the house made more apparent what was absent from the drawing.

It is also a drawing that is mostly unseeable. When it has been exhibited, a selection of one space is unfolded and shown in the gallery; the remaining folders are displayed alongside. To date, only the entranceway and hall has been exhibited, its irregular sequence of narrow rectangles offering the most visually engaging view, as well as a metaphorically apt glimpse of the rest of the work, positioning the viewer literally at the opening of the house and the drawing.



Figure 22 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The floor we walk on*, 2015. Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Te Whanganui-a-tara. Installation detail of *Something Felt, Something Shared*, curated by Emma Ng. Graphite on paper, dimensions variable. Photo: Andrew Matautia. Collection of Chris Parkin.



Figure 23 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The floor we walk on*, 2015. Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Te Whanganui-a-tara. In a one-off public performance for *Something Felt, Something Shared* (curated by Emma Ng) Justin and I unfolded our bedroom. Graphite on paper, dimensions variable. Photo: Louise Rutledge. Collection of Chris Parkin.

Relatedly, *The days we've been together* held within it the tension between the continuing accrual of pages as we pass each day and an anticipated but unknown end. Like *The floor we walk on* its conceit is to be a 1:1 of all the days we have been together; each sheet of paper marks a day of our relationship. But to simply call the days, mark them on a page and then index them within a stack is completely inadequate to the actual duration of the relationship. And, in contrast to the intimacy of the press in the rubbings, there was a degree of violence in the way the typewriter scarred, or even cut the paper. This form of marking literally created physical gaps and absences in the page. Both the works are merely symbolic markers for immeasurable things.



Figure 24 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The days we've been together*, 2018. Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Titirangi, Tāmaki Makaurau Installation detail of *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter*, curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith. Typewriter marks on paper, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Photo: Sam Hartnett.



Figure 25 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *The days we've been together*, 2018. Detail. Typewriter marks on paper, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.

As I discussed in Theoretical Frameworks: Trauma as form, intimacy was the ostensible theme of the work, but forms of trauma—absence, gap, the unsaid—thrust forward. This relationship between what was present and absent to the works started to direct the research to looking more closely at what was remaining ‘unsaid’ in the works: the gap and absences that contained more than what was in the drawing itself.

A line that, in theory, could connect us

The third drawing remains unfinished, but its various iterations illustrate the shift from drawing per se to essay qua drawing.

The early thinking for *A line that, in theory, could connect us* came while on residency in Banff in 2014. This experiment was not part of this research, but the context it offers is important. The idea arose from the weighty sensation of distance causing homesickness. I drew a single 390 metre line across a large sheet of paper, with the impossible intention of making it as long as the distance between us. Alongside this drawing, and in line with what I previously discussed as the marginalia of practice, I filled my studio diary with research about distance, such as great circle distance, the angle of flights an aeroplane takes between New Zealand and Canada, and the coastline paradox.

I revisited this drawing for this research with the intention of creating a book of that 12287km distance between Wellington to Banff, scaled down to 1:1000. While I worked on that drawing, Justin travelled to Vancouver, and I wanted that line to somehow, no matter how fragile, form a fine land-bridge made of graphite to connect us, in spite of its inadequate physical length.



Figure 26 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *A line that, in theory, could connect us*, 2019. Studio experiment detail. Pencil on paper. Collection of the artist.

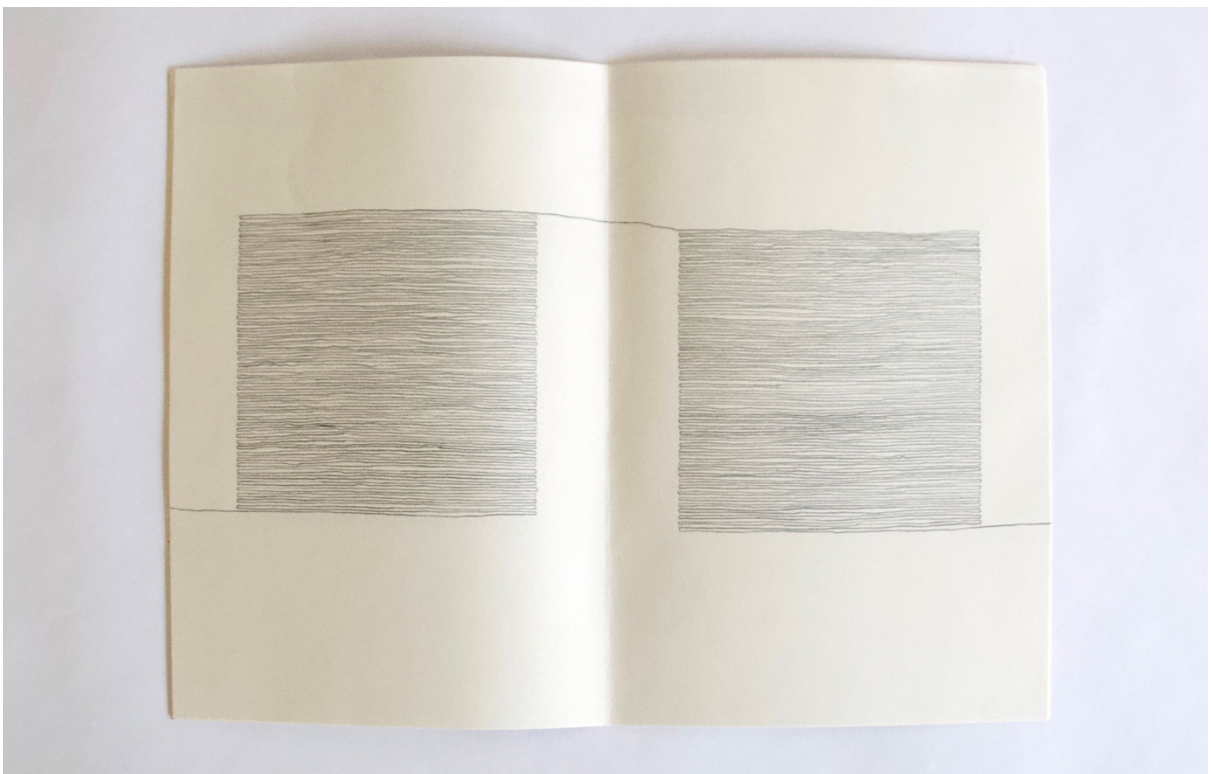


Figure 27 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *A line that, in theory, could connect us*, 2019. Studio experiment detail. Pencil on paper. Collection of the artist.

During that period, I also wrote the essay *A line that, in theory, could connect us*. The essay picked up on the research behind the drawing I did while on residency in Banff. It took an epistolary form, where I wrote to him, and told him about these various lines filling my thoughts and pages. About how, in their potential infinitude they are bound up with promise, even in their inadequacy to actually bridge gaps. In my process, the form of the line became lines of facts, narratives, quotes and anecdotes. Less formal: less about that fine, ceremonial, long, lead mark traversing pages. And while still inadequate in traversing the distance, it activated the page in a way that contained infinitudes and possibilities, alongside those futilities. The essay form gave a textual figuration to the manifold ways I was experiencing distance in a way that the drawing did not.

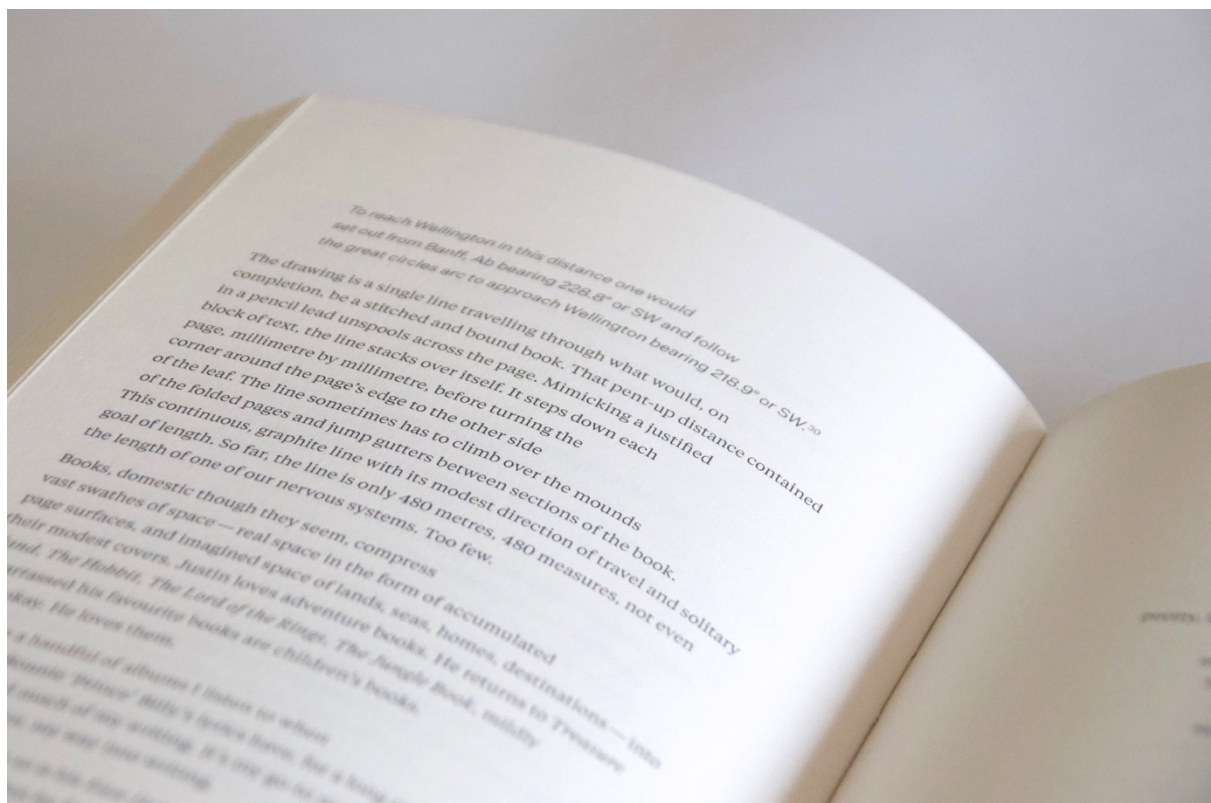


Figure 28 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *Elsewhere, or at sea*, 2022. Inside detail. Limited edition artist book.

The essay *A line that, in theory, could connect us* became the first essay that started to bend this research away from a ‘visual arts’ output. The process of arriving at the essay from the drawing experiments made me see more clearly the limitations I was feeling in my conceptual drawing process. It made clear how much was literally remaining unsaid in my

works: all the background information that filled my writings about works like this, and that gave for me the richness and the texture but was largely absent from the work itself. Later, as my understanding of and research into trauma developed, I also began to see how this shift from drawing to essay qua drawing explicated the therapeutic process I was going through, as explained earlier, and as I expand on shortly.

