

Double Dialogues #5

Art & Pain

connections, interactions & praxis

Friday 9 May & Saturday 10 May 2003

The Open Stage, University of Melbourne



Conference Abstracts in alphabetical order



Suck My Code Baby:

Linda Dement; Cyber Performance Art, Feminist Politics and the Injured Body

Sarah Austin

School of Creative Arts

University of Melbourne



This presentation will conceptualise a critical intersection between cyber feminist theory and corporeal feminism in order to examine the work of Australian Cyber artist Linda Dement and her depiction of the Injured female Body.

Part of a much larger body of work regarding the Injured body in feminist performance art, this presentation seeks to examine the injured cyber body in Dement's work as a strategic and literal manifestation of Elizabeth Grosz's

articulation of the female body, as 'leaking, visceral and messy'.

Further, I intend to analyse the relationship between the constitution of the female body as leaking and messy, and Donna Haraway's proposal for a feminine cyborg practice as a means of inserting feminist ideology into essentially masculinist apparatus. I will elucidate Dement's utilization of Haraway's seminal critique in her CD-ROM art-works, IN MY GASH and CYBERFLESH GIRL MONSTER.

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Reconciling Difference: Art as Reparation and Healing

Estelle Barrett

School of Communication and Creative Arts

Deakin University

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Words, images and signs strike the body like objects and have the capacity to intensify or assuage both physical pain and grief. Through the work of Algirdas Greimas and Julien Fontanille (1993), I will examine the role of affect in aesthetic experience to argue that both physiological and psychological symptoms may be alleviated through aesthetic practices and that such practices also have the capacity to dissolve 'difference' (subject/object, self/other oppositions) in ways that may effect personal, social and political reparation.

Claude Levi-Strauss's elaboration of the relationship between psychoanalysis and shamanistic cure (1958) will be the springboard for my discussion of the relationship between art and pain. I will also draw on Julia Kristeva (1984), who suggests that creative practices serve a reparative function occurring through what she has terms 'denegation', a process of retrieving some of the plenitude of full or direct bodily experience that is lost when we enter the limited domain of symbolic language. Creative practice involves an intensification of somatic dimensions of language termed the *semiotic*, which results in psychic reintegration and a recuperation of loss.

Through these contexts, I propose to explore the reparative potential of the expressive arts in relation to "reconciliation" between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians. The song *Reconciliation* by Western Australian Hip Hop artist, Matty B, the work of Murri artist Karen Martin (Booran) and that of other contemporary Australian artists will provide the illustrative framework for presenting this discussion.

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Writing The Ache

*Kylie Boltin, Rhonda Dredge, Antonia Pont, Josiane Smith, Amy Turner,
Henry von Doussa*

Department of English (Creative Writing)

University of Melbourne

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In our collaborative group's presentation, *Writing the Ache*, the connections and interactions between art and pain will be explored through six connected readings of creative writing emanating from individual projects underway in the Masters of Arts in Creative Writing program at the University of Melbourne. As postgraduate students engaged in both creative arts theory and practice, our creation of art and examination of the links between pain and art involve a variety of areas including physiological, psychological, existential and spiritual pain.

Themes to be explored include the following:

- The use of art as the expression, embodiment and representation of pain and the remodeling of lived experience. Art can simultaneously address the collective and individual pain of the human experience. Spiritual and physical pain is not only an individual lived experience, but quite often a common denominator that equally levels society. (Amy Espeseth Turner)
- The use of art as a process of understanding the past and making sense of pain. The research for and creation of art can perform as a facilitator to explore identity, culture, travel, and migration. (Kylie Boltin)
- The use of art (specifically creative writing) as a tool to recapture something of value, something that has been lost. Relationships between humans, either social or romantic, can be explored and understood through the practice of creative arts. (Rhonda Dredge)
- The use of art as healing of pain and disturbance in both the past and the present life experience of the artist. Pain can be the instigator of art, and art can simultaneously heal pain. (Antonia Pont)
- The use of art as a tool to distance oneself from experienced pain. Images are engraved in an artists mind, retained and enlarged,

through the experience of pain. An artist is able to take an objective look at pain as consequence of the absurd configuration of enmity and fellowship among human beings. Art starts at the point where the artist journeys away from the experience of pain. Through the editing process, an artist uses writing as a cool medium to juxtapose words of pain into a multi-faceted and engaging narrative. An exploration of the stream of consciousness that goes into the writing process will highlight the distancing from the pain through an emphasis on a 'word-smithing' practice. (Josiane Smith)

