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Author

Di Russo, Monique R

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Practice Led Creativity as a Bridge to Unknown Aspects of Self:

An Ekphratic Methodology to Enhance Memoir Writing

Monique Di Russo

BA, Grad Dip

School of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences

Griffith University.

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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)_____

Monique Di Russo

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To my family, thank you for providing me with refuge and stability during this confronting and transformative time.

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Abstract

Practice-Led Creativity as a Bridge to Unknown Aspects of Self

An Ekphratic Methodology to Enhance Memoir Writing

The purpose of this paper is to explore a new creative writing methodology for producing creative non-fiction writing with deepened emotional vivacity and opportunity for healing for the practitioner. A Shamanic based meditation practice was engaged to access emotions embedded in sub-consciousness or "anoetic awareness" (Tulving, 2002). The imagery conjured during meditation was then used to create a visual artwork representative of the emotional state being examined. Then, an adapted ekphratic practice, where the visual art and the subsequent writing are authored by the same person, was applied. Throughout the methodology explored here, emotional memories were experienced, or more accurately re-experienced, somatically, emotionally, and intellectually *in the present*. These experiences were potentially reflected in the writing practice. Furthermore, the writing practice itself also changed perceptions of the original emotional states. The emotional healing and benefits as a creative practitioner were correlated. Rather than producing more dynamic or vivacious writing, as was the original hypothesis however, it is perhaps more accurate to conclude that the emotional state of being and the written expression of that emotion *evolved* to include new memories, new imagery, and new insights to the benefit of the writing.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"I am a bridge, between two truths.

One that is seen. One that is unseen.

One that can be heard. One that is silent.

One that follows the trail. One that determines the path.

I am a bridge."

I had a traumatic upbringing. There is something about writing those words with the explicit intention for them to be witnessed that makes the admission more real. This is a fact I can finally surrender to and integrate into my identity now, rather than a shameful aspect of my past that I am constantly trying to overcome in the present. My father was an eccentric and voracious artist, as unpredictable as he was unreliable, yet he was a source of great wonder and creative genius to my childish eyes. I grew up surrounded by the remnants of his life's work: binders of newspaper clippings stacked on the end of the dining table like a city skyline, paint-stained dinner plates, makeshift palettes, strewn in the kitchen sink beside discarded tea bags and empty beer bottles, ABC news radio setting the tone to my every childhood escapade. And, of course, there were my knees, I don't' think I have a childhood memory that doesn't include my knees being smeared with acrylic from having Dad's half dry paintings perched against them as he photographed them. Something that also plagued my childhood was Dad's brash unconventionality.

Dad liked to challenge the status-quo. He spoke out freely against belief systems he didn't agree with whether people liked it or not, and he taught me very early in life to think *for* myself, not *of* myself. He wasn't popular amongst the people we knew, yet Dad and I always seemed to be able to balance each other out. Whenever I felt I didn't fit anywhere, it was my father I'd go to for comfort. As a developing artist myself, I had my own share of emergent peculiarities to contend with, but they never seemed as threatening in the face of my father's absurdities. The stigma of Dad's eccentricity has influenced my identity profoundly, particularly when I was twenty-four years old, and he chose to live off the grid, promptly disappearing from my life and taking my creative self with him. In the grief and confusion following his departure from my life I stopped creating altogether, opting for a more sensible way of being that I felt was more aligned with my encroaching adulthood. I also suppressed many emotions that I had associated with my tumultuous relationship with my dad that I found too difficult, or too distant, to deal with. That was eighteen years ago.

When I first embarked upon this research, I had intended to write my memoir exploring my creative identity and the events of my life story that have impacted it, using a hypothesised ekphratic technique called *self-reflective ekphrasis*. The technique extrapolates from traditional ekphrasis by amalgamating the dual roles of both artist and writer, where I, as the research subject, am both the artist of the visual art being examined, and the writer of the subsequent ekphratic output. The theory underpinning this strategy was that the narrative would be enriched, and the emotional vivacity deepened by the dual creative process being authored by one person. However ethical constraints meant that I was unable to centre the narrative on my family. In response to this change, I applied the same ekphratic technique to the story of my own emotions and the embodiment of my experiences of them, both past and present.

What I discovered through this work is that, simply put, I am an artist. What I mean by that is, I live through art. I experience life through artistic means. What I learned during this research is that creative methodologies are a unique process of communication, the resultant art is the language, and the artist is the bridge between the two. I am a bridge. I am an artist.

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Conceptual Framework

Ekphrasis

My theoretical research first centred on how ekphrasis might be utilised in my creative practice to underpin my non-fiction writing (Connel-Ross, 2006). I discovered, of course, that ekphrasis dates to ancient Greece and since then, has been significantly analysed for its consistent inter-artistic translations (DeArmas, 2005, p. 241). Its endurance over such a long period can be attributed to progression of both its meaning and application (Krieger, 1992). This evolution has seen contemporary literature studies almost exclusively apply ekphrasis to situations where a poem is inspired by observing a painting and the writer describes that experience. The mechanics of the tool are merely, one person "perceiving something, visualising that something, and conveying that something to others." (Krauth and Bowman 2018, p. 12). The initial image is a concrete stimulus for the writer from *beyond the writer* that the writer then wants to convey to a reader.

However, in other artistic fields, like music, ekphrasis is more broadly described as an intermedial tool (Krieger 1992, p. 14). In other words, the ekphratic exercise involves a transfer from one mode of neurological coding to another: first, it moves from an image in the writers' mind's eye, to words expressed by the inner voice; it is then transcribed into a written form; finally, that form is transferred to an image, but now in the readers' minds. In other words, the ekphratic exercise involves a transfer of "something" from one place to another: it moves from an image on canvas to an interpretation of the image in the writer's mind's eye; from there, it becomes words expressed by the observer's inner voice; that voice is then made tangible to more observers, that is readers, in a written form; finally, that form is transferred to an image, but now in readers' minds. In traditional ekphrasis, the focus is on the painting and the writing in response to the painting – the products. Typically, it involves two independent practitioners (one creating the visual art and the other creating the writing from the art) working in two independent mediums: images and words. The current research methodology deduces that this limits the potential benefits of the tool, given the mechanics of the tool are merely "about perceiving something, visualising that something, and conveying that something to others." (Krauth and Bowman 2018, p. 12).

In her Master of Arts research, India Breen (2107) discusses how ekphrasis intersects with confessional poetry forming a hybrid mode of poetics. Breen notes that in the act of engaging with visual art, in particular, the work of performance artist Marina Abramovic the practitioner organically draws upon their own subjective experience when responding to the art creatively. She discusses how viewing Abramovic's 1988 work titled '*The Lovers: The Great Wall Walk*', in which Abramovic and her ex-lover commemorate and document the end of their relationship by walking away from one another on the Great Wall of China, compelled her to consider the nature of her own relationship break ups. Breen was inexplicably drawn to ruminate on this subject poetically which later resulted in her researching and discovering the ekphratic method. In her poetry, Breen makes references to the imagery in Abramovic's work but makes the point that when doing so, she brings elements of herself and her story to the imagery, forming a hybrid genre, where the "poems inscribe the poet or figure of self at the same time inscribing the work of art." (p. 48). Indeed, Breen goes on to discuss that when writing the creative manuscript for her thesis, *'Miniature Thunder'* which includes her poetic response to Abramovic's work and that was intended to utilise an ekphratic method, she was motivated to write additional works that were entirely confessional in nature and unrelated to any of the visual art. Instead, these poems were inspired by the practice itself, revealing the dynamic and unexpected expression available when engaging the ekphratic method. It is this potential adaptability of the method that is of interest to this research.

Another example of the various ways that modern ekphrasis may be defined and adapted, is in the work of Pascale Petit (2016). Petit began her artistic career as a sculptor and visual artist, and later focused her creative endeavours on poetry. In her writing, Petit successfully implies both form and colour with little or no explicit mention of either. This is illustrated in her piece "In the Giraffe House" (2016) where she writes about her sick mother in hospital:

> "I wanted warmth but you are all the colours of drought, the cracked riverbeds of your skin a jigsaw no one can get right. I rest my palm against the partition and my breath blurs your lips, the long blue tongue that keeps licking the glass."

While "In the Giraffe House" was not written using the ekphratic method expressly, Pettit's aptitude as a visual artist is imbued in her written work through the clear transference of imagery. By considering that ekphrasis may operate as a tool *across* the lifespan of a single practitioner,

(rather than as a tool for immediate reference when writing involving two independent practitioners) we widen the scope with which we might examine both *how* ekphrasis operates and functions, and when it may be applied.

Returning to ekphratic practice as an intermedial tool as discussed previously, according to Krauth and Bowman (2018) the ekphratic device provides the writer with a portal into how writing is made *and* received. When we shift the focus from product to intermedial process and reduce the participants from two to one whilst retaining ekphrasis itself (the use of both images and words), new forms of creativity emerge. Exploring the impact of visual art and the subsequent writing when the two art forms are authored by the same person has investigative merit when examining emotional vivacity in memoir under the assumption that by engaging with both practices the practitioner gains differing insights into their own experiences. My challenge, then, was to devise an experiment employing ekphrasis as a *process focussed* tool to improve the creative expression of a single practitioner with an additional methodological aim: to access deeper emotional memories.

Zeitlin's (2013) model demonstrates a methodical approach for analysing how ekphrasis evokes an emotional response in the reader. According to Zeitlin, ekphratic practice must contain three elements to do this, they are vividness, clarity, and transfer of mental image. This procedurally constructed model for ekphrasis provides an opening for focussing on process and emotions, and because of the emphasis on emotional outcome, establishes a framework for the current research since the redirection of the writing centred on emotional memory. The work of Tulving (2002) on memory was also fundamental to developing a focus on emotion and process.

Memory and Mind

Justifiably, memory is referred to extensively in memoir research, particularly episodic memory, that is, our personal subjective memories of a specific event (Tulving, 2002, p. 2). A characteristic of episodic memory is 'autonoetic awareness', or self-knowledge, which according to Tulving (1972) is the ability to mentally time travel and self-reflect on behaviour in the past and make inferences about the future (Tulving, 2002, p. 8). The concept of episodic memory was first postulated by Tulving to differentiate between long-term memory stores in the brain; one holding

past events and the other holding information about general knowledge. Tulving (1972) proposed that it is episodic memory that comprises autobiographical information in the form of stories and events about an individual's past, as opposed to 'noetic awareness' or general knowledge, which holds semantic information regarding general facts and data about the world at large. Tulving makes the distinction that semantic memory is about knowing, whereas episodic memory is about remembering.

Tulving's earliest model states,

> Episodic memory receives and stores information about temporally dated episodes or events, and temporal-spatial relations among these events. A perceptual event can be stored in the episodic system solely in terms of its perceptible properties or attributes, and it is always stored in terms of its autobiographical reference to the already existing contents from the episodic memory store, (Tulving, 1972, p. 385)

> While, in contrast,

> Semantic memory is the memory necessary for the use of language. It is a mental thesaurus, organized knowledge a person possesses about words and other verbal symbols, their meaning and referents, about relations among them, and about rules, formulas, and algorithms for the manipulation of these symbols, concepts, and relations. Semantic memory does not register perceptible properties of inputs, but rather cognitive referents of input signals. (Tulving, 1972, p. 386)

It was Vandekerchove (2011) who described consciousness as a process of evolution as well as individual development. He was the first to build on Tulving's model through the introduction of the third level of memory that is subconscious; 'anoetic awareness'. Anoetic awareness (which is the primary focus in this experimental design), is positioned at the foundation of the memory hierarchy and informs both noetic awareness that sits directly above it, and autonoetic awareness which is executive to the other two. Accordingly, one is born with access to anoetic awareness which later develops into the ability to store conscious long-term general knowledge memories via noetic awareness (semantic memory), and finally forms auto-noetic awareness relating to the self (episodic memory). The three hierarchical layers of memory operate concurrently and interactively and are associated with specific neural structures.

Vandekerckhove (2011) used neural imaging to identify areas in the brain that correlate to the three layers of consciousness. Anoetic awareness was found to correlate to the thalamus, parietal structures, and the amygdala and as stated, begins to develop at birth. Noetic awareness, correlated with the cingulate cortex and the temporal lobes, begins developing around two years old. Finally, autonoetic awareness was correlated with the prefrontal lobes and is thought to develop anywhere from two to five. The purpose of outlining this neurology is to clearly demonstrate the physiological and functional separation between the three memory states, as well as their interdependency. This dynamic makes it difficult to determine the story surrounding the origins of our emotional experiences. While episodic memory is typically examined in memoir research and semantic memory as a general knowledge base must be applicable to any research endeavour, it seems probable then, that anoetic awareness also plays a valid role in the emotional undertone of memoir writing and should be examined further.

Vandekerckhove and Panksepp (2009) suggested that a key characteristic of autonoetic awareness is that is has an idiosyncratic affect-laden richness, it is a mental re-enactment of experience that involves a fixed sense of the self, specifically, they state that episodic memories are "enriched by characteristics like vividness, temporality, contextuality, colour, taste, and smell, affective richness, and cognitive subtlety. Clearly, they must use much more of the brain than semantic memories and are encoded in greater "depth" within the brain," (p. 1025). This greater depth within the brain could be associated subconscious information stored in anoetic awareness. To demonstrate the dynamic between the three states of memory and consciousness, see tabulated summary of Tulving (2002) Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Three Memory States

Memory State	Function
Autonoetic Awareness	'Event based Memories' based in context, that we can re-experience, and where our sense of self derives and can evolve with time and assimilation of new information. *E.g. After arguing with my partner, I grabbed a nearby apple and ate it in the sun, as I wanted 5 minutes to myself to feel better.*
Noetic Awareness	'Semantic Memories' not dependent on context. Nominal memories that help us identify objects, people, things. Informs our perceptions of our autonoetic awareness. *E.g. I see a red round fruit that I recognise as an apple. I like apples.*
Anoetic Awareness	'Unaware Memories' that underline pervasive emotional states and how we immediately view/feel about objects, people, places, things, events. Informs our perceptions of and reactions to our noetic awareness. *E.g. My first solid food was apple. I found the taste sweet and pleasurable.*

As the emotional foundation of our experiences underlining both noetic awareness and autonoetic awareness (Matheson and Barsalou, 2018) anoetic awareness is vital to this project. As outlined, in memoir research much of the focus has remained on autonoetic awareness as a function of subjective/episodic memory. What sets memoir apart as a literary genre from autobiography is that memoir focuses on a specific time in the author's life, a general theme, and the story speaks to the authors *feelings* about their memories (Edwards, 2013). If memoir entails the author's *feelings* about past experiences, anoetic awareness also ought to be prioritised in order to access data with greatest emotional depth. To access the entire gamut of memories foundational to the full breadth

of our emotional experiences (and pertinent to the life story of *that* emotion *for* 'me'), accessing subconsciousness through anoetic awareness is as vital as accessing subjective/autonoetic memories. The more details we can access, the richer and deeper and more complete is the narrative. In the past, research may have favoured examination of the more quantifiable 'aware' states to satisfy scholarly validity, but at what cost? Our conscious states provide the cerebral details of story, and are certainly valid, but these details alone may not fully nurture emotional vivacity in memoir (Gardiner, 2008). For the current research it became imperative to explore how we might access anoetic awareness if at a subconscious level, even if we cannot fully access that which is buried deep in the unconscious.

Before investigating how to access subconscious processes or those considered unconscious, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of the unconscious has become contentious in scholarly debate. Psychoanalytical criticism has been displaced by discursive forms of understanding identity, but more simply from an experimental viewpoint, if something is supposedly buried in the unconscious, how can we know about it, let alone measure it? (Fabbro A, Crescentini C, Matiz A, Clarici A, Fabbro F, 2017) Our understandings of the evolutionary sources of the human mind remain limited (Vandekerchove, 2011). Science currently knows more about *brains* than about *minds*, yet studies reveal that, as individuals, we often feel tensions that, cognitively, we cannot understand. This intuitive knowing, or 'intangible' state of experience, will be discussed later in the context of academic research paradigms. However, it *is* possible to note when the unconscious mind is in action since its existence is implicit (Campbell, 2004, p. 477).

Art therapy studies indicate ways in which it is possible to observe the unconscious. Studies have found that the 'conditioned self' consists of reactive behaviour that operates unconsciously, and these reactive behaviours can include pervasive emotional responses that are anoetic, in that they automatically and unknowingly perpetuate some perceptions, beliefs, and behaviour. As such, when we operate from the conditioned self, we often do not recognise the conditioning and do not create anything new: creation, and perhaps creativity itself, comes from raised awareness (Van Vugt 2019, p. 5). Further, this awareness can be brought about by using art as an intermedial tool in the therapeutic setting to focus on in between states. Creating art provides the individual with distance from their inner-world and outer-world realities, and provides them a "third person" perspective, raising conscious awareness of their behaviour which then makes different

behavioural outcomes possible (Van Vugt, 2019, p. 6). The presence of unconsciousness in memoir is not at all a new consideration: the process of writing has been shown to evoke emotions about memories that may not have otherwise become conscious (Edwards, 2013). As a feature in the *construction* of memory then, anoetic 'awareness' (which is being *unaware*) could actually be unconsciousness in memoir writing. As with art therapy, for the *single practitioner* in an ekphratic exercise, painting effectively provides a 'third eye' perspective for the writer. This gives distance to particularly emotional 'unconscious' memories so that they can be *consciously* expressed. Under this presumption, I return to how subconscious, and perhaps even previously unconscious, memories might be accessed for the purpose of the art.

Accessing Sub-Conscious Memories Through Shamanic-Led Meditation

In "Shamanic Dimensions of Psychotherapy: Healing through the Symbolic Process", Robin Van Luben Sels (2019) describes her journey from a shamanic perspective of psychotherapy. The book explores the sudden eruption of visions and dreams that she experienced during her analysis, personal life and psychoanalytic training. She explains how the phenomenology of ancient shamanism is applicable to traversing the subconscious and intangible aspects of the modern Self and how shamanism is a paradigm for the emergence of the psyche. Shamanic and post-Jungian psychotherapies provide a framework of articulation for those who have experienced an involuntary plunge into the unknown depths of themselves, often marked by experiences of visions and symbology. For those who seek ways to understand it Van Luben Sels describes seven expressive attributes used by the shaman, they are: mask, rhythm, silence, respiration, movement, sound and gesture (p. 4). It is the attributes of mask, respiration and silence that are applied in this investigation. However, where mask is referred to literally in Van Luben Sel's interpretation, here I refer to the mask as the aspect of self that masks the *deeper nature* of Self or selves (often in the service of social or familial conditioning and influenced by anoetic awareness). The premise here, is our deeper nature exists at the core of a multi-faceted Self. At the commencement of this work, the definition of identity did not constitute a single Self, instead, identity espouses historically and culturally specific 'selves' that is context sensitive. However, through shamanic practice the practitioner seeks a different sense of Self, from the one generated in childhood, one that is innate, yet acknowledges that no aspect of identity is immutable, but must be plural, and able to transition as awareness increases and evolves. The term 'Self' is used throughout to reference 'a deeper Self'

that is unmasked and more conducive to personal well-being. The attributes of respiration and silence are the characteristics of meditation that both stabilize the central nervous system and quieten the mind respectively to allow access to deeper layers of the psyche.

Throughout the process of this project, I have implemented shamanic techniques adopted by Chrissie Charley from The Mana Movement (2021). From my training under Charley, who has worked with indigenous elders in the Peruvian Andes for over a decade, I found a psychotherapeutic investigative process called "The Mindset Process" that is effective for eliciting sub-conscious emotional memories. This is described as an "empathic communication method" with Self that employs a combination of classic psychotherapeutic techniques and shamanic practices to break through pervasive belief systems. These belief systems perpetuate patterns and mindsets (intellectual attributes) that block access to deeper awareness states and memories. Through the Mindset Process, these beliefs are shifted to allow discovery of the embedded unexpressed emotions associated with them; this in turn unlocks the somatic experience of feelings which can then be released from the body (emotional attributes). In clinical practice, the purpose of the Mindset Process questions is to focus clients' conscious awareness on their *emotional* body through a triad perspective akin to that employed in some art therapies discussed previously (Van Vugt, 2019). Through focus on the somatic responses to the questions, rather than the intellectual replies, emotion within the body can shift to raise a new perspective of the remembered experience. This process was therefore a strategy applicable to the current methodology.

