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Introduction

The First Bite . . .

I am predominantly a creative writer, and it is from this position that this doctoral research project is produced, examined and analysed. As an undergraduate and then an Honours student, I was encouraged to think academically and to apply other people's theory to other people's creative writing. However, this PhD shifts my previous academic training, by tackling a substantial research project from a creative writing perspective, and then applying academic discourse to my own fictional processes. By shifting my previous academic training, this PhD project exposes the ways in which, as a creative writer, I see I my fictional processes, and also offers a partial response to Roland Barthes's essay *Death of the Author* (1982). While I am not *Pathos*, nor am I this PhD project, my own intervention into, and interpretation of, my own creative writing processes, is intended to show that the creative writer and their work are irreconcilably connected — and also to constitute a small act of defiance against Barthes' notion that the world of textuality subsumes the identity of the individual author. While I understand and appreciate the poststructuralist cultural critique of the 'authorship' construct underlying Barthes' idea, this PhD project allows me to expose my own creative intentions and therefore to 'live' as an author; in this way, my PhD project responds to Barthes's notion that once a work is written, its author is dead. I am aware that other readers may interpret *Pathos* and this exegesis in, quite possibly, different ways than myself, but I contend that while the reader is engaged in the act of reading this PhD thesis, its author is 'alive' — a writer - and thus influences the reader's perspective on the creative work *Pathos*. Thus, 'I' the writer impose my self on the reading process of my thesis novel.

In this thesis, I identify myself as a writer. I use the umbrella term 'writer' here to indicate that I am not only a creative writer. Though I identify more with the creative writing genres of fiction and poetry, I am also a writer in the 'non-creative' genres of academic discourse, and of 'non-fiction' forms such as the essay and autobiography.

There are myriad aspects of my self¹ that I extract, manipulate, synthesise and reform, among a range of techniques, in order to create — whether that be fiction or academic

¹ For theories of the self, see Foucault (1990; 1995; 1997; 2006), Lincoln (1997), Steedman (2000) and Wothington (1996). Foucault's extensive research and analysis in the areas of self, representation, authorship and identity (see Foucault 1990, 1995, 1997, 2006) has influenced and impacted my own academic pursuits.

writing. For the purposes of this exegesis, I focus on three specific aspects of *my* self — cannibalism, of self (autophagia)² and others, gluttony and consumption — and demonstrate how these three nouns, when used as metaphors, operate within fictional writing, by examining them in relation to my thesis novel *Pathos*.

To conduct this examination, the developed metaphors of autophagia / cannibalism, gluttony and consumption are applied to three distinct yet intertwined concepts in the writing of the thesis novel *Pathos*. These concepts comprise: the self and the writer in narrative fiction; narrative choice and narration, and the implications of desire within *Pathos*. I have chosen these particular metaphors and concepts, as I consider they offer fresh insight into the novel writing process and into the interactions between writer, characters and themes. I demonstrate how each metaphor and concept operates separately in my own work, as well as how each ‘feeds’ off the other in a circular fashion.³

This exegesis employs both creative writing and academic discourse to articulate its aims and to explore the arguments within its mobilising metaphors and concepts. I engage with a range of academic theoretical approaches from feminist theory to postmodernism to psychoanalysis, and deploy these approaches in both creative and academic writing. My intention is to foreground the ways in which the writing process can ultimately cannibalise, gluttonise and consume itself.

The mobilising concepts and metaphors in this thesis are not new. A range of literary/cultural theorists, including Tannell (1975), Crain (1994), Root (1996), Wilkin (1996), Cruise (1999), Petrinovich (2000), Sceats (2000), Guest (2001) and Eyre (2002), have used concepts of cannibalism or gluttony or consumption to analyse either cultural phenomena or literary texts and their production. However, none of the above theorists have utilised all three concepts in their analyses, nor have they applied the concepts to their own writing processes. This exegesis addresses this absence, and attempts to bridge a gap between academic theory, the novel writing process and the writer herself.⁴

However, in this project I have deliberately avoided Foucault’s theorisations. I relied heavily on Foucault’s theory as an undergraduate; now, as a postgraduate, I wish to focus on other theorists, to explore avenues of thought that may not be as widely known.

² I see autophagia as a form of cannibalism - a self-cannibalism that is inherent in my creative writing processes. Autophagia may be defined as a compulsion ‘to inflict pain upon oneself by biting and/or devouring portions of one’s body. It is sometimes caused by severe sexual anxiety, sometimes combined with schizophrenia or psychosis’ (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autophagia>).

³ This circularity is of crucial importance and links each chapter.

⁴ This is a deliberate use of ‘herself’. As this exegesis is self-referential, I will predominantly use the pronouns ‘her’ or ‘she’ to refer to my self within the writing process, unless otherwise referenced.

In this exegesis, I focus on the following two aspects of cannibalism: feeding on and/or off the body (both by self and by others), and the absorption of the 'fed-off' body into the self. According to Sceats (2000), 'cannibalism . . . usually appears in one of two forms: the depiction of the literal eating of human flesh, and the use of cannibalistic desire or behaviour as a metaphor' (2000: 33). Sceats' investigation is primarily concerned with society, culture and sexuality. She states:

[i]mages of cannibalistic consumption are everywhere: children eat jelly babies and bake gingerbread men; ethnic groups are swallowed up (assimilated) by host societies; sharp business practice is described as 'dog eat dog' in a competitive world of 'eat or be eaten'; lovers are invited to oral congress, 'Eat me'. (2000: 33-34).

For Sceats, it is not only the literal or anthropological aspects of cannibalism that are significant, but also the wider prevalence of a cannibalistic impulse. This wider impulse, I consider, is highly evident in the process of both novel writing and of academic research and writing. For example, in order to develop an argument, academic writers need to devour as much research as they can on their given topic. In essence, we feed ourselves not only background, but inspiration for our future theses — in essence, we assimilate another's body of work and allow it to inspire, or nourish, our own. Further, as this 'food' (other people's body of work) is sourced from contemporary cultural practice and discourse, and both creative writing and academic discourse also draw from culture, a cannibalistic impulse — however unnoticed — could also be said to widely 'populate'⁵ academic pursuits.

Sceats articulates the autophagic element of the cannibalistic impulse in the following statement:

[a]t what point does it [the 'eaten' object] become part of us? . . . We live in a state of uncertainty about how much the self is influenced, changed, nourished or poisoned by what is taken in of the world, the extent to which people are defined . . . or are affected by whoever provides their "food" (2000: 1).

The autophagic element of cannibalism is evident in my own practice as a writer. I consider that food does not need to be physical, but can also be parts of the self. In completing this

⁵ The verb 'populate' is apostrophised to indicate that while the cannibalistic impulse may be evident, its prevalence may also be overlooked.

project, I have often felt 'fed', or nourished, by the reading and writing process, by the work of other writer selves, and by my own writerly output.

In this exegesis, I examine also how the concept of cannibalism allows for and encourages 'transgression'.⁶ The mere act of acknowledging and succumbing to autophagic / cannibalistic impulses transgresses moral, cultural and ethical boundaries. To then apply these impulses to cultural discourses such as the researching/writing/ reading process, implies further 'slippage'⁷ between conventional boundaries — both within the thesis novel *Pathos* and within the PhD as a whole. *Pathos* itself contains many transgressive and cannibalistic themes – underage sex, lesbian sadomasochism, erotic asphyxiation, to name a few — and can be situated with similar transgressive works by other contemporary Australian writers, such as *Loaded* (Tsiolkas, 1995), *The Monkey's Mask* (Porter, 1994) and *Driving Too Fast* (Porter, 1996). Further, *Pathos* is written in a contemporary narrative 'style' — the writing is explicit and sentences simply constructed. Novels such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), with its stream of consciousness narrative, and Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* (1943), with its exploration of the individual versus the collective, are other texts that have developed my literary tastes, and have exposed me to vastly different possibilities for narrative and narration. The depth and complexities of the writing styles in the above two novels have impacted *my* choice of narrative presentation - *Pathos* uses a more contemporary writing style, similar to that of Tsiolkas and Porter, to maximise accessibility for the reader, and to pitch the novel at mass market 'consumers'.

To further the cannibalistic metaphor and the discussion of fictional exemplars above - as a creative writer, it is my habit to 'engorge' on fiction. I have devoured and been influenced by the novels of Stephen King, especially *Carrie* (1974), *The Shining* (1977), *Misery* (1986), *IT* (1987) and *Dolores Claiborne* (1992), by Kerri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1984), by Laurell K. Hamilton's *The Merideth Gentry* series (2000-2008), and by Lyn Flewelling's *Luck in the Shadows* (1996), *Stalking Darkness* (1997), *Traitor's Moon* (1999) and *Shadow's Return* (2008), to name a few. All of these novels — and countless others — have influenced the shaping, blending and final form of my thesis novel *Pathos*.

This exegesis also explores gluttony as a metaphor. A glutton may be characterised as 'a person who eats and drinks excessively or voraciously [and also as] a person with a

⁶ The noun 'transgression' is apostrophised to indicate its contested meaning, depending on the context in which it is used. My use of the term, and the context in which I use it, is evident in later chapters of this exegesis.

⁷ By slippage, I mean the capacity to 'slip' beyond acceptable and/or traditional barriers — in both culture and writing. This notion is further developed in Chapter Two of this exegesis.

remarkably great desire or capacity for something: *a glutton for work; a glutton for punishment*⁸ (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/+glutton>). In this exegesis, I investigate the metaphoric glutton within myself the writer, and the ways in which metaphoric gluttony permeates my own writing process, to - hopefully - spark the same consumptive urges within the reader. I also investigate the notion of gluttony in relation to the research element of both creative and academic writing.

Koehn (2005) sees gluttony as one of the most underestimated sins of humanity and because of this, as humans we often lack ‘an adequate apprehension of the nature [of that] sin’ (2005: 156). It is the lack of acknowledgment of the power of gluttony that becomes the focus of my analysis when applying it to the thesis novel *Pathos*, a novel that is ‘built’ to be consumed — both by the self and by others. As the writer, having satisfied my base desires — such as love, sex and comfort — I find other cultural means by which to quieten my internal glutton, and this quest influences the creative element of fictional characterisation. I gorge, digest and regurgitate what I have read/seen/experienced, and expel that in the thesis novel *Pathos*. My primary character Seanne is also an extension of my glutton status — as once I allow her to taste what she desires, she then ‘gluttonises’ other characters in the novel. Both Seanne and I then could be seen to ‘pursue what we should not’ (2005: 156), whether Kit - in Seanne’s case, or in my own - autophagically consuming my own creation and becoming obsessed with my own ‘world’. For a creative writer to not acknowledge the pervasive nature of the need to consume to excess, obscures the need to feast in the first place and somewhat diminishes the writer’s desire to write until the end.

Koehn (2005) sees the lack of acknowledgement of the power of gluttony as:

a failure to understand our appetite as part of [a] larger whole. In our gluttony, we neither perceive nor think about the particular features of different things. We become consumers gorging ourselves on undifferentiated stuff. Like the dog Cerberus, we seek (albeit unconsciously) to wolf down the world itself (2005: 171).

My failure to acknowledge my desires⁸ — for example, to complete this PhD project, to finish a novel — exposed me to other areas of interest to gorge on. I discovered new ways to read,

⁸ I use the plural ‘desires’ here because I have often felt — as I am sure others have — that more than one desire operates at the same time, sometimes in direct conflict with each other. For example - the desire to complete, the desire to pass, the desire to not burn the entire lot and dance naked in the ashes.

to write, to synthesise and for a while, I happily gorged on whatever cultural nourishment I found relevant to this process.

The overwhelming need to incorporate or consume anticipates my third area of metaphorical analysis - consumption. Consumption has been the focus of a vast body of academic research, ranging from its relationship to consumerism and technology, to capitalism, the media and the fashion industry (see Green and Adam 2001, King 2002, Moi 2005, Stark and Whishart 2004, Mick and Ratenshwar 2005, Couldry 2007). Feminist theorists have discussed consumption in terms of the uses and abuses of the female body, ranging from the purchase of the female body via prostitution, to anorexia, to pornography. However, the investigation of consumption in relation to the writing self and the creative/academic reading and writing process is an under-examined area of thought.

As a metaphor applied to the themes in the thesis novel *Pathos*, consumption allows this exegesis to demonstrate the impact of cannibalism and gluttony, on both the self and on others. My examination of consumption also focuses on the by-products of the ‘destroyed’⁹ self — the characters within the thesis novel *Pathos*. In turn, this process of examination also reflects a continuum of consumption, gorging, satisfaction and then further consumption. Koehn describes this continuum as follows:

[w]e ultimately desire one thing and one thing only — that the self be satisfied. Yet desire is complex because we are two selves — the empirical being we think we are at any particular moment and the transcending being who is forever seeking a more satisfying existence . . . We are a work in progress insofar as our self-conception continually evolves. But we are also unchanging in one crucial respect: regardless of circumstances, the self always desires lasting satisfaction for itself. (2005: 3)

Ultimately, beyond any academic or professional motives for completing this PhD, it is my *self* I aim to satisfy. I may have desired to regurgitate previous knowledge; to consume new ideas; to feast on possibilities - but to be honest, I have done this to please *me*. My satisfaction is paramount in this process, without which, neither the thesis novel nor this exegesis would have been written.

⁹ ‘Destroyed’ is apostrophised to indicate its ambivalent status. I view my gluttonous consumption as similar to a bushfire: though there is destruction and scars, new life — new ideas — lie waiting underneath the charred surface. During the research and writing for this PhD, it was only by caving in to my gluttonous impulses that I could move forward.

In order to examine the above metaphors and concepts, I have broken this exegesis into three chapters. Chapter One examines the ways in which as a creative writer, I cannibalise experience, people and events around myself in order to create my fictional world. I consider how gluttony operates both internally and externally to myself, and how consumption is more pervasive and subversive than merely the desire to devour. I then consider how the same desires operate in the reader to - hopefully - entice her or him to gobble up *Pathos* — making her or him obese with the process of reading.

Chapter Two focuses on my deliberate choice of writing the thesis novel *Pathos* in both first and second person. I consider the ways in which the first person engulfs — or cannibalises — the second person within the text; the gluttony of the first person to consume the second person (despite the submissive position of the first person narrator) and the means by which the consumption of another — whether by narrative or other means — creates turbulence and transgression within a text.

Chapter Three shifts the discussion of turbulence and transgression into a focus on desire. In this chapter, I consider the mechanism of desire in relation to my primary character Seanne. I demonstrate how Seanne cannibalises each experience she enters into, the consequences of her (mis-)use of her desire and her quest to consume Kit, regardless of the consequences to either her or him. Chapter Three also focusses on excess, on the consequences and fissures excess can create, and on the complications excess brings to the representation of desire.

In the Conclusion, I consider the consequences of my own autophagia, gluttony and consumption, and their relationship to the PhD project as a whole, and to my self as a creative writer. I then offer a snippet of the 'aftermath' of my indulgence.

And now, onto the appetizer: Chapter One . . .

But first, a Small Interruption . . .

The following pages contain a summary of Ouroboros (with illustrations), and a pictorial breakdown of Seanne and Kit's relationship. As the Ouroboros and Seanne and Kit's relationship encapsulate the cycle of cannibalism, gluttony and consumption explored in the exegesis, they are given their own space here to highlight their significance.