- The use of art to explore the pain of change in identity and what it means to *come out*, the pain of choosing the self, of making an art work of the self. The work relies on Foucault's insistence that we all must choose the self, but the trick is to figure out how to choose the self (make art) without dying, suicide being the ultimate choosing of the self. (Henry von Doussa)

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Art, Pain, Children: Utopian and Dystopian Discourses in Picture Books

Clare Bradford

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Deakin University

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Children's literature is marked by a pervasive commitment to social practice, and particularly to representing or interrogating those social practices deemed worthy of preservation, cultivation or augmentation, and those deemed to be in need of reconceiving or discarding. The effects of colonisation on the Indigenous populations of the settler societies of Australia, Canada and the United States are thematised in a number of contemporary picture books dealing with the displacement of colonised people forced to leave their ancestral lands and kinship groups under colonial and assimilationist policies. These texts rehearse events (such as the forced removal of the Stolen Generations in Australia, and the institutionalisation of children in Indian Schools and Residential Schools in the United States and Canada) which radically disrupted the cultural practices and interpersonal relations of Indigenous peoples, and which caused immense suffering to individuals, families and communities.

Using a group of Australian, Canadian and American picture books as its focus texts, this paper examines the extent to which narratives of pain and loss are informed by dystopian and utopian discourses. It argues that while they are concerned with bringing stories about the experience of colonised peoples to the attention of child readers, these texts also propose new social and political arrangements through which cultural transformation is enabled. In particular, their representations of temporality and spatiality go beyond either-or relations of time and space to construct spatio-temporal dialectics. Tracing interactions between present and past, presence and absence, these texts promote the formation of postcolonial identities produced between and across cultures.

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Three Poets Talk About Pain

Kevin Brophy, Eddie Patterson

School of Creative Arts

University of Melbourne

with Myron Lysenko, poet

Art, poetry in an open-ended performance. This will be a relatively unrehearsed performance rehearsing the politics of pain, the autobiography of pain, the aestheticising of pain, and its art.

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Depression and Expression Part 3: Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: The theoretical Paradigms of Depression

Justin Clemens (with Ron Goodrich & Ann Mc Culloch)

School of Communication and Creative Arts

Deakin University

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This paper will explore the philosophical, psychological and aesthetic models that currently respond to the treatment and understanding of depression. Depression, it argues, occurs within political, social and familial contexts. The treatment of its complexities are dealt with, at times, with more attention given to implementing ineffectual, obsolete, psychological paradigms and to serving political and economic advantage, than to creating new hypotheses that might render curative practice. The narrative and filmic techniques of a contemporary film will be drawn on to

dramatise the world of the depressive and as a starting point to highlight the problematic relationship between the needs of the patient and governmental, legal and medical policy.

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The Silent Scream:

Reporting Pain and the Pain of Reporting - Dilemmas In Photojournalism

Peter Davis

School of Communication and Creative Arts

Deakin University

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According to Clive Scott (the spoken image, photography & language), the camera can be seen as an instrument of mental tourism. It colonises reality, takes possession of it and turns it into the impotence of image, something without the right of reply, something subservient to the photographic gaze.

And according to Victor Burgin (looking at photographs), photographs are texts inscribed in terms of what we may call 'photographic discourse', but this discourse, like any other, engages discourses beyond itself. The photographic text, like any other, is the site of a complex intertextuality, an overlapping series of previous texts 'taken for granted' at a particular cultural and historical conjuncture.

In this presentation '*The silent scream – reporting pain and the pain of reporting*', I intend to reflect on my experiences as a writer/photographer who has documented 'otherness' in various locales around the globe. In particular I will explore the relationship between image and words in the context of Walter Benjamin's notion of the *optical unconscious*. I will screen (and exhibit) a series of images and reflect beyond the frame of my own seeing to examine the complex intertextuality embodied in the photographic gaze. I will do this with the explicit aim of raising questions about the construction, consumption and decoding of the photojournalistic images.

Theatres of discipline in the age of consensual euphoria

Peter Eckersall

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University of Melbourne

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Australian Prime Minister John Howard's vision for Australia as "comfortable and relaxed" marks the deliberate erasure of the multicultural imaginary. In the broad context of globalisation this singular vision of national cultural essentialism is experienced as a form of consensual euphoria. Notions of race pride are bought to bear in the revision of mythical (and unreconstructed) images of Australianness. Although this notion of comfort has been superseded by the rhetoric of war, the place of the other in each instance is seeded in the imagination as a form of discipline. Consensual euphoria is endemic; to critique and to suggest alternatives is to risk censure and exile (eg. the use of the term 'un-Australian').