The Mindset Process asks a set of specifically worded questions in a strict order, to traverse emotional depths within the psyche and body. Most questions are open ended and highly interpretative to allow the subject to travel where necessary with minimal leading from the questions themselves and avoid implications from conscious autonoetic fixations. This allows the subtle undertones of anoetic awareness to filter through. Questions are repeated and subtly reworded, the intention being to access a very specific emotional memory with explicit focus, prodding at it carefully from different angles to fully lift it, intact, like the precise etching of a knife. The Mindset Process Questions can be found on page 26 in the Overview of the Methodology chapter.

As the subsequent findings will indicate, there were considerable shifts in my conscious awareness of the emotions regarding the original lived experience, changes that had merit and may be of

interest to therapeutic fields. As the opening poem denotes, my role then became one of bridging my personal subjective truths and the public creative truths that potentially expand readers' insights or knowledge into their own emotional lives. It becomes important to assert that creative practices, and the subsequent creative output (as the language produced by this bridging), are valid vessels of knowledge with which to contribute to academia.

The Role of Creative Work in Academia

According to German and Gonzales (2018, p. 1821), society is modelled as a viable system with subsystems committed to present-day self-production, and subsystems committed to exploring the future of the system and in amalgamating an identity and an ethos. In this model, the role, ethos and proper organization of academia are derived from considerations on the proper architecture and cognitive systems within it, including the various research disciplines. Traditionally, research had an economic motivation, as Neave states, "The tasks governments have laid upon higher education today to emphasize the obligations it has to 'serve' society's interests and demands, which are primarily construed as economic" (2012, p. 3). Another traditional standpoint is that academia has been understood as a place where society negotiates its own identity and where it innovates and prepares for the future. On a micro scale my own work, as an example of creative led research, parallels this negotiation of identity. This view, substantiates the need for constantly evolving frameworks with which to investigate, practice and interrogate "data" and the myriad forms it may take. Further, German and Gonzales also claim that "To fulfill its role as part of society's higher hierarchical structures, academia must include areas that are sometimes considered redundant or an expensive luxury, such as the humanities or basic research" (p. 1). To avoid accusations of indulgent research paradigms, the humanities often must strive to produce bridge languages between disciplines to validate their contribution to knowledge and culture. In the pursuit of new knowledge, the largely economic publish-or-perish ethos of academia must be counterbalanced by a suggestive spirituality, here, understood as desire for uniqueness or an acceptance that within "knowledge" intangible unknowns exist (Goad, McNamara and Stephens, 2006). This argument is not intended to rub empiricists up the wrong way, it merely highlights that a duality, even a spectrum, within the way knowledge is accessed and represented, is possible.

While creative research is no longer regarded as the 'black sheep' of scholarly research or a less substantiated form of intellectual enquiry, where modes of enquiry used in scientific fields are often applied to research in the arts, seldom are modes of enquiry intrinsic to practice-led artistic research accepted as useful in the sciences, indicating that the contribution between these two methodologies is not yet considered equal or mutually beneficial to the broader pursuit of knowledge.

More recently, practice-led research in the arts has been validated by an increasing number of academic institutions around the world, claiming its place alongside other forms of research in traditional academia. The research craft cultivated by those engaged in practice-led research admits them to a broader community of the creative disciplines interested in questioning the conceptual basis of the various ways we perceive and make sense of the world around us. Additionally, the previous objective/subjective divide has now been replaced by an epistemological framework that embraces research that includes non-textual artefacts as part of the findings.

Wilson and Hawkins found from working with postgraduate students across both the arts and sciences that, "(we) feel that an important element of research induction and training should focus on the process of learning the craft of being a researcher, and of learning to play your *role* within the research community – territory important to understand regardless of your particular disciplinary field" (2017, p. 83). This suggests that within the academic context, creative work may have a decoding "role", via visual representation, the intangible unknown or that which cannot be explained exegetically. In the current research anoetic memories serve as intangible unknown data and visual art is the language used to represent them, which in turn informs the text, in this case memoir, for the betterment of the work. Creative led practices challenge the requirement of control in the discovery of new knowledge that is mandated by empiricists, and through this humble admission in not knowing, widen the scope of what can be learned. As Wilson and Hawkins evocatively pose, such approaches to acquiring new knowledge are valid and needed to stitch together the diversity of what can be known:

> If your work is challenging, probing, bringing into question or testing an established conceptual model, then you are doing research. If you are proposing a conceptual model in an emerging field, then you are doing research. If you are not challenging anything, directly or indirectly, implicitly or explicitly, then you are *not* doing

> research. Activities surrounding traditional scholarship, such as searching out elusive information, establishing chronologies, classifying or reinterpreting events, also constitute vital preparatory stages during which, as artists and scientists, we tentatively re-partition and re-evaluate new information at each successive viewing, while formulating our own conceptual approach (2017, p. 83).

Kjørup argues that "once you let go of the idea of a small set of formal criteria for what may count as 'real research', you open the doors for a serious and much more interesting discussion about what should be considered good research" (2012, p. 42). This pluralistic approach is a useful and effective strategy when considering metaphorical and conceptual models. Interestingly, it could be that science already uses furtive forms of bricolage, innately yet unknowingly collating ideas like a bower bird; it's just this method is not immediately evident. The underlying metaphorical nature of a conceptual idea being applied in science is only validated through the examination of it more closely through the scientific method. Unfortunately, it is evident that science as a discipline, is not taught at large, that the visualisation of concepts essential to their design is so deeply ingrained in contemporary conventions like creative research (Campbell, 2004). Writers throughout the arts and humanities have, of course, long been skilled in the use of linguistic metaphors, while visual metaphors naturally feature heavily in the conceptual toolbelt of visual artists, with writers such as Barbara Maria Stafford (as cited in Behrens, 2001, p. 84) venturing that "consciousness is the art of connecting".

Abstract devices such as metaphors are regarded as central agents for developing new frameworks in establishing conceptual models and communicating knowledge and understanding in the sciences as well as the arts. This illustrates the cohesion available across disciplines off the back of creative thought, and suggests that the humanities, arts and sciences cannot be regarded as markedly separate intellectual realms based on immiscible ways of thinking.

Subjective Research as a Bridge to Knowledge

Although the objective/subjective divide has somewhat abated, academia's bias towards rigorous research methods has left its mark. As a researcher, I was initially wary of confidently asserting my findings as 'knowledge'; the subjective experimental design troubled me, and I was concerned

subjectivity rendered the findings "less true" than more objective methods may have done. However, when considering the nature of meta-analysis, where findings from numerous studies on a particular area combine to give a wholistic overview of what is currently known about a subject, I established confidence in asserting my findings as valid contributions to broader knowledge particularly on creative methodologies. Of course, as both the observer and observed of my own practical experiences, my role as researcher was to report on what I found to take place during practice both internally and externally. When shared in a scholarly arena, this knowledge potentially unites with that of others to create broader overviews on what is currently known about the process of creative research.

Where objective findings may be more broadly applied, subjective findings may bridge the gap between the myriad possibilities of what is currently known and what is not yet known. In *Conceptions of Knowledge Creation, Knowledge and Knowing* Tan (2020) discusses knowledge from an epistemological standpoint, that being a philosophical basis for determining what types of knowledge are possible and ways to ensure their legitimacy. There are two items for discussion here. First, regarding what is possible, let's return to the idea of the intangible. From an empirical perspective, hypothesising possible knowledge from a position of unknowing is not possible. We cannot define what we do not yet know, in the scholarly arena we can make predictions, but the only assumption we can make when approaching the unknown, is to assume that knowledge is infinite and indefinable until the point new knowledge is discovered. Practice-led research operates well from this standpoint in its embrace of creative discovery and therefore arguably casts a wider net over all possible knowledge compared with rigorous scientific methods. Certainly, in this research I found that the new ways of thinking about creative practice and changes in my personal beliefs, were not known, or hypothesised before the research task. I did make predictions for academic mandate, but the strength of this practice-led research is that it remained open to the organic possibilities in the pursuit of knowledge.

Tan (2020) looks at the epistemological view of knowledge more deeply, discussing Hofer's (2010) definition of 'personal epistemology', as an individual's beliefs about knowledge and knowing, or an individual's conceptions of knowledge and knowing. Personal epistemology is an important consideration as a researcher because personal epistemology may be related to a person's willingness to learn and adopt new developments in both creative and traditional research

practices. Again, creative led researchers embrace of the unknown potentially fills the gaps in knowledge that quantitative measures do not. This builds upon the diverse fabric of knowledge in academia, fabric that would be considerably weaker without the mending of that thread. In other words, according to Tan a researcher's current understanding of knowledge, may influence the tenacity of their pursuit of new knowledge. In this way knowledge is self-evolving and breakthroughs are sometimes as dependent upon experimental conundrums as they are susceptible to them, something creative led research is open to by nature.

If creative research practices are not afforded equal weight for their contribution to knowledge, institutions risk overlooking one of the pathways toward pioneering *how* humanity potentially thinks, interprets, and produces knowledge. It is this supposition that, paradoxically, is both foundational to the current creative research methodology and is supported by the findings.

Ways Creative Research is a Pathway to Knowledge

In "Addressing the Ancient Quarrel: Creative Writing as Research", Webb and Brien (2009) outline ways that creative writing can deliver knowledge to readers, other writers and scholars. They cite Roland Barthes' "prophetic technocreativity' theory and explore how Magee articulates Barthes' theory in saying "a modern poem is not a knowledge-report… so much as a device for generating creative desire – the desire for meaning, for resolution, for further aesthetic experience, for a number of things…" (2009, p. 222). By opening the door to a certain facet of knowledge, ways of thinking or personal perspective, outside the motivation of aesthetic entertainment, a poem or novel might encourage readers to step across a threshold and explore a field established by the creative work. This kind of knowledge may be elusive but enlightening, as it creates a spark of unexpected or pleasurable awareness in the reader. This curiosity alone, imbued in the product of a creative pursuit, is testament to the ways in which creative research can further knowledge in and outside the academic arena.

Webb and Brien draw their own insightful conclusions regarding how knowledge can be passed from writer to reader through the creative artefact. They suggest that in creating an artefact that interrogates a particular field of knowledge or aspect of experience "we can… offer new ways of seeing and, in doing so, contribute some interesting and perhaps provocative facts to the

knowledge community. By defining, reflecting, intuiting, paying attention and experimenting… it is possible to make an original contribution to knowledge" (2009, p. 195). By creating distance and challenging preconceived areas of knowledge, an artefact can generate new material to pass on to others. In the current creative methodology, the vessel of knowledge is two-fold and can be found, not only in the creative artefact itself, through insights into the pervasive nature of emotions, but also in the analysis of the creative practices that were adopted.

Webb and Brien also acknowledge the 'bowerbird' process of gathering data and knowledge from various sources and creating an inter-disciplinary patchwork product that contributes new knowledge to readers. Similarly, in this research I creatively examine the interdependence of non-fiction writing and visual artistic practice, and the influence meditation can have on imagination in creative endeavours. This multi-faceted strategy is empirically supported, 'A researcher is capable of drawing data and ideas together from across fields and disciplines to find harmonies and synergies, and to combine them in a manner that produce (…) a fresh way of understanding those points of connection and their wider implications and applications.' (2009, p. 199). By drawing together disparate fields such as psychotherapy and the arts in the current exploration, new knowledge is contributed to each field.

In *Reflections on A Manifesto for Performative Research*, Haseman (2006), argues for having performative research recognised and valued as one of three major research paradigms. In his analysis of research methods, Haseman describes what is meant by 'performative research' and its different approaches to designing, conducting, and reporting research compared with traditional quantitative and qualitative research methods, arguing these differences validate why the third paradigm is required. Quantitative research, "embraces a set of scientific, deductive approaches and establishes 'research questions and hypotheses from theoretical models and then tests them against empirical evidence" (2006, p. 100). The familiar qualitative research: "prefers inductive approaches and encompasses a wide range of research strategies and methods, embracing the perspectives both of researchers and participants" (2006, p. 101). Haseman suggests that a hierarchy exists between the two, that the difference is largely how the findings are expressed and borrows Creswell's idea that the difference here is 'numbers vs words'. Importantly, in both, Haseman identifies that practice is an object of study, not the method of research.

Newer research methodology (including creative practice as research, performance as research, research through practice, studio research, practice as research, practice-led research) places practice within the research process and leads the research through this practice. In my own research, it was the practice itself that led to the discovery of new knowledge, despite the original investigation proposing a systematic approach to test a potential new creative methodology I called *self-reflective ekphrasis*. However, consistent with practice-led inquiry, the investigation began from my exposure to art throughout my life from my artist father, and my desire to write memoir based on emotional events surrounding it, rather than beginning from a problem to be tested. Similarly, the creative output and knowledge are expressed 'through the symbolic language and forms of their practice' (Haseman, 2006, p. 104), namely both words and images as ekphrasis demands - and the output and knowledge are subjective *for both delivery and reception*. The research question (to test an adapted ekphratic technique that elicits more emotionality in the writing of memoir) examines the *richness* of the creative output. This is not quantifiable other than through subjective measures, which is not characteristic of the more traditional research paradigms. Performative research is not expressed in numeric data or discursive text, but as what Haseman calls 'presentational forms'. This means forms that 'deploy symbolic data in the material forms of practice; forms of still and moving images; forms of music and sound; forms of live action and digital code.' (2006, p. 104), it can be argued that each of these is a 'text'. The 'practice' in practice-led research is 'the necessary pre-condition of engagement in performative research' (p. 99).

Haseman proposes that performative research represents a move towards holding that practice is the principal research activity, rather than *only* the practice of performance', so the outcomes of the practice represent research findings, *in their own right* (p. 100). Haseman then proposes that new strategies and methods must be created to create the new knowledge. These will depend on what is being researched. Clearly, existing methods will not cover all the performative outcomes. Validating the ongoing exploration of various creative research methods (which is precisely the goal of this project) are only as limited as there are practitioners to execute them. He quotes Carole Gray's definition of Practice-led research:

> First research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly, that the

> research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners. (1996, p. 3)

When assessing how practice led research addresses these needs, once again, creative research may use different pathways to arrive at the same destination, that being a greater understanding and expansion of knowledge. To explain, Candy (2006) discusses the limitations of what can be "known" via either practice led research or research led practice. Her postulation that both may formulate knowledge through a process of discovery rather than merely uncover knowledge as some sort of universal truth (p. 5), is provocative in terms of how this might affect research and pertinently, how to effectively relay what is subsequently discovered in that quest. Here, it is the proverbial journey that becomes as important, if not more so, than the destination or knowledge outcome.

While conducting her research for her novel *Waters Edge*, Perry (2014) draws parallels to her own process of grief with that of Barthes in *Camera Lucida*. (1993) As Webb and Brien discuss (2009 p. 189**)**, Socrates might contend that this transference of how to process grief (knowledge) could only be gained because of art, and not extrapolated from intellectualised texts on the same subject as Perry explains. Certainly, in the following design, I was able to access and process a grief (and other emotions) that I was unable to during a decade of traditional psychotherapy. This is not to discount traditional healing modalities, but it does illuminate and substantiate art in practice (as opposed to art therapy specifically), as a useful healing modality. As such, art can indeed contribute to knowledge outside its own discipline.

Turning back to Perry's article, the key argument was that through research into her creative writing, Perry was essentially conducting research into a Self and reconciling her own past and experiences through story, a phenomenon evident in my own practice. Perry aptly compared this process to *searching* – 'in the act of writing, I think that I carry out a process of searching. I search for either my father or my brother or both as I write. Similarly, I am searching for unknown aspects of my Self that I explore through both the practice and the story resulting from it.' (p. 38) Ostensibly, Perry's 'fictional' artefact included an absent father that perished in similar circumstances as her own. By writing about this, Perry gains a sense of reconnection with this lost figure and emotional insights. Perry concludes that though her artefact is no substitute for an actual

relationship with her deceased relatives, 'in writing, I find myself able to feel strong about this fact' (p. 42). Writing is therefore an empowering experience for Perry and one that ultimately helps her to reconcile difficult memories; this experience is echoed in my own creative research exploration. Through writing, we exorcise the damaging power of the physically unknown and access the emotionally powerful, emotionally formulated, subconscious dimensions of past experiences; this then gives definitive shape to the integration of trauma or challenges into the psyche. The process is cathartic, and it leads to significant insight into beliefs surrounding identity and Self.

Both Williams (2016) and Perry refer to metaphysical "scarring" and "wounds" through their articles. Perry confides that the "searching" phase of her research was 'very painful, like re-opening a wound.' (p. 42) In referring to Jo-Ann Sparrow's exegesis, Williams quotes the author as relaying the process of constructing her memoir as 'hardened scar tissue I actively stitched' (p. 5). The word nostalgia is of Greek origin, and roughly translates as 'the pain from an old wound'. Our past and memories being embedded injuries on the psyche with the power to haunt us is an evocative notion; through the process of composing their creative artefacts writers become resilient to reliving and restitching these old injuries in the broader interest of truth. Indeed, contemporary research has showcased many benefits of nostalgia for its ability to heal. Nostalgia tends toward a historical reputation as unhealthy due to its bittersweet nature. Certainly, in my own remembering of how my father influenced my creativity as a child, I have felt an unattainable yearning to return to that aspect of my creative Self as an adult. However modern examinations of the function of personal nostalgia have found functional benefits of properly engaging with nostalgic emotions, which include strengthened social connectedness, continuity of self, enhanced self-esteem, adaptive coping strategies, meaning in life, and comfort in the face of threatened mortality (Batcho, 2020).

Proper engagement with nostalgic emotions can be defined as the ability to recognise, and importantly feel the emotional impacts of past experiences, to assimilate those learnings in the present; this is a definition that applies to the methodology and aims in my research. Conversely, Batcho (2020, p. 2) defines anticipatory nostalgia as, "When nostalgia focuses on loss that has not yet occurred, the sadness of anticipated loss is premature and the experience becomes a paradoxical phenomenon of enjoying the present while missing it as if already relegated to the past.

Anticipatory nostalgia is characterized by difficulty enjoying the present, coupled with a tendency toward sadness and worry; I resonated with these characteristics regarding my creative identity prior to this task. Batcho found that personal and anticipatory nostalgia did not differ in frequency from exposure to happy and sad stories, but they did differ in reactivity to and *learning from* sad stories. Those who had successfully integrated their own sad memories were able to learn from other objective sad stories better (perhaps suitably defined as empathy), than those who were stuck in anticipatory nostalgia. This evidence is compelling in its advocacy for creative *practices* (as opposed to creative therapies) as a method for emotional processing and cognitive integration.

The findings of both Batcho's quantitative study and Perry's subjective findings are correlated, which supports the phenomenon outlined earlier (see page 24) that, "creative research may use different pathways to arrive at the same destination", that destination being an expansion of knowledge, in this case that nostalgic processing is beneficial, and the alternative pathway being *how* to process nostalgia. Both Perry and Batcho's findings, although independent and diverse, enrich and support each-other, strengthening what is known about nostalgia, story, and healing. Indeed, they echo my own findings that engagement with story can provide personal healing. Specifically, my own creative practice led to the emotional processing of my past traumatic experiences allowing them to be integrated into my identity, rather than experiencing them as a maladaptive aspect of my past. In this way, practice led creative research both supplements and substantiates knowledge in ways that objective tests cannot, and vice versa, demonstrating the spectrum of knowledge available to academia through the application of broad and diverse research enterprises, including performative and practice-led research.