This essay is also the first of the core pieces that went towards *Elsewhere*.

III. Performed essays

As the research progressed, I started writing essays that were less anchored to existing artworks but were nevertheless produced with the intention of being exhibited as performance and in relation to found objects. I was interested in what I saw as the essay form's flexibility and nimbleness. Where I saw the artworks I was making as closed units, the essay form felt open. The essay as artwork allowed me to address the marginalia of both my practice and my life. As Retallack writes: "One writes essays and poetry to stay warm and active and realistically messy."²⁹² In a series of experiments, I investigated how these essays could be worked into a visual arts practice through, in particular, performance and installation. I read the essay to the viewer (either in person or as a recording), in relation to a series of objects and ephemera. I found where my artworks tended to aim for a refined form, refined concept, the essay artwork could sprawl to an idea's furthest boundaries. Relatedly, DuPlessis writes: "Given that the essay is all margin, marginalia, and interstitial writing, it rearranges, compounds, enfolds, and erodes the notions of center in textually fruitful ways".²⁹³ For me, the essay form as artwork is a way of saying many things at once within an artwork; a way of bringing together thought and making; a way of understanding the rich association between objects and language, including all the subjectivities and problems and distances of language to object.

*To Essay (a relationship)*²⁹⁴ is a combined performed essay and installation of found objects. It showed alongside *The days we've been together* in the exhibition, *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter*.²⁹⁵ A recording of me reading the essay played over headphones the viewer could wear while moving around the exhibition. The essay traced various paper-based or paper-related objects and some of Justin and my things, both as objects in themselves and as objects that act as moments or signifiers of or in our relationship. These objects were displayed on tables in the exhibition.

²⁹² Retallack, *The Poethical Wager*, 5.

²⁹³ DuPlessis, 'F-Words', 20.

²⁹⁴ The full essay is included in Appendices.

²⁹⁵ *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter*. 2018. Solo exhibition at Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland.



Figure 29 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *To Essay (a relationship)*, 2018. Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Titirangi, Tāmaki Makaurau Installation detail of *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter*, curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith. Found objects, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Photo: Sam Hartnett.



Figure 30 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *To Essay (a relationship)*, 2018. Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Titirangi, Tāmaki Makaurau Installation view of *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter*, curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith. Found objects, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Photo: Sam Hartnett.



Figure 31 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *To Essay (a relationship)*, 2018. Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Titirangi, Tāmaki Makaurau Installation view of *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter*, curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith. Found objects, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Photo: Sam Hartnett.



Figure 32 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *To Essay (a relationship)*, 2018. Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Titirangi, Tāmaki Makaurau Installation detail of *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter*, curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith. Found objects, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

In response to Lorange's examination of the essay form *The essay as*,²⁹⁶ in *To Essay (a relationship)*, I proposed that a relationship is akin to the verb to essay: that the reading and knowledge of the individuals within the relationship is an ongoing verb, not a definite article followed by a noun. Following, the essay focussed a great deal on language and grammar, alongside the paper-based object collection.²⁹⁷

Because the essay played over headphones which relied on viewers choosing to listen, the essay was too easily dismissed, or missed. By the essay being so easily missed, the exhibition was largely read through the drawing and the found objects.

*I have an idea for an exploded essay*²⁹⁸ was an exhibition based on an essay.²⁹⁹ The essay described three artworks I once intended to make but never did.



Figure 33 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *I have an idea for an exploded essay*, 2018. RM Gallery and Project Space, Tāmaki Makaurau, Installation detail. Found objects, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.

²⁹⁶ Lorange, 'The Essay As'.

²⁹⁷ Parts of this essay were later integrated into *Elsewhere*.

²⁹⁸ *I have an idea for an exploded essay*, 2018. RM Gallery and Project Space, Tāmaki Makaurau.

²⁹⁹ The full text of which can be found in Appendices.

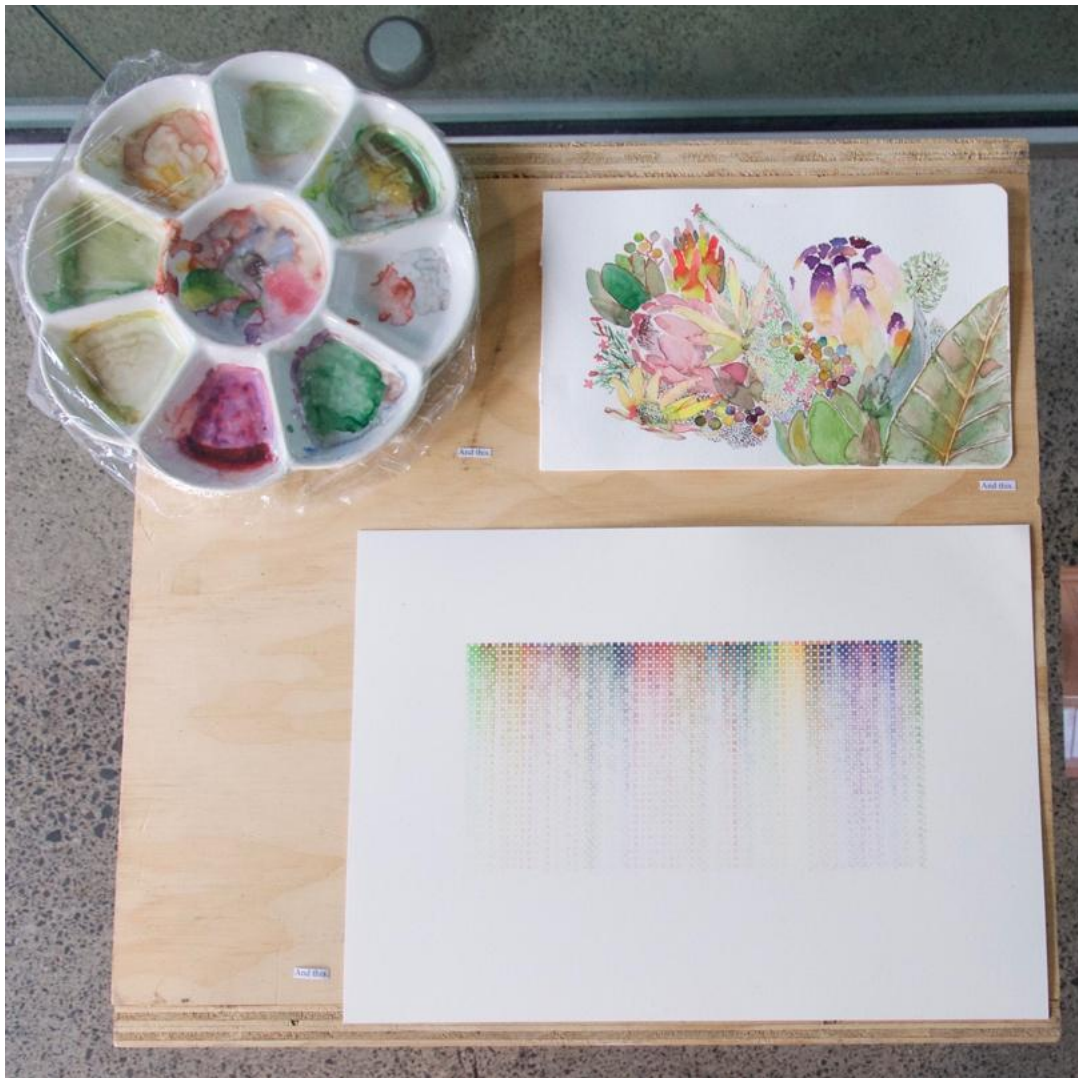


Figure 34 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *I have an idea for an exploded essay*, 2018. RM Gallery and Project Space, Tāmaki Makaurau, Installation detail. Found objects, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.

Each of the intended works dealt with the collateral of my practice (like, dead plants that had unintentionally become research data I then couldn't get rid of) and were underpinned by ambitions of unitary completeness that I ended up unable to achieve. The essay went into the details of the ideas, the sideways thoughts that leapt off from the ideas and the forms the works would have taken. It also talked about circles and tautologies, and described what I found to be the increasingly constricting cycle of make-work-show-work-store-work-repeat. The performed essay held potential to interrupt this cycle by, for me, beginning to displace the artwork from the objects and into the dematerialised form of words.

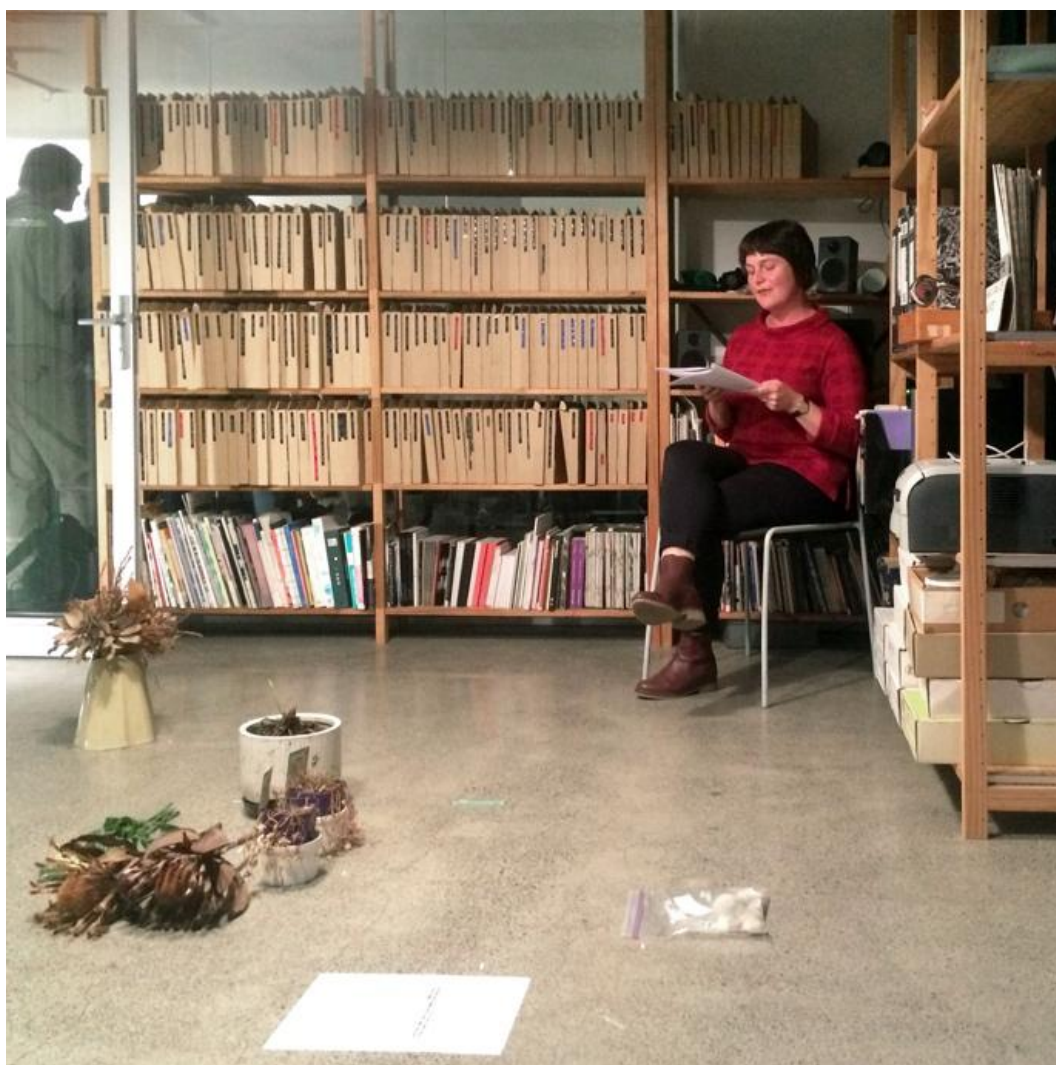


Figure 35 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *I have an idea for an exploded essay*, 2018. RM Gallery and Project Space, Tāmaki Makaurau, Opening night performance. Found objects, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.