The paper will consider the "Journey to Confusion 3" project (2002) that concluded a three year intercultural theatre experiment between Japan's Gekidan Kaitaisha and Melbourne's Not Yet It's Difficult performance group. Consideration of a politics of corporeality is a prominent feature of this work and leads to discussion about the shared experience of globalisation in Australia and Japan. Images of euphoria are contested by the reality of bodies struggling to maintain autonomy and presence. NYID's "K" (2002), an adaptation of Franz Kafka's "The Trial", will also be discussed for its literal rendering of the theatre as a disciplinary regime.

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All Her Chickens

A 30 minute monologue

Kathleen Mary Fallon

Department of English

University of Melbourne

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Kate is the white foster mother of Warren, a 17 year-old Torres Strait Islander. During the monologue they are en route to her home town.

Her monologue is structured around her rehearsals of reuniting with her estranged parents and of meeting Warren's Islander mother Flo who is critically ill in hospital. Kate remembers the difficulties and traumas of her relationship with her parents and she's confused and anxious over her position as a white foster mother, particularly in the light of the Stolen

Generations narrative. Her primary concerns though are Warren's physical and mental health and the impending confrontation with the Children's Services Department (which wants to Section 9 him when he turns 18). She's very alone with this complex situation, has seen too much of the brutality and racism of her own culture.

The Stolen Generation Report and narrative is forcing her to re-think many issues and the prevalence of this narrative is having a deep effect on her relationship with Warren (who accuses her of stealing him). She's confused, guilty, angry, impotent.

The voice of the white foster/adoptive parent is one which is almost completely absent from the debates and discussions around the complex issues of the Stolen Generation etc. This is understandable but unfortunate as there is much to say from this particular witnessing position. In coming to terms with it, as well as simply living in her particular relationship to interracial relations, Kate is forced to consciously articulate a position.

The audience sees the tensions and conflicts as she struggles to reclaim her own presence in the discourses (e.g. race) which shape her life:- so that she, rather than the cultures she inhabits, speaks through her mouth

Depression and Expression Part 1: Mother as 'Other'

Ron Goodrich (with Ann McCulloch & Justin Clemens)

School of Communication and Creative Arts

Deakin University

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Part 1 (a): This is based on a Case Study for our work on the ineffable nature of depression. Ron Goodrich will read a letter written by Case Study One. The content of the letter deals with the subject explaining how her relationship with her mother brought her to a state of despair (Depression, suicide attempts and hospitalization). In the letter she attempts to persuade someone experiencing a similar condition as her own to confront the situation in a dionysian manner; to identify the behaviour of the 'other' (mother) and to take action. The letter takes the form of a narrative and an argument encapsulating a story of seemingly inexpressible 'abuse' and arguing the case for separation from the cause of that abuse.

Part 1 (b): The writer of the letter responds to Sartre's novel 'Nausea' as an enactment of the experience of depression.

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Anecdotes and Antidotes – stories as balms, storytelling as healing

Stephen Goddard

School of Communication and Creative Arts

Deakin University

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This presentation will re-examine a series of 'dialogues' that occurred during my recently completed doctoral research project. Specifically, there was a constant tension between the desire to narrate and the fear of narrating. The autobiographical narration was at the painful edge, balancing between disclosure and concealment, vacillating between the desire to reveal whilst needing to remain discrete.

Scar as source of research orientation

One of the initial triggers of the research project was the attempt to re-consider the pain and confusion associated with the acquisition of a scar – a scar that now functions as a souvenir and an historical marker of a time when, as an adolescent, I attempted to stand up for myself, on a surfboard.

The video practice sought to examine the ways in which scars generate stories.

In my case, through performative video re-enactments at the site of the original surfing fiasco, these were narratives of loss – the loss of blood, loss of consciousness, and the loss of confidence as a consequence of the fall from grace.

Video confessional

At the same time, the storytelling process itself, also presented a further dose of pain and discomfort – the painful indecency of performing, and especially performing within the realm of autobiographical disclosure.

The research project enabled a re-consideration of the initial surfing scenario and the ways in which memory, re-enactment and autobiographical storytelling can open old wounds. And yet, for both the initial events and the subsequent narrativization of these events, it seemed necessary to develop a curative balm, and a soothing ointment to aid the healing process.

Doctorate, heal thyself

Whilst the initial surfing incident may have produced a trickle of blood and a measure of pain, and whilst the subsequent revelatory disclosures produced

a narrativized sense of pain (fused with the anxieties of performing a public form of confessional), it was also the case that the performative storytelling was a form of ritual exorcism that produced narratives of healing, restoration and re-growth.