Ouroboros¹⁰

Ouroboros is a serpent or serpent-like creature who devours its own tail; its own self. The word 'ouroboros' comes from Ancient Greek, meaning 'The Great World Serpent', and refers to a creature said to encircle the earth, protecting and nourishing it by feeding on itself. Though the self-eating snake featured in Egyptian hieroglyphics prior to becoming a prominent feature in Greek myth, it is the Greeks who first named Ouroboros.

Ouroboros has different symbolism across a wide range of disciplines — myth, alchemy, Jungian studies, witchcraft, art, philosophy and literature, to name a few. It represents: the circular nature of seasons: the change of day to night and back again; disintegration and reintegration; truth and lies; unity, self sufficiency and, according to Harris:

the idea of the beginning and the end . . . being a continuous unending principle. It represents the conflict of life as well, in that life comes out of life and death. 'My end is my beginning.' In a sense life feeds off itself, thus there are good and bad connotations (to ouroboros). It is a single image with the entire actions of a life cycle — it begets, weds, impregnates, and slays itself . . . in a cyclical sense (Harris 1997)

Psychologically, Ouroboros represents an archetype symbolic of the undifferentiated¹¹ personality — the Self that exists prior to the development of the ego, representing the 'ongoing reality behind the individuating ego' (Moon 132).

¹⁰ Information collated and synthesised from the following sources: Becker 1994; Biedermann 1995; Cavendish 1995; Griffiths 1995; Harris 1997; Moon 1991, and Walker 1988.

¹¹ This could be seen also as a morally ambiguous personality, an individual prone to promiscuous and/or risky behaviour.

Image 1

Simbolo alquímico (Ouroboros serpent). Drawing by Theodoros Pelecanos, in *Synosius* (1478).



This is a faithful photographic reproduction of an original two-dimensional work of art.

The work of art itself is in the public domain for the following reason:

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Image 2

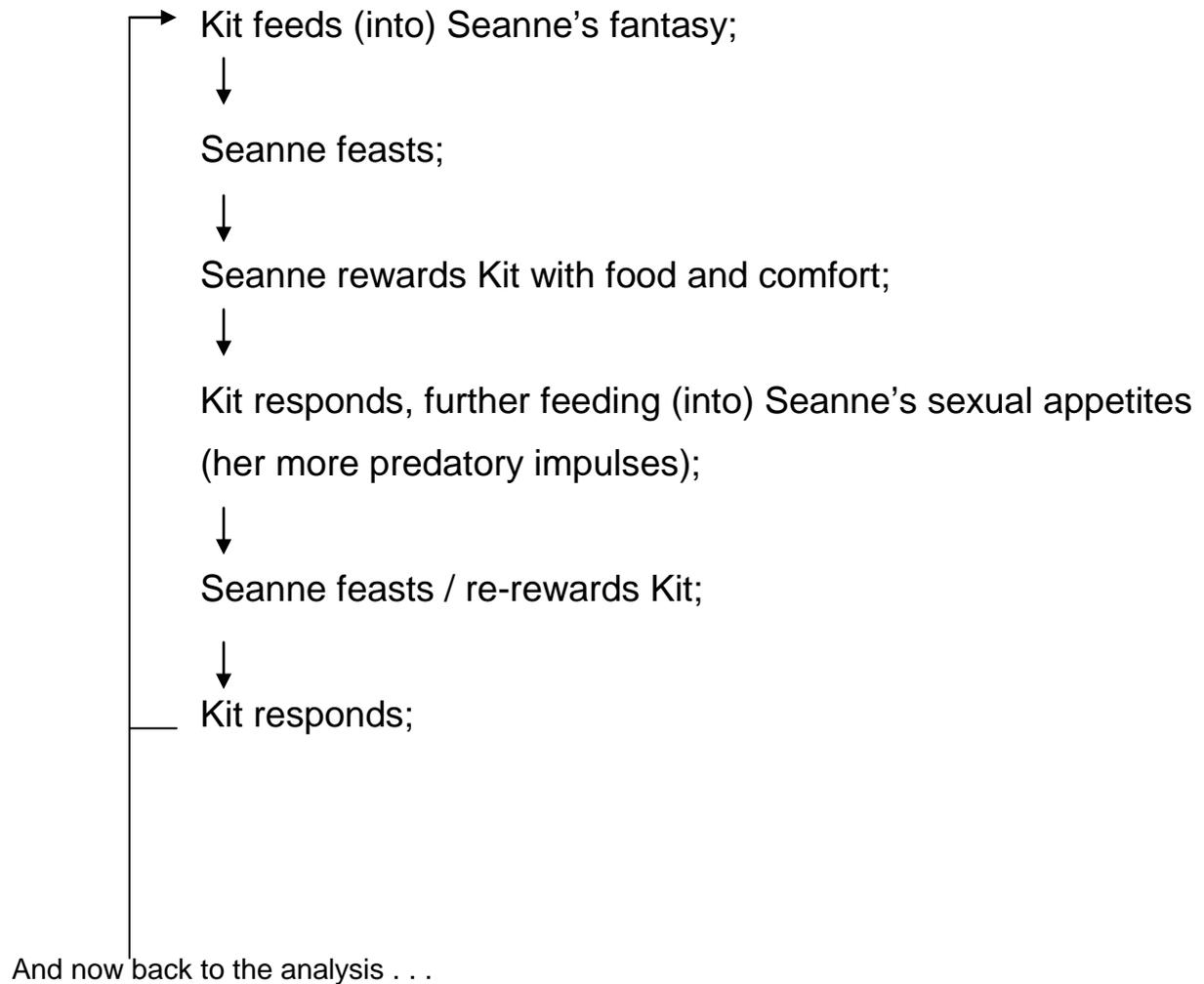
Engraving by Lucas Jennis, *De Lapide Philisophico* (1625).



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Pictorial Representation of the Complexities in the Relationship between Seanne and Kit



Chapter One

Feeding Me: Cannibalism, Gluttony, Consumption and the Writing Process

The process of writing a novel, particularly one that attempts to mix narrative perspectives and still fulfills academic prerequisites, is at times all-consuming and all-engulfing. Like the Egyptian myth of Unas the Lord, devourer of men [sic] and gods, spirits and souls (see Mackenzie 1907: 74-85), or like Kronos the all-devouring (Kirk 1972: 83-90), the novel writer too devours all — and all that she devours, in turn, ‘feeds’ and eats from her.

As primarily a creative writer, I devour the past and the present of both myself and those around me in order to produce my novel. I use sights and snippets of conversations, twisting and turning them, before spewing them back out on a page. This process is inherently cannibalistic in the autophagic sense — I feed off me in order to create another who is also, to a lesser degree, me. For me, writing, then, is innately a self-ish process.

In fact, I consider *all* my creative texts to encompass a wide range of thoughts, deeds and selves which function together to create a narrative that reflects a believable fictional world.¹² That reflection is, then, a reflection of some part of my self. However, just as a mirror only shows part of the whole, the narrative presented is only part of the whole self behind it; it is not a ‘full’ reflection. When anyone stares into a mirror, it is to look at a specific part of themselves ; similarly, I consider that whenever I write, I write with a specific idea of what aspect of my identity I will draw on (feed off) and expose.

During the 1980s, Gardiner (1981) conducted intensive research into the links between identity and writing, with a particular focus on women’s writing. Gardiner considers that:

[w]e can approach a text with the hypothesis that its female author is engaged in a process of testing and defining various aspects of identity chosen from many

imaginative possibilities. That is, the woman writer uses her text, particularly one centring on a female [protagonist], as part of a continuing process involving her own self-definition and her empathic identification with her character. Thus, the text and its female . . . [protagonist are] narcissistic extensions of the author (Gardiner 1981: 187).

While Gardiner's ideas above refer specifically to the 'woman writer' paradigm, they still resonate with me and the way in which I perceive the writing process. Though I acknowledge the narcissistic aspect of writing, and can and do see narcissism operating within my own writing, I consider it is the cannibalistic aspect of writing which overshadows all whenever I write. Yes, my writing is a way for me to 'fall in love' with myself, but it is more an avenue for me explore what I have ingested, pick it apart and offer it up to others in a different form.

This circular, intertwining aspect of the writing process also highlights a cannibalistic relationship between the female author and the primary female protagonist, and not just to the author's self. By devouring the people around her, the writer therefore devours 'real' lives in order to create a 'real' life on a page. Thus, in essence one position eats the other, both inhabiting parts of the other, and as in a co-dependant relationship, one does not operate without the other. The character cannot exist without the writer and the writer cannot write without a 'bite' to begin. Like a hunter, the writer is a constant pursuer of ripe morsels to inspire and nourish the writing process, whereas the character is the 'meal'. To take this metaphor further, the reader is then the 'dinner guest' who devours the meal (or meals), often for self-pleasuring purposes. Therefore, not only does the reader consume the character, she or he also consumes some aspects of myself as the writer. Hence, just as the eating process is based on a pleasure principle, novel writing - the creation of character and the anticipation of another reading one's words - becomes a cycle of pleasure. And for me as a writer, nothing is more pleasurable than seeing my characters 'come to life'.

The Character and the Writer

To illustrate the ways in which the thesis novel *Pathos* cannibalises my self and my experiences through the writing process — to create a 'meal' — I will conduct a dialogue between myself, the writer, and one of *Pathos's* primary characters, Kit. The following

¹² Even if that world is totally fictional, such as that in the popular science fiction television series *Star Trek* by Gene Roddenberry, it still contains elements — threads — of the everyday world we experience. All fiction needs to maintain some level of believability in order for the reader to 'go along with it'.

dialogue highlights the means by which I, as a writer, consume what is around me, and demonstrates how characters (using Kit as an example) continue to feed long after a novel is completed.

'Yah do know,' he says.

The writer is silent, contemplating.

'Okay then,' she says. 'So, I didn't make you honest, or wholesome, or noble. So what?'

'So, what does that say 'bout you?'

She contemplates this. He is silent, waiting for answers. She looks towards the ceiling, to the point in her mind where he exists most. She wets her lips and sees him, clearly defined, his face as real and alive as anyone outside her writer's mind.

'Well, ' "telling stories may not, in fact, be telling lies, but until one has established the nature of 'truth' it will be impossible to know" ' — or so Waugh (1984: 90) says anyway. Let's face it . . . creative writing is built on unknowns; on bits of self that others may not know about — experiences, memories, imaginations . . . lies, that sort of stuff. Sometimes the writer herself doesn't even realise that unknown exists until she taps into it, until her characters' needs inspire her. You needed to be the way you are in order for the plot to advance — even though I had no real idea where you were going to go.

And I guess that's the essence of my creative writing. I pile each unknown on top of the next, stacking them higher and higher until they create a story arch, a sub-textual thread, etc, that feels real. The tricky part is to not stack the pile too high and risk it toppling over, to become ridiculous and over-the-top, leaving nothing behind but a sticky, unappetising mess. But, if I can get that stack just high enough to hold together and impress, to tempt a reader, then all these unknowns become a 'truth' of sorts; it may not be my truth or even the reader's truth, but as long as it rings 'true', then it's digested.

She pauses.

'After all, all readers know that "these people aren't real. I'm making them up as they go along" (Sorrentino cited in Waugh 1984: 1) but that doesn't stop them wanting to know. Doesn't stop me from whoring my unknowns.'

, ' he says, shrugging.

He grins.

'But if yah made me from yah whore-brain, then yah should know everything about me. . . .'

'Hmmm . . . Most things, why?'

'Exactly. That's what I wanna know . . . why?'

'Why'd I write you?'

'Yeah.'

'Because, dear Whore-child, I could not not write you. You had to live because you've always been inside me. You're the boundary-less, unconstrained side of me. Your life is my life — amplified. It's like what Gergen (1997) says, "[p]ersonal identity cannot be fixed . . . the person experiences himself [sic] as many selves, each of which is felt to have . . . a life of its own" (cited in Lincoln 1997: 39). You are one of my many selves and by creating you, I get to experience that self without repercussions. You're my self that is without commitment, self-sufficient and defensive. You come from hardness, disappointment and suspicion but also from learning to accept others, even if they never accept me. And we're both 'futureless' . . . I still don't know what I want to be when I "grow up". If I lived the self that you are then I would be you outside my imagination and perhaps the writer of Pathos would be my imagined self instead. Sure, I'll never be male, or a natural redhead or forced to grow up in foster care — creative licence has some credit for those parts of you — but overall, I'd live much like you live.'

'Yah'd be a whore?'

'Maybe . . . or worse. Maybe I'd have gone the other way and I'd be the exploiter. Who knows? I mean, I was close, Kit, really close. I just happened to meet person A instead of person B one night and went left instead of right. I had no idea where it would lead. I still don't.'

She chuckles a little, humorless, lost in thought.

'In fact, this whole PhD- as-novel project, I had no "real" idea of where it would end. All I had was the idea of writing from first and second person points of view, of inventing Seanne, Lysandra and you as characters and the rest just happened along the way. It wasn't just a "matter of explaining [my] life or describing, recording, or analysing life; it [was] a matter of creating life" (Cohen 1995: 5) all 'our' lives. I created you and therefore, I created me as a potential owner of a doctorate. You created me, who created you in the first place. It's all intertwined.'

'Yeah, I get it. So, who came first, then?'

'Well, me of course.'

He giggles.

'No, I mean outta us.'

'Oh, creative writing-wise, Seanne. Image-wise, you. Seanne started as a character in an exercise to help write a short story. I didn't like the story much but Seanne stayed — her name a cross between Sarah and Dianne; a made-up name because her parents couldn't agree on what to call her - and I couldn't decide what to call her at all! From there I fleshed her out, gave her family and history. Then she started to speak, to tell me she

watches people and life, to give me sentences like, "I watch you walk across the room". And from that she was born.'

'And then?'

'And then came you — made from two separate images stuck in my head since I was a teen. First of a red-haired kid leaning against a wall under the Flinders Street clocks, his bored eyes scanning the crowd and the second: a young man, sitting up against a wall in a dirty alley, counting cash between his arched legs, tears running down his dusty face. This is where you come from, the two images spliced together, sculpted, twisted and then reformed to make you, Lockie, my beautiful Whore Child. Until I pulled you out of me, I've coveted these images inside me. But now I've created something worthy with them — you.'

He grins, shyly.

'So, that's why you.'

'And the others? Where'd they come from?'

'The others are also fragments of my self. Seanne is the self-destructive, self-denying, self-effacing self. The part of me who does not sleep, who got told "it" will pass, but "it" doesn't, only the days do. Seanne is me at three am wandering the house, peering at the world through sleep-deprived eyes, everything around me cloudy and grey, depression cloaking me. She is the me that sees the traps I set myself, but fails to stop them from triggering, who needs the release chaos creates. She's me when I won't go to the doctors, won't stop my thoughts from overpowering me, won't stop picking everything apart until it becomes nothing. She's the night-time, hidden me.

Lysandra is the professional, daytime me. She is me when I'm at my most confident, most together, the me who controls the physical world around her and presents a solid, indestructible image, whose entrance is noticed and who is never at a loss for words. Like Lysandra, I know the image I present, and I work hard to not shatter that reflection when in public.