The objects were laid out on the floor of the gallery. At the opening, I read the essay for an hour, after each reading immediately starting again. For the remainder of the exhibition, a recording of my reading played ambiently in the space. I used the discursive parts of ‘essay’ in time, in space, through objects and through words, to work through the messiness of practice.

Both these works asked the viewer to listen and read contiguously: listen to the essay, read the found objects. The visual texture of the found objects, included alongside the performance of my essays, became an important aspect towards how I started to approach aspects of writing *Elsewhere*, which I discuss shortly.

However, these experiments highlighted a problematic between writing and a visual arts practice: namely, the writing would be immediately absorbed into a discussion of how it operated as a performance or as an installation, rather than on its own merits. And while for me the heat of the research was in the writing, it continued to be persistently marginal in relation to what were more recognisable visual arts outputs. The other problem this highlighted is that, even though I have previously worked across many disciplines (from painting through to installation, animation, performance and found objects with or without my interventions) the foundation of my practice is drawing.

Drawing in both a ‘traditional’ and expanded sense, has backgrounded all my forays into other disciplines. Most fundamentally, I have long been engaged with the relationship between ideas around the mark (repeated gestures of lines, texts, prints, the act of cutting) and blank space (paper, gallery walls, the space of an incision, the gaps between images). This has played out in a multiplicity of ways: from the obviously drawn form of *A million dots (the small movements that make up grand gestures)* to the expanded drawing as an intervention of PODOCARPACEAE / *Dacrycarpus* – PANDANACEAE / *Freycinetia* (2009-2013), to the more abstracted sense of mark and gap in, *Slow and mournfully; slow and sad; slow and solemnly* (2013), in which a pianist played Eric Satie’s *Gymnopedies (no. 1 - 3)* first with one hand, and then the other, with the resulting recordings combined afterwards.³⁰⁰ Using performance and installation skewed the research towards those disciplines, and away from the root of my practice.

Through these two phases of research *An open love letter* and *Performed Essays*, I identified drawing and the essay as two essentially interrelated (albeit originally separate) parts of the research. I also saw how the forms my drawings were taking limited a full representation of C-PTSD in relation to intimacy, and how the essay qua drawing offered a fuller expression of life-drawing intimacy and trauma. These experiments revealed the stakes of the research and opened the territory to address a fruitful middle ground between drawing and essays.

³⁰⁰ Full documentation of these works can be found at my website:
<http://www.gabrielleamodeo.co.nz/index#/a-million-dots-the-small-movements-that-make-up-grand-gestures>
<http://www.gabrielleamodeo.co.nz/index#/podocarpaceae-dacrycarpus-pandanaceae-freycinetia>
<http://www.gabrielleamodeo.co.nz/index#/slow-and-mournfully-slow-and-sad-slow-and-solemnly>

IV. Towards *Elsewhere*

Overview

As this research developed, a key question was how to make an essay writing practice central in a contemporary visual arts context, without the essay being subsumed into other art disciplines.

As the research progressed, I wrote a collection of essays that were decoupled from artworks. While the essays might have a theme running through them, they primarily utilised associative thinking, so the writing was very discursive, jumping from subject to subject. I became interested how—in a similar way to my pencil dancing across the paper while drawing—through the flexibility of the essay form I was able to associatively dance ideas across the page. Where the works I had been doing became a closed loop of executing a single aspect of a broader idea, the essay as drawing could encompass more fluidly what I was interested in with the drawing works: the thoughts behind them, the way the ideas could spin off in different directions.

Elsewhere was originally formed from thirteen separate essays, and an additional collection of vignettes where the aim was to write the shortest essays possible: something like a gestural drawing, a swift movement towards capturing something big and small at the same time. Additional pieces of writing arose during the work of breaking down and recombining them. Five of the original essays provide points of resolve or focus throughout.

In the following, I address *Elsewhere* through a few different lenses: material expression, form and content.

I first discuss the material expression that *Elsewhere* has taken. I outline: the experiments that went towards arriving at the book-form; aspects of the book itself; and why this material expression is the best way for me as an artist to present trauma and intimacy in the essay qua drawing.

In form, I position *Elsewhere* as an essay qua drawing. I address this through picking up the theme of conceptual art, as initially raised in Theoretical Framework. I go on to demonstrate how aspects of *Elsewhere* operate as a drawing in written form.

In its content, I position *Elsewhere* as an articulation of the co-experience of C-PTSD and intimacy after childhood trauma. I discuss elements of *Elsewhere* in relation to relevant aspects of autotheory.

I weave the nature of the essay qua drawing back into the notion of life-drawing as a corollary of life-writing, by picking up on the nature of thinking-as-writing and intimacy as accrued observation.

Material expression

Building from the performed essays, earlier experiments towards resolving *Elsewhere* began with the idea of demonstrating the metaphor of the axial and appendicular skeleton. The research would have resolved into two interlinked parts: the artist book *Elsewhere, or at sea*, largely as it is now; and the addendum exhibition moment *Appendix of objects (Elsewhere, or at sea)*, which would have been an exhibition of the objects that have been written about in *Elsewhere*.

As well as taking the form of a textual appendix within *Elsewhere*, the *Appendix of Objects* would act as a physical inventory of the retrievable objects that were written about in the essays. As an intentional addendum, *Appendix of objects* would have positioned the readymade—as a recognised form of conceptual art—as the appendix to the writing.

The objects were categorised as either ‘retrievable’ or ‘irretrievable’, with both acknowledged in the written appendix, and the retrievable objects exhibited. Instead, however, of remaining as readymades in perpetuity, after the exhibition they would return to their ordinary place within my life: books return to the shelf; clothes to the closet; notes to the notice board. By not holding these objects as readymades in perpetuity, the unsettled nature of the found object reinforced the appendicular nature of the exhibition in relation to the axial artist book.

Through positioning the exhibition, which might usually be understood as ‘axial’, as literally the appendix, and by holding that place for the writing as central to this project, the intention was to reverse the placement of writing and art: the writing as the axial skeleton; the exhibition as the appendicular.

However, as my research into writing and art continued and nuanced into the essay and drawing, and finally the essay qua drawing, this presentation still set up a dichotomy between writing and art. The exhibition would have detracted and distracted from the potential of understanding the essay in the capacity of drawing.

In a swerve in the opposite direction, I also experimented with hand-drawing the text of *Elsewhere*. Different to Landers' use of handwriting, the drawing would have mimicked a laid-out book, so the drawing would reference the digital processes of publication. However, as with Landers' *[sic]*, the autographical mark placed the work *too much* in the space of drawing, at the expense of the argument for the essay qua drawing.

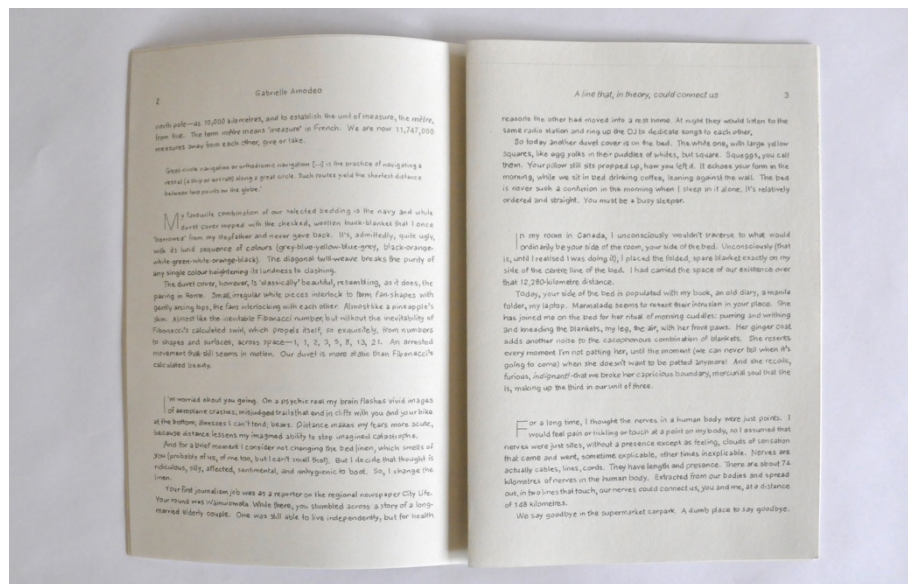


Figure 36 | Gabrielle Amodeo, Studio experiment detail. Pencil on paper. Collection of the artist.

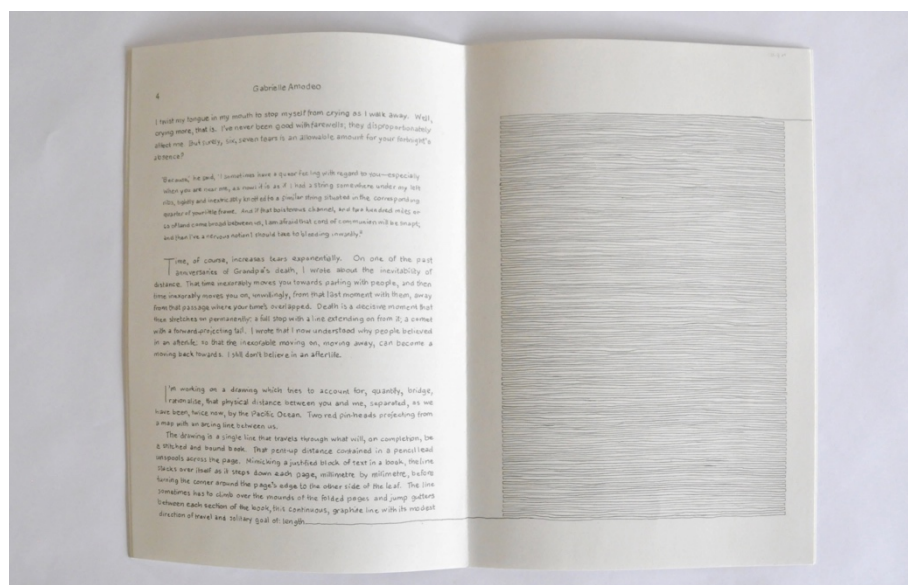


Figure 37 | Gabrielle Amodeo, Studio experiment detail. Pencil on paper. Collection of the artist.