Future directions

This presentation will also re-consider some of the future possibilities of the practice-exegesis relationship as an arena for a mutually beneficial series of interactions, in which writing and videomaking, as creative practices, can generate reflective anecdotes and reflexive antidotes.

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Good Grief: The Ghost As Concrete

Anthony Green

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Fotoescultura is a Mexican photographic-sculptural medium which commemorates dead or absent family or friends.

Unlike 2 dimensional representations, fotoescultura occupies contemporary space/time; its commemorative effect is distinct from the future anterior tense of photography. Instead of consigning its subject to an ephemeral deathly past, the fotoescultura subject dwells in the present, similar to a plaster saint or an animistic fetish.

Arguably, fotoesculturas are grief-therapy objects; monuments of the mantelpiece, having eternal 3 dimensional life.

In the hierarchy of grief consolation, there is object, image then memory. Within representation only the tactile object rises above the signal-to-noise ratio and becomes flesh, albeit concrete flesh; the ghost as concrete, in a Casparish kind of way.

Pain and Discomfort in Non-Figurative Art

Rob Haysom

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Deakin University

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In this paper aspects concerning abstract art and pain and discomfort are discussed. Picasso's iconic painting *Guernica* was a felt response to an horrific event, the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. What is less known, until recently, is that during this period communists fighting for the government side against General Franco used abstract art inside prison cells to torture its inmates. The use of abstract art to inflict pain and discomfort was palpable and calculated in the Spanish scenario.

Experiments by artists in the 1960s with line and color juxtapositions were also capable of generating states of discomfort and destabilisation. Two distinct approaches, one scientific and methodical and the other free-form and flowing to induce a drug-related experience were evident. Whilst different in intent, both approaches tended to cross-over and generate similar responses, such as a loss of equilibrium, chaos from order, induced pattern shifts and coloration effects, kinesis and transportation to an altered state of consciousness. Some works were calming whilst others placed the spectator on edge or created physical and mental pain. A number of examples of work from such artists as Vasarely and Riley will be contrasted with poster art and images by anonymous practitioners.

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Entering the Mysteries – Art and the Creative Process

Anna Huenecke

Analytical Psychology

University of Western Sydney

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The pioneering analysts, Freud and Jung, both experienced a "creative illness", a time when they were plunged into their own psychic processes. Ellenberger suggests that this 'creative illness' is like the initiation of a shaman, or a mystic. Jung used his experience of this process in his work as an analyst, and as a model for a training analysis. For Jung, image was vitally important and the paintings by him leave us a powerful record of his process.

Artists like Rothko and Pollock also went through a "creative illness", or an initiation. To make an image of psychological depth, out of concrete materials, brings us into relationship with the formless, archaic and unknown

depths of our own being, and it connects us to the Mysteries of life, death and renewal as they have been variously practiced over time and place. This process can be seen in paintings by Jung, Rothko, Pollock, in *The Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii*, and early prehistoric imagery (for example, the images from Old Europe collected by Gimbutas).

In my work with others, I use these different incarnations of the Mysteries in image, as points of reference. Concrete archetypal images may be created in a particular environment, one such is an environment where the process may in some ways be analytic: the relationship is psychodynamic, it is constructed in a disciplined way so that it is psychologically contained, empathic, open-ended and associative. This is a creative and therapeutic environment, and in some cases it is also psychotherapy, but not always, as will be shown.

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The Peculiar Mark of Infamy: Dissecting Murderers In London, 1800 - 1832

Helen Macdonald

Department of History

University of Melbourne

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From the inception of their craft, Britain's surgeons required access to the bodies of the dead in order to learn, practise and teach. However it was very difficult to obtain 'subjects for dissection' in a society imbued with cultural and religious conventions about how people should be treated, post mortem. Surgeons therefore found creative ways to obtain subjects. Many came from graveyards and hospital dead-houses. Between 1752 and 1832 the scaffold provided a further source, in the form of the bodies of people who had been executed for murder. Due to the heinous nature of this crime, these people alone were sentenced to two forms of punishment – first death and then dissection – with dissection serving as 'a further Terror and peculiar Mark of Infamy'. In London, their bodies became the property of the Royal College of Surgeons, and they were dissected in premises close by the scaffold. Like the executions that preceded them, these dissections were disorderly affairs performed before an audience. The College sought to regulate them, asserting that the work on murderers' bodies was in the interests of promoting anatomical and surgical knowledge. However things were rather more complicated than that. Science and art were inextricably linked in these dissections, as the College performed its institutional power through

the bodies of the dead.