Finally, Perry's connection to *Camera Lucida* as a 'book about my own, singular sense of grief' was rather poignant. This succinctly articulates what effective creative writing practice can achieve. Although Perry had tried to read several textbooks on grief, the intellectualised writing did not give her an experience to relate and tie her own experience to. But through the main character, Barthes' loss, separate but reflective of her own, provided a vicarious lens through which she could see her own grief with insight for the first time. In many ways, therefore, we seek out art to enrich our own experiences and gain the elusive boon of self-knowledge. It is only through practical experimentation with methodology that, as creative researchers, we can begin to discover any one of the infinite possibilities available to the human experience. It is subjectivity that is

tantamount to the diversity of knowledge and thus, creative research has significant validity for its contribution to the spectrum of knowledge in academia, not merely as a bridge where it joins other more rigorously tested fields of study, but as a pathway where two fields with their own merit meet at the pool of knowledge.

The performance based, practice-led methodology herein, tested an adapted form of ekphrasis whereby the writer is also the visual artist and produces the artwork that is utilised in the ekphratic practice. The chief hypothesis is that the painting would reveal a deeper understanding of the emotional experiences in memoir and the subsequent analysis of that painting would then emotionally enhance the writing. A secondary hypothesis was that shifts in my awareness would reveal that my original emotional experiences have impacted on my liberation of a more integral self, one at ease with the centrality of creativity in her complex identity. This was achieved through meditation, personal engagement with visual art and creative non-fiction writing as methods to access and process anoetic, or subconscious, emotional memories, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

An Overview of The Methodology

The three emotions I initially planned to examine were fear, trust and joy. However, following the ethical constraints mentioned in the Introduction (see page 6), the focus of memoir shifted from my relationship with my artist father to my own suppressed emotional experiences. Through the practice this organically changed the emotions being examined to grief, fear and love.

In memoir, the structure of memory that is typically relied upon for recall is autonoetic awareness, characterised by episodic memories that inform the content in remembered narratives (Vandekerckhove, 2011). Because the research is concerned with accessing earlier, hopefully original, emotional memories that are likely to be sub-conscious, according to Tulving's (2002) theory of memory, anoetic awareness should be stimulated or prompted in the interest of gathering data to produce emotional vivacity in the writing. As discussed in the Conceptual Framework (see page 10), Tulving explains that anoetic awareness is foundational to noetic awareness, and autonoetic awareness: each state directly informing the one above.

The primary aims of my *self-reflective ekphrasis* methodology were two-fold: first, to access the memory or memories that are foundational to my beliefs about the three emotions, grief, fear and love, and second, to test an adapted ekphratic technique that elicits more emotionality in the writing of memoir. Zeitlin's (2013) operational model of ekphrasis was referred to for its goal to evoke an emotional response in the reader through elements of vividness, clarity, and transference of mental image. The process of painting was the tool used to gain greater vividness and clarity in the interest of transferring the imagery to the reader. The memories being accessed included recent experiences from 2020, alongside childhood memories relevant to the formations of grief, fear and love. I accessed childhood memories through a focused meditation practice that aimed to uncover the origins of the particular emotions that have had a significant influence over the events of my life. For the purpose of the subsequent analysis, the term *self-reflective ekphrasis* will be used to refer to the entirety of the method being tested here (i.e. a constant juggling of words and images and feelings by one person to gain greater access to the creativity of the emotion itself). Where the term *traditional ekphrasis* will be used to refer to the standard description of imagery to words.

Each emotion was meditated on for thirty minutes twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening, for seven days. The timeframe was derived from literature that found changes in consciousness through meditation occurred from as soon as one thirty-minute session, to up to two months of twice-daily thirty-minute sessions. (Dispenza, 2012, p. 304).

The methodology therefore has four primary steps using various methods or tools to access and express emotion:

Self-Reflective Ekphrasis

1. The benchmark written creative output, that is, the creative writing before application of any experimental methodology.

2. The meditation on the emotion explored in the writing with the intention to incite anoetic visions representative of it.

3. Painting or drawing those visions, and

4. The creative goal, specifically, to assimilate the description and analysis of the imagery into the benchmark writing to enhance the work in ways that were previously not possible without the ekphratic process.

In the following third chapter, 'The Creative Experiment' where each creative piece, subsequent observations and findings are reported, major additions and changes to the experimental writing resulting from the experiment (titled, Grief '2', Fear '2' and Love '2') are highlighted in blue for ease of reference. Minor changes and deletions are also in blue and bolded.

The Data

It is self-evident that non-fiction writing relies on what is considered factual data. (Dubus, 2012). In this project, "data" was anything that informed the story both before and during the application of ekphratic technique. The constituents that make up the data are as follows:

1. Before writing the benchmark account: Photographs and existing episodic memories
2. The Mindset Process Questions (see below)

3. After the meditation: visualised images and any memories or elicited experiences that inform the art and writing.

The Mindset Process

To assist with eliciting sub-conscious emotional memories a shamanic "Mindset Process" was adopted as discussed in the Conceptual Framework. The 'Mindset Process' is a set of questions designed to lead the subject into deeper layers of consciousness. The questions were not verbally answered prior to the meditative practice, they serve as preparation to mentally focus on the particular emotion by working to negate activity in the mind, travel first into episodic memory relating to the emotion being examined, and then traverse deeper into anoetic awareness pertinent to the emotional construct (Frabbro et. al, 2017). As outlined in the Conceptual Framework, the variation in questions is intentionally subtle to ensure concentration remains on a thread of thought while opening possibility for a small shift in perspective that might unhook a relevant memory, however small. The Questions are as follows:

Questions

Example 'mindset' around emotion (grief): "I have unrealised aspects of myself."

1. What are the possible outcomes (for believing your mindset regarding grief/fear/love)?
2. Are you affected (by your mindset about grief/fear/love?)
3. Are others affected? (by your mindset about grief/fear/love?)
4. Are situations or conditions affected? (by your mindset about grief/fear/love?)
5. Are there any parts that you could be responsible for? (by your mindset about grief/fear/love?)
6. Is this your creation? (your mindset about grief/fear/love?)
7. Is part of this your creation? (your mindset about grief/fear/love?)
8. Is this someone else's creation? (your mindset about grief/fear/love?)
9. Is there anything/something you are not willing to look at? (regarding your mindset about grief/fear/love?)

10. Is there anything/something you are not willing to confront? (Regarding your mindset about grief/fear/love?)
11. Are there: judgements? Criticisms? Blaming? Justifications? Decisions? (that you have regarding your mindset about grief/fear/love?)

Mindsets Examined

Grief: "I have unrealised aspects of myself."

Fear: "I am afraid to live my truth."

Love: "Love is conditional on my pleasing others."

The Meditation

Following this Mindset Process, for each of the three emotions, I laid outside on the earth in the same location, actively focusing on the emotion and any thoughts, visions, objects, people, places, things or events that arose. That is, to access what is generally subconsciously dwelling in anoetic memory, bringing the smallest hint of anything into awareness as I contemplated the emotion, including physical sensations and their accompanying thoughts or emotions.

Following the meditation, I made written notes or voice notes of anything I became aware of, perceptions and imagery that emerged, that came up consciously and sketched anything that I experienced as particularly resonant with the emotion being examined. My notes included any observations including somatic experiences, environmental factors, emotional experiences, and thoughts either related or unrelated to the research endeavour.

The Painting

Each artwork was allocated one week to complete. It is important to note that the artistic merit of the piece was not pertinent to the creative outcome of the writing, rather it was designed to be instrumental to the post-experimental production of it. The primary goals of the painting were to assist my understanding of the impact each emotion has had on my life, and in visually representing

those subjective experiences through art, create tangible imagery with which to use in the subsequent ekphratic process.

The Creative Output

Another week was allocated for using the benchmark written piece *and* the artwork (the traditional ekphratic process) to produce the second piece of writing. I considered this as ekphratic writing. The aim was that the ekphratic writing would exhibit an increased emotional vividness in the creative writing in accordance with Zeitlin's theory of ekphrasis (2013), in order provoke more engagement from readers.

It took approximately nine weeks to complete all three emotional constructs including draft observations in the research setting. Being a practice led method, there were no expectations on what form the changes in writing might take, nor on the chronology of story. Rather, I allowed any additions and variations to be fluid, much like the rupture of supressed memories, and inspired by both the process of painting and its imagery (self-reflective). The only mandate I placed on the ekphratic writing was that it remained centred on examining the specific emotion.

Chapter 3

The Creative Experiment: Creative Work, Observations and Findings

Emotional Construct 1: Grief

Benchmark Prose Creative Work - Grief '1'

Dear Grief,

I'm not sure what to say to you. You are the long-lost Aunt I never knew existed suddenly knocking on my door. I don't know when or where you were born. But I see myself as a child in your eyes. I don't know what you have been doing all these years. But I have sensed you lurking in the background. I feel your presence whenever I tame the curl in my hair. Whenever I read an arrangement of words that have no purpose.

I think perhaps you existed long before I was born. You were lodged in my grandmother's bones. She carried you here on a boat from Germany with Grandad and my two-year-old mother. I have a photo of mum and my uncle at the beach after they had settled into Brisbane. They are both wearing woollen jumpers while they swim. Grandad didn't want them to catch a cold. He died before I was born, but I met him through my grandmother's anxiety and lack of spirit, which she hid beneath an immaculate appearance and the odd drink of whiskey.

Granny was polite. She weighed forty-eight kilograms and ate pound cake for breakfast. She was generous within her means. She knew how to avoid an argument three days before it happened. Her teacups were always perfectly lined and facing the front. Her handbag always matched her shoes. She went to Myer every Saturday at ten in the morning. She smiled demurely at the butcher and the man who cut her off at the roundabout. She knew how to apply make-up to hide a blemish or a bruise. She was a "lady". Mum says Granny was also a talented

singer. I never heard her hum a tune a day in her life. When she got dementia, Granny started to swear like a sailor, and she stopped brushing her hair. We were all abhorred by it. Now, I feel happy for her.

I speak to Granny in my dreaming. I see her laughing rapturously as she watches the sunset. She sings to me as she dances in a water fountain. Granny swears in my dreams like she did when she lost her mind, and she has a wicked sense of humour that I don't remember of her. I asked Mum whether Granny had a sense of humour that I didn't know about. She said "Actually, yes, she did."

I have understood my grandmother more intimately in her death than I ever did in her life. I feel her in the wind. She hugs me when you lurk closer, Grief. I feel the warmth of a hand on my left shoulder and the other reaching around resting on my heart. She rocks me and tells me, "It's ok. Step into your future, baby girl. You are a warrior. You are Prowess." I'm not sure what she means by that.

Although I did not know who you were Grief, I was overcome by your presence at first. I thought you were just sadness in a cloak, such was your weight and thickness. I was glued to the lawn for weeks after you arrived. Every waking moment I spent in the front yard, sometimes sobbing, but mostly staring into nothingness, in constant search of the reason for your coming. I am a healthy woman of good means. I have conquered my past in this lifetime and collected my future. I have a nice home and luxury cars. I have a good husband who provides for me and our two beautiful children. Greif, my grief, you have no rights.

Still, on that lawn in late March of two thousand and twenty, I cried a river of tears. The world was succumbing to the threat of a virus. Taunted by the calls of my ancestors, I was succumbing to the threat of myself.

"Let the earth hold you, when nothing else can." My grandmother would whisper to me. With nothing else to hold onto, that's what I did.

I had questions of myself and everyone else. I could not feel my heart anymore when not long before then it had beat rampantly within me. So, I prayed,

sincerely and like never-before, such was my pain. It ran deep and dark and constant. I was in a hole, and I was scratching and grasping at its walls. As I lay upon her, I also prayed to the earth to help me. I told her, "I am lost. I am every bit the exile, not quite fitting anywhere. Please guide me. Please lead me to my true and honest heart because I am somewhere between fearing authenticity and loneliness and being muted but by the company of the masses. I pray to you mother earth to move my legs in any direction. Implore me to get up, because I can no longer sit with the weight of my grief, and I am not capable of getting up by myself."

In that desperate call, I put my trust in the earth. I trusted her more than I had any other. More than I trusted myself. With her wisdom, that spanned the ether, I need not think, lest I know. With her, I did not fear the disapproval I had carried with me all these years. I did not fear the unknown. Instead, I stuck my hands up in full view and I surrendered. On my dead Grandmothers advice, I allowed the earth to hold me.

The memories of my emotions still run heavily within me. Grief, you were the first to crack my heart open and for that I thank you. With that breaking, I knew intuitively what I had to do. I had to allow you to engulf me. Hand you the reins of my experience from that moment on. Come what may. No laws. No rules. No roles. No obligations. No more colouring between the lines. I had to eat my pound cake out in the open. No apologies.

*****

Grief Experimental Observations

Not until I began writing, did I become aware the first emotional construct was in fact more appropriately describing my grief, rather than fear as originally intended. When the subject of my memoir changed from childhood memoir to one centred on my emotional healing and experiences

of Self more recently, I first reflected on the linear timeframe of those events which started in March of 2020 just as the Gold Coast went into in lockdown due to COVID. From that reflection, came the grief I experienced both somatically and emotionally for being unable to live the life I had planned for myself, certainly during that time, but in truth, for the life I had desired to live for almost a decade prior. At this point, the pre-experimental writing primarily accounts for two major things; 1). My internal and external experiences during that time, and 2). Conversations I unexpectedly had with the spirit of my dead grandmother also during that time.

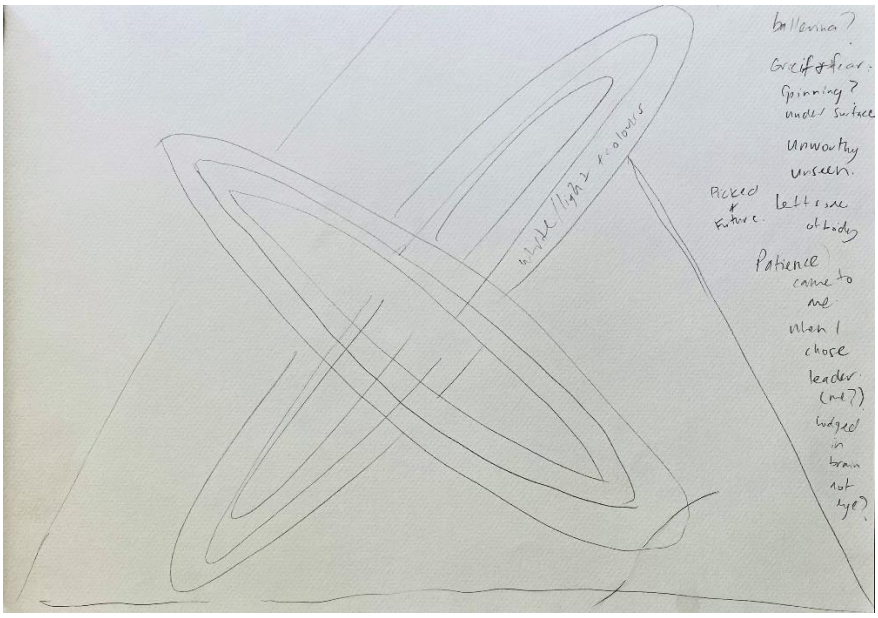
As discussed, I had no plan for the style the writing would take. I remained open to the process wanting to be unlimited by preconceived ideas and instead lead by the true nature of the expression of my grief. The result was poetic prose that set the tone for the subsequent creative writing. In this writing, I refer to a photograph that my mother once showed me of her and her brother swimming with jumpers on. I had no conscious memory of that photograph until I started writing and was attempting to describe the oppressive nature of my grandfather without explicitly detailing it. Other memories, like how perfectly lined my grandmother's kitchen was came into consciousness, metaphorically aligning with this idea of oppressive perfectionism.

It is here, in the writing of the first emotional construct that I introduce the pseudonym "Prowess" that my grandmother refers to me as. Prowess is a black panther spirit animal that my grandmother assigned to me to encourage me to live my personal truth in accordance with aspects of my 'wild' nature, in this case, aspects akin to a black panther: solitary, confident and embracing the darkness, in contrast to the culturally conditioned 'muted' version of Self that I had embodied up until that point in my life. Spirit animals are a belief in Shamanic traditions, suggesting everything in the universe is connected, and in energetically relating to other species in nature, we can find repressed aspects of our own nature (van Luben Sel, 2019). It is also here that my grandmother encourages me to feel the great depths of my emotions unencumbered by judgment of my conditioned Self or others. She is imploring me to see, that only by embracing the entirety of my emotional experiences, the conscious autonoetic experiences, the anoetic undertones, the physical, psychological and the spiritual, can my current true nature be set free (Irvine, 2020).

This first series of meditations followed the framework set out in the overview of the methodology. Initially, my primary observations were the interference of conscious expectations and curiosities around what might result from each session. For example, in the first four days of meditation, I

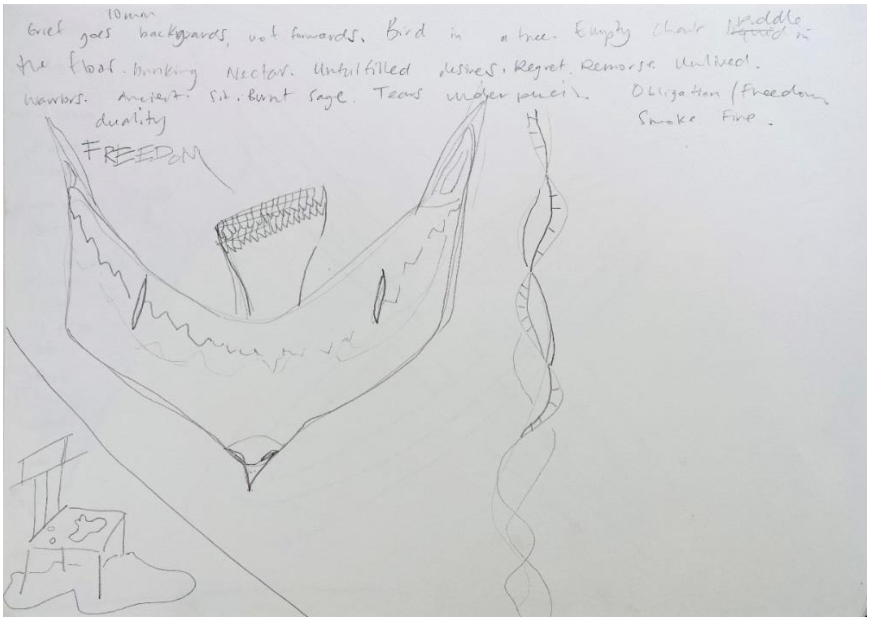
made some sketches of visions that came to me. While there were clear forms taking shape within my mind that I was able to draw, it became apparent that these were not necessarily accurate depictions of my grief, but perhaps better described as "my conscious thoughts of what grief is" settling into the process (Fabbro et. al, 2017). See images of progressive sketches 1-5 below.

Day 2



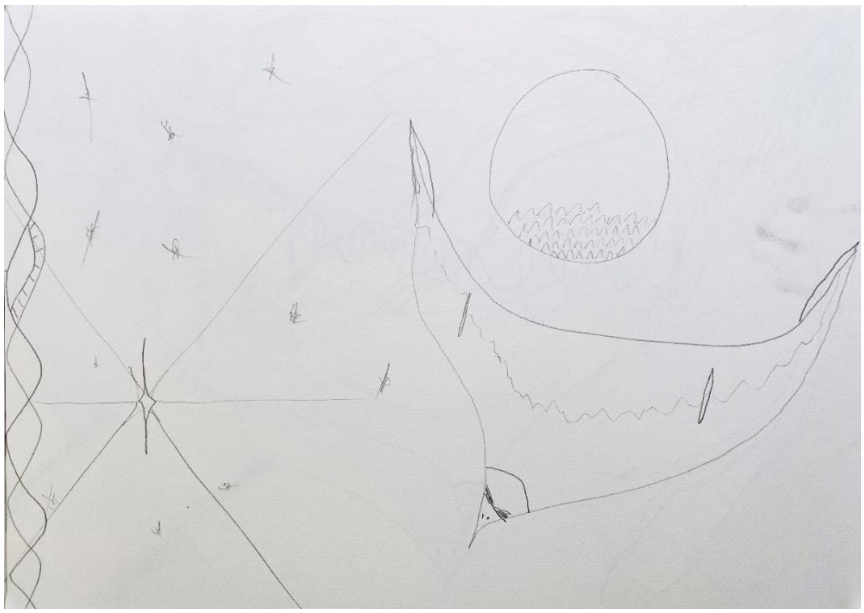
(Notes on sketch read: (On the image) White/light + colours. (Down the right side) ballerina? Grief & fear. Spinning? Under surface. Unworthy. Unseen. Picked & future. Left side of body. Patience came to me when I chose leader (me?). lodged in brain not eye?)