Similarly, experiments typing *Elsewhere* on the vintage typewriter (variously using carbon paper, and with and without the ribbon) used in *The floor we walk on* and *The days we've been together* started to, again, assert notions of the autographical mark and the one-off nature of such a manual process. While shifting this less towards drawing, I still saw potential for the aesthetics of the typewriter, and its close ties with drawing, overwhelming the essay.



Figure 38 | Gabrielle Amodeo, Studio experiment detail. Typewriter mark on paper. Collection of the artist.

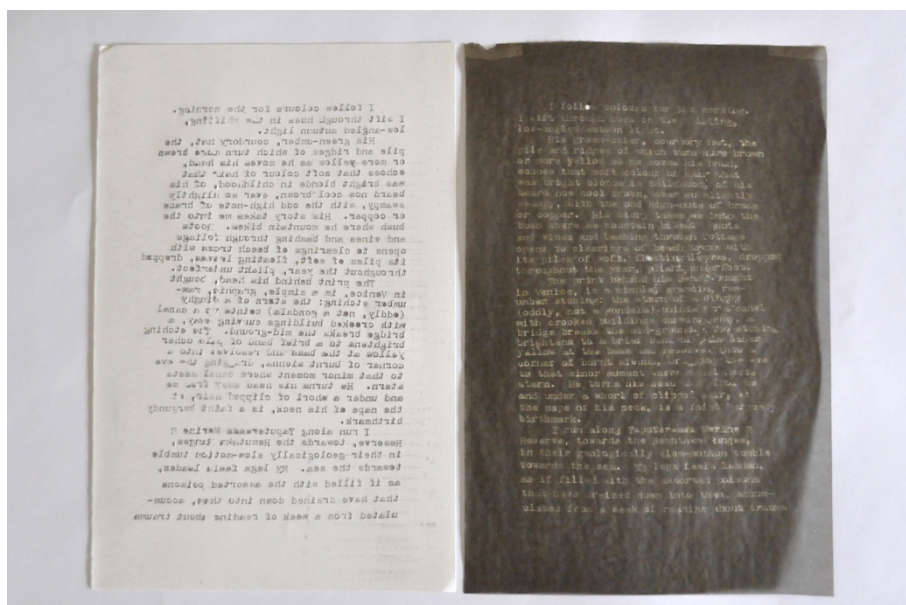


Figure 39 | Gabrielle Amodeo, Studio experiment detail. Typewriter mark on paper and carbon paper. Collection of the artist.



Figure 40 || Gabrielle Amodeo, Studio experiment detail. Typewriter mark on carbon paper. Collection of the artist.

Through these experiments, I learned that I wanted the writing itself to do the job of anchoring the drawing within the essay, as I go into in the section Form. So, a limited edition, printed, hand-bound artist book became the best resolution for *Elsewhere*.

Having an edition of digitally printed books that is theoretically infinitely reprintable, has the potential to play into aspects of conceptual art's rejection of singular art object, as well as Lippard's, "material form as secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or 'dematerialised'."³⁰¹ However, the weight of the paper stock, which is heavier than usually found in commercially published books, and the decision to have the books hand-stitched, and handbound intentionally moves *Elsewhere* away from that.

While I wanted the essay to be the drawing, I paid attention to ways the text in relation to the white space of the page could be complicated in similar ways to a drawing. As noted earlier,

³⁰¹ Lippard, *Six Years*, vii.

drawing has a more open structure, where the empty space of the page is in conversation with the marks of the drawing. The grid is low-slung on the page and leaves a proportionally large white space for the top margin. This spacing acknowledges the horizon line as I encounter it at Wellington's South Coast, Taputerenga: the close busyness of the sea where the text is positioned, and the abstract expanse of the sky in the top margin reference drawing forms like negative and positive space. Relatedly, in laying out the text, I paid attention to how that relationship could be carried through via typographical forms such as rivers, different moments of right-aligned, left-aligned and justified text, runts, and so on. Via these methods, the physical form of the layout occasionally interrupts and makes difficult—instead of enhancing—the reading experience, pressing the relationship between text and page on the reader's notice.



Figure 41 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *Elsewhere, or at sea*, 2022. Inside detail. Limited edition artist book.

The book is entirely white and grey: the white of book cloth, pages and outside of the dustjacket form the foundation for different instants of grey: in the text, the stitching and the inside of the dustjacket. Charcoal, and particularly willow charcoal, comes up in multiple

moments in *Elsewhere*. Based on its recurrence I chose to have the pages printed in a colour matched to Pantone 426U, the Pantone shade that best matched a heavy, willow charcoal mark. Similarly, the sections are stitched using a matching grey thread.

I chose a page-size that can be held between two hands but is not large enough to be easily viewed by more than one person. This scale reinforces senses of intimacy and privacy, setting up the pressure of intimate articulation.



Figure 42 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *Elsewhere, or at sea*, 2022. Inside detail. Limited edition artist book.

The inside of each dustjacket holds a surface of willow charcoal. In some senses this surface acts as an original drawing: it is an autographic mark using a traditional medium on paper.



Figure 43 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *Elsewhere, or at sea*, 2022. Dustcover detail. Limited edition artist book.



Figure 44 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *Elsewhere, or at sea*, 2022. Cover detail. Limited edition artist book.

However, it also negates itself as a drawing. It is not an ‘open’ structure, as described by Rosand and Bryson but is a uniform, void-like, full-coverage surface.³⁰² It literally turns away from the viewer by being inside the dustjacket, instead pressing towards the object of the book. A dustjacket is simultaneously both of the book but also detached from the book, so this ‘drawing’ is positioned ambivalently in relation to where the major content of the artwork is. And while I make the original marks, the drawing that marks the book itself is made by those handling it; the dustcover implicates the viewer or reader, recording their unintentional autographical mark. Combined, the scale of the book and the unpredictable behaviour of the charcoal mark, occurring somewhere between me and the person handling the book, illustrates something of the risks and pressures in the intimate disclosure of trauma.

An autographical surface of my marks on the ambivalent form of the dustjacket becomes an autographical surface of the readers’ marks on the artwork itself.



Figure 45 | Gabrielle Amodeo, *Elsewhere, or at sea*, 2022. Cover and dustcover detail. Limited edition artist book.

³⁰² Norman Bryson in Zegher and Newman, *The Stage of Drawing*, 151; Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, 2.

Form

Conceptual art and essay qua drawing.

I use precepts of conceptual art, alongside aspects of Krauss's 'Sculpture in an Expanded Field' to contextualise *Elsewhere* as the material outcome of my argument for the essay qua drawing.

As discussed in Theoretical Framework: Conceptual art, and to requote her, Lippard states:

"Conceptual art, for me, means work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or 'dematerialised'."³⁰³

Relatedly, Godfrey noted one of the four general forms of conceptual art as *words*, "where the concept, proposition or investigation is presented in the form of language."³⁰⁴ And finally, to requote Krauss:

... Practice is not defined in relation to a given medium [...] but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium [...] might be used. Thus, the field provides both for an expanded but finite set of related positions for a given artists to occupy and explore, and for an organization of work that is not dictated by the conditions of a given medium.³⁰⁵

It is from these key foundations—the idea is paramount, and the material form is secondary—and with a focus on both words as artform, the notion of dematerialisation, and an expanded field based on related positions, that I argue for the essay qua drawing, as demonstrated in *Elsewhere*.

The idea in *Elsewhere* is a life-drawing exploring my lived experience of dealing with the co-existence of C-PTSD and intimacy. Based on the experiments that led to *Elsewhere*, whereby the wordlessness of the drawings, for me, perpetuated the cycle of the wordlessness of trauma, drawing in and of itself was not the appropriate form for the idea to take. So, the material form had to move towards words. While drawing isn't dematerialised in a strict

³⁰³ Lippard, *Six Years*, vii.

³⁰⁴ Wood, *Conceptual Art*, 7.

³⁰⁵ Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', 42–43.

sense, figuration in *Elsewhere* is realised through textual description, which dematerialises the autographical nature of the drawing into the, I have argued, overlapping form of the essay. Thus, the essay qua drawing is the best material form for the exploration of a life-drawing exploring my lived experience of dealing with the co-existence of C-PTSD and intimacy.

Different drawing lenses put over the writing.

After writing a collection of essays towards this research I put them through a process of combining all the essays together, and then fragmenting them down using rule-based systems that aligned with rule-based precepts of conceptual art: arranging all the paragraphs according to length or arranging them alphabetically based on the first letter. While there was some usefulness in this process, treating the essays in this manner did not answer the research question. In the same way that drawing the text moved the research indelibly towards being a drawing and making the essay secondary to the autographic act of drawing itself (as with Sean Landers), the rules overwhelmed the writing, shifting it towards an Uncreative Writing work or a conceptual art exercise. The rule-based fragmentation, and attendant questions about this, overwhelmed the content.

Although, the uniformity of a rule-based fragmentation did not work, seeing the essays not as discrete pieces, seeing instead the possibility of combining their forms, did start to answer how a single essay, with passages of fragmentation and areas of resolution worked in relation to the process and techniques of drawing.

Rather than keeping *Elsewhere* as a series of separate essays, I brought several essays into a single, novella-length piece of writing. (I discuss the ramifications of this in relation to editing shortly.) The individual essays then become points of focus in amongst other pieces of more speculative writing, developed to bridge between or break up the essays. As with the sprawling process of drawing, moments of the composition resolve into heightened detail while other areas remain more abstract and less formed. Rather than being regarded as unimportant, these less resolved areas of a drawing (as with the speculative parts of my

writing) buttress the moments of resolution through contrast, through forming the broader scaffolding of texture and context and form.

While different drawing techniques can be bordered off and addressed separately (such as gesture separate from blind contour separate from contour, planar, negative space and so on), my experience of observational drawing is that these techniques overlap and feed into each other. In my observational drawing, they become states of mind I slip between and lenses through which I look as I try to make sense of what I'm seeing, as well as being techniques that have a presence in the drawing itself. In the same way the drawing might have points of focus and other areas that are vague and indistinct, a drawing will have moments of gesture, contour, planar, and more.

In one sense, the composition of *Elsewhere* operates as a blind contour: there is an implicit faithfulness in the telling of each moment, as there is ideally an implicit faithfulness in your hand responding to what your eye is seeing as you trace the contours of the figure. But the drawing as a whole is distorted: proportion is lost, small things become outsized, the line meanders across the page, losing contact with the starting point; blind contour resists closing itself into a stable form as areas are ranged over again and again producing different results. But, for all this, for its fragmentary, distorted nature, a blind contour is a beautiful thing, full of attention and care for each moment as those moments occur as your eye follows the form. It strings together its own fragmentary nature because of the usually single or minimal line the form takes. In *Elsewhere*, I string together fragments, giving form to memories, sensations, emotions. The fragments are as carefully observed as I can make them. But the fragments taken together, forming the contour of the narrative (such as it is), are discursive: as with a blind contour, the continuity is there but resistant to settling into a regular narrative form.