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Depression and Expression Part 2: 'Life Begins on the other side of Despair'

Ann McCulloch (with Ron Goodrich and Justin Clemens)

School of Communication and Creative Arts

Deakin University

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The task is to identify the extent to which depressives experience existential angst and whether Sartre's protagonist in 'Nausea' wears a dichotomous mask of philosophical debate and psychological process. How 'faceless' is the figure behind the mask and is it the case that the condition of the depressive is inexpressible? Kristeva notes that 'Depressed speech, built up with absurd signs, slackened, scattered, checked sequences, conveys the collapse of meaning into the unnameable where it founders, inaccessible and delightful, to the benefit value riveted to the Thing' (Kristeva,1989,52). Her argument hinges on the thing having a 'nothingness', a 'non-meaning', as language and life have no meaning. Action takes on another significance. Sartre's Nausea is a story of the splitting and interface of reflection and action at a point in which the protagonist relentlessly seeks 'meaning' in a world increasingly experienced as meaningless - as 'nothing'. Literature, it is argued here, succeeds in enacting the unutterable. Sartre's response to the Dionysian insight that 'it is better not to have been born' (Nietzsche) involves transformation through aesthetics. In what ways might the mask of philosophy and psychology be lifted by the enunciation of the literary narrative? This presentation paves the way to the final paper that will address the conflict between current models of psychiatric theory and practice.

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Pain and the Sublime

Tim Mehigan

Head, German and Swedish Studies

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A key element in the conceptualization of modernity was the idea of the sublime, which was discussed by a number of important thinkers in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, the sublime was an aesthetic category enjoining the subject to give up the excesses of the voluntary self. These Kant linked to unbounded Nature, whose steep cliffs, raging waterfalls and plunging ravines presented the outer side of what emerging bourgeois subjects were to appreciate as their own, untamed inner nature. The pain and suffering this unbridled inner nature could occasion was a prominent theme of romanticism, and it is no accident that it was articulated in imaginative writing on the very threshold of modern times.

The sublime has since been absorbed into discourses of modernity, where it now leads a shadowy existence. As a conceptual category, it has been disinterred in the psychology of Freud and Lacan, who point out the catastrophic effects to the rational self when the subject fails to stay within the border limits of modern conceptual understanding. The struggle between irrational longing and the demands of rational life, accordingly, has mostly been decided in favour of the rational self, who "sublimates" errant desire and displaces it onto regions of the unconscious self. The psychological afflictions that this occasions are then addressed in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis through the strategic intervention of the therapist. While these psychological afflictions are turned back in the direction of rational categories of understanding under the terms of modernity, they have remained a pressing, if not intractable, issue for modern subjects. It is for this reason that pain has emerged as a topic of importance in discourses of modernity.

A new complication emerges for modern subjectivity when the question of the alleviation of pain (or, in Freud's terminology, "Leidabwehr") is considered. For Freud, relief from pain is a matter of psychological importance and conditions mental awareness. Indeed, the promise of a pain-free life has led to a vast experimentation in the technical alleviation of physical pain since the beginning of the 19th century. The present paper proposes to investigate this alliance between modern subjectivity and the new utopia of non-pain. The paper argues that technology, in this context, has taken over aspects of the sublime first suggested in the 18th century discussion of the sublime.

A Year In Our Lives

Julie Millowick



In 1994 I received a serious injury to my spinal cord. I was in a rehab hospital for 14 months learning how to do basic day to day things (get dressed, open the fridge etc). Previous to this I had been a successful corporate industrial photographer employing 3 people. I had a strong exhibition record (in collections of the NGV and NGA) – ie, I lived a very independent life. At the 2 year mark of my rehab I had approx 2 hours vertical time a day and still could not manage a camera. One day I went to the darkroom and began to make photograms (photograms are made in the darkroom by placing an object directly onto photographic paper. neither film nor camera are used). Making photograms was something I could do **by myself** and it was both liberating and empowering. Thus began the long journey which became the exhibition 'paraphernalia', a narrative of text and p h o t o g r a m s (v i s i t <http://www.bendigo.latrobe.edu.au/sae/visart/staff/milloolwick.html> for both paraphernalia and an article from page 4 of *The Age*, headed "pain is the spur in building the image').