Day 3 (a)

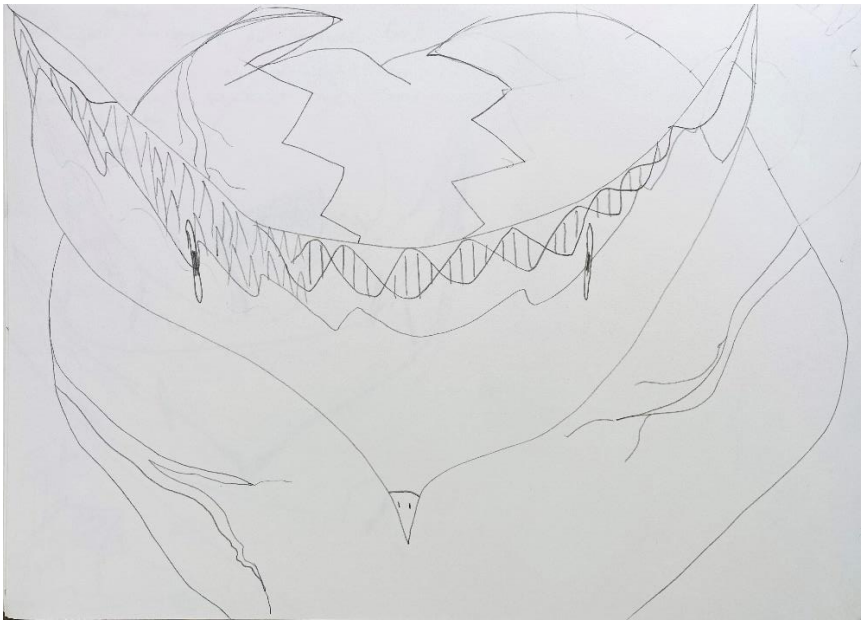


(Notes on sketch read: 10mm. Grief goes backwards, not forwards, Bird in a tree. Empty chair ~~liquid~~ puddle on the floor. Drinking nectar. Unfulfilled desires. Regret. Remorse. Unlived. Warriors. Ancient. Sit. Burnt sage. Tears under ?. Obligation/Freedom. Smoke Fire.)

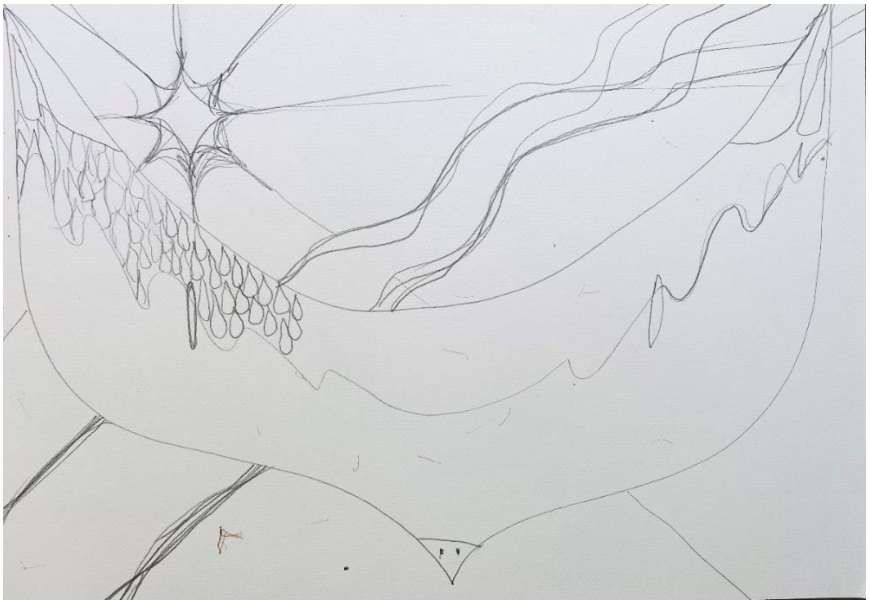
Day 3 (b)



Day 4 (a)



Day 4 (b)



Toward the end of the week, by the seventh meditation which took place in the morning, I observed that what I had been sketching was not a representation of the emotional content of my anoetic memory, rather they were superficial thoughts that I was processing in the act of meditation itself (Dispenza, 2012). By the ninth session, I consciously let go of the desire to control and began the

process from the beginning by reading through the Mindset Process questions with greater focus on the unknown origins of my feelings. This reset my conscious mind and I began releasing judgement of the seemingly unrelated thoughts, feelings and imagery that came to me which resulted in the formation of the resulting artwork.

The *intention* to produce a visual art piece representative of the visions incited by my meditation limited my concentration to what I saw in my mind. However, I soon realised there was more to this meditation than merely what I saw. I noted a twitching in my left thigh during the second last morning session that I had vaguely recollected happening in sessions prior. This twitching was experienced again in the final two meditations for this emotional construct, indicating the somatic nature of emotions, particularly supressed or unprocessed emotions (Zlomuzica et. al., 2017). In voice notes recorded on 21st October 2020, I observed:

> Certainly, the intention to create a visual art piece and the meditation are facilitating one another. I am getting a sense that my conscious thoughts regarding the painting are getting in the way of accessing sub-conscious thoughts *about* the subject of the painting or the form that the painting will take. I went in with a preconceived notion (conscious idea) that grief would look dark and dreary as it commonly is depicted culturally, while I prefer aesthetics, particularly in artwork, that are colourful. I became concerned that the artist in me would want to paint something that was aesthetically pleasing (to me) rather than something authentically representative of the emotional construct I was trying to access, visualise and express. It has been interesting, while I am sketching, that those (conscious) *beliefs* that grief is dreary are interfering (with what I am naturally compelled to do). All I *feel* to do is paint grief in some colourful way. The idea is to let go (of consciousness) in the meditation, so the imagery for grief *will* be colourful, because that is how I, personally, see it. I feel on an emotional level, or intuitive level, grief is the catalyst for the unlocking of other suppressed emotional experiences. Grief itself is an amalgamation of a lot of other emotions, therefore it doesn't have to simply be monotone and dreary in nature. I feel, Grief is made up of a spectrum of colour and experiences when you really feel into it. Grief is the beginning of a journey and a cracking open so to speak. That is the true vision of grief that I am

subjectively seeing, even if my conscious thoughts about how grief is typically represented defies this.

Interestingly, the internal image of my grief was not reflective of a particular memory. I did not consciously remember an early childhood memory of sadness or grief to arrive at the image. Rather, this was a symbolic image of a somatic experience I felt during meditation. I consider it to be a representative image of a suppressed, amalgamation of grief that I had been unable to put words to previously. Nonetheless, the grief I experienced in that moment was real and I physically felt the weight of it in my thighs during the meditative process.

If grief is a spectrum of colour and emotional experiences for me as I observed, the visual art representing my grief depicts this. The artwork for grief took only two days to paint (rather than the prescribed week). The artwork is both morose and hopeful. Hope is not a characteristic of grief that I consciously considered before the meditation experience, indicating that my conscious or learned beliefs around grief may have blocked my natural emotional processing of it in my life. In allowing myself to view and experience my grief subjectively, according to my *own* natural process i.e. colourfully, my suppressed grief itself began to shift. This movement became apparent in the process of the visual artistic expression (Van Vugt, 2019).

The grief meditation resulted in a clear visual image, therefore I wanted to convey it accurately so preparation for it was methodical. I sketched and measured out the image on a 90cm x 120cm canvass using tape to create sharp lines, before applying any paint. The angles in the background emulate the shape of a room, an empty room that signifies loneliness and disorientation.

Experimental Creative Work - Grief '2'

Grief '2' Creative writing - The revised expression of Grief after meditation and creative practice

I like to sit in my ice bath longer than two minutes.

Submerge myself in the stinging until my fingers harden.

Ask the blades to cut me deep so that I can give each one a name.

Then, when the surface is quiet,

and I have felt the cold take hold of my chest,

I spring up and out like a phoenix, gasping,

ready, like the day I was born,

with spells on my tongue

and freedom on my mind.

How else does the poet love, other than to live every moment infinitely?

*****

Dear Grief,

I'm not sure what to say to you. You are the long-lost Aunt that I never knew existed suddenly knocking on my door. I don't know when or where you were born. But I see myself as a child in your eyes. I don't know what you have been doing all these years. But I have sensed you lurking in the background. I feel your presence whenever I tame the curl in my hair. Whenever I read an arrangement of words that have no purpose.

I think perhaps you existed long before I was born. You were lodged in my grandmother's bones. She carried you here on a boat from Germany with grandad and my two-year-old mother. I have a photo of mum and my uncle at the beach after they had settled into Brisbane. They are both wearing woollen jumpers while they swim. Grandad didn't want them to catch a cold. He died before I was born, but I met him through my grandmother's anxiety and lack of spirit, which she hid beneath an immaculate appearance and the odd drink of whiskey.

Granny was polite. She weighed forty-eight kilograms and ate pound cake for breakfast. She was generous within her means. She knew how to avoid an argument three days before it happened. Her teacups were always perfectly lined and facing the front. Her handbag always matched her shoes. She went to Myer every Saturday at ten in the morning. She smiled demurely at the butcher and the man who cut her off at the roundabout. She knew how to apply make-up to hide a blemish or a bruise. She was a "lady". Mum says Granny was also a talented

singer. I never heard her hum a tune a day in her life. When she got dementia, Granny started to swear like a sailor, and she stopped brushing her hair. We were all abhorred by it. Now, I feel happy for her.

I speak to Granny in my dreaming. I see her laughing euphorically as she watches the sunset. She sings to me as she dances in a water fountain. Granny swears in my dreams like she did when she lost her mind, and she has a wicked sense of humour that I don't remember of her. I asked Mum whether Granny had a sense of humour that I didn't know about. She said "Actually, yes, she did."

I have understood my grandmother more intimately in her death than I ever did in her life. I feel her in the wind. She hugs me when you close in, Grief. I feel the warmth of a hand on my left shoulder and the other reaching around resting on my heart. She rocks me and tells me, "It's ok. Step into your future, baby girl. You are a warrior. You are *Prowess*." I'm not sure what she means by that.

Although I did not know who you were Grief, I was overcome by your presence at first. I thought you were just sadness in a cloak, such was your weight and thickness. I was glued to the lawn for weeks after you arrived. Hunched like a vagabond when I wasn't a pool of flesh on the ground. Every waking moment I spent in that front yard, sometimes sobbing, but mostly staring into nothingness, in constant search of the reason for your coming. I am a healthy woman of good means. I have conquered my past in this lifetime and collected my future. I have a nice home and luxury cars. I have a husband who provides for me and our two beautiful children. Grief, my grief, you have no rights.

Still, on that lawn in late March of two thousand and twenty, I cried a river of tears. The world was succumbing to the threat of a virus. Taunted by the calls of my ancestors, I was succumbing to the threat of myself.

"Let the earth hold you, when nothing else can." My Grandmother whispered to me. With nothing else to hold onto, that is what I did.

I had questions of myself and everyone else. I could not feel my heart anymore when not long before then it had beat rampantly within me. So, I prayed,

sincerely and like never-before. The vortex of my pain ran deep and dark and constant. I was in a hole, and I was scratching and grasping at its walls. As I lay upon her, I prayed to the earth to help me. I confessed, "I am lost. I am the exile, not quite fitting anywhere. Please guide me. Please lead me to my true and honest heart. I pray to you mother earth to move my legs in any direction. Implore me to get up, because I can no longer sit with the weight of my grief that has no reason and I am not capable of getting up by myself."

I woke early the next morning to a sky split open. Alive and ominous. The Gods, all encompassing, had tilted the earth upside down during the night to see what might drop out of it. I quivered at the sight and was muted. There was molasses in the air and lead in my mouth. A prayer on my lips and the faint call of bird ringing in my ears. Hidden from view amongst the debris and splendour, interchangeable, the great bird's maniacal rapture rang out so powerfully that despite the heft of my thinking, I was startled by its sound. Embedded in her song, she carried this message, "Look up. Notice now, that the tear in the sky is healed over. The Gods sewed it back up and haloed it at dawn, to show you the beauty that comes from deep wounding. Everything that trickled out of it yesterday has now left and gone soaring. Pick yourself up. Put your feet on the earth, golden, and raise your arms when it is too dark so I can carry you."

With that answer to my call, I put my trust in the earth. I trusted her more than I had any other. More than I trusted myself. With her alchemy and wisdom, that spanned the ether, I need not think, lest I know. With the earth guiding me I did not fear the unknown. Instead, I stuck my hands up in full view and I surrendered. On my dead Grandmother's advice, I allowed the earth to hold me.

The memories of my emotions still run heavily within me. Grief, you were the first to crack my heart open and for that I thank you. With that breaking, I knew intuitively what I had to do. I had to allow you to engulf me. Hand you the reins of my experience from that moment on. Come what may. No rules. No roles. No obligations. No more colouring between the lines. I had to eat my pound cake out in the open. No apologies.

*****

> There was a man I knew briefly around that time, and only by name. When he learned of how I wanted to process you, he called me self-indulgent. Held together by my grandmother's marrow and her spirit now roaming within me, I heard these words, "That's all we need, Prowess. Another white, privileged, educated male telling us the correct way to feel."

*****

Grief Major Findings

The notable changes in the post-experimental writing for grief included three major additions to the work. They are:

1. The addition of the opening poem
2. The addition of a ninth paragraph that opens "The following day I woke to a sky split open…"
3. Closing paragraph that opens "There was a man I knew briefly around that time…"

The opening poem is a metaphoric account of my experiences with grief. Starting the work with a poem uses a form that is invested in greater intensity of emotion through its brevity; in a poem every word must work and there is more expectation of emotional intensity, whereas in prose writers can get away with superfluous words more easily – and that is the distinction, perhaps between general prose versus prose poems and poetic prose. Poetic accounts must more succinctly describe the subject. The metaphor of the ice bath refers to the reluctant nature of the grieving process. Prior to the writing practice, grief was an emotional experience that I had avoided, indicated by my suppression of it. However, once I had opened to the process of grief, like dipping my toe in the proverbial ice bath, I became aware of the benefits in grieving despite any discomfort. The poem is also illustrative of the colourful, or positive aspects of grief, as described in the rebirth of the phoenix that rises through the surface of the water representing a changed, integrated, form of Self. The poetry had both practical and psychological effect. It frames the subsequent writing

by providing a visual account of grieving that potentially served the research purpose to produce greater vivacity (Zeitlin, 2013). It also served to articulate my own change in perception of the *function* of grief as a bridge emotion able to integrate other emotional experiences (Luethje, 2009). The poem is the flagship piece to describe the phoenix in the visual art, which is referred to indirectly in the second post-experimental addition, only as the "great bird". The poem is emblematic of the *outcome* of grieving rather than descriptive of my process of grief at large, which is why, as a symbol of transformation the phoenix features strongly here, and not elsewhere in the writing.

The ninth paragraph portrays the lyrical nature of my grief. My experience of grief, both in remembrance of it and during the process of painting, was one of emotional, psychological, and somatic movement. Emotionally, I moved from the stages of despair into hope. Psychologically, I gained greater awareness of what it was that I was grieving, which was an ancestral trauma and detachment from my present Self as developmentally integrated or 'initiated' adult as defined by Plotkin (2008). Regarding my somatic experiences, I consciously recalled feeling a heaviness in my body at the time of my grieving in 2020. I describe this weight in the benchmark piece of writing (*I was overcome by your presence at first. I thought you were just sadness in a cloak, such was your weight and thickness. I was glued to the lawn for weeks after you arrived*). This was re-experienced as physical twitching in my left thigh during the meditation practice during my research. I interpreted this sensation as an emotional blockage signifying the anchoring nature, or weight, of the grief that I had been carrying.

While the majority of paragraph nine is a metaphoric retelling of the painted image, there are indicators that the written work is directly inspired by the image. For example:

"I woke early the next morning to a sky split open" references the black pathway coming from the top of the painting that the Phoenix is descending upon.

"Molasses in the air" describes the deep amber hue in the background of the work.

The Phoenix itself is referenced in "the faint call of bird" and "Hidden from view…the great bird's maniacal rapture…"

References are made to the beauty in the transformative power of the Phoenix and its descendant pathway from the sky down to the earth to assist me with the metamorphosis of my grief, in, "Look

up. Notice now, that the tear in the sky is healed over…The Gods sewed it back up and haloed it at dawn, to show you the beauty that comes from deep wounding."

Finally, "Put your feet on the earth, golden…" is a direct description of the golden floor in the artwork. These references indicate how this passage specifically, has been directly shaped by the imagery and demonstrates the use of traditional ekphratic methodology.

Further analysis reveals that the central figure of the slumped girl appears to be shaped by the original creative writing. She is slouched and heavy in posture, an illustration of the written description "Hunched like a vagabond" in the benchmark work. The figure's solitary, ghost-like body points to my "non-existence" and feeling of "exile" and "not quite fitting anywhere". The girl's sitting posture is a depiction of the line "I can no longer sit with the weight of my grief that has no reason". Similarly, the black cyclonic shaped path coming from the girl (or perhaps it is leading *to* her), that the Phoenix is travelling down, refers to, "the vortex of my pain ran deep and dark and constant. I was in a hole…"

The closing paragraph includes a story that is not featured in the painting. Rather, this narrative was formulated resulting from the practice itself. I experienced a flow state here first established in the painting practice that was then recommenced in the writing practice, where the words seemed to emerge from nowhere (Lineen, 2019). Painting the imagery of my grief, defined and shaped my thoughts about it, in a way that the written word could not, which then allowed me to move through the emotion. This final section then acts as a closing to my grief both experientially and in the story. There is a change in tone in this section that communicates an ending to my grief and a movement toward the next stage; this is another as-yet unknown emotional state, but certainly one that is less submissive than the unresolved grief I had carried for so long. This is evident in the closing quotation from my dead grandmother, which is assertive and resolute "That's all we need, Prowess. Another white, privileged, educated male telling us the correct way to feel." Prior to the experimental endeavour I had indeed experienced movement in my grief through writing alone as told within the benchmark account. However, the experimental exercise allowed me to transmute my grief into something greater than what it was as indicated in the closing paragraph. Least of all this shift resulted in the creative changes made to the work, but most of all it resulted in a positive change in mindset regarding the positive aspects of grief.

Emotional Construct 2: Fear

Benchmark Prose Creative Work - Fear '1'

Dear Fear,

When I was a child, I was told a story about a little girl who, while walking in the park one day, was attacked by a magpie protecting its nest. As the little girl looked up toward the cerulean sky to assess her assailant, the great checked bird pecked her eye clean out, leaving her permanently blinded.

Since that day, some thirty-five years ago, every spring when the magpie sits high to sing out from its fortress, I crouch down low and scurry past it, making blinders with cuffed hands and that story embedded in my spine. Over the many years that have followed that story both my eyes have survived, on account of my wariness, and seen great beauty on ground level, but I have never dared to look to the heavens at the setting sun, or the morphing shapes of the midday clouds, too afraid of the uncertainty. Fear, you are the consummate shadow, you can lure every other emotion to your side with your threat and power. Even innocence. Especially love.