This can be seen in how my parents recur as fragments throughout *Elsewhere*, particularly in the first half, rising into prominence and sinking again. Though the writing about them is relatively sparse, I tried to give focussed detail, which has the effect of making them seem to occupy a larger space. This is perhaps analogous to how the index events of trauma have a sucking focus in the context of a life. The concentrated shards of my parents works in contrast to, say, Justin, who is tightly drawn as foreground and background into all aspects of *Elsewhere*, by being both the person to and for whom the whole work is written, as well as

being the subject of much of the writing. Additionally, I treated Marmalade as I would draw a domesticated cat's lived behaviour: she slinks in and out of *Elsewhere* as though through our house, sometimes glimpsed in the corner of a scene, other times asserting her presence as the subject of a section. Surrounding the people who recur in *Elsewhere* are descriptions of the objects, like still-lives, that resonate or act as metaphor to other parts of the composition. I lavish attention on tone, colour and the haptic experience of these objects. This maps strongly as a development from the use of found objects in previous of my works.

The scenes within *Elsewhere*, though, are more accurately tableaux, especially those from my early life. Too brief for the continuity that could be a narrative, the scenes mostly are flashes, a few seconds long with minimal or no dialogue. This is because that is how the memories present themselves to me. A few seconds, not much more: the time of a lunge, or the time of a glance, or the time of a spill of brine from a jar. Enough for partial comprehension, not enough for narrative clarity. The flashes are then strung together, producing a narrative where gaps, lapses and absences do as much work as the tableaux themselves. In this, the scenes are like a gestural drawing: they give a sense of the event; a narrative can be built around them; but they are not narrative in themselves.

In the process of an observational drawing, sections of the drawing will become a fixed point within the composition that I return to continually. If I get lost in or confused by another part of the drawing, I go back to that fixed point to relook and revise what's familiar and more stable. When drawing the body, this is frequently the pelvis, to which the rest of the body will be built out from. Having a part of the drawing that is a place of continual return anchors the drawing. It often becomes, by dint of those continual returns and revisions, the part of the composition that's most fully described. The refrain of *Another time*, and the continual return to Taputerenga, operate in a similar way, both as an actual place I returned to within the process of working on *Elsewhere* and also as a compositional device within *Elsewhere*. Running is integral to my writing process, and the *Another time* observations were plein-air sketches when a moment pulled me up short. Breathless and sweaty, I typed quick notes into my phone, jostled them about in my head during the rest of the run, and later worked them up into drawings for *Elsewhere*. The refrain operates as a solid if changing location that I return the reader to when I'm changing the course of the composition.

This overlapping multiplicity from my experience of observational drawing is important in the positioning of *Elsewhere* as an essay qua drawing. These techniques as modes and lenses informed both the way I approached the act of writing, the decision-making in the editing process, and also how I contextualise the finished work.

Over the course of this exegesis, I outlined the overlaps between the essay and drawing to propose a fruitful middle ground between them. As I hope the above demonstrates, this concept has arisen through praxis, and from my personal experience of writing and drawing. I began this discussion with the metaphor of the axial and appendicular skeleton as a way of framing the relationship between art and writing.

As I write up my findings on this research, I have arrived at a different way of understanding the essay and drawing: as oil and water contained in a vessel. In their usual state, they sit as separate forms alongside each other; through shaking, they can be combined. But they remain immiscible. Inertia settles them back to their separate forms, alongside each other.

Through this research I have shaken the essay and drawing together. Shaken together, they move through and around each other, complicating each other as a pair of split forms. *Elsewhere, or at sea* is an interlude of the essay and drawing shaken together: a captured moment of their glistening complexity as shared form.

Content

Autotheory has been an important touchstone for the content of this research. As an interdisciplinary approach to engaging with theory in ways that supports weaving together the autobiographical, personal, and creative with the theoretical, conceptual and critical.³⁰⁶ From this, autotheory supports the exploration of the co-existence of the personal experience of intimacy and C-PTSD in an academic setting. To address these, I first look at my citations made in *Elsewhere*. Following, I address autotheory in relation to intimacy and trauma.

Citational practices in autotheory and *Elsewhere, or at sea*

As implied by the name, autotheoretical works put forward a theory in relation to the self. In an observable sense, this can manifest in particular forms of citational practice.³⁰⁷ In relation to intertextual intimacy, Fournier writes of this practice: “The moment that a text resonates with the understanding ... is also a moment of ‘being understood.’ Citation, placed next to memory, becomes a way of making one’s life intelligible.”³⁰⁸ In *Elsewhere*, I use two forms of referencing: an in-text citational practice whereby I address the works of other artists in relation to the life-events I describe; and quotations from other sources that are placed adjacent to my writing. To first address my practice of quotations, this stemmed from a performative element in earlier performed-essay experiments, in particular the works *To Essay (a relationship)*, and *I have an idea for an exploded essay*. As part of the performances, I included pieces of writing and other objects (books, images, curios). The intention was to force the listener/viewer into parallel processing of receiving, looking, touching, listening, reading. The multiplicity of texts (the quotations, the essay’s content, and the objects) worked in adjacency to each other. The intention was to unsettle where the artwork occurred: it was outside of the objects, but it was also not just within the essay. In this way, I was using quotations as a textual form of found object, alongside the actual found objects that formed the props for the performances.

³⁰⁶ Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 7.

³⁰⁷ First discussed in Theoretical Framework: Intimacy.

³⁰⁸ Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.*, 144.

This practice of using quotations as a form of found object carried over into the process of writing *Elsewhere*. Quotations from writers, theorists, podcasts, newspaper articles break through my own writing. While they are relevant to the passages of my writing and do the work of helping make sense of memory (as discussed in *Intimacy*) the authors are often unacknowledged within the page, and the quotations act almost as interruptions or outside interjections. This differs from some of the mise-en-page in-margin textual citational practices Fournier outlines, such as Nelson's *The Argonauts* and Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*, in which, she argues, the citations (respectively) foster intimacy at the level of form, or can be understood as amical and friendly.³⁰⁹ Rather than engaging with text-based theorists and philosophers in the way they do, I am articulating passages of my life in dialogue with particular artworks that have resonance to the experience.

Instead of engaging with a lineage of theorists and philosophers, passages of *Elsewhere* engage with artworks. Jenny Saville's *Self Portrait (After Rembrandt)* offers context for the physical trauma of a broken collarbone and intergenerational trauma running between my grandmother, mother and me; Simon Morris' *Yellow Ochre Room* became an imagined place to understand the different intimacies I have with my grandfather and husband; Maddie Leach's *If you find the good oil* became a metaphor for understanding the weight of non-disclosure of sexual abuse. While there are the more obvious moments of engaging with an artist's work, I was also interested in how I can reference an artwork in a formal, textual sense. During the course of writing about Monet's habit of working in series on particular subjects, the refrain of *Another time*, sharpened into a plein air series whereby I started understanding it as a way of intentionally 'quoting' Monet's practice. As I continued to investigate my own habits of attention, this begun to resolve my understanding of intimacy as accrued close observation. This in-text form of citational practice whereby I position artworks to make understandable life-events has more resonance with how Fournier articulates an intertextual intimacy.

³⁰⁹ Fournier, 144 & 146.

In this research I have used my personal experiences with both intimacy and trauma alongside theoretical framings of both in a process of life-drawing that parallels a practice of life-writing. In relation to trauma in particular, autotheory gives important allowance for the subjective experiences that arose during the research. As discussed in Theoretical Framework: Trauma and Intimacy, trauma is an event that fractures the sense of self, preventing the person from integrating the event into the narrative of their past. Through the effects of PTSD, the trauma remains present and relivable. As a person who experiences C-PTSD, addressing personal trauma in my research (say, to write, representationally or theoretically, on trauma) can generate PTSD-symptoms such as sweating, increased heartrate, vertigo, emotional flooding. It is to partially reexperience the trauma. Thus, throughout this research, PTSD symptoms have pulsed against the representation and analysis of trauma, resisting a neutral and objective body of work. As memory, symptoms, representation and theory tangled together, autotheory was an important lens with which to contextualise this mingling of the self with theory.³¹⁰

Combining several essays into one novella-length essay allows me to introduce the previously discussed forms of trauma: moments where the narrative fragments, or jars, or seems to dissociate away; where there's moments of whiplash, or where what seems to be a tangential theme resolves between several essays. Imbedding these forms of trauma into the structure of *Elsewhere* acknowledges, through form, the theorised experiences of C-PTSD. Different from the drawing suite, *An Open Love Letter*, though, I was not in the thrall of the symptoms: being able to address trauma through words and narratively, and being able to use them with intention, as a tool within the editing process meant I could articulate these complex experiences through both form and words.

The act of articulation in intimate settings makes up a significant proportion of *Elsewhere*, as well as being a key driver of the work. However, I do not position *Elsewhere* as a trauma testimony, whereby the narrative is focused on the arc of the trauma itself, from a time before the trauma, the trauma itself, and the period after the trauma. Instead, *Elsewhere* is an

³¹⁰ Significant portions of this paragraph were used for a proposed abstract for the forthcoming Special Issue "Autotheory in Contemporary Visual Arts Practice" for the journal *Arts*.

expanded life-drawing of acknowledging and integrating traumatic events within a primary intimate setting—my relationship with Justin—and through additional, supporting intimacies (for instance through therapy, and with my grandfather). So, trauma does not form the arc: intimacy does.

This can be seen narratively via the work opening with speaking directly to Justin through the writing about my fears surrounding disclosure. During the period where I have left *Elsewhere* with him, it reverts to not talking to anyone specifically. In this section, which makes up the bulk of the work, *Elsewhere* opens out to a broad range of settings, centred on our life together. Throughout, various index traumas and periods where my C-PTSD symptoms have flared are touched on as they have resonated with or impacted on our relationship. *Elsewhere* then begins to move back to speaking directly to Justin again as I range over our shared experiences through the final third of the work.

But further, as discussed earlier, intimacy resolved in this research as a practice of accrual based on close observation. This included using intimacy as a practice to observe and understand PTSD and its symptoms. So, as well as intimacy forming the narrative arc as outcome, it also underpinned the approach through which I could make sense of trauma. *Elsewhere* touches on the moments of trauma (the index events), but it is more aligned with the intimate practice of expanded life-drawing, as interweaving the complex lived experience of learning to contextualise my past in relation to my present.