'Paraphernalia' came about because of the severe restrictions physical pain placed on my life. In 2000, I was working on a commissioned exhibition for the Bendigo art gallery. I was still using the photogram technique and the work was in the form of a journal as I searched for the early female photographer Anna Atkins. It was called '*A Year In Our Lives*' and was a homage to this pioneering woman, with my imagery as much as possible echoing the botanical nature of hers. The planned year was from June 2000 to June 2001. On 28 January 2001 my husband told me he had been having an affair with a female student 32 years our junior. Then he left. In the midst of almost incomprehensible pain I had to make a decision about this body of work. Should I abandon it, or integrate this event into the journal? I eventually chose the latter. The resulting exhibition is actually being shown in Melbourne at this moment (*Span Galleries*, 45 Flinders Lane until 3 May). *The Age* critic very favourably reviewed it on Wednesday. He begins "Milloolwick's exhibition is a tour de force in the medium...", and continues, "Milloolwick's images not only work historically, but exploit the archaic and mysterious character of the technology in order to retrieve something primitive in a given motif". He concludes 'these are not mere studies of nature; nor do they simply recall old archives, but involve a personal expression of signs that have a haunting meaning for the artist'. '*A Year In Our Lives*' involved the integration of emotional pain into the imagery.

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The Spectacle of Violence: 'Fatal Charades' and Philosophical Theatre in Ancient Rome

Paul Monaghan

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The most popular form of entertainment in ancient Rome was the gladiatorial combat where, at its height in the first and second centuries A.D., over 100 men (often condemned criminals) and even more animals might be killed each day. Gladiatorial displays are known to have been integral to earlier Etruscan culture, where this form of combat was connected to honouring the graves of fallen warriors: *"the blood was supposed to reconcile the dead with the living"* [Kohne & Ewigleben, 2000, 11]. An Etruscan tomb painting provides an intriguing link between theatrical performance and this kind of brutal public execution. A figure in a 'harlequin suit' named Phersu seems to be controlling a savage fight between a blindfolded man and a beast. What makes the depiction even more interesting is the fact that the word 'Phersu' is thought to be the derivation of the Latin word 'persona' (face, mask, character). The Latin word for 'actor' - *histrion* - also derives from an Etruscan word. A link can be tenuously traced from Phersu through Italian farce and Roman comedy to the gladiatorial combats of the first century AD (and even through to the *Commedia dell'arte*). When the orgy of blood spilling was not enough, a favourite embellishment was to force the condemned man to dress in the costume of a mythological character whose death might be considered particularly entertaining. In what one scholar has called a 'fatal charade' (the ancient 'snuff movie'), the condemned man was then forced to become the star performer in the enactment of his own death. The Roman Stoic philosopher and playwright, Seneca, was appalled by these displays, but it was not out of concern for the victims. HE was concerned that the spectators became emotionally involved in the events. His own theatre, though, is spectacularly violent, and he seems to have desired an Artaudian kind of infection and purging.

This paper will follow a line through these clues to suggest that what the Romans seemed to have favoured was an ancient (and admittedly more brutal - for the moment) form of 'Reality TV', not a representation of an action, but an action in itself. Big Brother may be red with the blood of

ancient victims.



"Ravaged Kingdon': Approaching Pain through Gameplay

Kathy Mueller

School of Creative Media

RMIT University

This presentation draws upon outcomes from my doctoral research into gameplay as a tool for supporting disadvantaged youth and adults who show signs of depression or other personal and social dysfunction. My board game prototype, 'Ravaged Kingdom', and a CD-ROM prototype both model the use of gameplay, role-play, archytypal characters and classic situations that allow players to explore the inner landscape of the psyche. Drawing on the work of Joseph Campbell, Bruno Bettelheim, Carol Pearson, and other Jungian analysts, a world of Villains, Allies and unpredictable 'Wildcards' has been created, which allows players to identify some of their inner demons and outer conflicts. The interactions of the hero/player are tracked for their heroic or otherwise qualities through a communication device that allows players to choose strategies best suited to solving the situation at hand. The tracking system gives players feedback on their playing styles and presents feedback on other models of interaction that may be more helpful.

Art Through Pain: The Panacea

Angela O'Brien

Head, School of Creative Arts

University of Melbourne



Community arts development with marginalised communities has become an issue of considerable interest for arts workers, researchers and funding bodies in the past few years. As part of the implementation of its *Australians and the Arts* policy document, the Australia Council have funded research into the use of arts activities to re-orientate disadvantaged young people in the education system towards improved academic interest and achievement. The School of Creative Arts has also benefited from this shift in Government

policy with a significant ARC grant to investigate the efficacy of arts intervention for highly marginalised youth. There is a growing body of international research in this field, which posits that marginalised young people can be "empowered" through arts intervention. Specifically, the literature argues that young people "at risk" can sublimate harmful risk desire by immersion in "safe" risk-taking through the arts and that this is most successfully achieved by the sharing of personal stories, written, enacted or symbolised visually. This research, inevitably, confuses the issues of arts therapy and creative product that uses personal experience (or biography) as a springboard. This paper will outline the current ARC research being undertaken in the School of Creative Arts. It will critique the underlying research philosophy associated with the use of arts intervention for the purposes of individual or community empowerment and analyse the possible political motivations behind this trend.