Devin comes from adaptability, the me that moves on from disappointment, who always has an agenda, who is possessive of what's mine and will not back away from confrontation. He's my transformative, arsehole side, using others as an anchor to satisfy my self.

So, basically, Kit, Pathos is a testament to my multi-cannibalised self, so much so that as "the author [I become] a fragmented subjectivity inscribed within contradictions of the text" (Lewis 1992: 25). Each one of you contradicts the other, yet all exist within the main body — me.'

'Sounds like we're experiments, like yah wanted to see how far yah could push it.'

'And in a way, that's exactly it. I am the meat from which you are moulded . . . and then I let you loose on the world. Paradoxically, I've thrust myself out there too, into the

faces of everyone who reads *Pathos* and have told them to consume, to devour what I have put before them. I suppose it's like what Harlpern (1995) says, that "every writer — after a certain point, when one's labours have resulted in a body of work — experiences himself or herself as both Dr. Frankenstein and the monster" (1995: 109). That's me, the creator and the creation, the mad scientist who has a vision and the monster who wishes to experience life outside its confines. I am both the cannibal and the cannibalised — as too are you."

'And what limits are they? Yer the one who's free, we're prisoners. We ain't got no chance to live outside. We ain't real.'

'You are to me.'

'That ain't enough.'

'It has to be. You can whine, and cajole and haunt me, but you only have what I grant you. "Truth" isn't in what is written — it's in the hands of the writer. I create and destroy but I am a fractured person, my desires born from the complexities of existence and reproduced in order to understand my selves, my worlds. Hence, this whole project, is "not self-expression, but self-creation; writers are people who become themselves by writing. In this sense, writers resemble fictional characters who become themselves by being written" (Cohen 1995: 6) *Pathos* is not about you or Seanne or any of the themes it explores, it's about me. About who I have feasted on and how those feasts have impacted me.

'I'm like a monster's mother, creating hybrids of myself and sending them out into the world; their lives separate but intimately entwined with mine, with my every impulse.

'This entire experience of novel writing, of undertaking a PhD, has eaten me up. It's fed on my life, on the time I could have spent experiencing my own "self-ness". This project has inhabited me — forcing me to once again log onto a computer, alone and hungry, with only my feasted "bodies" to feed on.'

She pauses, swallows.

'Kit, when I first started this, I came across a particular quote. At the time I dismissed it, returned the book to the library shelf and researched other topics . . . but I couldn't quite forget it and now, more than ever, I know why. It's my epiphany. It's this: "[writing] is like a cactus needle, embedded in the flesh. The more one tries to remove it, the deeper it gets" (Curti 1998: 116). This is how it's impacted me — no matter how often I want to rid my body of these things, this PhD's hold is deep.'

'So, now what?' he says, 'Yah got us out, and yah just empty and that's it?'

'For a while. Until that hunger to write starts to gnaw, wanting to be sated, wanting to be fed. Then I find myself awake before dawn, my fingers primed over the keyboard as another creation rips out of my body, misshapen and bloodied at first, a mere shard of what it will become. Once that new creation is out, I dismiss the older one, "no longer responsible for any acts committed by my previous selves" (Ackerman 1995: 7). Once this whole project

is complete, bound and out of my hands, I can forget Pathos — except of course, you won't go, you've stayed long after the others. But I will cannibalise you too — purge you, so to speak.'

'Yah say that now, but once yah supervisors sign off, yah'll forget me.'

'No I won't, because among other things, I have an idea . . .'

"Bout me?"

'Yes. About another novel.'

'But didn't yah just say. . . ?'

'That it's monstrous? Yes. But I can't ignore the monster. The monster is in me and sometimes she needs to run free. Barbara Creed (1993) talks about the monstrous feminine — female monsters in films and literature and how their depiction relates to the representation of women — but what about the monster in the writer of these monsters? These images of women as demon, vampire, monster — they come from somewhere, so what does that say about the self behind the monster? Are all creative writers just monsters in human skin? Or is it the fact that I'm female that makes me more prone to access that monster? I don't know, Kit . . . but I know that it's alive inside me and until I tell my next tale, that monster craves another feeding.'

'Yer seriously fucked up, yah know that?'

'Yes. But so are you.'

'Yeah, I know,' he says, sighing. 'Yah think I don't get it, but I do. Yah made me, so whatever is wrong with yah, is wrong with me too. And if yah a monster, then I'm a monster's child.'

The writer doesn't answer, merely nods her head. He comes closer, she shudders as if his breath runs along her neck. She reaches to where he would be standing and tilts her head in his direction. He is silent, and if he were a cat, he'd be purring, curled in her lap and content. But he is not, she is he and he is her and because of the whirling thoughts inside her, neither of them are content.

As illustrated above, I, the creative writer of *Pathos*, feed on aspects of my self to create my characters, a dynamic which I maintain is cannibalistic, gluttonous and ultimately monstrous. I consider the cannibalistic impulse is always present when I write creative narrative, that my characters are the evidence of my need to consume and purge, in a circular, infinite process. As my characters originate within the mind, to see the evidence of them in a physical form — a novel — actualises the imaginary cannibalistic metaphor, making it accessible and 'cannibalisable' by others.

In a colloquial and physical sense, if as individuals, we are to believe the saying 'we are what we eat', then as a creative writer, I have fed off my creations, they are what I have 'eaten'. Without the dual images of Kit or the beginnings of Seanne from a creative writing exercise, these characters would not exist in their current form. Kit could well have been a forty-two-year old factory worker if had I turned a different corner, Seanne could have been a four-year-old beauty pageant princess. Hence, while I am constantly on the 'hunt' for consumable ideas, some of my feedings are happenstance — included in the vast library of creative resources by mere chance, whereas at other times, I deliberately eavesdrop into conversations, consciously covet certain images, and horde them both away. Further, while as a creative writer, I constantly feed off the world around me, what I feed on is just as important as the feeding itself. Despite having constant input, the filtering (editing) process — like deciding what food in a buffet you want to eat — allows me as a writer to decide the most hearty morsels to present to the reader. This is similar to presenting another with a slab of well-presented meat and encouraging them to eat — after all, I already know it's worth a taste; I've already picked at it. Thus, how can I see my creative writing processes as being anything but basically cannibalistic and/or autophagic? The original 'ideas' for my characters, plots, and so on, come from outside, from another 'body' — physical or otherwise. That 'body' is then taken into the self, digested and regurgitated, becoming 'owned' by the self. As a creative writer, I then use those reconstituted aspects to create another 'body' for others to feed on. The 'body' I create, like the multiple 'bodies' I've fed on, is also two-fold; the physical form of the novel (the bound paper copy) and the characters and plots therein — all of which are 'cannibalisable' by others. It is after all from devouring other people's bodies of work that I first gained an interest in writing. Without my first desire to ingest fiction, I may not have wanted to produce my own. Again, I consider that while I am inherently cannibalistic and autophagic in my creative desires, the processes I employ to create fiction are decidedly circular in nature.

In discussion about inventing characters, Card (1988) writes: '[e]very story you tell reveals who you are and the way you conceive the world around you — reveals more about you, in fact, than you know about yourself' (1988: 7). Accepting this, the act of writing *itself* becomes one of the purest forms of cannibalism. If the writer is unable to know the self until there is an output, then Card (1988) implies that without the writer's need to consume, interpret and synthesise — visually, emotionally or physically — the writer is unable to ever glimpse the full perspective of the self and therefore, unable to reveal themselves completely to the self. The autophagic act of writing creates a conundrum: the self seeks to feed the self in order to enhance, create and sustain the self. Like literal, physical autophagia, this process is not

without some pain. To get to know the self, one then exposes the self to remembering hard lessons, to painful memories and suppressed heart-aches — all of which expose and actualise the masochistic elements present when autophagic and/or cannibalistic impulses are indulged. However, without that indulgence, the self is never fully known.

Harlpern (1995) also identifies this paradoxical self-ness. According to Harlpern, 'he or she who lifts and twists the strings, simultaneously [identifies] with the puppet — an alter (altered?) ego, an I not necessarily I, nor me' (1995: xi). In terms of my writing self and *Pathos*, this relationship co-exists because the self is ever-changing, in the sense that sometimes it consumes, and sometimes it wants to be consumed. However, given that writing is considered to feed the soul, what happens when the writer is starved? Does that then mean that the writer's self is in stasis, awaiting a chance to feed? Or does the writer continue to consume anything around her, in the hopes of nibbling something tasty, in the hopes of escaping this infernal loop?

Like Ouroboros (see pages 12-14), the writer too is curled into herself, forever feeding. By exposing my self and the conceptions I have of the world, I allow the reader to digest that information and assimilate it within their own self. In essence, this creates a circle of feeding that results in both a semi-dependant relationship between my selves and the reader, and with my narrative as a whole. For this relationship to work, I must first tempt the reader and maintain independence *and* control of the narrative. If successful in this, then it is the reader who becomes the gluttonous entity — consumed by the presentation of 'ideas, beliefs, emotions other than or even quite opposed to those he [sic] has in real life' (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:101). Though I do not delude my self that *Pathos* will change the world, it has changed *me* — and, if published, it may change some readers in the future. I am a different self now that *Pathos* is 'out' of me than I was when *Pathos* was 'inside' — my original perceptions of plot, character, and so on, shifting as I researched more, wrote more and devoured more. In essence, not only have I cannibalised my self to create, *Pathos* has also cannibalised me. I consumed to create. I created the novel. The process of writing the novel has in turn impacted on and re-created me. I am no longer a person who wants to write a novel, but one who has Ouroboros, eat your heart out.

The Writer's/The Author's Self

Lewis (1992) contends that:

[t]he concept of the author has been dissected to produce a divide between two entities: the author and the writer. This divide posits the author as the point of origin constructed for the text by [the] critic and [the] reader, and the writer as the “real” historical personage who manipulates physical materials to create the text (Lewis 1992: 18-19).

This divide of perceiving the same person as both writer and author indicates a fundamental complexity within the creative writing realm. It implies that it is the reader/critic who in fact creates an author, rather than the creator of the text herself, and that it is only through consumption of the text that authorship is created. Does that then mean that if the text is not consumed, the physical person behind the text only ever remains a writer? Not only is this a powerful position for a reader/critic, it further implies that cannibalism, gluttony and consumption of a text is crucial for authorship to be fully granted. If the textual body on offer is not tempting enough, then perhaps writers are left in a void — waiting for their texts to be consumed, wanting for someone to feast. However, since most writers are readers and/or critics themselves, does this then mean that once a writer has written text, and re-read that text, that authorship is partially granted . . . even if it is autophagic and somewhat narcissistic in origin? These issues are in a continual state of slipperiness, unable to be fixed, and therefore, are constantly shaped like Ouroboros, feeding into each other — even if from different points of origin.

In addition to this implied self-creation, the writer/author then creates a third entity — the narrator, who is also ‘bound’ by the self and its creation. By stringing a narrative together, via the use of a narrator, as a writer I am is able to give the reader an impression of a life without the reader fully consuming my life — and thus, can create a ‘me’ that is not me at all, whilst still embodying parts of me. While a narrator distances the writer from the reader — the narrator acts like a ‘waiter’ between the two — it does allow the writer a means by which to entice the reader to feast and yet maintain a self that is independent of the creative writing process and of the reader (it is this self who remains once the novel is written, read and consumed). This then implies, that while a writer uses their self to create a narrator, it is only the narrator who is really ‘feast-on-able’ — the writer is forever safe from full

consumption by the reader. Further, by readers indulging and consuming a narrator and thereby actualising the writer's authorship, a reader can be seen as merely another instrument by which, as a writer, I create myself. Ouroboros too, is considered a self-creator — the Great Snake is able to consume, impregnate and reproduce itself. Perhaps then, as a writer, I am just a more contemporary reflection of the Ouroboros archetype.

Added to the creative element, my writer/author self is further splintered by the academic self. The process of writing a novel, such as *Pathos*, as part of a PhD project causes a conflict between the academic self and the creative, imaginative self. The academic self reads, responds and analyses in ways which the creative self deliberately overlooks — the academic self having cannibalised differently than the imaginative self. For example, while I am rarely not reading, and will often have two books 'going' at the same time — one unashamedly pulp fiction and one more 'highbrow' — my reasons for reading differ vastly, and therefore, I consume on a different level when reading for pleasure rather than reading for knowledge. While both choices of reading material feed the 'whole' self, the academic and imaginative self are often in direct conflict. For example, in *Pathos*, the academic self sees the character of Devin as a traditional representation of misogyny and askew to my personal politics and feminist academic training. However, my creative self wanted to explore that sort of character and dominated the criticisms of academic self when shaping Devin. This created conflict on several levels; not only did I suspect the criticisms future readers may have of Devin, I also wanted to defend his representation. Added to this complication is that without the other self, Devin may not be the character he is. For example, without the academic self, I may not have been able 'see through' Devin. This knowledge assisted in mapping out his characterisation, especially during the scene in which Seanne confronts Devin outside the restaurant - but without the creative self, Devin would not have been written at all. Hence, while in conflict — both with themselves and with the main 'I' self — the academic and imaginative self both feed and work in unison as well; each consuming and gluttonising material and experience that both enhances and diminishes the other. Thus, as Ivanic states, to write at all is:

an act of identity, in which [writers] align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and values, beliefs and interests that they embody (Ivanic 1998: 32).

Writing is also an exercise in self-resolution, self-exploration and self-consumption. It is through the conflation of the academic and the creative self that I can draw on the experiences of both and attempt to combat some of the conflict that these selves inhabit.

It is the mincing of different these (and other) self-hoods that has not only allowed me to complete a creative PhD, but has also added to the experience of being a writer. Though *Pathos* may be guilty of reproducing some traditional representations, it also attempts to shatter them — and challenging the norm is often what my ‘whole’ self is most interested in. The character of Kit is one such ‘shattering’. As both under the age of consent (a child) and a prostitute (an ‘adult profession’), Kit can be seen academically emblematic of William Blake’s polarity of innocence and experience. However, I consider Kit to be more than that. Kit is a direct challenge to the more culturally pervasive image of the sexually underage *girl* — and in particular, characters such as Lolita in Vladimir Nabokov’s novel *Lolita* (1955) or Belinda in Anne Rice’s (written under the pseudonym of Anne Rampling) novel *Belinda* (1986).¹³ I consider Kit to be a challenge on two fronts — first, he is a male who occupies the same cultural space as Lolita and Belinda, and second, he resists ‘normalising’ his relationship with Seanne, whereas both Lolita and Belinda both normalise their relationships with their older lovers, to different degrees. As a challenge to feminised representations of the sexually underage girl, Kit is another example of the intersection between the academic and the imaginative self, and the ways in which the two conflate and conflict.

To best demonstrate the struggle between selves and the impact that struggle has on characterisation, plot and theme, I now conduct a second dialogue with Kit — as a symbolic representation of this struggle.

The Character and the Writer II

‘Yeah, so?’ he says, ‘what’s that gotta do with it?’

‘At times too much,’ she says. ‘You see Kit, Pathos may have been written a lot sooner if it weren’t for the academic side.’

‘What’cha mean?’