This research draws from DuPlessis and Lorange's framing of the essay as writing-as-reading and thinking-while-writing, and Young's proposition: "But maybe all essays... enact the way that somebody's mind can shape thought," situating the essay as a potential space for a lived, ongoing practice.³¹¹ I combine this with my situating of intimacy as a process of accrued, close observation within my expanded life-drawing practice. The accrued observation encompasses the sensorial as well as the emotional, as a contextualisation of the relationship between intimacy and trauma. *Elsewhere* takes the form of an essay that uses techniques of drawing, such as gesture and blind contour, to arrive at the essay qua drawing.

³¹¹ DuPlessis, 'F-Words', 17; Lorange, 'The Essay As'; Ashleigh Young in 'Ashleigh Young—5 Questions'.

Conclude | To Shut

Through a methodology of research based in an art practice formed on modes of expanded drawing and writing, and supported by this exegetical document, this thesis asked how an expanded practice of life-drawing—in which the essay operates in the capacity of a drawing—can be valuable as a mode of representing experiences of trauma and intimacy within a contemporary visual arts context.

Over the duration of research three key inquiries occurred:

To study dissociation as a symptom of past trauma, and observation as a characteristic of intimacy, in order to explore their roles in an expanded practice of life-drawing.

To explore forms of expanded drawing in a contemporary visual arts context that pushes from image and towards language/writing via the modes of observation and description.

To investigate a combination of drawing, writing and presentation techniques that support the proposition of the essay qua drawing in a way that maintain space for both the essay *and* drawing, whilst demonstrating the productive overlaps between them.

I examined the first of these inquiries through considering autotheory as a practice to support my interrogation, through both theoretical research and lived experience, of modes of intimacy and trauma. This gave rise to the research proposal of intimacy as a practice of observation to reinterpret dissociation from only obstructive, to a potential space for poesis. This is demonstrated in two interlinked ways through the content of *Elsewhere*: through an arc based on the process of intimate articulation of trauma to my husband, the accrued observation of intimacy, as part of a practice of expanded life-drawing, allowed me to address and articulate dissociation, effectively repositioning it from something I was in the thrall of to something I could make artwork from.

I addressed the second inquiry via utilising selected aspects of conceptual art and Krauss's 'Sculpture in an Expanded Field' to argue pre-existing models of art allow space for movement towards writing and language in a visual arts context. I refined this to a consideration of the potential overlaps between the essay and drawing. This introduced the research proposition of the essay qua drawing as part of an expanded practice of life-drawing. I combine this with the first research proposition to particularly position the essay qua drawing as a valuable mode of representing experiences of trauma and intimacy within a contemporary visual arts context. Various studio experiments demonstrated the potential for the essay qua drawing, but further refinement was needed to the techniques of *Elsewhere* to underscore this. However, the essay qua drawing did further support the first research proposition through articulating the 'unsaid', the gaps and absences that were occurring in the earlier drawing suite *An open love letter*. This is through readings of both the essay and drawing as a space for *thinking through*, for intimacy as observation grappling towards understanding.

The third inquiry arose through considering both the practices of other artists working at the nexus of writing and visual arts, as well as considering the audience reception of my experiments. This exposed tensions between how writing is received in a visual arts context, particularly when couched or framed or presented as performance, installation, exhibition or through an autographical mark. This opened the research proposal that the artist book is a mode of presentation that sits efficiently between the disciplines of drawing and the essay. In concert with utilising techniques of drawing through the mode of essay writing, presentation decisions around layout, materials and scale of the artist book underscores the essay qua drawing. This is demonstrated in the form and presentation of *Elsewhere*: during both writing

and editing, I used the sensibility of drawing techniques (such as blind contour, gesture and plein air) to inform and develop the essay. This stems from my sense of expanded life-drawing practice as a mode of observation and description sited in both language and visual outcomes. The artist book uses typographical forms in ways that echo the shared forms of trauma and drawing. And the dustjacket contains a charcoal surface that operates in two key ambivalent spaces: it is both of and not of the artist book; and the autographical marks are made between the reader and me.

These three research inquiries and their resultant propositions then mutually support each other in *Elsewhere, or at sea*. An expanded practice of life-drawing allows space for the essay qua drawing. Drawing and the essay are modes that support the idea of accrued observation as a process of intimacy. Through the carefully considered presentation of a piece of writing within a visual arts context, essay qua drawing has the capacity *to hold* the intimate observation that shifts dissociation away from only obstruction.

The research outcome of this thesis, *Elsewhere, or at sea*, uses an expanded practice of life-drawing—in which the essay operates in the capacity of a drawing—as a compelling mode of representing experiences of trauma and intimacy within a contemporary visual arts context.

Afterword: On Negative Space

Perhaps the most impactful moment of my undergraduate education was, as a seventeen-year-old in my first year at art school, my then drawing teacher introducing the concept of negative space drawings. Not simply empty, white silhouettes of objects in a vast blackened-out page, but actually drawing, via the shadows cast by the multiple light-sources in the classroom, the plenty of the blank, white wall, the angled gap between it and the table, the fine curve of the edge of the sheet of paper the objects sat on overlapping another, the intersecting, layered shadows of each object colliding with the other. This negative space had fullness, depth, weight, delicacy, texture, distance, connection; in short, empty space was revealed as replete with form. Not, though, in the way an object has form, pushing forward against the eye for attention. Its form is abstracted, all shadows and light, receding back into the picture plane.

In a way that kept unfolding to me, I remember being astounded at the idea of looking at gaps, empty spaces, absences to make sense, enrich, to actually *see* what seems apparent. In that moment, my world was written anew.

Unaddressed trauma is like a drawing without rendered negative space. Let us imagine a vase, a bottle, both bisque-fired white ceramic. Maybe a piece of driftwood curves in front of them. Maybe an animal skull, slightly yellowed, off to the side. All highly rendered, but with

nothing in between them. The objects are zones of certainty standing out sharply from the white of the page. But the white of the page presses against perception, asking *what is in there?* The drawing dissociates from presence into absence.

The development of this research, for me, was to look beyond the areas of safe and certain presence, and to start addressing the gaps, the absences. Over time, through a practice of close observation as a mode of intimacy, the engulfing void of gap became legible. The dissociation, the trauma, was first briefly glimpsed. Then looked at... seen... acknowledged... examined... articulated... and rendered. The gap and absence of trauma and dissociation shifted and shaped into negative space. Form and negative space became mutually defining: the form giving substance to the negative space and the negative space enriching and contextualising the form.

The course of undertaking, considering and reflecting on this research has been to have that long-ago negative space lesson again. That the spaces in between are necessary to understanding the forms. That looking through, looking around, looking between, looking aslant helps make sense of the looking at. That intimacy and trauma can reciprocally acknowledge each other. That poiesis can come from dissociation.

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Appendices

To Essay (a relationship)

The following was the script for the recorded essay *To Essay (a relationship)* that was part of the 2018 solo exhibition *Blind Carbon Copy: An Open Love Letter* at Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Titirangi, Tāmaki Makaurau, curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith.

[Item: Woodstock No. Five typewriter]

Justin found the typewriter under the house.

We bought the house together on Wednesday, 25th March, 2009. We'd been together for one thousand, nine hundred and seventy-eight days or two hundred and eighty two weeks or sixty-five months or 5.41369863 years. [Edit: how to parse a relationship].

The house was built in the 1940s. Land area: 490m², Floor area 94m². Together we have lived at six different addresses: three in Auckland, three in Wellington.

The typewriter is older than the house. It's a Woodstock No. Five, with the serial number AN241757. The prefix N indicates it is a Correspondence model, with an eleven and three eighths-inch carriage. The number 241757 means it was manufactured in 1929.

At some point it was introduced into the belongings of the house, probably by a previous owner: an unofficial chattel, a relic of the house's history. But as I have experienced it, it had always been somehow synonymous with the house, somehow representative of that dwelling we had stewardship over for a time; it had been sitting under the house for who knows how long before Justin found it and we started keeping it inside.

Woodstock typewriters seem to have one historical moment: one was a key part of a case to incriminate a former US State Department Official, Alger Hiss.

In 1948 Hiss was accused of being a communist spy: that a decade before he and his wife, Pricilla Hiss, would type state secrets out on their 1927 Woodstock typewriter to supply to communist groups in the USA.

By 1948 the Hiss' no longer owned their 1927 model so the defence and prosecution went on a hunt to find it, to prove it was the machine that typed "The Baltimore Documents".

What was thought to be the Hiss' typewriter was found and entered into evidence as Exhibit #UUU, however, it's now widely accepted that this was not the Hiss' typewriter and was

most likely a forged typewriter. Nonetheless, Alger Hiss was convicted and imprisoned for several years.

Our typewriter was manufactured the same year as *Exhibit #UUU*, the typewriter entered into evidence for the trial against Hiss.

Where the paper used within the typewriter will have a lineal sense, as the words sequentially form on the page, the platen of a typewriter is a site of accumulated strikes, each strike acting as a redaction of the strike before. As the marks accrue their sense in the singular is lost. So the sense lies in the papers that have rolled through the typewriter, but the platen is the site where all those absent sheets of paper still somehow remain.

For me, paper operates along a binary: quotidian and throw-away but also singular, irreplaceable. Like a relationship, I guess: quotidian and unique.

Paper is the gift you give at a first anniversary. It's meant to signify an early relationship's fragility, and also a new page of a couple's life. Possibly this is a cynical acknowledgement of the deluge of paper you'll accrue over the duration of your relationship. A shared life holds so much paper.

[Edit: Not a shared life. To share a life sounds like some sort of merger. Liquids merge. Companies merge. Lives don't. It's a passage where two existences move alongside each other. It's two distinct territories that overlap, two times that touch. Yes. Overlapping lives.]

[Items: a selection of 54 samples of all the paper around our house]

A full sample of all the paper around our house would include:

- bank statements
- bills
- books
- business cards
- cardboard boxes
- civil union certificate
- drawings on paper

- exhibition catalogues and brochures
- house purchase documents
- notebooks
- manila folders
- maps
- packaging
- paintings on paper
- paper towels
- photos
- post-it notes
- postcards
- sewing patterns
- shopping lists
- tissues
- to do lists
- toilet paper

[Item: Book: *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, edited by Richard Kearney and Mara Rainwater, open at page 445, annotated post it note on facing page.]

This is a textbook we shared while we were studying, around 2005, 2006. Actually, it was his; I would borrow it—well, steal it—for my studies. I found his decade-old post-it note message to me some time last year when I was doing some refresher reading. My nickname is Gussy.

[Edit: neither of us now knows why he thought this was so important for me to read.]

I was studying my MFA. He was doing his BA with a philosophy major, and doing extremely well. He was heavily encouraged to go further with philosophy but decided to ultimately go into journalism instead. More jobs, you see. That's not so much the case now, especially not in daily newspapers.

The slightly off-kilter rhythm of daily newspapers has shaped our existence—for a long time

our days were syncopated: my days started in the morning, his mid-afternoon, my weekends on Saturday and Sunday, and his were split across the week. Recently we've watched the proposed NZME Fairfax merger go through the Commerce Commission with a great deal of attention.