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Waking from the Porelain Dream: the role of government in reducing anthropocentrism

Scott Rawlings

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Community Outrage (Elkington) is a product of increasing community concern for the environment and a decreasing level of trust in public institutions, especially in terms of protecting the environment. In part, community outrage is a reaction against antiquated Enlightenment concepts of the environment, which lay in the aesthetic virtue of *disinterestedness* (Kant) - a distanced contemplation of the environment as artifactual rather than natural. This anthropocentric perspective dominated artistic appreciation of the environment into the mid-twentieth century.

Today, we live in a techno-somatic culture where everything is interpreted as an extension of the human condition. This is most evident in our relationship with the built environment – *the city* - however our expectations have changed since the city was built. As a life support system, the city is out of kilter with the community and its enviro-social values. We have lost our appreciation for the connection between individual action and its effect on the environment: the light switch and global warming, the cistern and water purity. A growing awareness of this self-deception has provoked community outrage.

This tension between the natural and built environments resembles that

between Deleuzean smooth (nomad) and striated (sedentary) space. For Deleuze, the two spaces are always mixed, always at the interface of each other. Current State Government initiatives - such as the Green Wedges program - reflect community demands that we explore this interface between the natural and built environments. Although there is an ontological identification with the cradle of the natural environment, contemporary life is played out in the arena of the built, just as all becoming occurs in smooth space but progress is made by and in striated space. There is lack in our experience of the city that has inspired the search for the Green Wedge, the "nomadic transit in smooth space".

Hepburn promotes this emotional and cognitive engagement with the environment – a metaphysical relationship rather than the aesthetic relationship maintained since the Enlightenment. I believe this changing perspective is reflected in the transition from conservation (*old environmentalism*) to **sustainability** (*new environmentalism*).

In all acts of subversion, maintaining currency of language is crucial, and already the new paradigm of environmental metaphysics, sustainability, is being subsumed by the language of the old and losing traction. The initial concept of Environmentally Sustainable Development (Brundtland 1987) is being replaced by triple-bottom-line sustainability, which is easily hijacked to serve the agenda of particular interest groups.

The expression of current environmental theory in culture - and, in turn, the influence of culture on emerging theory - elucidates and expresses the apparent inexpressibility of community outrage, but it also limits the framework in which sustainability is viewed, i.e., from a policy perspective, a framework about everything is actually about nothing at all. Government can work towards ameliorating community outrage and regaining trust by developing policy which reflects not only the change in the enviro-social relationship from the aesthetic to the metaphysical, but also by offering leadership in sustainability discourse.

The Bride Stripped Bare

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Independent Scholar and Artist

Marcel Duchamp chased his Virgin/Bride over half a century, trying to surprise her, surprise us, surprise himself. A pursuit increasingly mechanical, increasingly breathless, the bride stripped in a thousand ways by an endless

procession of gazes, eviscerations, substitutions, revelations. As Angela Carter points out, stripped of the idea of free exchange, sexuality is nothing but pure cruelty. Pleasure becomes pain, desire breeds disgust. Can we strip the bride? And if we do, what then?

In the *Mahabharata*, Draupadi, bride of many brothers, is saved from pain and humiliation by Krishna, who transforms her sari into an endless river of material even as it is ripped from her. In contrast, Mahasweta Devi's modern Dopdi, the captured, beaten and raped tribal guerilla, refuses to conceal the fact of her nakedness. Using her body as evidence, she confronts her captors with the signs of their own brutality. But, unless accompanied by Dopdi's voice, Dopdi's gesture, is Dopdi's riven flesh any more direct a sign than the endlessly deferred spectacle of Draupadi's nakedness?

At the moment of pain there is nothing besides sensation. Elaine Scarry says that pain destroys worlds. Susan Stewart says that to fear death in the darkness is to approach the darkness as a veil between worlds and not to encounter the object of fear itself. But Peggy Phelan suggests that performance is predicated on its own disappearance, that it responds to a psychic need to prepare for loss, for pain, for death - and that the acts it makes visible are attributed over and over again to bodies, even if often immaterial and phantasmatic ones. I say, the observed body in performance becomes even more complex and less easily fixed when its propinquity introduces the dynamic of sensory and proprioceptive factors ... above all real or imagined *touch*, and the sound and feel of breath.