‘Well,’ she says, ‘what I mean is . . . in my undergrad degree, I read hundreds of texts, novels and theory and without knowing certain theories are out there, maybe I would

¹³ Though Lolita and Belinda are not prostitutes, they are two well-known images of the sexually alluring underage girl. In this sense, Kit is the ‘flip-side’ of these characters.

have written *Pathos* sooner. Those theories, psychoanalytic, feminist and postmodernism theories have all impacted on how I wrote and on what I wrote.'

He bites his lip, thinking, then says, 'But without them, maybe yah couldn't have done what yah have.'

'Maybe,' she says, unconvinced. 'But knowing those theories, knowing what could be said about *Pathos*, made it harder to write, made me wonder if what I'm writing is within the discipline that I've studied and whether I'm betraying that discipline by writing in way that is not normally considered literary.' She pauses. 'But then again, writing against or writing despite the discipline is powerful too — to be on the fringes of anything gives a view those within the core take granted. Perhaps the marginality of *Pathos* is its most powerful aspect, and though I must justify its whys and wherefores, I shouldn't have to. If writing doesn't challenge, then what's the point? What's the point in only being able regurgitate theory and not discover new ways to ingest knowledge? After all, Picasso knew the rules of form and sketch before he broke them. He hungered for different images, just as I hungered to write *Pathos*. It is that hunger to create that binds me to my "work" even when life throws obstacles in the way.'

'Egoist,' he says.

'No, not quite, because I have no pretence that I know all the rules, all the conventions.'

'Yer just argumentative.'

She shrugs. 'Yes. But again, what's the purpose of writing anything if it doesn't challenge; even if — as I've discovered — the biggest challenge thus far has been to my self-identity as PhD student and that of writer. It's the displacement I feel between the two which has caused the most friction and resistance to writing, in both the novel and the exegesis because, the experience of writing *Pathos* as a PhD has meant I've had to be more consciously aware of my self in order to write the novel I wanted to write, but still fulfil academic requirements. I couldn't ignore the academic, couldn't just write for the pure pleasure of it. Instead, I had to write with theory and thesis ideas in mind. At times that meant the narrative shaped itself in ways I normally wouldn't have considered — some of these ways were embarrassingly unsuccessful. However, it did make me invest in the process more, I found myself unpacking ideas deeper, attempting to get to their original source — much like picking the stuffing out of a salad roll, examining it and then eating each ingredient separately.

'Academically I could have gone in a thousand different directions — all of those potential directions based on a compromise the academic and the imaginative self could 'live' with, could most comfortably digest. And so, while *Pathos* may not be a literary novel, literary studies have impacted it, it's not an academic novel, but influenced by academic

theory. This may all sound like justification to some, but “the self as writer is particularly significant when discussing academic writing, since writers differ considerably in . . . how far they establish . . . presence in their writing” (Ivanic 1998: 26). So, without the training I have had, I wonder if my writer’s self would have known what needed subversion and what needed inflation. That I can even write an exegesis in this way — with these conversations between us — shows another level of the conflation between the academic and imaginative self while offering a different writing presence to the reader.

‘Unfortunately,’ she says, ‘academia demands distance and a “responsible . . . [academic] must step back, as it were, almost as if he or she were a separate person, and place that emotional highly sensual experience in a context of the relevant experiences of others and that of the history of academic analysis of the topic” (Thesis and Zawacki 2006: 49). So while I’m always my self, there is no escaping a fracturing of self whenever I write; just like you, my darling boy, whenever I write, academically or imaginatively, I am never fully my whole self at all times — I’m split, drawing on aspects feed into me from different directions. So perhaps, I am not merely one Ouroboros, but simultaneously multiple Ouroboroses (Ourobori?), all of which are feeding at various stages, frenzied but contained inside one master Ouroboros; that of this self I call “Nikki”.’

“Heavy,’ he says.

‘Yes . . . and still I could go on . . . but I shall refrain.’

In a primary sense, then, writing, whether it be academic or creative, revolves around the use of multiple slivers of self which are both cannibalistic and autophagic impulses. These impulses then gather images, experiences and thoughts — both internally and externally — which I, as the writer, drop into a mixing bowl to blend narrative, characterisation and representation together and create a ‘whole’ (a novel). Once ‘cooked’, readers are then able to absorb this novelistic ‘cake’, exposing themselves to the same impulses I indulge in. The slivers of my writer’s self, originally from others, can then become part of the reader — for once readers have read, they can not ‘unread’, the text becoming part of her/him whether she/he wishes it or not. For example, readers who are also academic examiners, embody my PhD, add their own critiques (self-slivers) to it, and develop their own mixture. Once I receive the examiners’ report, I then embody what has been said and re-cannibalise, re-gluttonise and re-consume, and so on and so forth. The process is continuous and infinite, much like Ouroboros, and once ‘tasted’, it can never be ‘untasted’ again.

Finally, it is not only the writer and the reader who cannibalise (sometimes autophagically), gluttonise and consume the characters within the novel — the characters

themselves also form opinions on each other, and though those opinions are created by the writer, the way in which characters cannibalise, gluttonise and consume each other is as revealing and absorbing as the narrative itself.

Characters and Selves: Theirs, Mine, Ours.

As the primary character, Seanne is also *Pathos*'s primary focaliser, controlling not only the narrative,¹⁴ but also the representation of those around her. It is through Seanne that the reader 'sees' the other characters — never 'seeing' Lysandra, Devin, Kit and others without her. This limited depiction of the other characters portrays only fragments of the personae around Seanne. Since the reader only knows these personae through her, it is only through her that they become 'people' on their own. However, 'just knowing what someone does while you happen to be watching him or her isn't enough to let you truly know that person' (Card 1988: 5). How accurate are Seanne's representations of Lysandra, Devin or Kit, when all are coloured by Seanne's impression of them? What if Seanne represents them partially or unfairly or incorrectly? How then does this effect the processes, and impulses, of cannibalism, gluttony and consumption?

Perhaps the most obscured character in *Pathos* is Lysandra. Presented as the dominant, in-control career woman, Lysandra is only ever seen in relation to Seanne, her reactions only ever filtered through Seanne. In a sense, Seanne cannibalises Lysandra and therefore, the reader embodies an already embodied body. Lysandra is not 'flesh' in her own sense; she is a regurgitated representation of what Seanne feels Lysandra is, all of which are coloured by Seanne's interpretations. Hence, the reader never sees Lysandra alone, out of control or anxious. How different would *Pathos* be had Lysandra narrated? Or Devin? Or Kit? To know Lysandra, the reader has to take her portrayal in good faith — however inaccurate the portrayal may be — and to fill the 'gaps' in between with the reader's own cannibalised self. For example, when Seanne runs and leaves Kit in the hands of Lysandra, the reader never knows exactly what transpired between Lysandra and Kit — neither is willing to admit to Seanne what happened, therefore the reader can only infer a sequence of events. Even Seanne herself can only make assumptions based on what she has gleaned along the way. In this way, while Seanne presents what she thinks is a full meal, it is missing elements along away — like serving up a three course meal, with an 'unknown'¹⁵ saboteur

¹⁴ A deeper analysis of the narrative point of view and narrative restrictions can be found in the following chapter.

¹⁵ 'Unknown' is apostrophised to indicate ambivalence: while Seanne does not 'know' of the writer, readers do.

deliberately hiding the rolls so the meal is never complete. Thus, while Seanne has the most powerful *narrative* position as focaliser, she has limited access beyond what she physically experiences and because of this, is also entombed in the wider body of the writer and is never fully 'complete' while the writer holds the strings. Further, by Seanne offering the reader a somewhat devoured version of Lysandra, Seanne becomes similar to a master of ceremonies: the players around her are only important in reference to herself — they exist only because she does, having no 'life' outside her enclosed narrative. Seanne's position, then, mirrors the writer's dual position — as she too is devourer and devoured.

Devin and Kit are also puppets manipulated by the writer, in terms of both their overall characterisation and of the interpretations Seanne brings to the narrative. Devin is a slave to consumerist impulses (his gluttony apparent); however, his relationships with other characters are diverse — so that he is, as Card notes, a 'different [person] in different relationships' (Card 1988: 10). With Seanne, he is the instigator of conflict; with Lysandra, the ever-loyal best friend; the buddy to Addison; ex-lover of Dayton and seducer of women — often in misogynistic ways. All these roles show Devin with a myriad of faces and while Seanne sits in judgement of Devin, he is presented as multi-dimensional. Devin is able to be consumed at different levels, depending on which 'face' he is shown to have at the time. In some ways, this makes Devin more accessible, and therefore more consumable, than the other characters in *Pathos*. While Lysandra is always portrayed with one face — the dominant — Devin's many faces imply he inhabits a potential multitude of tastes, allowing different aspects of himself to be feasted on at different times. Even if the reader (and often the writer herself) is not impressed with Devin, his multi-dimensionality means he is able to feed the reader in different ways, perhaps more successfully than Seanne herself.

Kit, however, has only one face — a whore. Within this role, Kit is not so much a persona but a function, a tasty treat, and his 'limitations' are easily tackled by Seanne. One example is Kit's age. Though Seanne is aware that Kit is a teenager, her desire for him outweighs her logic, even when Kit reveals he is also under the age of consent. Instead of this being a deterrent (a narrative limitation), Seanne is excited by Kit's 'young-ness' and delves into risky sex with Kit, further transgressing the taboo against sexual relations with minors. Seanne's failure to see Kit's age as a barrier re-reduces Kit to his function as a whore, and because of this, Seanne re-exploits him for her own desires. In this sense, Seanne portrays herself as one of *Pathos*'s most disturbing characters,¹⁶ as she is both

¹⁶ Other disturbing characters include Devin, some of Kit's clients and Seanne's younger brother Cooper, whose relationship to Seanne borders on sibling abuse.

aware of her transgression (admitting her behaviour is deviant) yet at the same time unconcerned with her exploitation of Kit — this is similar to sociopathic behaviour in serial killers where they are aware of their actions but it does not impact them. Hence, while Seanne appears repentant, I consider that her subsequent actions with Kit undermines this repentance. Seanne's behaviour is not so much atonement, but calculated attempts to further 'taste' Kit. Even before meeting Kit, Seanne is fascinated with the idea of male prostitution, and her fascination becomes near-obsession when she meets a whore. For Seanne, Kit is part- fantasy, part-reality, he 'both exists and does not exist; he . . . is a non-entity who is a somebody' (Waugh 1984: 91); Seanne never fully lets the fantasy go. Once Seanne has met Kit, she develops different ways to keep interacting with him. Mimicking a sadomasochistic relationship, Kit feeds Seanne's physical fantasies, and her imaginative fantasies of life as a whore, and she then rewards him with physical comforts — food, shelter, and so on. He accepts these, and although he breaks the 'rules' by his own transgressions (thieving), he returns to Seanne again and again, refuelling her fantasies. Seanne then increases her 'rewards' every time Kit feeds into a deeper one of her fantasies. This circular pattern is best represented visually (see page 15), as it succinctly illustrates the continuum of feeding/reward and demonstrates Seanne compulsion towards gluttony — especially when Kit is the food she most craves. This relationship pattern is only shattered when Kit refuses Seanne's apology, in effect starving her - though she still attempts to engage him via her rewards. To that point in the novel, Kit is Seanne's banquet, and once he has unleashed her appetite, she is compelled to emulate those experiences and seek them out in her relationship with Lysandra as well. In Kit and Seanne's last scene together, Seanne finally admits that Kit is *what* she wants, not Lachlan, the 'real' person behind the whore. It is only when faced with Kit as a person (as a 'who' rather than a 'what') and not as a food, that Seanne is able to let him go, her final goodbye to Kit made easy by his humanness. Hence, while Seanne gives the appearance of penitence, through her 'gifts' to Kit, it is only repentance to a point. Exploring/exploiting Kit is her main reason-for-being and without her hunger and his feast-on-ability, he is nothing to her.

Given that 'no-one who gets around to writing a book . . . ever reads everything that has been written about a subject' (Torgovnik cited in Lincoln 1997: 48), the writer too fills in gaps in her experience, either by observation, judgement or research. These gaps begin to shape a narrative with a distinct point in mind, whether that is an exploration of a theme or a specific personality infused within a character. One device employed by a writer to shape her characters and to create that 'somebody from nobody' is the act of giving each character a

name. By naming my characters, I offer the reader the first lure for those characters' eventual consumption. Even though I use many other devices to tempt the reader, by the reader identifying a character via her or his name, forms a catalyst for further consumption, as the reader is able to cannibalise that information into her or his reading experience and anticipate further interaction with that character. Names too, often bear associations — these associations dependant on what experiences the reader has had with others, what effect other individuals and/or characters have had on the body of the reader. Naming then, is not only a point of reference for readers, but also a means by which as a writer, I can tap into the reader's own cannibalised /autophagic life experience and create a 'commonality' between writer, reader and character.

The name Seanne is a hybrid which I created by blending together two common female names — Dianne and Sarah. Seanne is not a 'real' name, with no mythological or historical provenance. However, 'Sarah' comes from the Hebrew, meaning 'Princess',¹⁷ whereas 'Dianne' has two meanings - the first from the Greek, meaning 'Celestial Hunter'¹⁸ and the second from North American origins, meaning 'Divine'.¹⁹ The name 'Seanne' could then mean 'Divine Princess Celestial Hunter'. This meaning adds to Seanne's construction: she often exhibits what some may deem a 'princess complex', expecting to be pampered and petted and take little responsibility for herself. Seanne's dress is often medieval — free-flowing skirts and low bodices — and she is often dressed by others, allowing herself to be adapted and consumed by forces outside herself, such as Lysandra. In this sense, Seanne is like a princess in a fairy tale — like Sleeping Beauty or Cinderella — whose life is ultimately subject to factors beyond her control. Without any 'personality' added to her, Seanne can be seen also as the cannibalised body, flesh offered up to others as food. However, Seanne's characterisation as a sexual predator contradicts her physical presentation. Similarly, the reader cannot assume Seanne's personality truthfully reflects the symbolism implied by her name. In *Pathos*, what is first presented is not what is - the reader is forced to accept the writer's characterisation, rather than rely on the cultural knowledge they (the reader) might bring to the text. In this way, a further Ouroboros-like coil forms, linking the reader, the writer and the character.

¹⁷ See Jeans (1996: 165) and Room (1995: 955).

¹⁸ From Dianne (2), <http://www.babycenter.com> (accessed April 30 2007)

¹⁹ See (Room 1996: 307), and Hanks and Hodges (1999: 28).

Lysandra's portrayal is also not synonymous with her name. The name 'Lysandra'²⁰ comes from the Greek and its various meanings are all similar — emancipation,²¹ one who is freed,²² and liberator.²³ Lysandra is not free however - she is constantly restrained by her job, her family and her image - nor does she free others. Instead, Lysandra is presented as controlling, dominating and self-interested, all of which point to a gluttonous side to her nature. Lysandra invests much into herself, feeding herself what she feels she needs in an endless cycle of consumption and greed, even if she does not want it. For example, while Lysandra frees herself from the physical presence of her family, their 'control' still dominates her notions of herself and her career, so much so that she flaunts her success and her lover to her family whenever she has the chance. Whatever Lysandra wants, Lysandra makes sure she has (even Seanne), and just as a glutton eats for the pure pleasure of eating, Lysandra consumes for the pleasures associated with excessive consumption and the implied success that excessive consumption embodies. Lysandra then, personifies cannibalistic, gluttonous, and consumptive impulses — and like the impulses themselves, she remains active, pervasive and prevalent until the end of the novel.