It had never occurred to me before now, that the magpie was simply a mother enacting the clear boundaries she had set for herself.

*****

Some years ago, Leo was given a children's bible for his end of year gift from school. Our family are non-practising Catholics. In the introduction to the book, the author writes "My hope is, that when reading this message, your child says, 'God loves me more than anyone and I can trust God'. This was an education for my own devout ignorance. I recoiled as I read those words to my son. What theology would teach a child that a mother's love is not the greatest in the world? In what realm is love something you depend on from others rather than a belief

that is held within? Understanding the magnitude of the love I have for my children, how bad can it be for them to know that there is an intangible force that loves them even more than I do? In what world would a mother fear a love like that for her children?

*****

The first time I met our puppy 'Patience', I was terrified of her. It was the thought of her that petrified me more than the reality. But I don't need to tell you about the intimate workings of your ways, do I, Fear? Patience was an entirely new and foreign presence in our home. I had no idea what to do with her. She was small and innocuous, but to me, her danger was profound. Whenever Patience got tired of waiting for me to give her attention, she would grow angry and destroy everything in her path. All she wanted from me was time. Instead, I tried to control her. I attempted to make Patience fit into my life, without any adjustment from me. She threatened me with change, and not knowing what was changing, I simply fought it.

We decided to call her Patience over dinner a couple of weeks before she arrived. Given that both the kids names started with *L*, we tried to think of a name for her that also started with *L. Lunar, Leila, Laney* were all passed over. The breeder had sent photos of her and confessed to us that our pup was an exuberant one and that we should be prepared for chaos. So, in the absence of a suitable *L* name as planned, I suggested that we call her *Patience*, and so, it came to be.

Despite my initial fear of her, despite my initial rejection of her, Patience has stayed with me over the past year. Sitting, writing, breathing...being, Patience has been by my side all the while, ever vigilant, perpetually on the lookout for you, Fear, so that I didn't have to worry about it.

Grief had loosened its grip on me on the command of a passing phoenix. Even so, it kept a hand resting on my shoulder reminding me my grief was not far away. So, with a feather in my hand for safe keeping, I began walking with Patience every day. Sometimes twice a day. Me, Grief, you Fear, and Patience,

we all walked together to a destination unknown, on a path undetermined. After those walks, I would recall small details of the sights I had seen. Little things that filled me with awe and wonder. Things that managed to crinkle my leaden face if temporarily. Magical things that held within them meaning that only I could decode. Connections with moments that seemed to have you dropping a few paces behind the rest of us Fear. Fragments of joy amongst fractures of trepidation. Those fragments were shards of light that fed the black Panther prowling, and I began writing them all down.

*****

I found two dollars, a pin feather, and a magpie all in the space of one meter.

Then, I lost my mind

to a single thought glued to the left side of my head

to the left side of my head

left side of my head.

The Jasmine vine told me to reach out to you

but I was wading mud. Holding my breath,

diving under the surface, searching for the roots of a lotus flower.

*****

A spider wrapped in a tissue.

A purple string.

A brown paper bag. Tumbleweed.

The scent of musk on a solar breath, turns my cheek. Left wondering.

Speckles of light on the inside of my eyes.

Feline eyes, hanging amongst the black of night, like keepers.

And all the while, through the thickness of my thinking,

the petals of a lotus flower unfurled amongst the circuits,

roots sprouting from the pit of a chest, pounding.

Alive, wild and out of control.

*****

Fear Experimental Observations

I struggled with producing the 'fear' construct from the beginning. The struggle to articulate my fear felt representative of how pervasively fear has influenced decision-making in my life. I am trying to allow this process to unfold organically as much as I can in the pursuit of truth regarding my emotional origins and the effects those origins have on my general and creative expression of the emotion in the present. So, perhaps unsurprisingly, I have approached fear with some fear. Writing about fear brought up a lot for me both emotionally and in remembrance. This is evident in the meandering nature of reflections in the writing, it's as if I approached the story of my fear indirectly, like I was avoiding it, prodding at it from a careful distance. As a risk-averse person most of my life, this is precisely how I have approached anything that I have perceived to carry any inherent risk, including realising my true desires and embodying the entirety of who I am.

This primary observation for writing about fear, describes my inability to articulate it at first, which seemed correlated to the reluctance I have had in confronting fears in my life. This reluctance could also account for the suppression of my memories when I first felt fearful. This unwillingness to confront my fear led to obstacles in my emotional expression and creative articulation of it throughout this process.

The commencement of the benchmark writing for this construct was challenging. I was not able to consciously access memories relating to fear in my life. This came down to two primary realisations 1) that I couldn't locate fearful memories because they were scarce; I avoided personal situations that would make me fearful, such as physically or psychologically risky situations and, 2) that the original memories of my fear in my childhood were suppressed. These characteristics

influenced the quality of the pre-experimental writing compared with that of grief, in that both the form and narrative within the writing was disjointed; however, in the pursuit of experimental integrity I did not draft fear any more than I did for the grief construct which is evident in the work. For example, the opening scenario detailing my chronic fear of magpies since childhood, is one memory that came to me effortlessly when first considering fear. This story exemplifies how, as a survival instinct, fearful responses are hardwired into nervous systems and how that hardwired behavioural response had sub-consciously repeated itself throughout my life. Rather than accessing the traumatic memories regarding the origins of my fear, this banal memory afforded me safe distance to describe the visceral effects of my fear driven response.

During this part of the writing practice for fear, I felt a "knowing" that fear and love were deeply linked for me. This aroused another more recent memory of reading a passage from a children's bible to my son, where I was offended by the suggestion that God loved him more than I did. During the initial COVID lockdown period in 2020 that the present-day embodiment of my emotions is set, I had my own spiritual experiences. Through writing this memory, I realised that by denying my son the opportunity to connect with a higher love beyond my own, I was selfishly fearing that he would not view me as the most loving entity in his life. A question arose here: had this mindset been originated in my childhood where I did not feel truly loved and acknowledged simply for 'being'? Rather, I formed the belief that gaining love was conditional upon what I did and whether I pleased my parents. I distrusted, or feared, the notion of unconditional love because I did not believe it existed. I feared what was unknown to me. My experience had been that love is earned through behaviour, it is *conditional upon* behaviour, even between mother and child. Despite this experience of love with my son, intellectually I understood that our love for each other need not be earned, questioned, or feared, so this led me to consider the degree to which my childhood mindsets are entrenched because I could be fearful of something as ubiquitous and natural as my own motherly love for my son.

The concept of fearing the unknown was creatively explored further through the metaphor of my pet German Shepherd, who I had feared even before I met her. Aptly, her name is *Patience* which is an attribute that is beneficial when working through an emotional process and this worked in with the emotionality of the experiment and thematic integrity of the narrative.

In the act of walking my dog, I found the patience I needed in my emotional processing of fear, an emotional shift that resulted in my discovering a creative expression of it (Lineen, 2019). During this walking I was innately drawn to the natural elements of the environment with which I walked which inspired me to write poetically about my fear through the story of those connections. The two poems included in the original creative writing for fear, were written in 2020 during the period much of this work is set. They hallmark the emergence of a pattern I would later identify; that since childhood, during traumatic events and despairing emotions, it is in my natural response to write and through that writing, to find hope.

Procedurally, the meditation for fear did not differ from the outlined methodology, including the timeframe, frequency, and duration of meditation sessions. Again, my cautiousness may have influenced my ability to open and flow to the thoughts, feelings, and internal experiences of fear. In my notes pertaining to the fifth meditation session, I note:

> The internal images for fear during meditation are, so far, juxtaposed. As if my original fearful memories were bobbing up like corks from my sub-conscious. Many of the images I could make no sense of, I could not consciously understand where they came from or why, or even exactly what these images represented in terms of my fear or my memories in general. Even so, I tried to observe what came to me without judgement and record or note those observations for the purpose of the art.

The major observation during the fear meditation was the visceral nature of this emotion. Rather than *see* my fear during my meditation, I predominantly and aggressively *felt* it, as frozen contortions of my arms and hands. Without conscious memory of it, I sensed that I had enacted this "defensive hand" gesture during an incident when I was six years old that involved domestic violence in my home. As a child then, I recall being immobilised by fear, and during the meditation I re-experienced those feelings of defencelessness, and I was reliving them through the body during meditation via the inaction of my hands.

I experienced the "defensive hands" until the twelfth meditation session, where they ceased; this correlated with a change in my internal visions. The montage of indecipherable imagery slowed and instead of slipping into my sub-conscious memory as hypothesised, I travelled forward to an as-yet-to-be-lived experience: a creative process that I had long desired to engage in but had feared. I imagined immersing my body in paint and using it to create an artwork as homage to a creative

self that I never dared to explore. I come from a lineage of artists on my paternal side. From my view, their artistic identity was met with fear by the women in my family. Prior to the experiment for fear, I had some awareness of the effect that this family history had on my creative identity, however it was the meditation that raised awareness of the extent of the psychological and somatic impact this story has had throughout my life. As both a woman and an artist in my family, these opposing facets of Self have contributed to the immobilisation of my creativity in adulthood and prevented me from enacting my true creative desires. It was therefore integral to the original research aim, that being to gain understanding of the origins of my fear, to adopt this full body artistic technique to paint the imagery for fear.

The fundamental difference between the painting for grief and fear were the methods used to produce them. The imagery conjured during meditation for grief was very clear to me, therefore the method for painting it reflected this precision. The grief painting was planned and sketched onto the canvas before any brushwork was applied to accurately replicate my imagined vision. This is consistent with the research aim to produce an artistic image of the one aroused during mentation for the purpose of traditional elements of ekphratic interpretation. However, given the erratic nature of the imagery I envisioned for fear, and the lack of clarity surrounding the origins and form of those visions, my approach to the fear painting was not planned. The only certainty in this endeavour was that I intended to imprint my body onto the board. The composition and emerging subjectivity were unclear and therefore they were entirely led by the flow of the practice (Lineen, 2019). This strategy is emblematic of my approach to fear in my life to immobilise or freeze up when feeling fearful, and my inexperience in how to approach that state. The direction of my life has been governed by my desire to *avoid* fear, rather than from intentional direction toward facing it.

Executing the methodology, I lay my entire body on a large sheet of canvas that I had poured black acrylic paint onto, covering the entire right side of my body in paint. Following this, I imprinted the profile of my body onto a 90cm x 120cm high board contorting my body to fit on it. The outcome was a black gargoyle-like imprint that dramatically communicates a dark and fearful mood. The hands in the painting appear to be floating and shielding the figure's face, an effect that was accidental. However, given the insights I had during the meditation process regarding my

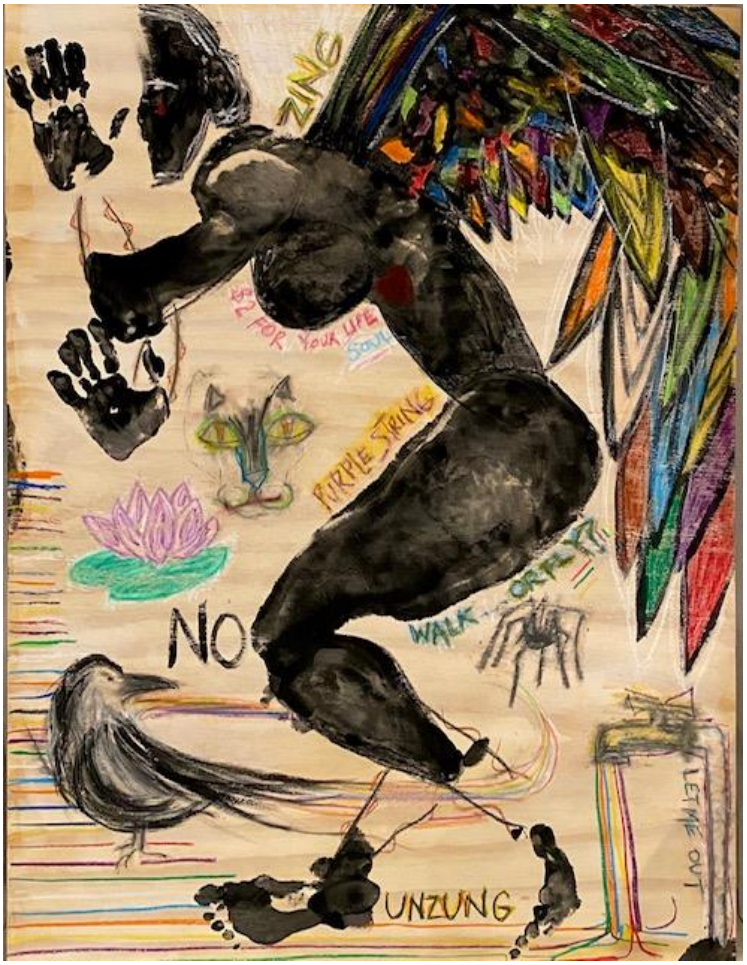
'frozen contorted' hands, I have considered that this reflection in the painting, while unintentional, is correlated to that experience.

The additional visual elements to the fear painting were made using crayon. They were applied spontaneously in a graffiti style that echoed the spontaneity that I had originally envisioned them. Elements from those visions are present here, for example, the lotus flower, the spider, the feline eyes, and the purple string from the original poetry, also the magpie featured in the opening of the written piece. Other elements are included here that had not yet been consciously related to my fear, for example, the words *no,* and *zing*. 'No' literally being the word I subconsciously hear when I approached something that felt fearful. 'Zing' is a word I have used to describe my feelings of anxiety in previous creative works. The gushing tap releasing floods of colour that spill out onto the work, is also a metaphor I have used in previous creative writing to symbolise my unleashed inner artist that, if let out, might never be restrained, and will inundate all other aspects of my identity.

The wings are a prevailing feature of the body imprint in the fear painting. These were applied fluidly during the painting process. They symbolise the freedom and colour that comes with embracing all aspects of Self, in this case, my suppressed creative identity that I had sub-consciously defined as "bad" from my familial conditioning. The bloodied tear and heart represent the regret, and indeed the grief, I felt during the experimental process for denying myself what is my birth right; to evolve.

The physical movement involved in the practical process used for this painting evidently had effect on both the content of the writing and on my conscious memories that would later *affect* the writing. Notably, while in the process of imprinting my body on the board I remembered a poem I had written as a teenager. The poem popped into my awareness unexpectedly and I remembered every word, later finding my childhood diary to cross check my memory of it. I had not referred to that poem since childhood, thematically it is applicable, as it speaks to living unrestrained, here, "fear not the cries within your soul, your obscenities, your truth". This demonstrates how memories, as formative to our emotions, can be lodged in the body and released through creative movement and expression (Krauth, 2010).

Experimental Creative Work - Fear '2'



Fear '2' Creative writing - The revised expression of grief after meditation and creative practice

Dear Fear,

The first time I met our puppy Patience, I was terrified. It was the thought of her that scared me more than the reality, of course. But I don't need to tell you about the intimate workings of your ways, do I, Fear? Patience was an entirely new presence in our home, **and** I had no idea what to do with her. She was small but to me her danger was profound. Whenever **she** got tired of waiting for me to give

her attention**, she would destroy everything in sight**. All **Patience** wanted from me was time. Instead, I tried to control her. I attempted to make Patience fit into my life without adjustment *(deleted: 'from me')*. She threatened me with change and without knowing what was changing, I simply fought **her.**

We decided to call her *Patience* over dinner a week before she arrived. Given that both the kids names started with *L*, we tried to think of a name for her that also started with *L*. *Lunar*, *Leila*, *Laney* were all passed over. **The German Shepherd** breeder sent photos of her and confessed that our pup was an exuberant one, and that we should be prepared for chaos. In the absence of a suitable *L* name as planned, I suggested we call her *Patience*, assuming we would need some. And so, Patience came to be our dog's name.

Despite my initial fear of her, *(deleted: 'despite my initial rejection of her')* Patience has stayed with me over the past year as my guardian, perpetually on the lookout for whatever preludes you Fear, so that I did not have to worry about it. She has been by my side on the front lawn: a quiet ally. With Patience and time, Grief began to loosen its grip on me. Even so, Grief kept one hand resting on my shoulder reminding me it was never far away. So, *(deleted; 'with a feather in my hand for safe keeping')* I began walking every day with Patience. Sometimes twice a day; I was trying to outwalk myself. Me, Grief, you Fear, and Patience, we all walked together to a destination unknown, on a path undetermined. Patience gave me freedom to notice small details, little things that managed to crinkle my leaden face, if temporarily. Magical moments with my natural surroundings, held within them meaning that only I could decode. These moments of connection in solitude had you dropping a few paces behind the rest of us, Fear. These observations were fragments of joy amongst fractures of trepidation that fed my spirit; the black cat "Prowess" that my grandmother had come to refer to me as. As I walked, I began writing those fragments of joy down, amidst fractured feelings of trepidation.

*****

Trepidation – Fracture one

Fear, you come to me in pieces. Stuck to things that are not your doing. Yet, there you are like water, taking on the form of everything you touch. You are a trickster. A shapeshifter. An undercurrent. I wonder just how much of my life has been shaped at your hand? I think of you, drop a bloodied tear, and disconnect my heart for survival. I shield my face from the force of your nothingness. Memories come to me in fractures. Symbols and words are clues to our story. They spill out and over and stain everything they touch. I can't bottle you up cleanly and label it like the others. Instead, the river of you runs deep, and wide, and overflowing. Traversing my brain in whirlpools, you take in what I experience today and pull it down below to the blackness of your creation. How many of us have broken children stuck inside us at the helm? Banging on the walls, "Let. Me. Out", knee deep in mud, arms outstretched and searching in honour of a different existence.

Even in the galaxy of my futures, Granny is always mum in your presence, Fear. She knows the girth of your reaping. She knows that taming you can only come with taking ownership of you. Even in the limitlessness of death she remembers the box that you held her in during life. When I think of you, she climbs inside my body, a shadow, and my thumbs start twitching. Mitochondrial morse code, pinging out guidance.

"Stand down. Prowess. Stand down. Don't fight. Don't flee. Stay firm."

Her face is motionless yet pleading. Her hair moves gently across her face in the breeze. There is a golden hue around her as she speaks to me. Sitting with knees tucked into her chest, a chin resting between them, she turns to look silently toward that setting sky, lamenting her loyalty to you. That's the thing about you Fear, your tide is so strong it has the power to wash away lineage.

*****

Joy – Fragment one

Each day the wolf walks far and wide, unchanged in any weather, intent on its task to do as a wolf does. Undeterred by the terrain. Moving with the order of the pack. A wolf is a wolf. It can walk up to twenty kilometres in a single day, regardless of changes in its environment. It knows its purpose and strives for it, unwavering. It is ruthless to the deer. It knows to leave the mammoth unchallenged. Peace is found in it honouring its instinct to live as wolf. No performance. No malice. No thought. Just truth.

*****

Trepidation – Fracture two

When I was a child, I was told a story about a little girl who, while walking in the park one day, was attacked by a magpie protecting its nest. As the little girl looked up toward the cerulean sky to assess her assailant, the great checked bird pecked her eye clean out, leaving her permanently blinded in that eye.

Since that day, some thirty-five years ago, every spring when the magpie sits high to sing out from its fortress, I crouch low and scurry past it, making blinders with cuffed hands, that story embedded in my spine. Over the many years that have followed, although both my eyes have survived on account of my vigilance and seen great beauty on ground level, I have never dared to look to the sky during a setting sun, or at the morphing shapes of the midday clouds. **I have been too afraid of the possibility that I will be blinded by a bird from someone else's memories.**

It never occurred to me before now, that the magpie was simply a mother enacting the boundaries she had set for herself. **Fear, you have the capacity to lure every virtue to your side and cloud judgement with your threat and power. Truth. Innocence. Even love.**

*****

Joy – Fragment two

I found two dollars, a pin feather, and a magpie all in the space of one meter.

Then, I lost my mind

to a single thought glued to the left side of my head

to the left side of my head

left side of my head.