We inhabit the space between pain and its representation. The gap is infinite, the pressure intense. Draupadi's sari/screen shimmers. Our gaze is fixed, fascinated, on the prospect of her nakedness, our mouths open. I desire you, I hate you, I fear you, you have hurt me so much - is there anything to negotiate between the heat of flesh in pain and the coldness, the shame, the need of the moments before and after?

Loss, Grief and Representation: 'Getting On With It'

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Dominant twentieth century medical and clinical models have assumed that

grief will be 'resolved' when survivors reach the point where they can emotionally detach themselves from the dead person. Freud sees mourning as a survival tactic, that enables the bereaved to grieve by 'letting go' of and 'breaking the attachment' to the lost person or object, and with 'melancholia', the refusal to let go, leading to pathological outcomes. The melancholic remains a romantic symbol of the connection between insanity and creative genius.

This paper argues that, contrary to detachment being necessary for creative remodelling of the experience through artmaking, our ontological security actually requires continuity, not detachment, and that the construction of (biographical, narrative) art of all kinds, is a fundamental mechanism for restoring a sense of meaning and place for the dead and lost, in the ongoing trajectory of self-narrative.

The origins and implications of scientific, modernist assumptions of the boundaries between life and death are discussed; as are the limits of the notion of liminality and stages of 'letting go'; loss and death as a loss of the self; and the importance of narrative processes in the maintenance of ontological security.

The Aerialist: The Physical and Emotional Pain

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Alfredo Codona, working with his brother catcher Lalo Codona, was one of the greatest aerial flyers of the twentieth century, and well-established in the centre ring at Ringling BBB in 1930. Alfredo aspired to the aerialist's dream and mastered the triple somersault in 1917 to become legendary in his own life-time for his balletic aerial movement. He trained hard to do this feat while working with Wirth's Circus in Melbourne. If his professional achievements were exceptional and he was called the King of aerialists, accounts of these stand out because they are usually combined with a narrative about his sensational private life with the equally famous Lillian Leitzel who died in a fall from the web or single hanging rope, and his subsequent murder-suicide of his Australian wife Vera Bruce.

Alfredo describes his triple somersault "I am travelling at the rate of sixty-

two miles an hour [...] the space gauges of the brain have ceased to function properly."

To do her act of turning her body over itself on the web Lillian had the shoulders of a "middle-weight boxer" (Verney 1978 202). Lillian enhanced her act by her feminine appearance and to camouflage her body's muscularity, she cultivated an impression of frailty.

In this off stage story they enacted spectatorial desire for possession of an unattainable feminine other as aerialist. The violence of Alfredo's private life seems at odds with the idea of his action as an aerialist. The cultural fantasy of a floating, ethereal aerial figure, an insubstantial body, contradicts the pain of a material body. If excessive violence betrays the aerial body, in this instance the latter is no longer accountable to social codes, the material order.

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Art and Pain in the Plays of Heiner Müller

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This paper will consider the theme of Art and Pain through a critical analysis of the writing of Heiner Müller with a particular focus on his last work for the theatre, *Germania 3 Ghosts at Dead Man* (1996) translated by Carl Weber. Müller (1929-1996) lived through one of the most violent and harrowing periods of German history, serving in the German army and being taken as a POW by the Americans in the final months of World War Two. On his release, he settled in the Soviet sector of the divided city and saw the Berlin Wall rise and fall. In between he lived through the loss of hope that was the East German state. His plays, poetry and prose span the period from 1949 to 1996 and are an often sardonic and bitter response to German history, an expression of the pain of participating in an increasingly dysfunctional political system to which the only alternative was the equally abhorrent triumph of capitalism. In *Germania 3 Ghosts at Dead Man*, Müller constructs one of his more cohesive play texts that gives time and space to the contemplation of a painful history that involves Germany but also Europe – Russia, Croatia, Poland and France. Stalin is the King of Rats and Hitlers hands 'are bloodied as the hands of all great men of history are bloodied'.

The paper will argue that Muller's work is an experience of pain whose expression is neither for cathartic or therapeutic purposes. Nor does it attempt a healing affect. Rather pain is linked to the play of politics and history in a way that is profoundly and resolutely anti-illusionist. Nor is there anything metaphysical about the experience of pain. In the closing moments of the play Muller evokes Rumpilstiltkin – 'Rookedegooh there's blood in your shoe' – to suggest that European culture is profoundly a dark space.