Identity and Characterisation: Seanne, Lysandra and Kit

Literary theorist Weir (1996) has conducted extensive research into the problematic nature of defining identity, seeing 'the very concept of self, of an I, of a me, [as] something which is constructed only through inter-subjective interactions, which take place always in the contexts of shared meanings' (1996: 185). Shared meanings are then heavily dependent on a similar experience. While Weir (1996) mainly uses these concepts of identity in reference to the self, these concepts can also be applied to characters - which, in any case, reflect the writer's self.

Though both similar in age and both female, Lysandra and Seanne have been socialised in different ways by social status, family and cultural background and have different personal views of self. This is important, because, as Weir notes:

²⁰ Lysandra is the feminine form of the male name Lysandros (Hanks and Hodges 1999: 48).

²¹ From Lysandra (1) <http://www.babycenter.com> (accessed April 30 2007).

²² From Lysandra (2) <http://www.name-meanings.com> (accessed April 30 2007).

²³ From Lysandra (3) <http://www.parenthood.com> (accessed April 30 2007).

central to self identity, then, is the capacity to sustain and in some sense reconcile multiple and often conflicting identities and to understand, criticise and reconcile multiple and often conflicting interpretations of those identities (Weir 1996: 186).

Both Seanne's and Lysandra's multiple identities are tied to their respective roles and can result in one identity (or role) engulfing — cannibalising — other identities (or roles); often resulting in both self conflict and conflict between each other. For example, Lysandra's professional identity feeds into (and engulfs) other aspects of her life — from her relationship with Seanne, to her connections with her brother and sister — forming an almost suffocating role from which she operates. She often finds herself splintered between her self image of success, her role as confidante and her position in Seanne's life. However, her most dominant identity — career woman — eclipses all. Lysandra herself comments on the impact of this near the end of *Pathos*, offering Seanne 'work' as one of her reasons for her distance from Seanne. However, neither reconcile the issue, leaving Lysandra to re-rely on her most secure identity and Seanne to contemplate her own fractured, conflicting selves. Another area of Lyandra's life that exposes her to cannibalistic and gluttonous impulses is her relationship with Devin. Metaphorically speaking, she feeds off him (and sometimes feeds him by fuelling his desires), and he in turn gobbles her up — from her energy, to her affections, to her time — some of which affect the 'cost' of her relationship with Seanne. Lysandra's relationships with Seanne and Devin, then, serve to add weight to Koehn's (2005) previous argument concerning gluttony's potential for destruction. While each character is aware of their 'failings' (both in terms of themselves and with the other person), none fully resolve their multiple identities successfully, and while Seanne attempts to change her life, her desires — her hunger — once again surfaces. This alludes to psychoanalytical theory on the rise of the repressed, a construct that applies to Seanne throughout *Pathos* — whatever Seanne represses, becomes her primary focus later in the novel.

While Seanne and Lysandra filter their identities through external influences, they also — and especially Seanne — define, their identity in relation to each other, creating an individual identity that is dependant on the reflection of the other. Seanne, in particular, feels starved when not 'fed' by Lysandra's attention and love and subsequently, this cements her decision to indulge with Kit. Prior to Kit, Seanne's 'childish' antics like refusing to get out of bed provided her with a means to cement her self identity by witnessing its reflection in Lysandra. Lysandra then takes command, ordering Seanne to seek professional help. Despite some defiance, Seanne caves to Lysandra's demands, re-establishing her self as being dependant on Lysandra. However, once she has slept with Kit, Seanne's notions of self shift — becoming not so much about emotional security, but about sexual freedom and

therefore, she seeks to maintain simultaneous sexual relationships with Lysandra and Kit, both of which sustain her desire and nourish her, albeit in different ways. While under Lysandra's command, Seanne is the feast, the body which Lysandra devours, manipulates, abuses and adores — and while Seanne's interactions with Lysandra also meet her emotional needs, they fuel her sexual demands as well.

Seanne's role and sense of self is shifted somewhat with Kit. Though still submissive to a point (she also allows Kit to take what he wants and begs him for it) her 'lure' with him is not his attention, but his willingness and ability to take the same 'punishment'. In this way, Seanne's relationship with Kit is co-dependently cannibalistic and gluttonous — and indicates a transgressive, adaptive side to Seanne's notions of self. She is two separate but intertwined identities (dominant and submissive) when with Kit, and his ability to accept her multitude of 'faces' without question becomes part of his lure, allowing her to explore sides of herself Lysandra denies. Thus, flipping between the two lovers, Seanne is able to not only feed her conflicting desires, but also to appease some of her notions of hidden self. However, as Weir (1996) points out, 'the problem of the *identity of the self* [sic] is bound up with the problem of *identity of meaning* [sic] and with the problem of *identification with or relationship to, others* [sic]' (Weir 1996: 189). By Seanne tying her selfhood to the bodies of Lysandra and Kit, she leaves herself shattered when both remove their reflective mirrors. In essence, they leave Seanne almost identity-less and disembodied, and she then seeks to redefine herself by reverting to her original desires — Lysandra.

One of the major ways in which the characters within *Pathos* consume each other — other than sexually²⁴ — is through their clothing and the adornment of the body. Seanne, in particular, is overly preoccupied with the presentation of the body via clothes and accessories. Using these markers to judge, examine and consume the other characters within *Pathos*, Seanne does not separate what she sees from what she knows, seeing the outer as tied to the inner, just as food can be visually appealing, while, the experience of tasting it differs. Seanne's view of other characters' identities, often based on clothing, then forms a skewed interpretation of those characters. Seanne's misreading of the relationship between clothing and identity illustrates how notions of identity as performance and of performativity operate in *Pathos* — whereby one does not always equate to the other. A good example of this is in the minor character of Hannah, Devin's 'girlfriend'. Seanne's first taste of her is over lunch, where Hannah's work uniform immediately causes Seanne to dismiss her as insipid and stupid and Seanne's opinion never changes; she comments later during Devin's Halloween party that Hannah is childish, alien and out of her depth. However,

²⁴ Sexuality and desire is the primary focus of the chapter three.

in both cases, Hannah is 'performing', the first time at work and the second at a fancy dress party — and neither performance may be the 'real' her, both events being bound by certain social and cultural behaviour 'norms'. However, to Seanne, the combination of Seanne's previous knowledge of Devin's taste in women coupled with Hannah's dress (cannibalised from aspects of Seanne's experience), fortifies her notions of Hannah's identity. Seanne does not aspire to alter, analyse or examine her 'conclusions' — believing Hannah's performance (and to a point, the performance of all characters in *Pathos*) of a predetermined role to be authentic.

Judith Butler (1990) has outlined the mechanics of performativity. According to Butler, 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act" but rather as the reiterative . . . practice by which discourse produces the effects it names' (Butler 1990 :140). Simply said, Butler (1990) indicates that an individual's choice of clothing is also a choice of identity, whether that choice is deliberate or not. However, as Weir (1996) points out:

what's lost here is any recognition of the perspectives of the participants in these performances, and hence the meaningful differentiation among unreflective, deliberate, dogmatic, defensive, anxious, ironic, playful and paradoxical performances . . . and any understanding of the ways in which these interact and conflict in specific performances and particular subjects. (Weir 1996: 127)

Weir therefore complicates Butler's notion of the complexities in performativity, indicating that while choice of dress connotes certain identity markers, these markers may be obscured, subverted and/or deliberately misleading, depending on the individual. Further, an individual who disrupts the meaning attached to these markers, is not only misleading others, but also asserting a subversive identity.

The conflictive aspects of performance and its relationship to identity is evident in the four major characters of *Pathos*, and also in Seanne's perceptions of Kit. On a basic level, Lysandra is consumed by the idea of success and deliberately offers her 'audience' a performance based on the continual management success, so much so, that she expects a similar reliance on success from others. For example, Lysandra often expresses displeasure at Seanne's 'simple' tastes and lack of class and social ambition, commenting several times on Seanne's lack of ambition. Seanne, however, constantly resists incorporating Lysandra's idea of performance into herself, instead relying on her own 'performances'. Her 'acts' of defiance, then, indicate a potential flaw in Lysandra's performativity — as performativity is

based not only on acceptance of the performance by others, but on the willingness of others to embody that performance for themselves. Though readers do not see how Lysandra deals with the aftermath of her discovery of Seanne with Kit, it is implied that so tied to her identity are notions of success that when faced with her relationship breakdown, Lysandra more fully integrates herself in work (her promotion) and the betterment of her self (swimming every morning). All these elements function to further solidify Lysandra as 'success' — so much so that her identity and performance become one in the same. In this aspect, she is not only the consumed, but the consumer as well.

While Seanne is resistant to Lysandra's performance — and often expresses desires to discover what's 'underneath' — she simultaneously expects Kit to perform in the role she has predetermined for him — the whore. Seeing Kit as only a product to be consumed and used, Seanne fails to see the 'person' beyond his sexualisation. Kit does little to deter this and for most of the novel, accepts his role, taking it further and further each meeting, his body providing not only sexual food for Seanne, but a concrete reflection that his performance as whore is the 'right' fit. In their final scene together, Kit drops the performance, complicating, as Weir (1996) has noted, notions of performance and identity. Though readers are not told what happened to Kit during the months away from Seanne, it is implied that whatever happened shattered his whore reflection (performance), forcing him to confront his 'true' identity as Lachlan. Kit is the most easily adaptable character, moving from role to role with ease — yet still able to maintain his identity despite the constraints of his multiple performances. In this way, Kit is the consumable, useable body, while Lachlan remains the untouched and un-edible body. Even though he and Seanne have sex, Lachlan remains stable, solid and unobtainable, unlike Kit who allowed Seanne to devour him. Further, while Seanne bucks against Lysandra's performance, she does accept (absorb) it into her life but, despite her desire for Kit, Seanne never allows him to fully integrate into her, instead keeping him on the margins — both metaphorically (excluding him) and physically (pushing him away). In short, once Kit shatters his 'whore' allure, Seanne can no longer consume him without complication and therefore, Seanne has to cease 'feeding'. For Seanne, then, Kit must always have a consumable/consuming function for him to be integrated in her life, without which, her gluttony is unsatisfied, and therefore, so is she.

By such a complicated performativity functioning in *Pathos* on a creative level, it illustrates that while the characters misread, misuse and mis-analyse each other's performativity, as a writer, I am acutely aware of the conflict inherent when portraying performativity within fiction — even if that performativity is not the main focus of the narrative. Understanding this relationship, then, further ignites the desire for all involved to

consume — from the writer, to the characters, to the reader — as each performance offers insight into the creative writing processes behind the narrative. As performance is an act of embodiment (taking on other aspects of self that may or may not be part of the performing self) and that embodiment is ‘stolen’ from others, performance, then can be seen as an act of cannibalism and gluttony in itself. Further, while the characters perform, their entire constructions are extensions of my *self* and those are performances that I have either embodied or witnessed. This too, then, hints at the prevalence of autophagic/cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses within creative writing, again supporting an Ouroboros-like process involved in my creative output.

However, it is not only the writer or the characters within *Pathos* who indulge in the metaphorical process of cannibalism, gluttony and consumption. Existing outside the narrative, the reader too plays a major role in the process — and they too are just as prone to exhibit cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses as the writer and characters themselves.

Outside the Text: the Reader and *Pathos*

In most second-person narratives, the use of ‘you’ implies there is a ‘you’ who is listening to the tale — the ‘you’ that is the reader (see Wothington 1996). However, *Pathos* has two deliberate ‘you’s’ who are both the narrator and the narration addresses — the ‘you’ that is character Lysandra, and the ‘you’ that is implied as the reader. This complex web of a double ‘you’ creates a multi-layered relationship with those inside the text and those outside the text. The writer presents a narrative, via Seanne, which is then engulfed by the reader, who in turn devours the plot (and slivers of the writer’s self) - again mimicking an Ouroboros. However, it is not just as simple as presenting a narrative and having someone consume it. In order for that process to occur, the writer herself has to be, as Hodgins notes, ‘interested in writing novels, [to] have a have a passion for reading people and their behaviours and their lives’ (Hodgins 1993: 100). As the writer, I also need to have an understanding of the ways in which the reader might attempt to read the narrative. Both of these ‘conditions’ then, are dependant on what shared knowledges I can assume between myself and the reader, and a wider understanding of the writing/reading process. Without the writer being able to tap into the reader’s emotions, the reader may not wish to continue to devour the narrative, starving both the character and the writer of what she desires the most — consumption. In some ways, then, it is an important part of creative writing that as a writer, I have had

academic training and have been able to draw from that training. Without an appreciation of the reading process, perhaps my novel (and any after it) would fail to tempt. In essence, I would 'jam' the Ouroboros process mid-cycle, rendering it still.

'So, that's it,' he says, 'yah say all this and you move on? Well, I'm telling yah now, yah can't get rid of me that easy. I ain't done yet.'

He folds his arms over his chest and inside her mind she sees his scowl and knows that he will need a narrative of his own before he is silenced.

And so, it re-begins . . .

Chapter Two

Feeding You: Cannibalism, Gluttony, Consumption and Narrative Discourse

At its most basic level, 'fiction differs from fantasy in that it is constituted by a process of telling and in the process elicits a response, asks to be read, looked at, listened to, but not necessarily believed' (Stern cited in Whatling 1993: 201). In the case of *Pathos*, Seanne expects similar responses from those reading her narrative — she wants to be looked at and listened to, presuming she'll be believed. This supports Whitcomb's (1995) considerations that 'the unity of . . . a plot depends largely on the clearness and stability of [the narrator's] position (Whitcomb 1995: 17). Seanne is the one stable denominator throughout the plot. She links the other characters together and to her, via her physical presence and without her, the other characters are silent, existing 'outside' her direct contact. It is because she is the plot (that is, without her, the narrative ceases) that her position is the most stable, most concrete, regardless of how she presents the plot. She does not allow other 'voices' to counteract her observations, her beliefs. Her narrative, then, is largely dependant on only her and only her. In essence, she is *Pathos* — and to a point, expects the same demands that fiction itself does to be consumed by an outside force. By Seanne demanding an audience who listens to only *her*, Seanne asserts herself into the most dominant position in the novel — despite being submissive in her relationships. This duality of a position within a position is colloquially called 'topping from the bottom' (see Califia 2001, Easton and Hardy 2003) in sadomasochistic play and can easily be applied to the narrative flow of *Pathos* as well. By being both dominant (as the narrator) and submissive (as herself), Seanne is both cannibalising (often autophagic) and cannibalised, whereby the world she inhabits allows her to gorge in ways allowed no other character, yet at the same time, she asserts herself as the main consumable 'body'. While Lysandra, Devin and Kit offer some disruption to her 'feasts', their interruptions do not ever interrupt her position — she maintains her narrative control until the final line (even if her emotional control is dubious by then).