The Jasmine vine told me to reach out to you

but I was wading mud. Holding my breath,

diving under the surface,

searching for the roots of a lotus flower.

*****

Trepidation – Fracture three

My love is selfish like the sun. Sometimes withdrawn. True when present. Warm either way.

Leo was given a book once called, *My First Message*. He inherited his religion indiscriminately from us, and a long line of tradition: it stipulates that repeating ritualistic patterns without question asserts passage to salvation. To Leo, his religion is the stainless-steel cross my mother bought him that he wears on a dog tag necklace with his LA Lakers cap and Nikes. Leo has been to church three times in the decade of his life. Once to be baptised. The next to see his sister be baptised. The third for a funeral.

In the introduction of the book the author writes "My hope is, that when reading this message, your child says, 'God loves me more than anyone and I can trust God'. This book was an education for my own devout ignorance. Initially, I recoiled as I read those words to my son. What theology would teach a child that a mother's love is not the greatest in the world?

That night I told Leo, "I gave birth to you. *I* love you most in the world – even more than God does." I kissed him tenderly on the forehead and took in his look of admiration. Leo's eyes closed as I whispered those words of assurance to him, as did a part of his mind.

Whether God is an entity, supernatural or spiritual, faith does not exist on a page. Just as love does not exist outside of us. God, faith, and love exist within. Today the question I ask myself is, "In what kind of world are we taught that love is something we acquire from others, rather than something that merely exists? In what world, is love something we depend on, rather than something we simply believe we deserve? In what world is love a state or condition rather than a state of being? Knowing how much I love my children how bad can it be to believe there is a source available within them that loves them even more than I do? In what world would a mother in her right mind ever fear a love like that for her own children?

*****

Joy – Fragment three

A spider wrapped in a tissue.

A purple string.

A brown paper bag. Tumbleweed.

The scent of musk on a solar breath.

Speckles of light on the inside of my eyes.

Feline eyes, hanging amongst the black of night, like keepers.

And all the while, through the thickness of my thinking,

the petals of a lotus flower unfurled amongst the circuits,

roots sprouting from the pit of a chest, pounding.

Alive, wild and out of control.

*****

Piece from the past

(Written at fifteen years old in a pool of teenage angst. Remembered at forty-two years old in a pool of paint.)

Fear not the cries within your soul

Your obscenities

Your truth

Teach them to wander through your blood and seep through your barricade

To expose the real you

Let life stab you with fate

accept that its all too much

Let go of your love and revel in its deliverance

Wear your shadow with distorted reason

for normality is wicked

its definition; infinite in every case

Rotate your worth until you realise its meaning

Analyse your premonitions

Embrace your scars until the tissue dries

Swap your skin for your heart so at last it can breathe

Follow its rhythm

Dance to its beat

Without qualms or nerves or obligation

Simply grow wings and soar

beside its naïve beauty

*****

Fear Major Findings

An unexpected change in the experimental writing for the fear construct was in the editing and formatting, something that did not fundamentally change in the experimental writing for grief. This could be due to the lesser quality of the first draft for fear, however post-experiment I was able to view the entirety of the story of my fear with greater clarity and discernment. This resulted in the narrative being more structured post-experiment than it was pre-experiment, and the tone of the writing reflects this. As noted in my observations, I initially approached the construct fear with some fear. This apprehension is evident in the work itself that I initially characterised as a lack of confidence and form. This greater certainty in Fear '2' correlates with the greater certainty I felt regarding the origins of my fear during the meditation and painting practice, and in my understanding of how fear has influenced the course of my life. This awareness translates to more decisive work because it produced greater confidence in my creative identity. This reclamation of my identity as an artist is evident in this revision of the work which feels much more extensive and assured than it was for grief.

After the painting, I felt compelled to move the section about my dog Patience to open the narrative of fear. Introducing with this story illuminates the idea that my fear has been a response to limitations in my mind and my attachment to the need for certainty. Needing certainty in the past, old stories about how to respond to fear featured only avoidance of the fearful stimulus; redefining my relationship to fear by facing it, meant the birth of new behaviours and new, more empowering, outcomes. There is a gentle patience evident in the subsequent unravelling of stories in the post-experimental writing that, paradoxically, is speaking to the rigid nature of fear. At the close of this section, I again refer to "Prowess", the black panther that was introduced in the grief writing. The black panther is able to walk confidently alongside my fear and, in doing so, traverse the undulated

physical and emotional journey; undulations that I describe as "fragments of joy", and "fractures of trepidation".

I became aware that the poetic elements woven within the writing for fear, both before and after the experiment, elicited some joy for me in amongst the feelings of fear. They popped up fragmented, like beacons of hope, to combat the fracturing within my psyche caused by the trepidation. It was my shift to fear (from grief) that woke me up and gave me a new perspective to notice joyful moments in the environment around me; perspective that would not have occurred without the acknowledgement of fear itself. This juxtaposition of emotional process is made orderly within the writing by titling the various creative elements of the journey thusly i.e. 'Joy – fragments 1, 2 and 3', 'Trepidation – fractures 1, 2 and 3', and then, finally 'The piece from the past'.

Trepidation – Fracture one

The first 'Fracture of Trepidation' was a new element to the writing. The voice of this piece resembles that of the voice in the grief memoir; it is poetic and was written in a stream of conscious style after examination of the artwork. This writing was intuitive, in that I did not overthink what was produced, rather, I merely wrote what came to me after engaging with the artwork. There are direct references to the imagery in the painting that, like grief, borrow from the ekphratic device, for example, "Memories come to me in fractures. Symbols and words are clues to our story." However, the critical dynamic between the visual art and the creative writing during this process was how the imagery enlivened the characteristics of my fear, something that was not evident in the writing before the painting. For example,

> I can't bottle you up cleanly and label it like the others. Instead, the river of you runs deep, and wide, and overflowing. Traversing my brain in whirlpools, you take in what I experience today and pull it down below to the blackness of your creation. How many of us have broken children stuck inside us at the helm? Banging on the walls, "Let. Me. Out", knee deep in mud, arms outstretched and searching in honour of a different existence.

This section points to the rampant, pervasive nature of my fear and its profound influence on present day experiences despite being deeply and sub-consciously entrenched and originating at an unknown time my childhood.

References to my somatic experiences in the meditation feature in this writing, "When I think of you, she (my grandmother) climbs inside my body, a shadow, and my thumbs start twitching. Mitochondrial morse code…" This details the embodiment of ancestral trauma regarding a fear response passed down my lineage through my grandmother, resulting from the domestic violence she experienced at the hands of my grandfather, and then later echoed in my own experiences of witnessing domestic violence. Critical to the story of my ancestry is my grandmother telling me that only by acknowledging that my fear of self-empowerment is a creation of my own mind, can I be free of it; something my grandmother was not able to do in her own lifetime. This realisation was made during the process of the self-reflective ekphratic analysis and is crucial to the shift in mindset about the role of fear in my life; that it is *I* that controls *it*, rather than the other way around.

Trepidation – Fracture two and three

Both these fractures are re-writes of the original pieces. Common to these re-writes is the clarity and form that is honed within both. Additionally, there are more creative devices used within each that serve to enrich the work. However, these are subjective elaborations resultant from the process of the self-reflective ekphratic technique, rather than explicit descriptions of imagery. Again, these changes are the outcome of deeper understanding of my fear due to the entire process of painting that translates to a more fluid and skilled execution of each written recount.

Joy – Fragment one, two and three

The first fragment of joy illustrates the primal nature of the wolf. The wolf is a metaphor for my German Shepherd "Patience", and this piece was written during 2020 after walking with Patience on a rainy day where she was unfazed by the weather, while I ducked and weaved to avoid the rain. I included it in the fear memoir because it opens the Fragment of Joy trilogy aptly by referring to the act of walking and my dog Patience. Additionally, this piece calls to the innate or integral

nature of the wolf and how, as an animal, it is true to its ways of being regardless of its environment. Unlike me at that time, where I felt I was not living authentically but was attempting to conform to social expectations; a wolf does not purport to be anything other than a wolf. The remaining Fragments of Joy (2 and 3) are those that are included in the original writing and remain unchanged.

The final poem: A piece from the past

As outlined in the Experimental Observations (see page 54) the final poem unexpectedly surfaced during the practical execution of the painting. The poem was written when I was fifteen years old, describing my yearning even then, to "expose the real me". When reflecting on that time in my life, I was becoming aware of my own identity and how I was already showing a tendency to introvert my creative desires. During the meditation when I recalled the domestic violence situation, I learned that the safest response to visceral feelings of risk and fear was to freeze or flee. At fifteen, I cautiously began to explore aspects of myself, my inner artist, that I feared would be rejected by society at large, as I felt my father was, so I fled from it. The finale of the poem, "Follow its rhythm, dance to its beat, without qualms or nerves or obligation, simply grow wings and soar beside its naïve beauty", correlates with the freedom I felt while executing the painting of fear, a creative liberation I had never felt before. This sense of freedom, and the wings referred to in the poem compelled me to feature the wings on the gargoyle in the painting.

The original benchmark writing for fear felt contrived and disjointed, the writing practice felt resistant, just as re-experiencing the fear itself did. The entire experimental process, from the base-rate work, to the meditation and painting, and finally to the experimental ekphratic writing, worked dynamically to extract anoetic awareness relating to fearful feelings and the symbology associated with it. Uncovering the subconscious stories of how my fear has manifested over the course of my life allowed me to view the function of fear from a different perspective; as a marker for change and growth and integrate this new information consciously into my autonoetic experience as Tulving suggests through his analogy of mental time travel. Understanding where my fear originated, gave insight into situations where fear is evoked in me erroneously in the present so I can regain control over my response to it.

Emotional Construct 3: Love

Benchmark Prose Creative Work (Love '1')

Dear Love,

It's nice to finally meet you. Unexpected, but nice. I thought we crossed paths once. I saw a glimpse of your face on a crowded street. I strained my neck to try and make eye contact with you as you hurried by, but all I saw was the face of an ordinary man. Certainly, no ideal of love. He smiled back at me hesitantly, a moment of recognition in his eyes, but as soon as I looked away disappointed, he did too. It was never really you after all, Love. It was just an illusion. I wanted to know you so badly.

I enjoy talking to strangers. I always have. There is safety in the anonymity. There is no risk. There is a comfort in confiding in a stranger that is not possible with someone I know. I have had many beautiful moments with people I've known for minutes and will never see again. I take their secrets away with me and they take mine, sparing my conscience the trouble. Its vulnerability pawn. I wonder how many orphaned secrets are running around out there.

"Why do people always tell you things?" my friends often ask.

I don't know why. I've never questioned it. Maybe, it's just because I like to listen.

Love is powerful and pure and simple. People are complicated.

I had a profound moment with some strangers at a bar while out celebrating my husband's birthday once. While my friends were drinking and chatting amongst themselves, I went to watch the DJ. I sat quietly beside the booth saying nothing at first. Noting my interest, the DJ happily began sharing his craft with me. His name was Luka. He was open and gracious with me. He had the delicate hands of a ballerina, and he executed his art as fluidly as one. I liked him immediately.

I spent time with Luka. I watched him push buttons, adjust levers, and spin discs. He explained the mechanics of it all to me over the din of his own creation. After half an hour Luka just smiled at me, and I smiled back. It was time. I thanked him the way you thank a nurse who has tended to you, and I returned to my group.

A girl walked into the room. She glowed from within. People should know of their beauty, so I walked over to tell this girl how her brand of beauty affected me. As she turned to face me, instead of sharing with her what I had intended, I caught her eyes. They were sullen as a grey sea. Yet something glittered there, bobbling on the surface. A raft of logs crudely bound together by an unrelenting life force. "You're in love with the DJ, I can feel it. I can sense it." I said to her instead.

Her name was Jess. Her friend beside her looked at me, a margarita frozen halfway to her mouth. Suddenly feeling foolish, I said, "I'm so sorry. I'm way off. I'm sorry."

"No, you're not. She just broke up with him. How did you know?"

I looked at Jess who was timid in the face of the truth I had reflected to her. "Jess, you love him. I don't know how, but I can tell. What are you doing?" She remained silent, but her face wilted like a flower, and I didn't say another word.

I returned to Luka. "I just met Jess. She loves you, you know?"

"I know. I love her too, but she has a lot to sort out before we can be together."

Love is powerful and pure and simple. Relationships are complicated.

To sense love as a vibrant cord that connected one heart to another was an extraordinary thing. Love, although I could not call you my own in that moment, you made me as happy as if you had been. I was humbled and honoured to be in your presence, even as a voyeur. This time there was no illusion, I did see you,

although not with my eyes. Had I been 'looking' for you in the wrong places all along?

The following evening at dinner, I told my story to my friends. Many of them had observed the two girls from afar and made the assessment that it was Jess and her girlfriend that were together. Not one of them had spoken to Jess, or her friend, or spent any time with Luka. Yet they told me that what I had experienced was not right, that it could not have been real, because of what the majority had witnessed to the contrary. I will admit, Love, I doubted what I knew to be true of you in that moment. I owe you an apology for my treason. Particularly since searching for you for so long was my own choice and then I questioned how you presented yourself to me when I finally found you. But the sorrow that comes with doubting your power is my own cross to bear. It always has been.

"If he were in love with her, and she was in love with him, why wouldn't they just be together? Why would she be all over her friend?" the question was asked.

Love is powerful and pure and simple. Life is complicated.

*****

A Mother's Love

Mum told me a story of love. When she was a child, she had a doll. It was the only doll she owned. That doll was the one thing that was truly hers. When Grandad would question why Granny hadn't pressed Mum's clothes properly, Mum would straighten her doll's skirt down tight. Despite her insistent pulling and preening the doll never cried when Mum corrected her. It didn't question. It didn't make a fuss. In fact, it didn't ask for anything except to be loved as Mum loved it. Being her only one, Mum coveted and cared for that doll meticulously, and that doll reflected that same love and care back. Mum says she knew then, the magnitude of the love she would one day have for her own children by the measure of how much she loved that doll.

*****

The Butterfly Effect

Love is a thing not for its own sake, it would seem. Our tribe of women are expert at externalising their love. Pulling it from their loins and offering it up in bloodied hands. Love, you manifest in countless forms and express in infinite ways. Indeed, to say *I love you*, is proclamation in your name. But to surrender, that is love in action.

I sat with a dying butterfly once, convinced that its fragility meant that it needed me. It was beautiful, just so, that my time with it tricked my heart. I fought ants who would swarm it, birds that would swoop it. This brave little butterfly, flailing, who did not want for saving, instead yearned for living, come what may. To save it from fate was as good as standing on it. So, I just sat with that dying butterfly and briefly we both lived.

*****

Love Experimental Observations

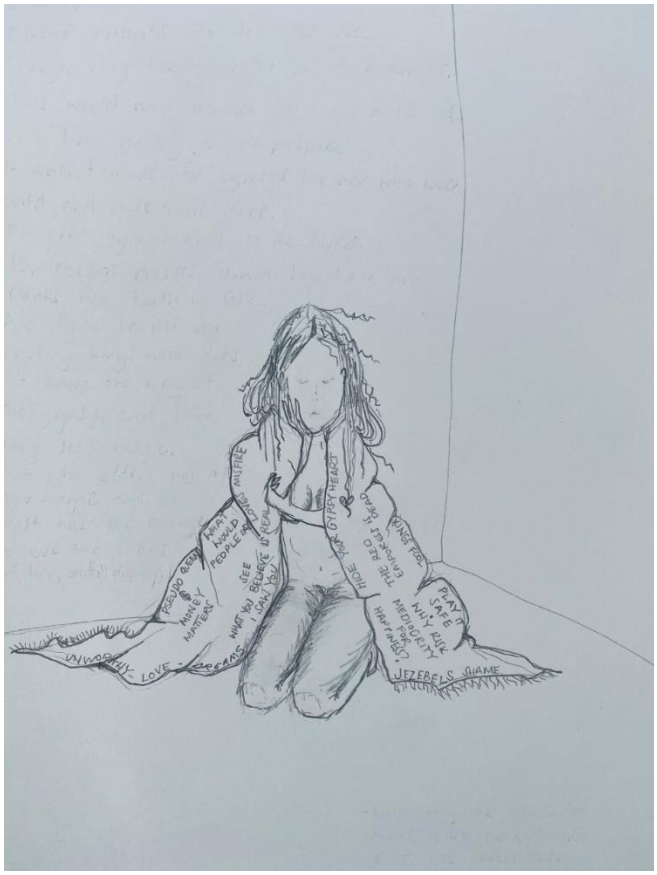
Joy was intended to be the final emotional construct for the experiment. However, in the process of writing fear, I noticed an association between my fear and my love (as discussed briefly in that chapter). This observation led to the decision to instead explore my relationship with love as the final emotiogrnal construct. Like fear, I approached the love construct in accordance with the general evocation of that feeling, in this case, with grace and tenderness, this romantic, fluid approach is reflected in the tone of the first draft.

At this point I was two months into the experiment and had experienced substantial self-discovery that had caused changes in my personal life, including how I related to myself and other people. What also occurred was the spontaneous release of some sub-conscious memories outside of the experimental context. This internal processing influenced the subjectivity for the story of love. It felt relevant to write about an event that occurred in my life *during* the research i.e. The opening scenario where I experienced feeling the love between two strangers, which occurred in October 2020.

The Butterfly Effect is a piece that I wrote while walking with Patience during 2020. In the Butterfly Effect I describe feeling needed as akin to love, "I sat with a dying butterfly once, convinced that its fragility meant that it needed me." This self-reflection came about during the onset of the experiment for the love construct. I wasn't consciously aware of major correlations between my thoughts and feelings on grief and fear and my behaviour. I understood that my life had been affected by those two first emotional states, but I made connections between memories and my childhood conditioning much quicker for love. The theme of the Butterfly Effect is to love and surrender to where your love wishes to reside, rather than try to direct its course. This relates to others and Self. We each have parts of ourselves that we like more than others; what was arising for me, was, the awareness that parts that I liked most about myself tended to be parts I hid from others. Also, people cannot control who to love, or how to love, or the cyclical nature of love and how it changes.

The memory of my mother telling me the story of her doll several years ago is one I have easily retained. At the time, her innocent comparison of her love for me and that of her doll affronted me. It triggered the feeling of control my mother has had over me and the decisions I've made in my life to acquiesce to expectations. A doll is inanimate and entirely at the whim of its owner. The owner can dress it however desired, position it any way that is preferred, take it everywhere. This is how I have viewed my mother's love: conditional, and easily revoked with her displeasure. That's not to say that is how it is, but the reflection in writing illuminated this view of it.

Experimental Creative Work - Love '2'



*(Words on image left to right: Unworthy – Love – Dreams. Pseudo Queen $ Money matter. What would people say. What you ~~believe~~ see is real, I saw you. Love Misfires. Hide your gypsy heart. Jezebel's shame. The red emperor is dead. Kings fool. Play it safe * Why risk mediocrity for happiness?)*

Love '2' Creative writing - The revised expression of grief after meditation and creative practice

Self-Love

If you ever loved a wild thing,

really loved a wild thing

Don't clip its wings to keep it,

Fly.

Or give it a mirror to judge,

Let it love.

Don't place it by the window,

Dreaming.

Don't talk over its tongue,

Listen to it.

Don't feed it at your will,

Nourish it.

Don't boast of yellow in its blue,

Hold it.

Don't cover it when it sings abundant,

Dance to it.

Don't chastise the mess it makes you,

Understand it.

A wild thing, a true wild thing,

without ever feeling sorry for itself,

either alone in a cage, restrained, as frozen on a bough,

will drop dead just as quietly.

Because a wild thing, a true wild thing,

sees death as its master;

no man, no where, no thing.

If you ever loved your wild thing

Set it free. Set her free.