[Items: tracing the as yet unsuccessful union of NZME and Fairfax through six documents]

[27 May 2016 NZME/Fairfax Application: Proposed merger submitted to the New Zealand Commerce Commission]

[2 May 2017 Commerce Commission Determination: The ComCom released their decision ruling against the merger]

[26 May 2017 NZME/Fairfax Appeal: NZME and Fairfax lodged their appeal against the ComCom at the High Court]

[19 December 2017 High Court Judgement: the NZME Fairfax Merger Appeal against the ComCom was dismissed by the High Court]

[5 February 2018 press releases: NZME and Fairfax confirm to the NZX and the ASX they will apply for leave to appeal the High Court decision upholding the ComCom's decision]

[2 March 2018 press release: Hearing dates confirmed for merger appeal from 5 June 2018 to 8 June 2018]

How the outcome of this merger, this now seemingly forbidden corporate union, will affect our days still remains to be seen, but production journalists, the subeditors and designers of newspapers, are usually disproportionately affected by any sorts of media corporation changes.

Because he's a subeditor, his words, always rigorous given his philosophy training, are now more clipped.

Write from the top down, most important points first so that, for expediency, the bottom half of the story can be cut without materially affecting the story. The word ‘that’ is mostly unnecessary. ‘With’ is not a coordinating conjunction. ‘In the wake of’ is a cliché, not to be used. Past and last can’t be used interchangeably. The use of ‘currently’ is mostly redundant. Cull the adjectives.

[Edit: This makes him sound sterner than he actually is. He’s really quite silly and sweet. It’s just a different type of words he works with. He wrote these words to me a while ago.

[Item: Screenshot of email, redacted, between artist and husband]

[It's in Hawera, but something to file away in the inspiration files for the distant maybe future world.

I like the idea of a file for the distant maybe future world]

I still like the idea of a file for the distant maybe future world.]

[Edit two: After I read this to him, he said, “I hope people don’t notice that I didn’t hyphenate that compound adjective in the email.”]

[Item: Text dated 2nd February 2018, in artist’s handwriting]

[2 February, 2018: His first journalism job was as a reporter on the regional newspaper City Life and his round was Wainuiomata (circa. 2008). While there, he stumbled across a story of a long-married elderly couple. One was still able to live independently, but for health reasons the other had moved into a rest home. At night they would listen to the same radio station and dedicate songs to each other.]

Incidentally, while we’re on the subject of grammar, my name is partially constructed from an Italian present tense verb. Amare is the Italian infinitive of ‘to love’.

[Item: First conjugation, Are, in the artist’s 2017 Italian class work book]

Amo. I love.

Ami. You love.

Ama. It loves.

Amiamo. We love.

Amate. Plural, you love.

Amano. They love.

Amo literally means I love. Deo means god. Amodeo: I love god.

[Edit: I'm an atheist.]

So my surname is both a proper noun and a full sentence, complete with subject, object, tense and verb. I'm rather proud of the grammatical dexterity tucked neatly into those six little letters. Intimacy and the present tense are imbedded into my name.

To love is the obvious infinitive for a relationship, but it seems somehow not right to me. It's at once too broad and too particular; too hammy and too poignant. Because I can love chicken soup and cool sunny days and my husband all at once, the sweeping nature of the verb lessens in the particular when applied to our relationship. It describes a feeling, but it doesn't describe the passage, the process, the time, the space of a relationship.

[Item A: redacted certified copy of New Zealand Civil Union Certificate; and Item B:
redacted certified copy of Copy of Particulars of Civil Union]

We have a civil union. I like the implications of Civil. I know it means civil in the sense of 'relating to ordinary citizens and their concerns', but for me there's also something of 'civility' in this, as in courtesy, as in an act of showing regard for each other.

But we constantly struggle to conjugate this form of legal commitment: an infinitive isn't immediately apparent, leaving us with a muddle of grammatical uncertainties: Is the infinitive to civilly unify or to civilly unite? Did you and I civilly unite? Is she/he/it civilly unified? Are we civilly unifying? Are they civilly united? [Edit 20 April: I think I prefer 'unite' to 'unify']... [Additional edit 14 May: Or have we unionised?]

In Italian, con means ‘With’, from a Latinate root meaning ‘Together’:

Conjugate: to Yoke together

Consummate: Brought to completion together

Conglomerate: Ball together

Contribute: Bestow with

[pause]

Congruence: To come together

Concurrent: Running together

Contemporary: Together with time

Contiguous: Touching

So I want a different infinitive for this passage of our existence: a grammar that can adequately encompass the process of a relationship: coming together, running together, together in time, touching.

Perhaps a relationship is ‘to essay’; to essay is a process of questioning, and to question can be a form of vulnerability. In an examination of the essay form, titled *The Essay As*, poet Astrid Lorange writes: Quote “The word *essay* comes from an old French word meaning ‘trial’, or ‘attempt’. It is, by nature an incomplete thing, an experimental process that is necessarily inconclusive ... The presentness of the essay form asks: *what now*, and *now what?*”³¹² End quote

Like a familiar corner in a house, where you both know and don’t know what’s coming, this present we spend together is the bend between one thing and another, our osculating timelines.

[Item: Diagram of our osculating timelines.]

³¹² Lorange, ‘The Essay As’.

Lorange goes on to write, quote “It is an act of both reading and writing; collaborative, performative, shared and compromised.”³¹³ End quote.

A text unfolds to the reader. Reading is a slow process of revealing, word-by-word, page-by-page; the single accruing to a state of emergence, the reveals continuing with each re-read, and overlaid by the discursive nature of thought bounding off in other directions, sometimes suggested, sometimes unexpected.

[Item: Text dated 24th October, 2017, in artist’s handwriting]

[24th October, 2017: I realised, recently, how fifteen years has changed his appearance, but how the veneer of all those appearances still overlay what is immediately present. In a gradual process of unfolding, there’s the early twenties and the late thirties; the mutton chops, the beard, the moustache, the clean-shaven; the new scars softening to old scars; glasses, no glasses; all there even in their absence, just unfolding. A palimpsest.]

When I write there’s that period where the words building on the page feel like they start to lose all sense. Where because of this fragmenting of sense I want the essay to burst its form like confetti. I want to cut the essay up into paragraphs, and then into sentences, and then into single words. And then I would gather all those fragments of meaning to try to figure out what I mean. And then settle and resolve the essay into something approaching order again.

Where the simple measure of a relationship is to parse it out to the barest of facts. Look at all these days we’ve been together; look at this list of addresses we’ve lived at; look at the places we’ve gone; the distance travelled; the spaces dwelt in; the beds slept in; the words spoken; the ideas shared. All meaningful. All slightly inadequate to what they mean.

[Item: Book: *The Luminaries* by Eleanor Catton open at pages 668 and 669, redacted.]

³¹³ Lorange.

Like the strikes on the typewriter's platen, the tiny fragments are decipherable but meaningless, and their accrual is full of unreadable meaning. It's in the accrued unruliness resolving into combinations and sequences that they become meaningful.

[Item: Woodstock No. Five typewriter]

I have an idea for an exploded essay

The following was the script for the recorded essay *I have an idea for an exploded essay* that was part of the 2018 solo exhibition of the same name at RM Gallery and Project Space, Tāmaki Makaurau. A printed version of the essay was part of the work and was laid out as it appears here.

[Item: Script for audio of *I have an idea for an exploded essay.*]

[Date created 21 November 2017]

I always thought I would write a proposal for [REDACTED] but I never did. And then [REDACTED] closed. And now I have a studio there.

[Item: Photograph of studio: this was the photo I posted to Instagram when I moved into the studio on 19 January 2017.]

So I thought that maybe I would have some sort of open studio there, an exhibition or a performance there, that I would call *I always thought I would write a proposal for [REDACTED] but I never did*. And now I'm about to move out of my studio and I still haven't held the open studio.

[Edit 9 January 2018: I've now pretty much finished moving out of the studio. FOMO seems to be a pretty overwhelming part of being an artist.]

[Second edit 2 February 2018: My lease there officially expires tomorrow; the new tenant takes on my old studio space from 4 February 2017.]

My plan for the open studio was it would have had three works that I would have made for the exhibition at [REDACTED]. In classical rhetoric, three is used because it's unstable, dynamic; two and four are both too balanced, and five is too many. The use of three also fits in with the classical modes of persuasion: ethos, logos and pathos. Anyway, I digress.

I liked the idea of the show being based around notions of unitary completeness.

Like, I wanted to look at where the point is that a painting is actually completed. So, the first work that I thought about for this show at [REDACTED] was called, *Cleaning my palette, slowly*. That same year, 2015, my partner gave me a bunch of flowers around the anniversary of the death of my grandfather, because I was a bit down.

[Item: Watercolour painting of flowers.]

The flowers were beautiful and I immediately took them to my studio and did this watercolour painting for him, as a thank-you.

[Item: Ceramic watercolour palette in shape of flower, Gladwrapped]

But what I liked most about it was what remained in my palette, this palette, with this series of madly pooled colours, all there, all of the original painting but not so. [Edit 5 January 2018: I've since stored the palette upside down so it doesn't get dusty. For the show I would have glad wrap it.]

I wanted to capture that, slowly, piece-by-piece, by systematically lifting all the paint into a tiny paintbrush and transferring it, loaded brush by loaded brush, into a grid. Something like this.

[Item: Studio experiment: watercolour painting of gridded colours.]

[Edit 9 January, 2018: This is just a studio experiment using a different set of colours, but it matches the painting really well. Maybe I don't have to do the actual work; just use this.]

In the end the palette would be clean and the colours would be captured in a grid. It would be the ultimate completion of the painting of the flowers, to have used every last skerrick of the paint in a diptych.

[Item: Dried floral arrangement in jug.]

These are actually the original flowers, two and a half years on. In their freshness they were vibrant and colourful. I've always struggled with throwing out dead flowers, be they pot plants or fresh flowers.

[Edit 25 May 2018: other dead flowers from around the house that I haven't thrown out:

Items: Dead catnip kept on the ground near the cat food bowls.

Items: Dead proteas kept in a jug by the couch in the living room.

Item: Dead moth orchid in white pot, which Akiko gave me when she moved to Sweden. She told me she had had it for nearly twenty years; I managed to kill it within a year.

Item: Dying roses my mother-in-law gave me a few weeks ago.

Absent Item: Dead flower, kept in a branch pot in the bedroom, from the succulents by the side of the house.

Absent Item: Dried flowers from the sand dunes out at Piha, picked before we moved to Wellington.

Absent Item: My dried elopement bouquet.]

[Edit 17 January 2018: I found these cornflowers in the studio bin. Fuck. Now I'm collecting other people's dead flowers.]

[Update 27 February 2018, I threw the cornflowers flowers out.]

[Item: marker of where the cornflowers would have been if I had kept them.]