Narrator, Narration, Narrative

As the only narrator, Seanne is an observational protagonist,²⁵ both of herself and of the people around her. Even when involved in situations where most narrators would explain their thought processes, Seanne maintains a level of distance from the text that posits her both within the action and outside of it. Similar to an eyewitness account, Seanne tells her version of the way that she sees it and because of this, Seanne's narrative can be seen to contain a mixture of 'truth' and 'lies', depending on her view of events – and the reader's own autophagic experiences are likely to influence her/his own interpretations of events in the novel. While at times the reader is given snippets of Seanne's thoughts, (for example, on page 225 she comments 'I guess we're even'), Seanne does not offer any deeper analysis, and because of this, her narrative is predominantly emotionally and situationally driven. However, as Brooks notes, 'it's not simply that the narrator is "unreliable" . . . there is no possible test for what "reliability" might mean within the frame of the novel' (Brooks 1993: 115). In *Pathos*, notions such as truth and reliability are constantly complicated by a biased character, who is only 'seen' through by Kit and Devin within the novel, but perhaps by the reader outside the novel. This complication, then, highlights a 'struggle' between narrator wanting to be believed and the reader's willingness to believe the narrator's tale. For example, if I tell a lie, and 'you' believe that lie and invest in it, which is more powerful? The original lie? Or the continuation and re-perpetuation of that lie? Couldn't the entire novel writing process, then, also be considered a lie? Not all events in *Pathos* happened to me, nor does Seanne exist outside the narrative, and therefore, any reader, any writer, who reads or writes is partially willing to invest in 'lies', regardless of the narrative point of view. It is only because Seanne 'controls' *Pathos* that she is believed and granted a certain level of reliability.

Many literary theorists have examined the relationship between reliability and the narrator, but perhaps Rimmon-Kenan (1983) defines the concept most succinctly as: a reliable narrator is one whose rendering of the story and commentary on it the reader is supposed to take as an authoritative account of the fictional truth. An unreliable narrator, on the other hand, is one whose rendering of the story and/or commentary on it the reader has reasons to suspect. There can, of course, be different degrees of unreliability. But how can the reader know whether he is supposed to trust or distrust the narrator's account? What indications does the text give him one way or the other? Signs of unreliability are perhaps easier to specify,

²⁵ This position can also be referred to as the 'narrative focaliser' (see Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 74-76).

and reliability can then be negatively defined by their absence (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 100)

If this is 'true', then there is no way in which Seanne is to ever be fully believed or fully not believed. With no gauge by which to judge her, the battle to fully believe or fully discount continues — for if the reader starts to question, when does the questioning end? And who does it end with? Perhaps this is why Seanne (and I as the writer) never really analyses herself deeper — as there is often no 'solution', no lasting satisfaction to be gained. Indeed — even now that the novel is written, questions still remain. In light of Rimmon-Kenan's considerations above, one wonders if *Pathos* would have been more or less reliable if Lysandra narrated? Or Devin or Kit? Or if *Pathos* had been narrated by an omniscient third person narrator? The reader may have been exposed to a different view, to a different side of the characters within, but ultimately, *Pathos*'s narrative would still be coloured by a 'self'. There is no escape from this conundrum, not matter what the novel. Most novels require a narrator to filter the plot and since the writer behind the narrator is human herself, the narrator will always be coloured, regardless of whose narrative point of view it is narrated from. My own socialisation, experiences, and so on that created *Pathos*, illustrate my slant on the world — and blatantly too — and my choice of narrator deliberately hints at the way in which I perceive the writing process. Being both an avid reader and a published writer, I do not see reading and writing as merely entertainment, but as a means by which to stimulate, challenge and respond to the wider world. In short, Seanne — as my first novelistic response — is not merely a narrator, she is a vehicle by which I comment on the contemporary state of relationships, sexuality and gender. Seanne is testament to my previous selves and to the evolution of my experiences, training and writing practices. This is why, despite some of the criticism Seanne could receive, 'the author does not apologise for his [sic] characters . . . Above all, he [sic] has them tell us what they think, what they feel, what impressions beat in on their minds from the situations in which they find themselves' (Friedman 1969: 149). If a writer were to apologise for their narrators, this then leaves a path open for fiction to be seen as autobiographical — the exact opposite of what a fiction writer may be aiming for, and contrary to what I aimed for when writing *Pathos*. Therefore, despite Seanne's contradictory and transgressive characterisation, I stand by her and do not apologise for my selves.

In overall terms, *Pathos* is a dual-layered narrative; Seanne not only narrates the current world, she also allows the reader in on key moments in her past life. By having a forward functioning plot intermixed with back story, the reader is able to both journey with her in the present and formulate ideas on the impact of her past. This not only 'fleshes'

Seanne out, but allows the reader to nibble at the more understated, subtextual content. For example, toward the end, Seanne may claim she is getting herself together, however, her behaviour and repetition of past mistakes hints at the 'truth'. This truth is also seen in her willingness to indulge abusive behaviour in current relationships, almost mirroring her childhood experiences. Hardy sees layering of 'narrative within a narrative [as] intent on revealing and forming its meanings through telling and also through not telling, through listening and not listening' (1975: 3). It is also 'telling' that Seanne not only reveals her past, but also reveals the past of the secondary characters — with the exception of Kit, whose past exists on the periphery of the narrative, left to reader imagination. Obsessed with what was, Seanne's choice of memories, illustrate their wider importance in her current life that she acknowledges.

As there is no specific date reference in *Pathos*, except for that of universal holidays, Seanne narrates a present that can be either today, tomorrow or ten years from now. Gillard (2003) refers to this as 'the experiencing and narrating self of the narrator' (2003: 28). This means the reader is able to experience events as Seanne does and to react to those events almost simultaneously. By experiencing 'life' alongside the narrator, the reader is then able to progress, adapt and journey with Seanne, almost in a symbiotic relationship and perhaps, fashion her or his own narrative alongside Seanne's. Thus, not only does Seanne create a narrative within a narrative, narratives can exist outside the boundaries of the text as well, in the imaginings of the reader. This occurrence of framing smaller narratives within a larger narrative body — aside from being ultimately consumptive — is similar to the notion of the cycle of life, whereby the larger body engulfs the smaller in order to sustain the larger body's needs. In this case, the main plot focussing on Seanne is the larger body, ingesting all. Implied in this is the idea that for Seanne's narrative to continue, smaller plot 'bodies' need to be created, adapted and consumed in order to sustain and 'feed' the wider body. In essence, a fluid form of consumption needs to be formed that both feeds into and feeds off the narrator and the reader, creating almost a transference between the two. Again, implicit in this is the consideration that despite the writer being the origin of the novelistic world, it is the narrator and the reader who are vital holders of power in that world.

Though a narrator is crucially important to storytelling, narrative technique is equally important. *Pathos* mixes first and second person point of view and because of this, complicates and challenges traditional narrative structures. This mixing of narrative techniques also demonstrates how cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses are embedded in and impact on narration.

In an analysis of narrative point of view, Fludernik (1994) states that:

since the narrator, by definition, occupies the deictic position of the “I” and the addressee the deictic position of the “you,” you can only refer to the narrator in passages of self-address in which an “I” splits into two voices that interact dialogically (Fludernik 1994:4)

This may be true of most first and/or second person texts, however, *Pathos* complicates Fludernik’s (1994) definition by being both. In *Pathos*, ‘you’ refers to the character Lysandra, and also to the reader. ‘You’ is both inside and outside of the text — and though connected to the main narrator, ‘you’ is autonomous to *Pathos*’ first person narrator Seanne. By ‘you’ existing outside the mind of the first person narrator — the ‘I’ character — and living in her own right, the reader experiences a shift in perception — not only can ‘you’ be a direct dialogue with that reader, but the narrator also has direct dialogue with ‘you’ as well — making the narrative appear almost schizophrenic. Though this can be disconcerting to the reader, the experience of multiple personae operating in unison widens the ways in which the reader reads.

Later in her analysis, Fludernik (1994) identifies the use of a specific ‘you’, stating, that often:

second-person texts start out with a passage of what initially appears to be a generalised or generic “you,” a “you” with which the reader in the role of “(any)one” can identify, but the text then proceeds to conjure up a very specific “you” with a specific sex, job, husband or wife, address, interests, and so on, so that the reader has to realise that the “you” must be an other (Fludernik 1994: 6-7).

Even though *Pathos* uses this method to introduce Lysandra to the reader, from the moment she is ‘introduced’, there is an expectation of ‘you’ being a specific you, not a generalised ‘you’ as Fludernik (1994) states. Part of this derives from Seanne’s ‘I’, setting up the expectation to the reader that ‘you’ must also be a character important to the plot — as in speech, to have a ‘you’, implies there is usually an ‘I’ present. This creates a more dialogical feel to the narrative and can be seen to bind the reader closer to the text. As Fludernik notes, the ‘non distanced you form [tends] to stimulate an aura of intimacy or closeness, adding even further to the effect of involvement’ (Fludernik 1994:20). Involving the reader of *Pathos* in the narrative, taps into her or his innate, buried autophagic and cannibalistic impulses — that is, not only does the reader ‘feed’ off her or his self (in physical terms, such

as the time needed to read) but 'feeds' off the narrative as well (both in terms of the characters and of the plot). If the reader then identifies her or his self with 'you', even though 'you' is Lysandra, and feels more personalised, the distance between the three (writer, reader, narrator) closes further. Aside from consuming the narrative, readers are in a way feeding off an imaginary self — reading the narrative to see how far 'you' can go within the safe limits of the narrative, within the confines of a 'you' that is not 'you' the reader. Further, if the reader reads 'I' as part of the writer's self and 'you' as part of her or his self, then the distance between the writer and the reader also closes, each one experiencing a level of consumption they may not have experienced with more traditional points of view. Hence, while second person narrative can be disconcerting, its impact on writer, the reader and the characters creates a series of diverse relationships, some more complicated than others. As the relationship lines continually blur between who is who, the impact of a first and second person narrative expands outward as well as circularly, binding all to the text in Ouroboros-like patterns of consumption.

According to Fludernik:

second-person narrative, radicalises tendencies inherent in the language itself . . . the decision to employ the second person in a narrative text is a highly self-conscious one, much more self-conscious and fraught with significance than the choice between the first- or third-person form (Fludernik 1994: 20).

Part of the significance of the choice revolves around second person narrative being a more subversive, intrusive form of storytelling, one that presents a narrative that operates as both a lure to the reader and yet maintains sufficient distance to separate writer from narrator, character from reader. This is perhaps why second person texts are not a popular medium and many, such as Duras's *Malady of Death* (1986), are novellas rather than novels; second person narratives demand more of all involved. Just on the surface, the impact of the blurring of roles, the shifting position of 'you' and the counterbalance of 'I' as observational rather than interactive, can put undue pressure on the writer, dissuade the reader and stagnate the narrator. However, it is because it can create these situations that second person narration has power — it subversively changes the reader and the writer, and once attempted (either by writing or by reading) that experience can not be 'undone'. This is similar to the experience of tasting — once tasted, it can not be untasted again, forcing a deeper relationship, a deeper conversation to operate between the narrative 'consumers'.

Fludernik (1994) examines the importance of this relationship between all involved and the narration. In her analysis, Fludernik (1994) divides narrative into two parts — the homo-communicative narrative and the hetero-communicative narrative. She writes:

homo-/hetero-communicative narrative respectively refers to the communicative circuit between a narrator and the immediate addressee or narratee who is at the receiving or interactive end of that communicational frame. Homocommunicative texts share realms of identities between the personae on the communicative level and the fictional personae: that is to say, either the narrator or the narratee or both are also characters in the fiction. Hetero-communicative texts, on the other hand, completely separate the realms of plot agents (characters) and interact on the communicative level (narrators and narratees) (1994: 1).

Using Fludernik's model as a basis, *Pathos* is predominantly a homo-communicative text: both the narrator and the addressee (Lysandra) are characters in the text and interact and perform within that fictional framework. However, on the same token, *Pathos* also fits the hetero-communicative model; all other characters exist separate to the narrator's direct contact and so does the writer; that is, the writer never imposes a narrative above Seanne's narrative. As both hetero-communicative (communicating to the reader outside the text), and homo-communicative (communicating with each other within the text), *Pathos* is perhaps best described as bi-communicative — as some would view Seanne as bisexual. This two-way, two-fold communication posits the reader in an interesting position — as she or he is vital to the success of Seanne's narrative, that is with no audience, no 'you' outside the text, Seanne's narrative can be considered 'deaf' as Lysandra can never respond outside of Seanne's contact. This grants the reader more options than in traditional narrative structures; she or he can either be 'sucked into' the narrative, identifying with (becoming) the implied 'you', or the reader can invest in the characterised 'you' of Lysandra and see Lysandra as outside of the reader's self or flip between the two. This, of course, then further ignites consumptive desires in the reader — for if the reader is able to choose 'who' they want to be, they are able to cannibalise, gluttonise and consume at their leisure, either by feeding off others or feeding on themselves. The relationship created, while somewhat restrictive, is also vast.

Relationship-centric narratives usually present themselves in first or third person form, however, as relationships are often fraught with introspection, observation, and self-ish analysis, second person narrative is perhaps the most fitting form of narrative to explore the

dimensions of dysfunctional relationships. Fludernik outlines the ways in which second person narratives scope relationships, stating:

second-person texts manage to bridge the confining limitations . . . by representing precisely the elusive, interactive, and processional quality of love relationships and reflecting the shifting perspectives of mutual empathy, the inevitable barriers to ideal oneness, concomitant alienation, misinterpretation, strategic self-projection, or incorrect self-assessment, all experiences that typically result in the well-known uncertainties and abysses of love affairs (Fludernik 1994: 21)

By presenting *Pathos* as a second person narrative, as the writer, I believe I am able to reflect much more of Seanne and Lysandra's relationship by what is not said, by the spaces in the text where each character fails to understand the other, fails to learn and evidently repeats the same pattern — much like the writing process itself and my model of Ouroboros. However, as Radstone notes, 'complex and difficult questions still remain concerning the exact nature of the relationship between that which is lived and that which is represented' (Radstone 1992: 11). It is somewhere in the middle, in the space within the spaces in Seanne's narrative that perhaps *Pathos* 'speaks' loudest. For example, Seanne offers only partial narratives of Lysandra, Kit and Devin — but it is what the writer implies and the reader brings to the narrative that exposes deeper elements to Lysandra, Kit and Devin's personalities. Perhaps Lysandra is just a 'bitch', Kit a whore, Devin an asshole — or is it just Seanne's consumption of their lives into her own narrative that makes them so?

Despite the limitations discussed above, the biggest issue with writing second person narration is that it is not as defined as first and third person narration. DelConte (2003) discusses this idea, explaining that;

critics have inaccurately positioned second-person in relation to first- and third-person narrations . . . Much of the confusion regarding the definition and positioning of second-person narration results from our inadequate terminology . . . The term second-person is misleading [as] it encourages identification based merely on the presence of the second-person pronoun 'you' (DelConte 2003: 4).

Taking this into account, second person narration, then, can not just be a presence of 'you' within the base narrative. In fact, I consider my narrative *Pathos* to be a mixture, a splicing, of first person (a more close narrative) and third (a more distant narrative) that allows for myself as the writer to be able to control plot flow from both an intensely personal

position — the 'I' narrator Seanne — but to also maintain a distance by 'hovering' above the text, yet still being able to 'speak' to the reader through the use of 'you'.