*****

Dear Love,

It's nice to finally meet you. Unexpected, but nice. I thought we crossed paths once. I saw a glimpse of your face on a crowded street. I strained my neck to try and make eye contact with you as you hurried by, but all I saw was the face of an ordinary man. Certainly, no ideal of love. He smiled back at me hesitantly, a moment of recognition in his eyes, but as soon as I looked away disappointed, he did too. It was never really you after all, Love. It was just an illusion. I wanted to know you so badly.

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name was Luka. He was open and gracious with me. He had the delicate hands of a ballerina, and he executed his art as fluidly as one. I liked him immediately.

I spent time with Luka. I watched him push buttons, adjust levers, and spin discs. He explained the mechanics of it all to me over the din of his own creation. After half an hour Luka just smiled at me, and I smiled back. It was time. I thanked him the way you thank a nurse who has tended to you, and I returned to my group.

A girl walked into the room. She glowed from within. People should know of their beauty, so I walked over to tell this girl how her brand of beauty affected me. As she turned to face me, instead of sharing with her what I had intended, I caught her eyes. They were sullen as a grey sea. Yet something glittered there, bobbling on the surface. A raft of logs crudely bound together by an unrelenting life force. "You're in love with the DJ, I can feel it. I can sense it." I said to her instead.

Her name was Jess. Her friend beside her looked at me, a margarita frozen halfway to her mouth. Suddenly feeling foolish, I said, "I'm so sorry. I'm way off. I'm sorry."

"No, you're not. She just broke up with him. How did you know?"

I looked at Jess who was timid in the face of the truth I had reflected to her. "Jess, you love him. I don't know how, but I can tell. What are you doing?" She remained silent, but her face wilted like a flower, and I didn't say another word.

I returned to Luka. "I just met Jess. She loves you, you know?"

"I know. I love her too, but she has a lot to sort out before we can be together."

Love is powerful and pure and simple. Relationships are complicated.

To sense love as a vibrant cord that connected one heart to another was an extraordinary thing. Love, although I could not call you my own in that moment, you made me as happy as if you had been. I was humbled and honoured to be in your presence, even as a voyeur. This time there was no illusion, I did see you,

although not with my eyes. Had I been 'looking' for you in the wrong places all along?

The following evening at dinner, I told my story to my friends. Many of them had observed the two girls from afar and made the assessment that it was Jess and her girlfriend that were together. Not one of them had spoken to Jess, or her friend, or spent any time with Luka. Yet they told me that what I had experienced was not right, that it could not have been real, because of what the majority had witnessed to the contrary. I will admit, Love, I doubted what I knew to be true of you in that moment. I owe you an apology for my treason. Particularly since searching for you for so long was my own choice and then I questioned how you presented yourself to me when I finally found you. But the sorrow that comes with doubting your power is my own cross to bear. It always has been.

"If he were in love with her, and she was in love with him, why wouldn't they just be together? Why would she be all over her friend?" the question was asked.

Love is powerful and pure and simple. Life is complicated.

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A Mother's Love

Mum told me a story of love. When she was a child, she had a doll. It was the only doll she owned. That doll was the one thing that was truly hers. When Grandad would question why Granny hadn't pressed Mum's clothes properly, Mum would straighten her doll's skirt down tight. Despite her insistent pulling and preening, the doll never cried when Mum corrected it. It didn't question. It didn't make a fuss. In fact, it didn't ask for anything except to be loved as Mum loved it. Being her only one, Mum coveted and cared for that doll meticulously, and that doll echoed that same love and care back. Mum says she knew then, the magnitude of the love she would have for her own children one day by the measure of how much she loved her perfectly kept doll.

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The Butterfly Effect

Love is a thing not for its own sake, it would seem. Our tribe of women are expert at externalising their love. Pulling it from their loins and offering it up in bloodied hands. Love, you manifest in countless forms and express in infinite ways. Indeed, to say *I love you*, is simply proclamation in your name. But to surrender, that is love in action.

I sat with a dying butterfly once, convinced that its fragility meant that it needed me. It was beautiful, just so, that my time with it tricked my heart. I fought ants who would swarm it, birds that would swoop it. This brave little butterfly, flailing, who did not want for my saving, instead yearned for living, come what may. To save it from fate was as good as standing on it. So, I just sat with that dying butterfly and briefly we both lived.

*****

Jezebel's Love

At 7.42pm on Monday the thirtieth of November two thousand and twenty, there was a lunar eclipse. I lay in a hammock at the campsite I was staying at with my family and swayed gently under the trees waiting for it, one leg dangling over the side like a perched wild cat. An unexpected thick of clouds had moved in and the tangerine moon, that I could see perfectly well just an hour before, suddenly became hidden from view. I never saw the eclipsed moon that night.

I shut my book and rested it on my chest, hoping that the gravity of the words I had just read would penetrate better with direct contact to my heart. My mind was reeling upon reading them. The book described how nothing on the earth is separate. People, nature, even objects, are all connected by one invisible source, and at its core that source is love. People we encounter, situations we find

ourselves in, things we experience, objects we attach to, are all reflections of our internal world and how we view ourselves in the larger context of love. A light spray of rain gently fell on me as I contemplated this unfathomable force. I had checked the weather forecast for the lunar eclipse that day before we left. There was no rain scheduled for the entire week. I closed my eyes and knew intuitively that someone I loved was crying.

It was no surprise that my grandmother came to me in that moment under that elusive moonlight. I had become accustomed to seeing visions of her and hearing her voice whenever I sat under a starry night sky. The darkness had become our meeting place. During her life, my relationship with Granny was like those I had forged with strangers: intimate from a polite distance and fleeting in many ways. In her death she had become my closest confidant and ally. She whispered, in the blithe repartee characteristic of her immortal incarnation, "Jezebel's love is shameful. No one admits to needing Jezebel's love, although it is delicious and nourishing and unshakable. For it is not of this world. This world was made for Kings and Queens who love neatly for the people. It wasn't made for gypsies like her, who love wild and pure and free, but even gypsies need to feel love. So, Jezebel presses down her wayward hair, hides her wild nature and cloaks her truth in silk. She finds herself an earthly King, who does not know the way of the gypsy, how they seek magic, but who offers her a new name and claims the chaos of her for himself. Every full moon, Jezebel escapes to the water's edge and fills up her cup. There she sees all the other gypsies crouched and naked, laughing and hooting and cussing as they fill their cups, too."

I am a woman who has lived her life dictated by fear. A fear not of her making. It is the same fear that imprinted itself on my grandmother's womb after my grandfather back handed her for not parting her hair right; it is the same fear that prevents my own mother from ever taking a full, belly-deep, breath of air. Or relaxing her shoulders down. They are embalmed with the memory of carrying, not one, but two lives on them. The first life was the perfect one she presented

to the world and the second, was the one she effortlessly made invisible while she was simultaneously dying from hiding it.

Even as a modern woman in a modern world, the blood of my ancestors still roams within me. I have lived my life believing that I am less. That I am weak. That what I am is wrong. That I should hide myself. That my love, my true, forceful, unwavering love, is shameful. It is too volatile. It is indulgent in a patriarchy that demands outcome resulting from stoicism, guile, and control. My love is worth nothing more than whatever I choose to make it appear in this world. Like magic.

My love is my impetus to learn, yet it is not scholarly. It is my drive to defend, yet it is not strong. It is the core of my compassion, yet it is not philanthropic. This admission is too much for some. Such naked truth should instead be covered by a silken cape and a well pressed skirt. I have treated my love like it has no impact; when it is the most powerful thing that I possess.

Jezebel's love is the love she holds for herself that she will hoard and protect behind a thick of clouds before she will ever let it be eclipsed. As I lay in the hammock that night, I was so consumed by thinking who it was that I loved that could be crying in that moment, that I didn't notice the single tear drop pool in the corner of my own eye and then slide softly down, like it was warily tiptoeing, to the bottom of my cheek.

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Love Major Findings

The experimental method for love had profound effect on me. My experience of sensing the love between two individuals that I did not know had a relationship, as described in the opening story, is testament to the ways the project itself was shifting things in me and opening me to new

experiences and ways of perceiving my world. I was opening to new ways of being and relating to the world. I observed in my diary:

> I can see how I have feared both external forms of love and love for all aspects of my Self. Two months have passed since I began this practical research and I have noted organic changes in many of my relationships since then. Some of my intimate relationships are being challenged as I question the foundations of them. Likewise, some friendships I have been reluctant to investigate on a deeper level despite desiring to, I have begun to venture towards. In both instances, I have feared to enact these changes, and yet, for once I have. Regarding my existing intimate relationships, I have gained confidence in expressing my feelings and enacting emotional and psychological boundaries I hadn't before. This made me aware of mindsets that I have held, that I don't have 'the right' to implement boundaries out of fear of abandonment for doing so. My love, my relationships have been conditional on my compliance.

During the meditation I *felt* love before seeing any imagined visions of it. Love felt deeply lodged in my gut, as if I was hanging on to it. It felt tight and restricted, like I was physically clinging on to whatever version of love I had at my disposal. I noted:

> Even by the twelfth meditation session, I could not let go. I didn't *want* to let go despite becoming increasingly aware that whatever bodily experience I had of love, it didn't feel healthy. I inherently knew that at the time my awareness was interfering with the meditation. This preoccupation made the visual experiences difficult to decipher. I did in fact see things, but these felt like forced conscious memories of what could be *construed* as loving events in my life. I remembered my mother brushing my hair, however I didn't feel that this was an authentic representation of love. Why can I not freely access memories of love?

Artist Yumi Sakugawa (2021) states, "A completion of a creative idea can be challenging because some ideas may rather stay in the energetic realm of infinite possibilities than to solidify into a concrete, tangible experience. It also takes time to translate, molecule by molecule, an ephemeral idea in your imagination existing as pure energy to a more static object or structure that exists in the three-dimensional world that is experienced and felt by others." This quote suggests that the reason I was unable to access love was because I hadn't experienced love as I imagined it to be.

Love remained an "ephemeral idea in my imagination", indicating that my *expectations* of love had interfered with my ability to identify *actual* love I had experienced in my life. This expectation of what love *should* look like may in fact be correlated with my mindset that I lack love and self-love. This realisation resulted in a small (A3), colourless pencil sketch of me, naked, looking disappointed and vulnerable, wrapped in a silken cloak marked with phrases and mindsets that have limited my reception of love that has been available to me in my life.

Drawing this was a sullen process of realisation. I became aware that the only person who had obstructed any love that I had wished to receive in my life, was me. I had a limited definition of love that I had harboured in sub-conscious expectation that love appears only one way: my way. This resulted in the opening poem "Self-Love" where I am reflecting on first, loving my own innate wild Self, the self that is unincumbered by fear or expectation, by exposing her and setting her free. As with grief, opening love with this poem swiftly directs the reader to the tone of my personal story, in this case, my sombre lament regarding a lack of love for and acceptance of all parts of myself, past, present, and unfolding. The poem references DH Lawrence's "Self-Pity" with the metaphor of 'the wild thing" as a reference to one's natural state, and existing in the moment simply as one is, rather than as one is expected to be. In Lawrence's poem, "the wild thing" lives and dies without thinking or analysing how: it just does. Similarly in the post-experimental poem, "Self-Love", one simply loves oneself, accepts oneself as-is, good, bad and ugly, without judgement.

In contrast, the post-experimental addition of "Jezebel's Love" outlines an experience I had in late 2020 that once again involved interactions with my grandmother's spirit. This again illuminates the ancestral trauma I was carrying regarding self-love, self-acceptance and living authentically. Here, my grandmother refers to this type of love as a "Jezebel's love". Jezebel is a reference to both the Phoenician Princess and wife of the King of Israel in Scripture and the modern synonym for an autonomous, independent, liberal woman. These assertive traits are ones that have been suppressed in women of my maternal line in favour of embodying a more traditional and submissive role as subordinate wife.

Chapter 4

Post Analysis of Major Findings

Throughout the methodology, I experienced, or more accurately re-experienced, emotional memories somatically, emotionally, and intellectually *in the present*, bringing different elements of my identity to their understanding. These were reflected in the re-writing practice. Furthermore, the writing practice itself then also changed my perception of those emotional states. The emotional healing and benefits as a creative practitioner were correlated. Rather than producing more dynamic or vivacious writing, as was the original hypothesis, it is perhaps more accurate to conclude that the emotional state of being and the written expression of that emotion *evolved* to include new memories, new imagery, and new personal insights to the benefit of the writing.

The original proposal was that this methodology tested an adapted form of self-reflective ekphrasis whereby the writer is also the visual artist and produces the artwork that is utilised in traditional ekphratic practice. The chief hypothesis was that the painting would reveal a deeper understanding of the emotional experiences referenced in memoir-style writing and the subsequent analysis of that painting would then enhance the writing to greater vivid affect emotionally. A secondary hypothesis was that shifts in my awareness would reveal that my original emotional experiences have impacted my embodiment of certain aspects of Self in particular, my creative identity (Matsuba & Pratt, 2018).

Two major findings were discovered in the academic pursuit 1). That the creative writing did change post-experiment and, 2) The practice resulted in personal healing. The methodology succeeded in accounting for measurable changes in the writing due to its inclusion of benchmark piece of writing. Changes were evident in the analysis of the benchmark and experimental creative writing, which is extensively examined in the previous sections pertaining to each emotional construct. In simple terms, the analysis clearly shows that each individual piece of writing *was* changed and expanded upon after the experiment. However, did the changes enhance the writing to its benefit? And, regarding personal healing I observed, did it result in a greater understanding of Self in relation to my emotional experiences, specifically, in my identity as an artist? First, I'll examine the potential benefits made to the writing.

Benefits to the Writing

Was there ekphratic process?

Were the changes that occurred in the writing the result of the experiment, or would these changes have occurred organically in the due course of drafting? One way to determine this is to examine the degree to which ekphratic device is evident in the process and has influenced the post-experimental work. Certainly, modern definitions of ekphrasis have shifted from traditional and rigid definitions outlined by Webb (2009) to the broader definition of "a description of anything we see with our eyes" (Connel-Ross, 2006, p. 11-12). In accordance with Connel-Ross, the experiment did cause the changes as evidenced through ekphratic technique, because additions made to the work, while perhaps not always literal descriptions of the artworks themselves, were subjective interpretations of the artwork and visualisation process. Even if the additions were abstract in nature (as was common to all three emotional constructs) they included my personal descriptions of the artworks. Each experimental creative writing included mentions of imagery in the relevant artwork consistent with traditional ekphrasis. In the grief writing, there are references to the "phoenix" and "great bird" as well as the colours and postural characteristics of the subject that are included in the writing. In fear, the literary references are not as direct, they are subtle but are nonetheless evident, for example, "I think of you, drop a bloodied tear, and disconnect my heart for survival. I shield my face from the force of your nothingness. Memories come to me in fractures. Symbols and words are clues to our story. They spill out and over and stain everything they touch". Each of these visual elements are present in the accompanying artistic work.

Love is perhaps the most poetic ekphratic interpretation in the findings. The sole visual description I refer to from the artwork is, "Such naked truth should instead be covered by a silken cape and a well pressed skirt". It could be argued that this piece of imagery is a significant one, and the nucleus from with which other words and imagery in this piece are spawned. The metaphor of the eclipsed moon, which is pervasively referenced throughout this story, was inspired by the notion of concealment that this sketch elicited within me. To explain, "An unexpected thick of clouds had moved in and the tangerine moon, that I could see perfectly well just an hour before, suddenly became hidden from view. I never saw the eclipsed moon that night." There is also a tone of resentment in my literary description of the silken cape. This resentment is toward my feeling of

obligation to wear the socially acceptable (metaphorical) silk cape and pressed skirt, rather than expose suppressed aspects of Self.

In other contemporary definitions of ekphrasis, there is emphasis on the *nature* of the visual imagery the writing produces in the creative exercise, rather than the actual description of it. Theories that focus on the process itself state that, ekphrasis must "through hearing, *operate* to bring about seeing" (Krieger, 1992). The story of Jezebel's Love and the literary devices used to tell it, derive from this original silken cape description of the artwork, and amount to ekphratic interpretation in accordance with these operational models. This method applied Zeitlin's (2013) operational model of ekphrasis, that is, the artistic interpretations work to elicit a vivid and clear emotional image, and then transfer that emotionality to the readers' mind. My inability to access a specific memory to align with my grief, and still experience it, visualise it and paint it, and then verbally tell its story, also demonstrates that such operational ekphratic elements were achieved. It also raised my awareness that I was experiencing ancestral grief, not personal grief, which will be discussed later in this Chapter (Parvan, 2018).

While ekphratic device was evident in the experimental creative writing, it is worth noting that some changes were made intuitively rather than ekphratically. Rather than studying the visual art and vividly describing and amalgamating that description into writing, some changes that were made were *felt* and processed internally resulting from the entirety of the overall process. This suggests that the painting acted as further catharsis with which to gain greater insight and clarity into the experience of emotions that came from the imagery in meditation (Van Vugt, A, 2019). The meditation produced an image to paint, the act of painting that image assisted articulation of it, along with the ekphratic interpretation itself.

It is reasonable to conclude that the changes in the post-experimental writing for each construct within this research practice, come from engagement with the artistic practice and therefore would not have occurred without interaction with the art. Rather than assert that the ekphratic device produced the changes, it is perhaps more accurate to say there were beneficial changes in the writing that were a *product* of the entire methodology employed here.

Did the Changes Result in Emotionally Enriched Writing?

Having established that changes in the writing could derive from the process, the next question is, did these changes benefit the writing, explicitly, did they produce memoir that had been enriched through the development of emotionally powerful narrative? The founding argument for expanding emotionality in the writing rests upon the ability to access original emotional memories. In this regard, I'll establish that anoetic memories pertaining to the emotions could have been accessed.

I will examine the meditation and visual art as technique to unlock suppressed emotional memories to consciously integrate into the memoir writing (and the Self, which will be examined in the *Evidence of Personal Healing* section of this chapter). In the Conceptual Framework I demonstrated how episodic memory, as the amalgam of our lived experience, is considered the foundation of our identity, and is referred to extensively in memoir writing research (Dere et al., 2016). Tulving's (2002) work is consistently referred to in the literature on episodic memory where he discusses this conscious autonoetic awareness. Tulving's model is applied here, however it is Vandekerckhove's (2011) subconscious 'anoetic awareness' (as opposed to conscious 'autonoetic awareness') that aimed to be accessed for its influence on pervasive mood states.

How do we know that the meditation and painting practice accessed, and expressed, anoetic memories? In all three emotional constructs, I observed difficulty in locating a decisive visual image to paint during the meditation, despite reporting other effects from the practice such as the somatic elements and a rupturing of indecipherable or fleeting images. While trying to recover an image for grief during the meditation I reported first seeing an image that I described as a culturally imbued image of what grief looks like, this could be described as the semantic or noetic representation of grief, rather than an image exemplary of my own personal experience of it. Both the original "contaminated" image and the resulting painting had one element in common; they both featured a phoenix as the focal point. This suggests an interaction or "battle" between my conscious thoughts and subconscious thoughts in the initial stages of meditation (Fabbro et. al, 2017). This battle of consciousness is akin to the distinction Tulving makes between "knowing" and "remembering"; knowing what grief is, how it is supposed to feel and when it applies, versus remembering my own personal experiences of loss that resulted in grieving. Here, remembering has two elements: recalling conscious experiences of grief in autonoetic awareness typical in

memoir writing; and recalling subconscious associations of grief in anoetic awareness pertinent to this method. It is posed that the method increased the amount of data being "remembered" through the additional access to anoetic data and may be why my subjective account of grief eventually won the imagery battle. The final image reflected a story representative of my own definition of grief crafted from autonoetic data and deeply embedded anoetic data, rather than an image created from semantic information from noetic awareness.