[Second edit 17 January 2018: My root to my new studio at Massey takes me past a series of windows to the offices of other PhD students. The internal window ledges are 370mm deep white painted concrete. One has a vase of what looks like shrivelled and dried daffodils; another has a single, long stemmed, dried protea. The vessel it sits in is much too short for it. In some sort of solidarity, I now keep my dead orchid and dried flowers on my window ledge.]

[Third edit 22 February 2018: a chap from Facilities Management jimmied open the locked drawers in my desk with a pair of needle-nose pliers from Sam's studio. I guess the drawers had been locked by a previous student, who had then taken the key with them.

[Item: Ziploc bag with eleven rocks and one broken shell.]

The student left inside the bottom drawer this zip-lock bag of rocks and a single broken shell.]

[Edit 23 February 2018: As part of my induction into the PhD I had a discussion with a Research Data Management Librarian from the Manawatu campus. One issue we discussed is what *is* Research Data Management for a Creative College researcher. This is her response.

Quote: I've come across a presentation that talks about it in an understandable way—slide 13 has a definition. The presentation also says: 'Art data is personal and may not be factual in nature. What matters most may not be the content itself, but rather the presentation, the arrangement, the quality of expression. So it's definitely not black and white!

End Quote.

[Item: screenshot of her response.]

[illegible]

[Item: Trodat printy-dater 4810 stamp]

Following this notion of unitary completeness, my second work for the show at [REDACTED] would have been to complete this Trodat printy-dater 4810 stamp. Its first date is 01 JAN 2015 (the year I was considering writing the proposal) and its last date is 31 DEC 2026. Given the quantity of dates (4015 not factoring in leap years) I think it would have been a series of, what would they be, prints? Drawings? –Anyway a series of pages, perhaps in a book format.

The pages would have looked something like this.

[Item: first A4 Studio experiment]

[Edit 9 January, 2018: As I was working on this studio experiment I realised I'd never be able to 'complete' the stamp in the way I thought I would because it also includes a forward slash and a dash that I wouldn't incorporate in, and also to really complete it would be to use every combination, so I'd end up with incongruities like 56 JAN 2017 and 83 NOV 2021. I think it's more accurate to say complete the dates of the date stamp.]

[Second edit 9 January 2018: Or maybe I should complete the stamp properly? Maybe it works better to follow the form of the stamp even though it will have ridiculous permutations?]

[Item: second A4 Studio experiment]

The stamp's mechanism is circular: four bands, each with twelve options for days, months and years. If the fancy took me, I could cycle through the twenty thousand, seven hundred and thirty six combinations of those circular rubber bands—twelve years, twelve months, twenty numbers and four punctuation marks—which would then lead me back to the same point, the point started at. After cycling through the illogical combinations of '96 FEB 2019' and 'forward slash dash MAY 2025', I would ostensibly arrive back at 'nought-one JAN 2015': painfully logical, utterly pointless; it would be a duration of time spent marking a passage of time beyond the realms of our Gregorian calendar.

Dr. Elizabeth Barry, in an audio book on *Metaphor*, says of metaphors of time:

Quote "But modernist writers post-Einstein are living in a world where the idea is even more complicated, that categories of time and space have to some extent collapsed into one another. In a writer like Samuel Beckett there's an explosion of metaphors of time, new metaphors of time, time behaving in ways, in the subjective perceptions of his characters that we've never seen it behave before: time piles up, time thickens..." End quote. [Dr. Elizabeth Barry, Associate Professor, University of Warwick; transcribed from Audio Book *Fry's English Delights*, from 46.13]

[Note from April 2017: We went to see Nadia Reid with Ant. It was his fifty-first birthday and he was a bit drunk. He said, not long before she came on, that reality thickens, as you get older. This thought makes me feel heavy.]

My mother gave me an orchid once and, through my negligence, I let it die, a reoccurring theme. I felt so guilty about it that couldn't throw it out. It sat on my back porch for a year or so before it made an appearance in a show called *Keeping Secrets and Stealing Things*.

[Items: A) Catalogue for exhibition *Keeping Secrets and Stealing Things* open at image of orchid; and B) Artist book titled *Thoughts of Discomfort* open at page titled: *Oncidium (The Dancing Lady) Orchid, Dead*.]

Here it is in the show, along with what I wrote about it for the show.

[Edit 9 January 2018: Over time it began shedding its flowers, which, as best as possible I collected in the pot. When it began shedding its aerial roots I kept it in this plastic bag].

[Item: Plastic Bag]

When we moved to Wellington a few years after that exhibition, I brought the orchid with me, tucked between my feet in the front seat of the car for the whole eight, nine hour drive. Here's the pot plant now.

[Item: Oncidium (The Dancing Lady) Orchid, Dead.]

I told the curator of *Keeping Secrets* about this in an email. [Edit 9 January 2018: during the show they were incredulous of my hoarder-like behaviour and the array of objects that I'd managed to misappropriate and keep during my life. I thought they would find the idea of me carting a dead orchid down to Wellington pretty amusing.] This is our email exchange about it (everything else I've redacted for privacy reasons).

[Item: Screenshot of email conversation between artist and curator]

Second additional edit 4 June 2018: Evangeline pointed out that the curator actually wrote 'orchard' instead of 'orchid'.

First additional edit 3 June, 2018: this pot plant has now travelled one thousand two hundred and ninety two kilometres: Auckland to Wellington in 2015, and the Wellington to Auckland in 2018, and been in two exhibitions: one in 2013, one in 2018; and the two galleries its been shown in are fewer than fifty metres away from each other. In five years it's completed something like an extraordinarily large circle, arriving back in almost the same place.

I've started reading a recent translation of Homer's *Odyssey*. In the introduction the translator notes this:

Quote: 'Homer is usually described in Greek sources not as a singer (*aoidos* [ow-ae-dos]) or rhapsode ("song-stitcher"), but as a poet, *poetes*—a word that means "maker."' End quote.

Can we take a moment to consider rhapsode: song-stitcher? Isn't that rather beautiful? A rhapsody is an epic poem, stitched together by a song-stitcher, a rhospode. I love etymology. When I'm stuck while trying to writing or, frankly, procrastinating about writing, I spend inordinate amounts of time looking up the etymology of words.

18 May 2018: When I was installing a recent show I told the curator that I had etymology pins that we could use. Yeah, etymology pins, I insisted, quite possibly nodding.

I, of course, meant entymology pins; pins for pinning bugs. When I speak I have a terrible time with malapropisms, which worsens with tiredness and stress: it's a trait I share with my father. Maybe that's why I feel more comfortable with writing.

Samuel Johnson once wrote of the ever-changing nature of words and their meanings: Quote: "Sounds are too volatile and subtle for legal restraint; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride" end quote.

But, I still love the idea of etymology pins.

[Item: **Entymology** pins. Poor cousin to etymology pins.]

[Addition 4 June 2018: I've now been involved in four shows at RM. The title of one of them, *Duas Cidades*, is spelt wrong on the archive box, but I've made a new label for it.

[Items: Three RM archive boxes, and the RM label maker with new label]

Things have a way of being so circular, of seeming to so easily cycle around to the same point, albeit slightly changed by the passage of time. [Note 16 January 2018: Rewatch *Waiting for Godot* to see if it may have some bearing on this.]

31 May 2018: This morning I've walked around the house in the same circle maybe three times trying to find my copy of *Waiting For Godot*. I can see its cover in my mind's eye and I can almost place where it might be.

Vivian Mercier wrote the famous review of *Waiting for Godot* that stated quote 'he has written a play in which nothing happens, twice' end quote. It was one of those instances of cultural knowledge where I knew Vivian Mercier's review of *Waiting for Godot* before I knew anything about the play itself, like, I knew "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn" before I saw *Gone With The Wind*. Or I still haven't seen *Dirty Harry*, but I know the line: 'you've gotta ask yourself one question: "Do I feel lucky?" Well, do ya, punk?'

[Item: Screenshot of Vivian Mercier's Wikipedia page]

2 June 2018: I found my copy of *Waiting For Godot*. It was in the room I thought it would be in.

[Item: Book, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett]

A script contains two parts: dialogue and stage directions. But where a play is more usually remembered for the words spoken, like so: “But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!”—the stage directions quite literally give flesh to the words, through the actors’ bodies, as in:

[Juliet appears above at a window].

The stage directions, so often the poor cousin to the words, give a play its emphasis and expression and movement, and the audience a visual memory.

[Addition 4 June 2018: Another excellent Shakespearian stage direction is of course this one from *A Winter’s Tale*: Exit, pursued by a bear.]

I especially love the stage directions of *Waiting for Godot*. His stage directions are extensive. One of Pozzo’s lines, which runs to four hundred and forty-eight words, only contains a hundred and thirty-three words dialogue: the rest are stage directions.

I’ve recently decided the final of the works for the show at [REDACTED] would be an audio piece of the stage directions from *Waiting for Godot*. It’s been knocking around in my head for a couple of years now, and it feels like it fits as the third work. I had called the work *A Country Road. A Tree. Evening*. —which is, of course, the first stage direction of the play. The work would sound something like this:

A country road. A tree.

Evening.

Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting.

He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again.

As before.

Enter Vladimir.

(giving up again).

(advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart).

(He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to Estragon.)

(He reflects.)

(irritably).

(hurt, coldly).

(admiringly).

(without gesture).

(Decisively.)

(gloomily).

(Pause. Cheerfully.)

(Estragon tears at his boot.)

(feebly).

(angrily).
(angrily).
(angrily).
(pointing).
(stooping).
(He buttons his fly.)
(musingly).
(He meditates.)
(He takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again.)
(he searches for the word)
(With emphasis.)
(He takes off his hat again, peers inside it.)
(He knocks on the crown as though to dislodge a foreign body, peers into it again, puts it on again.)
(Estragon with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off his boot. He peers inside it, feels about inside it, turns it upside down, shakes it, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing, feels inside it again, staring sightlessly before him.)
(examining his foot).
(He takes off his hat again, peers inside it, feels about inside it, knocks on the crown, blows into it, puts it on again.)
(Silence. Vladimir deep in thought, Estragon pulling at his toes.)
(Pause.)
(Pause.)
(He reflects.)

Those are the first two hundred odd words of Beckett's directions. There are roughly five thousand words of stage directions in *Waiting For Godot*. Rather than watching a play being acted, where flesh gives life to words, to read a play requires reading the stage direction as well; it completes the play.

[Item: Script for *A Country Road. A Tree. Evening.*]

Both act one and two end with almost the same lines, act one being:

ESTRAGON: Well, shall we go?

VLADIMIR: Yes, let's go.

And act two a subtle reversal with:

VLADIMIR: Well, shall we go?

ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go.

Both end with the same stage direction:

(They do not move.)

This is the ostensive end of this essay, typed out on 19 January 2018. This is not coincidental; I decided to write this sentence on this day for the sake of completeness.

31 May 2018: I didn't finish the essay on 19 January 2018. I'm lost in this endless circle of make work, show work, store work, repeat.