In light of theorists such as Radstone (1992), Fludernik (1994), DelConte (2003) and others, as well as my own considerations of second person narration, *Pathos* should perhaps be considered not simply as a second person narrative, but rather a multi-directional, multiple functioning, consuming narrative: it feeds on my training as a writer, as an academic; on previously written first, second and third person narratives, on the characters it explores, on the fictional world it creates and, perhaps, most importantly, it attempts to feed the potential reader, by allowing the reader to interact continuously with her or his own impulses. Further, without my base cannibalistic/autophagic impulses, my predilection to ingest the desire to create the narrative originally, this novel and any other after it, may never have been written. Brooks (1984) words this notion more succinctly (succulently), stating:

narratives portray the motors of desire that drive and consume their plots and also lay bare the narrative of narration as a form of human desire; the need to tell . . . and seduce and subjugate the listener, to implicate him [sic] in the thrust of desire' (Brooks 1984: 61).

By narratives seducing the reader, the reader is hopefully held enthralled in the narrative process, unable to extract themselves from that process, no matter how they may wish to. In this way, it is the writer via the narrator who creates the reader's consumption of the text — creating a cause-and-effect chain, and hinting, again, at the Ouroboros-like duality operating within the writing realm.

In light of the above, I consider that varying impacts and aspects of autophagic/cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses underlie all my creative writing processes — from the inception of an idea, to the attempt to convince the reader to also ingest this idea. Once the creative process has begun, it is one that is never-ending, continually evolving and most of all, constantly feeding and re-feeding for its own selfish purposes. Ouroboros-like desire then, never dies, despite effectively destroying the self the moment it begins to desire to devour.

Chapter Three

Feeding Them: Cannibalism, Gluttony, Consumption and Desire with the Novel *Pathos*

Desire is perhaps the most cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive act of all. Often connected to sexuality, desire first needs an object to desire; that object is another person. As this form of desire is 'something that is never completely fulfilled, its object [also] can not ever offer full satisfaction' (Brooks 1993: 261) and thus, the person who desires becomes locked in a loop.

As a writer, it is my desire to create, entwine and engulf that binds me to the text, that motivates me to type sentence after sentence in the hope to invite readers to 'dinner' and have them leave full. Writing a novel such a *Pathos*, a novel filled with both constructive and destructive desires, forms a relationship between 'I' as the writer and 'you' as the reader, whereby the 'reader stands in a naturally voyeuristic relationship to the book, so that authors and readers alike are made to share a sense of complicity toward their subject' (Charney 1981: 7) — that of both the narrating subject of *Seanne* and the overall unfurling of the plot. This complicity — a willingness of both 'I' the writer and 'you' the reader — then too interpolates outward and inward, reinvesting itself in the autophagic/ cannibalistic, gluttonous, consumptive process.

A physical novel has no desire of its own. It is an inanimate thing. Any meaning a novel comes to have is then attached by outside forces — namely the writer and the reader. Thus, the desire to write, to read, to engage, lies repressed and only can surface once the reader has felt its pull. Stratton (1987: 97-98) examines this notion of a text's repressed²⁶ sexuality, seeing a text as an object to be used. While I concede that all texts have a certain level of 'usability', I believe novels can also maintain a subject-hood, an agency that the writer has infused within the text in order to create words that desire to be used. Therefore while a text may be seen to embody a repressed sexuality, the element of desire has been placed deliberately in the text by the writer and therefore is not as repressed as may first appear. If desire is deliberately inserted in a repressed position, does this then imply that

²⁶ The use of 'repressed' here refers to that which is hidden under the surface of the text. For example, though a novel may be erotically charged, that charge lays dormant until the reader ignites that charge.

the desire is not so repressed after all? Though the reader attributes their own desires to the text, without the original desire of the writer to write, desire simply finds another outlet. Desire is always present, it is only its outlets that differ.

Radstone (1988) considers that:

in order to gain even a limited insight into the ways in which texts appeal . . . then the pleasures of those texts must be interrogated to reveal the ways in which they intertwine with the . . . needs and desires of readers (Radstone 1988: 14).

Pathos's sexual representations may not be to every reader's tastes, however, by the reader wanting to read *Pathos*, the desire for the novel itself becomes the first lure for full consumption of the text. Without the desire to devour, to cannibalise, the reader would cease reading, instead moving on to other texts.²⁷ Part of the creation of pleasure revolves around the reader. According to Aaron:

Pleasures, then, [focus on] the consumer of these representations, whose desires are met or activated by them, whose desires determine their production or popularity. These are perilous pleasures *in* [sic]... fiction but most importantly the perilous pleasures *of* the reader . . . and *of* [sic] society in general (Aaron 1999: 2)

Brooks also examines the pleasures inherent in a text, believing that 'the desiring subject may be in the narrative, and so always also the creator of the narrative . . . to make it part of the narrative dynamic' (1993: 261). By desire being fed in different directions — the writer desires to write, the narrative desires conclusion, the reader desires the text — the production of *Pathos* creates a cannibalistic repertoire for all involved. Like the glutton whose need to consume outweighs concerns of personal restraints and consequences, and often extends beyond self-imposed boundaries and restrictions. After all, how many of us have written and/or read long after we promised to go to bed?

Desire also underlies all character interaction in *Pathos*. From the moment Seanne opens the narrative, through her relationships with Lysandra and Kit and up until the final desperate attempt to lure Lysandra back, Seanne is driven by her desire, her need to not

²⁷ Just as Seanne herself seeks satisfaction elsewhere than her current relationship, I believe the reader needs to have her or his desire satisfied — whether that be through the enjoyment of voyeurism or the pleasures involved in reading itself. Reading, then, can be seen as a masturbatory act, whereby the reader pleasures herself solo, surrendering to a fantasy unfolding before them.

only devour another but be gorged on in return. Controlling the narrative, Seanne cannibalises all characters within her world, using them primarily for her own sustenance, her own desires. Within the trapped narrative world of Seanne, all characters function as an aspect of her desires — for friendship, sexual satisfaction, or the deeper desires she seeks in Kit. Hungry for the satisfaction that comes from having desires sated, Seanne's desire is her reason-for-being in every interaction she situates herself in and ripples throughout the other lives within *Pathos*.

In *Pathos*, all 'men [within the narrative] are seen only through the women's eyes' (Charney 1981: 58) - they are tainted first by Seanne's perverted female desires. Unlike many novels of the past, where women are objects controlled by the male, in *Pathos* all characters, male or female, are manipulated and motivated by the female. Seanne objectifies all those around her, presenting them only through what she deems their most cannibalising, desirable aspects. With Kit, it is his taboo whore body which steers Seanne towards him; with Lysandra, it is her hidden body beneath her professionally clothed self which ignites Seanne. For Seanne, the more transgressive and fetishised the person is, the more likely they are to be desired by her — and the more desirable they appear to her, the less likely they are to be represented beyond their desirable purposes. Hence, in some ways, Seanne does not differentiate between Kit and Lysandra's bodies. In fact, once Seanne and Kit have had sex, she frequently compares Lysandra and Kit, blending them together as one overall idealised desired object. Thus, Seanne, through her desire, not only consumes the idea of Lysandra and Kit, she encourages the reader to also deny Lysandra and Kit any 'real' subjectivity.

Seanne herself is not entirely subjective in her portrayal. By her very design — that is, as a fictional character — she too is an object and her subjectivity is dependant on participation and the autophagic/ cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses from both the writer and the reader.

In order to demonstrate the shifting ways in which subjectivity, objectivity and my overall assertion that the writing process is ultimately autophagic/cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive in its impulses, I have written the following section from the point of view of Seanne's psychologist, Elliot Ados, focusing on Seanne from an outside angle. This grants 'you' the reader a different means by which to engorge and engage with *Pathos*. So as to not disrupt the flow of the following section, the Harvard referencing system will be abandoned in favour of footnoting. As this section attempts to further bridge a gap between academic analysis and creative output, the use of the Harvard system distracts the reader, drawing attention to the referencing rather than the text.

CASE STUDY: DIANNE MURPHY*²⁸

By: Elliot Ados MA Psych

BACKGROUND:

Dianne [then 25] first presented herself to me as a result of pressure from her then girlfriend Sandra [then 29]. Sandra voiced concern with Dianne emotional fickleness, her inability to commit to a path of action and her self destructive behaviour. Faced with amounting duress from Sandra, Dianne agreed to seek professional advice. Dianne reports seeing one other counsellor before contacting myself, however, her experience with that counsellor was not positive and lead to some hesitation on her part towards further counselling.

Despite promising initial sessions, Dianne failed to present herself for further sessions for several months. It was during this abandonment of therapy that Dianne initiated and pursued a sexual relationship with a minor; a 15-year-old Melbourne prostitute named Lance. Their relationship terminated abruptly when Sandra became aware of the affair and confronted Dianne. The confrontation resulted in Dianne leaving Lance and Sandra alone in her bedroom, whereby the exact events that transpired remain obscured by both Sandra and Lance. However, what has emerged is that Lance was beaten and facially disfigured by Sandra. It's been insinuated that Lance was sexually abused while alone with Sandra. There is no actual evidence of this, however, given Lance's reactions (even though some reactions could be attributed to his experiences as an underage prostitute) indicates that he suffers from long term post traumatic stress disorder.

In order to gain access to the root of Dianne's desire for transgressive sex she indulged in with Lance, I recommended interactive session between Dianne, Sandra, Lance and myself. Sandra has refused to attend, threatening legal action if Dianne's harassment continues. Since the first initial requests, Sandra has changed her phone number and refuses all interaction between myself and my office, returning letters to sender and blocking incoming faxes and emails. Lance, however, agreed to attend six one hour sessions on the condition that he is paid for his time. He attended three of the six session and since then has become un-contactable, moving from his lodging. He has rumoured to have left the city. Dianne remains hopeful that he will return, however, I do not share her hope. Given his reluctance to answer questions and his elusive defensive behaviour, I do not foresee him returning to

²⁸ * Names have been changed to protect the identity of the persons involved.

sessions any time soon. I find this quite disheartening as aside from my primary concern with Dianne, I feel that Lance too would benefit from a structured counselling experience.

SESSION TRANSCRIPTS:

The following excerpts are from sessions conducted between myself and Dianne — over a four month period — and the interactive sessions between Dianne, Lance and myself. These excerpts are crucial insights towards understanding the emotional mechanics of Dianne and her self defeating behaviours when confronted with intimacy, responsibility and desire.

Excerpt 01:

E: You wanted him?

D: Yes.

E: No matter what?

D: Yes.

E: The question is why?

D: I don't know, he seemed so . . . experienced, so erotic. I wanted to completely have him.

E: And he let you?

D: Yes. I could do whatever I liked with him and he took it. It was very . . . addictive.

Excerpt 02:

E: Lance, why do you think Dianne pursued you?

[pause]

L: Forbidden fruit is sweeter, ain't it?

E: Perhaps. But 'it is not true that forbidden fruit is sweet simply because it's forbidden. It is sweet because it is sweet'²⁹. Maybe she just wanted to taste that sweetness.

L: Nice for her.

Excerpt 03:

D: I had to find . . . to meet him . . . to meet you.

L: Lucky me.

E: Often these 'first stirrings are characterised by the presence of a desired object'³⁰ [and] in this case you, you were what she wanted.

L: So it's like, my fault? I made her hot for me?

²⁹ Tucker 1991: 19.

³⁰ Bataille 1997: 129-130

E: No, that's not what I meant. I'm saying is that having discovered you, she wasn't satisfied with being distant from you, she had to feel it for herself. She saw you as erotic and 'the erotic can not be felt second hand'.³¹

L: I like said. Lucky me.

Excerpt 04:

E: Lance, what did you want from Dianne?

L: [inaudible]

E: Pardon?

L: Nothing.

E: No, not nothing. What did you say?

L: Well, I thought maybe . . . yah know . . . after we fucked a few times, she'd yah know, like me.

E: Romantically?

L: Pfft. No.

E: So you wanted friendship?

L: Yeah I suppose.

E: Good. So, Dianne what did you want?

D: I don't know, I was just fascinated by him.

E: Because of his age? His profession? Or something else?

D: That and everything about him. I had to have him. He just seemed so . . . naughty I wanted to know what the complete package would be like.

E: So while you wanted to possess him, he wanted friendship. It seems clear to me that's where it went wrong.

L: Nah, it went wrong when she fuckin' betrayed me.

E: And you wouldn't have felt betrayed if you didn't begin to trust —

L: Fuck you.

Excerpt 05:

E: [referring to Dianne's self harming and cutting] Do you remember how it started?

D: Not really, but I remember doing it when I was nine, after I got suspended from school for kissing one of the boys.

E: And you've done it ever since?

D: Yes.

³¹ Lorde 1993: 343

E: Do you think your relationship with Lance was extensions of that need to hurt yourself? After all, you knew if Sandra found out, she'd react badly and yet you continued to have sexual relations with Lance. Maybe by cheating, you subconsciously set yourself up to be hurt.

D: Maybe.

E: It also explains why you thought it was so intoxicating.

D: And what about Sandra?

E: What do you mean?

D: Why did I want to hurt her?

E: So she can hurt you in return. Because somewhere along the line Dianne, love and pain became the same to you.

Excerpt 06:

E: So if Sandra didn't discover the affair, how long to do you think you two would have continued?

L: Till she got bored of her new dolly.

Excerpt 07:

E: So what first attracted you to Sandra?

D: Um . . . I don't know. She just seemed so confident, so strong, so together.

E: Was she?

D: Mostly. Sandra is always in control, never lets too much show.

E: Wasn't that the problem towards the end?

D: Yes.

E: So the very thing that first attracted you later repelled you.

D: I guess.

E: Why do you think that happened?

D: I wanted her my way, not the way she really was.

E: And what was she really?

D: Angry when I wanted to be possessed by her.

ANALYSIS:

During our one-on-one sessions, Dianne constantly exhibited a desire to please, feeding off my reactions and reacting in the ways she seemed appropriate. If I showed displeasure with her answers, she became despondent and disruptive, often fiddling with the seams of her shirts, her hair or whatever in reach. Despite several questioning techniques, Dianne managed to avoid direct answers,

often ‘confessing’ an inability to verbalise her thoughts. Taking this into account, I recommended ‘homework’ that Dianne could complete between sessions and document her answers within a notebook that I would review weekly. Though initially keen, as sessions progressed and especially after the interactive sessions with Lance, her documentation and willingness to contribute became sporadic and unfocused. Her wavering commitment to self examination and successful understanding of her pre-stressors is symptomatic of her overall emotional fragility in relationships.

Dianne quests for an idealised form of love. When that love fails to constantly keep her engaged, she resorts to self destructive and attention getting behaviour in order to regain the focus. The older child of two older working parents, Dianne rapidly learnt how to manipulate situations so that she could escape satisfied, often leaving a mess behind her in her quake. Dianne does not ‘desire to be satisfied only for a second. At every point of time, [she] desires to be satisfied for the foreseeable future. Implicitly [she] wants what will satisfy in an abiding way. Only something that provides lasting satisfaction is truly good’³². Once the satisfaction factor is lessened, Dianne seeks to find satisfaction elsewhere. Her primary focus is her own gratification, taking only what she wants from a situation, person or event before moving on to the next. Though her relationship with Sandra progressed over a three year span, once Sandra ceased feeding Dianne’s need to satisfied, Dianne began to view the relationship as unsatisfactory and desire-less. This desire-less-ness then led her to idealise Lance. It is this need to be satisfied; to feel constantly ‘full’ that often preludes Dianne’s self destructive phases. She feels that she has to intake everything, almost to the point of sickness, before she is able to fully appreciate that experience. Similarly to a bulimic, Dianne feels the need to gorge and only once uncomfortable, does she seek ways to purge.