Notwithstanding the lack of clarity this battle of consciousness initially posed, I was still able to locate an image for each emotion. For Fear and Love I was able to access memories from autonoetic awareness. For Fear I remembered the domestic violence situation from my early childhood and recited the poem I wrote during my teens during the painting practice. For Love I wrote about the conversation with my mother where she compares her love for me with the love she had for her childhood doll, and during the meditation I had a brief snapshot of her brushing my hair as child. For Grief however, I could not locate an autonoetic memory to anchor my grieving to. However, I was able to locate a very clear image for Grief in the end, clearer than that of the other two emotions, in fact. This was a symbolic image of the somatic experiences I felt during meditation, that I consider to be a representative image of a suppressed, amalgamation of grief that I had been unable to put words to prior to the research endeavour. This was a grief born of my lineage that I carried. This sense of loss was one that was predominantly felt rather than intellectualised therefore it was not possible to retrieve a fully formed memory from my own consciousness. This grief, I shared with the women in my family and the resultant image was my personal articulation of that bond.

In shamanic culture "remembering" does not only apply to recalling memories, rather remembering is the act of returning to who you are spiritually or in your natural state as a being unencumbered by the shaping of social culture (van Luben Sel, 2019). Key to this remembering is the understanding that everything in the universe is connected and holds a purpose greater than itself that serves the natural order of things collectively. Within the energy stored in our bodies we carry the metaphysical memories that have shaped our lineage, and by extension through our actions that shape the earth itself. It is our quest to remember who we are beyond the limitations of that social and familial conditioning. The pervasive mood states characteristic of anoetic awareness that Tulving describes, could account for this feature of both shamanic culture and

ancestral trauma, with both aptly describing my experiences during the experimentation with grief. Another possible reason that grief could not be reduced to a single memory or memories is because grieving is more aptly described as a *process*, or a response to other emotional circumstances, such as loss, change or acceptance. Whereas fear and love are states or emotions where strong physical attachments to people or situations are typically associated, and therefore we can recall images and events that align with them (Batcho, 2020).

Dere et. al's (2016) work with PTSD patients reveals how trauma can affect the way we recall, and indeed suppress, certain events in our lives. My fearful and grieving memories were likely to be unprocessed and subconscious, expressed (or lodged) instead in my body on a cellular level, as opposed to more positive emotional memories which are more easily remembered and accessed. When considering the negative and limited beliefs I have held around love (generally thought to be a positive emotion), it is likely that those memories were suppressed, too. Deepak Chopra (1991) regards our physical bodies as the culmination of our physically lived experiences particularly suppressed traumatic experiences. Additionally, studies have found that memory can be stored somatically within the body and that the events that are associated with somatic symptoms are not always immediately known to us (Krauth, 2010). Supposing all three emotions were suppressed, also common to all three emotional constructs in my research were the somatic expressions during the meditation, indicating that a physical embodiment of memory was shifting during the practice for all three. For Grief, I felt twitching in my thighs, for Fear I felt cramping and contorting in my hands and forearms, and finally, for Love I felt pulling in my gut. The shift in my psychological awareness that correlated with these physical displays of memory indicate that it was my sub-conscious emotional memories, relevant to the work, that were being released, and therefore the data required to produce emotionally enriched writing had been accessed.

Regarding how these emotional shifts were imbued in the writing to enrich it, as discussed in the Conceptual Framework, performative research is not expressed in numeric data or discursive text, but as 'rich, presentational forms' which cannot be quantified other than through subjective measures. There are several examples of this subjective richness. For example, direct references to the imagery in all three artworks have already been discussed, but in Fear, a critical dynamic between the visual art and the creative writing was the inspiration the imagery evoked to *enliven* the *characteristics* of my fear, something that was not evident in the benchmark writing. For

example, “Memories come to me in fractures. Symbols and words are clues to our story…I can’t bottle you up cleanly and label it like the others. Instead, the river of you runs deep, and wide, and overflowing. Traversing my brain in whirlpools, you take in what I experience today and pull it down to the blackness of your creation.” Both the writing and juxtaposed imagery in this section are reminiscent of Terese Mailhot’s writing in *Heart Berries* (2018), whereby emotional memories are remembered from a distance to the experience itself. As a writer, this neuro-literary technique creates distance, by writing fluidly in a stream of consciousness style, without overthinking, allowing for safe, unattached emergence of traumatic or difficult memories, while retaining the emotionality of the lived experience (O’Rourke, 2017).

Another example of how the ekphratic exercise caused depth in the emotional story in a way that would not have been possible without it, relates to colour. While colour can indeed be described in creative writing, it is clearly typically characteristic of the visual arts, supporting findings that visual art can express feelings and experiences that the written word simply cannot (St Clair, 2016, p. 13). As outlined, colour was a crucial part of my journey toward hope in Grief. The visual expression of my grief related to colour and influenced the poetic tone of the subsequent post-experimental writing. In the act of painting, grief lost its characteristic heaviness for me and by injecting colour into its expression, grief became the catalyst for a metamorphosis that I had not experienced prior to the meditation and painting. This was subsequently integrated and expanded in the writing.

Evidence of Personal Healing

In *The Unconditional Life*, Deepak Chopra suggests, “No one knows why people make sudden breakthroughs into self-awareness, but when they do, the effect is often short-lived. The moment of liberation may be earthshaking, but it passes quickly, leaving no deep or lasting transformation in its wake. There is no great mystery to this. The forces that uphold our familiar world have returned with renewed tenacity.” (p. 154) Certainly, Chopra is describing what I had experienced in my life before conducting this research. Although I had some awareness of the ways my beliefs and memories linked to the emotional states of grief, fear and love might have been affecting my behaviour, I often felt powerless to change them. In my discussion of each of the Major Findings

in Chapter 3, I report experiencing the sort of realisations that I would define as "healing." The critical difference in the awareness raised during the experiment may have to do with the intention placed on the healing element of this work and that the understanding reached extended beyond intellect to include emotional and somatic processing. An immediate example of this is in the methodology for grief, as an emotional process in itself; the experiment allowed me to move through a previously stagnant grief in my own way, to shift it. However, a less obvious healing 'process' occurred in the interaction of each experimental construct and the procedural flow-on of each emotion.

Through writing my conscious intellectual expressions of each emotion in the benchmark, I was able to first purge the immediate thoughts relating to them. In the meditation and visual art practice I was able to go a step further and dislodge unknown somatic elements of my supressed emotions and give represented form to the physically unknown aspects of my feelings and gain access to intangible experiences to help integrate them into the psyche (Batcho, 2020). This then allowed for the creative execution where those new insights could be expressed in written form and be consciously understood. But it was *how* the creative experimentation of each emotion fluidly led on to one another in the practice led methodology that really allowed healing to take place.

In my articulation of it, by identifying that the first emotion was in fact grief, not fear, I was able to work through that grief to see how profoundly, subtly, and pervasively fear had affected my life. Then, by engaging with my fear I was able to confront it through the painting methodology that I had avoided most my life. After confronting my internal fear, I was able to acknowledge my external fears, in particular my distrust in love, which gave me the awareness to approach relationships in my life differently, and subsequently form different beliefs around what it means to unconditionally love and be loved. This process is consistent with Erikson's theory of self-actualisation (Armstrong, 2012). The table below illustrates how the experimental process played out in my embodiment of each emotion and importantly how the flow of each step directly impacted the subsequent one. If I had not shifted my grief in the first instance, it is possible I would not have confronted my fear. Whether this healing resulted in a shift in my creative identity, may be answered in the creative method used to paint the fear construct. By enacting my creative desire to paint in such a tactile way, a desire I had long suppressed, I finally realised my identity as an artist.

Illustration of Healing

Emotion	Embodied Changes
Love	Realised I had a fearful and distrustful approach to love and relationships and began to set boundaries and communicate openly with the people in my life.
Fear	Identified how fear had limited me and first confronted it through the creativity in the experiment.
Grief	Processed the unknown feelings of sadness I was carrying to reveal that living fearfully had caused it.

It is worth noting here that, like Perry (see page 24), almost a decade of clinical therapy had not led me to the realisations, and importantly, changes in my life, that this experimental process did. It took feeling the physical imprint of my traumatic memories and understanding them through conscious engagement and methodical creativity, to heal them. While I had certainly recounted my traumatic episodic memories intellectually during therapy, and even acknowledged the ways that trauma has affected my behaviour, it was the combination of releasing my somatic manifestation of the emotions and creatively expressing the influence they have had on me, that resulted in a notable shift in my conscious awareness of the relationship with each emotion.

Further to this, also consistent with Perry in writing *Water's Edge*, it took the lens of the creative work to reveal the link between my own existential grief and my grandmother's grief for never having lived the life she had imagined for herself. My suppressed joy for the simple act of writing for no explicit reason, conveyed in, "I feel your presence whenever I tame the curl in my hair. Whenever I read an arrangement of words that have no purpose" is correlated with my grandmother's suppressed creativity, also conveyed in grief: "Mum says Granny was also a talented singer. I never heard her hum a tune a day in her life." While I had experienced conversations with my grandmother's spirit in 2020, conversations where she overtly encouraged me to live authentically in the moment even if that came with more personal risk, it wasn't until I wrote about that experience during this project that I became aware that my initial feelings of grief could be characterised as the onset of ancestral healing (Irvine, 2020).

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

My initial interest in how visual art can enhance creative non-fiction writing was influenced by my childhood relationship with my artist father and the tumultuous aspects of our relationship. As a writer this initiated my curious investigation into ekphrasis and how the tool can be adapted in a modern context by amalgamating the usually separate roles of both artist and writer so that the depth of personal experiences within the writing may be enhanced. Due to ethical constraints identified in the proposal stage of the research undertaking, the focus of my memoir was changed to the story of my original emotional memories: the ekphratic methodology used to tell it remained the same.

Ekphrasis has been described as "the verbal representation of visual representation" and indeed because of its image driven characteristics, has traditionally been a device used in lyrical writing practices (Webb, 2009, p. 1-2). However, new ways that ekphrasis is being understood suggest that it is already a widespread, if unnoticed, method used by writers, since visualisation is common to general writing practice, including non-fiction (Krauth and Bowman, 2018). Being memoir, the functionality of memory was subsequently examined to gain insight into how the way we remember influences subjectivity in memoir. It was here that Tulving's (2002) work became of interest for its insight into the hierarchical nature of memory. Both episodic memory and semantic memory are long term conscious states, with episodic memory characterised by autonoetic awareness, or our ability to remember our experiences subjectively. It houses long-term memories about things we can recall at will. Conversely, semantic memory, or noetic awareness, is long-term memory about things we know i.e. the information we use to identify (rather than recall) words, symbols, objects and things. In brief, autonoetic awareness holds long term data about past events we remember and is characterised by its function to allow us to "mentally time travel" and make inferences about our behaviour, whereas semantic memory holds data about general knowledge. While most memoirists examine autonoetic awareness, my interest shifted to a third state of memory that was examined later by Vandekerckhove (2011) and added to Tulving's hierarchy, as it was consistent with my research aims to explore the emotional origins of my

experience. Anoetic awareness is the foundational state of memory and develops early in the lifespan, as such it accounts for the pervasive mood states we unknowingly attach to objects, people and places. Due to the subconscious nature of anoetic awareness it became necessary to explore possible ways to access this subconscious state. O'Rourke (2017) and Dispenza (2012) both found validity in using meditation practices to access subconscious parts of the brain. A shamanic-led meditation technique, "The Mindset Process", (Van L ben Shels, 2019) afforded the research a structured method to traverse deeply stored anoetic memories.

Historically, academia has favoured quantifiable research methods for their broadly applicable findings in a wider social context (German and Gonzalez, 2018). While subjective research designs are no longer considered a lesser form of research, there is still some ground to cover in this debate. Defining what constitutes knowledge is an important element in the pursuit of research design 'equality'. In brief terms, there is a trade-off between that which can be broadly applied in quantifiable paradigms and the complexity of knowledge that can be gained from subjective approaches. It was found that in practice-led, performance-based research we can gain insight into the various pathways to arrive at a certain type of knowledge (Candy, 2006), often resulting in the discovery of unknown facets of learning that would not have been revealed otherwise.

Performed research becomes an *outcome* of the research enterprise because of its insights into human experiences and practices (Haseman, 2006). This substantiates how creative research can bridge the gap to knowledge where traditional research methods cannot. This is outlined in the analysis of nostalgia performed by Batcho (2020), who conducted rigorous research, and Perry (2014) who creatively researched nostalgia through her practice. Both researchers found positive engagement with nostalgic feelings resulted in positive outcomes for the aggrieved. In summary, creative research is a commodity in the interest of balanced learning outcomes in academia with regard the pursuit of greater knowledge.

Chapter two discusses the methodology of the experiment. The research aim was to employ a performance-based, practice led methodology to achieve ekphratic changes in non-fiction, memoir style writing. The experimental aim was to access memories foundational to my beliefs about three emotions (grief, fear and love) and to test an adapted ekphratic technique 'self-reflective ekphrasis'

that combined the roles of both artist and writer, with the intention to elicit more emotional vivacity in memoir. Zeitlin's (2013) model of ekphrasis was used to substantiate this practice for its goal to evoke an emotional response in the reader. There were four primary steps to the research method for each emotion, 1) a benchmark creative work used to establish changes in the later work, 2) the data gathering; a meditation practice focused on each of the three tested emotions in order to dislodge sub-conscious memories associated with them, and provide imagery to paint, 3) painting those visions, and 4) the creative goal, to assimilate the ekphratic interpretation of the art and process into the benchmark writing to enhance emotionality in the work.

There were unexpected findings early on relating to the meditation, where consciousness was found to interfere with engagement with anoetic awareness. However, this did not affect the outcome of the experiment and imagery was produced for all three emotions that was found to be representative of subconscious aspects of psyche. Each emotion inspired various visual art correlated with the undertone of the emotion, and the embodiment of it during the practice itself. Traditional ekphratic changes were observed as there were direct references to some imagery evident in every painting. However, the painting also elicited abstract creative additions, that may be considered as ekphratic in accordance with modern definitions of the technique (Connell-Ross, 2006).

It was concluded that the changes to the writing did benefit the work by adding to the narrative and building upon poetic elements of the writing that enlivened the emotionality. Further, changes in my awareness for each of the three emotions and the somatic expressions of suppressed memories of them during the meditation, indicates that it was my sub-conscious emotional memories, relevant to the work, that were being accessed, and therefore the depth of emotion required to re-write the work with further emotionality, had been achieved. Due to synergies with Erikson's theory of self-actualisation (Van der Kolk, 2015), it was concluded that the shifts in consciousness regarding the impact of my emotions, combined with the anecdotal evidence indicating how my behaviour had changed in my personal life parallel to this research, that personal healing took place, particularly regarding my identity as an artist. The awakening of these subconscious anoetic memories, and the subsequent changes in my perspective on how I respond to the experience of emotions being examined via this methodology, could account for shifts in autonoetic consciousnesses that Tulving discusses. According to Tulving a characteristic of

autonoetic awareness is our ability to 'mentally time travel' to the past to examine our own behaviour and make predictions about our future behaviour in similar circumstances. Considering the hierarchical nature of Tulving's model it is possible that the elicitation of sub-conscious anoetic memories informs understanding of behaviour in our conscious autonoetic memories and therefore allows the individual greater awareness to make adaptive changes in the future. This is a postulation that could benefit from wider academic pursuit to the potential advancement of both developmental and clinical psychology, and in non-fiction writing practices.

In brief, it was found that the research methodology successfully accounted for changes in the post-experimental writing and my personal experiences with my emotions. Those evolutions included new memories, new imagery, new somatic experiences, and new personal insights that benefited the writing and caused new awareness's regarding how my foundational memories influence my behaviour in the present.

Conclusions

Unlike psychology and traditional sociology, where scholarly pursuit involves being objective and detached, the humanities understand that the researcher is always personally invested in what they do: the important thing is to be transparent about those investments. Despite not having any professional or practical experience with visual art, having such intimate personal history with it makes it possible that I was able to engage with that aspect of this methodology more openly than researchers who have no artistic prowess. Another consideration regarding the influence of the artistic practice is how the variation in each artwork, including materials, size and method to produce it, may have affected the degree of creative interpretation and therefore achievement of the research aim: to produce emotionally enriched writing (and, an emotionally enriched writer). The dynamic nature of the painting for fear as opposed to the methodical nature of the painting for grief is example of this. While each painting process was akin to the emotional journey itself i.e. grief being painted methodically like the process of working through stages of grief, and fear being a spontaneous creative approach, like the reactive unravelling of fearful feelings, it is possible that these differences effected the process of the subsequent creative writing. Certainly, the fear construct included the "fragments of joy and fractures of trepidation" structural elements unlike the creative writing for the other two constructs.

Consistent amongst each emotional construct in this investigation was the finding that the visual artistic practice did aide the expression of deeper or different elements of the story. These elements were the supressed memories, somatic experiences and symbolic representations that underpin mindsets and beliefs I have around grief, fear, and love. Art is a way to unpack greater and deeper knowledge of self and enrich the written word. Specifically, imagery can reveal explanations, symbols, and stories of self that words sometimes cannot. There is a primal quality to the communication from a visual art piece that is not reliant upon social context or intellectual understanding, communication that transcends the physical. Language is limited especially when describing the emotional aspects of the human experience, so, could an individual potentially benefit more from expressing through symbology and imagery when attempting to process and understand themselves? Certainly, Shamanic practices (Van Luben Sels, 2019) and some art therapies (Van Vugt, 2019) might argue that this is the case. How would we think if language was not taught to us? Surely, our thoughts would contain only imagery. Each of us, arguably, have our own imagined language buried deep within that is innate to us, and could provide us with an alternative pathway to freeing our suppressed expressions of self.

Performative based, research led practice allows for change and natural evolution in the pursuit of knowledge that is less confounded by experimental conditions than more rigorously objective or scientific methods. However, the subjectivity in this design does make experimental replication difficult. Certainly, the methodology applied here, while structured, is laborious which makes validation difficult for future research. The question arises, would this method work for other practitioners, and, if so, do the benefits outweigh the complexity of the task? Since a large part of the creative outcomes derived from the adapted ekphratic technique that was used, the experiment could be replicated without the meditation component to simplify it. This would also provide analysis of that component in the current findings (Haseman, 2006). The dual role ekphratic method on its own could be effective in enhancing writing in other creative writing genres where the need to access subconsciousness is not required.

It is possible that the current method is suited to healing modalities as well as creative fields, due to the significant shifts in mindset, formation of creative identity, and behaviour I experienced. An unexpected change in mindset occurred in the way I viewed identity in general, however. The initial fixation on a single suppressed deeper Self, what I largely considered my creative self, that

I needed to embody for me to be 'true', slowly shifted to an acknowledgement that my various identities are not mutually exclusive, nor are they stagnant, they toggle and evolve, and through this project my creative Self was doing just that; emerging. This is evident in the initial loss I felt during the grief methodology for living as an 'unrealised version' of myself, a view which had transformed by the end of the experiment. In the analysis of the love construct, that loss had journeyed to transform to lament for my inability to love and accept *all* parts of myself, "past, present, and unfolding". Given this overarching metamorphosis of, not only emotional mindsets that had effect on my behaviour, but in my perspective of *how* my identity functions over the lifespan, this method may serve somewhere in between the creative and psychological disciplines, as a form of art therapy, a bridge if you will, between the insights afforded by both fields. One way to assess this supposition is to apply the method to a group of creative writers and a group of non-writers and make observations regarding variations in the descriptive enrichment and therapeutic benefits of the subsequent creative expression.

As outlined in the introduction, poignantly the most personal discovery made through this work is that I am an artist. I paint my emotions. I draw my thoughts. Then, I write about those experiences, not for any purpose or reason, but because I am compelled to do so. I take in the wordless data of my perceptions and transform it into a creative output so that I can gain understanding of the things that happen to me. I didn't know this before embarking on my research, nor would I have called myself an artist prior to this project. I sensed it, that my artistry was tantamount to my existence, but again, what I learned as both the observer and the observed of my own creative practice, is that creative methodologies are a unique pathway to communication, the resultant art is the language, and the artist is the bridge between the two. I am an artist of my own volition. In fact, through this work I contend, that a dormant artist lies within each of us, if you only wade through the dissonance that imprisons it.

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