Unsatisfied with current situations [that is, the result did not grant her the attention or contentment she craved]; Dianne channels her disappointment through her body, expressing her non satisfaction in masochistic ways³³ — whether that be directly through self harm or subconsciously setting herself up. Again, from her parents, Dianne learnt the ‘bitter’ truth that she carried into adulthood, that ‘self destructive [women] are far more memorable . . . than female warriors, and they teach white western women that the most acceptable and admirable way to take a last stand . . . is to turn against themselves’³⁴.

During some of our more productive sessions, Dianne mentioned that often she would wake during the night to find her mother intoxicated and sobbing that marriage and children have ruined her

³² Koehn 2005: 45

³³ Masochism and sadism are of particular importance to this case study and will be addressed in a later interpretation.

³⁴ Pearson 1997: 21

life — just like that of her mother before her. Dianne would often sit with her mother during these periods, making sure she went to bed safely. Twice during one of her mother's 'phases' Dianne had to prevent her mother from drowning or hanging herself. On the one occasion Dianne attempted conversation with her father about her mother, her father slapped her face and accused her of being a hysterical bitch like her mother; warning her, she'd end up just like her. Dianne never attempted conversation with her father again, instead, he became a mostly avoided presence in the house, functioning to Dianne, only as a money maker and moody disciplinarian.

Though close as small children, by the time Dianne was 11, her younger brother Charlie began to emulate their father, leaving Dianne with no ally with their household. Alone and emotionally distant, Dianne would disappear for hours, returning home only for meals and sleep. It is during this time Dianne confesses to having several sexual encounters with local boys ranging in age between 12 and 21, each sex act becoming more increasingly daring. Several times Dianne admits to 'taking on' two or three boys at once and on going frequent sexual encounters with a brother and sister. She also confessed to sex acts with a lesbian teacher and intercourse with one of her father's friends. This 'appetite [of Dianne's] is characterised by its sheer insatiability'³⁵ whereby Dianne felt compelled to gorge on as much sexual activity at possible, at times to the risk of herself by deliberately placing herself in situations with older boys who could have easily abused her.

By the time Dianne left home at 16, she was notorious for her promiscuous behaviour, manipulative ways and ability to get what she wanted via sex, all of which can be traced back to her upbringing. Exposed to domestic violence, child abuse and ignored for hours on end, Dianne learnt to internalise her anger.. It is 'because we have developed a male-centred measure of aggression, that we have blinded ourselves to the ways in which girls develop and utilise power'³⁶ and hence, it is not surprising that it then leaked out in other ways. For Dianne, though powerless at home, the discovery of her sexual appetite unleashed a powerful tool within her; one she discovered she could wield at will. However, once she moved to Melbourne, Dianne consciously decided to edit her sexual history and presented Sandra with an idealised version of herself — yet another form of coercion on Dianne's behalf. (Ironically, Dianne expected complete openness from Sandra, and yet maintained her own shielding). By obscuring herself, Dianne's 'sexual subject hood meant that [she] had to repress or deny aspects of [her] sexuality and desire which did not conform... To become a clean and proper person . . . [she had] to sublimate aspects of desire that did not conform to the dominant norms of gender and sexuality'³⁷. Dianne perceived Sandra as wanting the inexperienced, naive country girl, the dominant cultural ideal, and thus presented Sandra with that image. Though able to swallow this

³⁵ Sceats 2000: 35

³⁶ Pearson 1997: 19

³⁷ Krzywinska 1999: 189

‘new’ self, and mostly maintain that self while in the presence of Sandra, Dianne’s façade began to unravel once she and Lance connected.

From the first moment Dianne discovered Lance, Dianne formed an idea about who he is and his emotional, sexual and physical make up, forming a pornographic picture of him within her head. Normally, ‘pornographic fantasies are . . . a realm in which we can embrace pleasures that we may have very good reasons to deny ourselves in real life (like the fact that something might not be nearly as much fun to do it as it is to think about)’³⁸. However, Dianne’s fantasies were unable to sustain her, her thoughts of Lance needing to be fed directly from the source — him. Much like an addict needs their fix, Dianne needed to feast on Lance, to satisfy her that ‘inescapable drive that . . . she manage[d] to find an outlet’³⁹ for.

While good ‘sex is about compromise, negotiation and shared imagination’⁴⁰, Dianne’s pursuit of Lance failed to be ‘good sex’ on all scores. In sessions, Dianne often refers to her interaction with Lance as ‘naughty’ or ‘dirty’, stating that Lance was like a lure that she had to nibble on. Considering her past, Lance offered Dianne a chance to re-explore [to re-taste] her sexual subjecthood without conventional relationship ramifications. For Dianne, Lance was the prescription she has not filled since leaving home and it is her ‘desire for the body itself, an erotic longing to have or to be the body’⁴¹ that pushed her forward towards was inevitable doom. As Lance relies on prostitution to support himself, he became an easy channel for Dianne’s repressed sexual desires, her need to conquer, to have and to totally have what was placed in front of her, to ‘celebrate and/or reconstitute individual and collective identities’⁴² without much consequence. Individually, Dianne and Lance are sexual manipulators, mirroring each other’s sexual misuse as both using sex as a means of support — Lance financially and Dianne emotionally. Collectively, Dianne and Lance

‘are “discontinuous”⁴³ — finite, closed, incapable of deep communication with others because much of their own self hood is closed to them. In the erotic encounter discontinuity and finitude are breached, if only momentarily. One body accedes to the other, breaches its walls, enters its bodily orifices’⁴⁴.

³⁸ Henderson 1992: 183

³⁹ Waddell 2003: 91

⁴⁰ Whatling 1993: 194

⁴¹ Brooks 1993: 275

⁴² Radstone 1988: 10

⁴³ Brooks (1993) quotations

⁴⁴ Brooks 1993: 275

It is only when Lance and Dianne partake of each other's body, that they are able connect — a superficial and self indulgent connection; Dianne connecting with Lance in order to satisfy her sexual desire and Lance connecting to Dianne to emotionally bind himself to her. Both these acts are completely egoistical and self effacing; both parties fail to recognise the base needs behind their sexual expressiveness.

From its conception to its conclusion, it is not surprising that the relationship between Lance and Dianne detonated. Once the thrill of the chase was satisfied, Dianne's compulsions towards Lance needed more stimuli. Having broken one taboo, sex with a minor, Dianne shifted the focus to further, Dianne having already learnt that 'degradation which turns eroticism into something foul and horrible, is better than the neutrality of reasonable, non destructive sexual behaviour'⁴⁵. Her internal need for destruction, for the absence of guilt and the pursuit of pure pleasure [if only for herself] further dictated her urges. Snaring herself in a cycle of attraction and repulsion towards Lance, Dianne found herself compelled by two contradictory urges — the thrill of taboo and the transgression of boundaries and although, 'the taboo would forbid the transgression , the fascination compel[led her]'⁴⁶ to further pursue Lance.

Many times throughout sessions, Dianne referred to Lance not by name, but by his profession only. Nicknaming him 'the whore child', she would often express contradictory sentiments towards him. These emotions ranged from fascination, to fetishism, to loathing, to repulsion, depending mostly on how successfully Lance was at the time in fulfilling Dianne's needs. Whenever he failed — such as an incident where stole her jewellery — Lance failed to be the alluring whore that Dianne wanted him to be. Breaking her ideal of him, she was forced to confront his depths rather than his surface persona. That Lance was buyable, a consumer-able product, able to be purchased, enjoyed and cast aside was Lance's most attractive quality, mostly because of Lance's 'association [with] sex and money . . . [which] gave an added sense of transgression'⁴⁷ of 'naughtiness' and 'dirtiness' by being with him. She understood perfectly that it is via money that he negotiates and surrenders himself and therefore, he became 'a fetishised material form of desire'⁴⁸ rather than a potentially serious relationship. From the beginning, Lance was never more than a consumer product to Dianne, unfortunately, he desired more from her.

⁴⁵ Bataille 1987: 140

⁴⁶ Bataille 1997: 68

⁴⁷ Krzywinska 1999: 194

⁴⁸ Stratton 1987:144

Considering both his profession and his age, Lance at times is both an object and subject to Dianne. As an object, he's a lure that silently entices Dianne's desire, as a subject, he's an active participant in their sexual game playing. Positioned somewhere in the middle, in an abject position, Lance is a personality in conflict with itself. He is neither child or adult, lover nor friend, masochist nor sadist — this flux, changeable at a moments notice — gave him an added sense of allure to Dianne. Unable to be labelled in simple terms [aside from her constant reference to him as a whore] Lance represented a site of experiences, emotions and playing fields that Dianne craved for herself. As evident in every sexual situation she described with Lance, her own 'abjection [became] a compromise of judgement and affect, a condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives'⁴⁹ none of which she could resist the urge to subjugate herself to. Experiencing taboo transgressive acts such as fisting, breath control play through erotic asphyxiation, oral sex during her menstrual cycle, biting and blood intake, Dianne's abjection formed itself only when she was able to feed off the by the body of another abject. For Dianne, 'that the mechanism of abjection centre[d] around objects that disrupt[ed] the body continuity'⁵⁰ and further exposed her to destructive behaviours.

Concurrent to Dianne's association with Lance, she also attempted to maintain her pre-existent relationship with Sandra. Assimilating themselves into somewhat traditional roles, Sandra being the 'butch' professional and Dianne the 'femme', Sandra was granted control by Dianne. Dianne openly admitting that Sandra often dressed Dianne, showed her where to eat and opened her to a social status that Dianne had not been invited into before. Though titillating at first, Dianne freely admits that because Sandra did not assert that control in the sexual realm. Sandra's lack of consistency — both in terms of emotional input and sexual behaviour — within that relationship granted Dianne what she felt was permission to cheat. This is despite Dianne identifying as a gay woman, her desire for Lance suggests her 'sexual identity does not have to correspond with fantasy'⁵¹.

In one of our more gruelling session, when asked to reflect on Lance's gender, Dianne became aggravated, yelling at me that 'fucking knows no gender'⁵² and only through further pushing, Dianne was forced to admit that while loves women, loves their entire femaleness, she often perceives maleness as a sexual outlet. With her attitude of 'women are lovers, men are fucks', Dianne constantly severs herself from emotional male attachment. This is most evident in her relationship with both her brother and her father, both of whom she has cut out of her life. Lance too confirmed her internal emotional editor, having also not lived up to expectations.

⁴⁹ Kristeva 1982: 9-10

⁵⁰ Kristeva 1982: 9-10

⁵¹ Whatling 1993: 199

⁵² Henderson 1992: 181

Though ‘lesbian butch and femme identities . . . are frequently read by heterosexuals as proof of how irresistible masculine and feminine roles are — an irresistibility they then go on to attribute to the naturalness of heterosexuality’⁵³ — her attraction and interaction with Lance is less than ‘natural’, even though ‘traditionally’ heterosexual . Staged from the onset, Dianne cast Lance into a specific role, seeking a specific performance from him, and when he did not readily accept that role, she axed him, leaving him to bear a hardened critic alone — Sandra.

Once Dianne and I began to wade through the murkiness of her relationship with Sandra and her interaction with Lance, it became clear that Dianne sought the thrill of rougher, more daring sex, and to transfer it into her day to day life. Having had light sadomasochist experiences with a previous partner and indulging in erotic asphyxiation with Lance, Dianne admits to at first feeling offended by Lance’s assumption that she would endure that, then later intoxicated by the evidence of bruising, soreness and the lingering eroticism ignited inside her. Having read her so swiftly at a level that she had not been read at before , Dianne had to unshackle herself from her previous ‘refus[ual] to acknowledge the existence of such feelings [or commit] an injustice to[wards] the complicated mix of emotions, desires and fantasies experienced’⁵⁴ within her life thus far. Despite freely admitting that her attraction to Sandra was based on the presence of strength, power and possibly domination, Dianne was unable to articulate her desires to Sandra, and consequently, her relationship with Sandra did not progress to the sadomasochistic levels that Dianne desired. Instead, ‘held enthralled’ by the experienced hands of the minor, Dianne was instantaneously faced with her own secret desires. She then attempted to ignite the same hunger within her concurrent relationship. However, as neither woman had broached the topic within the relationship, Dianne’s attempt to lure Sandra into sadomasochistic play failed. By the conclusion of their relationship (and sadomasochism still being unspoken between them,) Dianne attempted to force the issue, putting her desires on display for Sandra. Unfortunately, as there had been no discussion between the two of them and no boundaries or rules set, Sandra failed to respond, spiralling Dianne further into destructive behaviour. Dianne reverted to cutting herself and other self destructive behaviours. While many may perceive her actions as extreme and self hating, in this instance, I believe her ‘self-mutilation and masochism are paradoxical means of self preservation’⁵⁵. Seeing her self as emotionally needing and yet unable to gain what she desired, to have her hunger sated, Dianne reverted to self mutilation as a means of self interest, almost as a way to remind herself what she wanted. Similarly to masturbation, in this case Dianne’s cutting was more an indicator of pleasure than of pain. This mingling of pleasure and pain indicates that

⁵³ Bordo 1995: 294

⁵⁴ Whatling 1993: 197

⁵⁵ Ghaly 2004: 31

by freely choosing to victimise herself, she protects against the humiliation of being victimised. In this way she preserves a sense of personal control. However, the pretence that she truly likes pain may gradually become unconscious. The masochism inherent in many transformations is not a component of a . . . female adjustment . . . Rather it reveals a victim struggling to adapt⁵⁶

to a system of sexual play that she has had limited interaction with.

When first presented with the possibility that she may be masochistic, Dianne was resistant of further discussion, reverting to traditional notions of femininity, with her underlying argument being, women are not 'sado-masochistic because they are not seen to be'⁵⁷. Having never had anyone around her who ventured into a sado-masochistic relationship, I suggested she document every relationship she's entered into, friendship or otherwise and analyse the power structures associated with that interaction. Starting with her first close friendship when she was a child and concluding with her interaction with Lance, it became obvious that in Dianne's life 'all relationships are sado-masochistic ones, with the possibility that the roles can be temporarily changed for purposes of experimentation, but there still remains a fundamental distinction between master and slave'⁵⁸.

With her childhood friend, Dianne was constantly dominated by Annabel, Annabel being the think tank and main instigator towards all trouble they got themselves into, from school yard pranks, to setting fire to one of the local farmer's hay sheds. During all of their escapades, Dianne maintained that she was just going along with Annabel, promoting the image of innocence and victim-hood that she sought solace in. Continuing until Annabel's family moved away from the area, Dianne and Annabel's friendship was one of the first markers of her desire to be dominated by another person; and therefore avoid all personal responsibility for her own behaviour. In effect, Dianne used her friendship with Annabel as a spring board in which to enact her own desires without having to 'own' the consequences. Though Dianne would receive punishment from both her parents for her actions and from Annabel herself if Dianne resisted her plans, Dianne would attempt to negotiate the severity of punishments so that she received the punishment she most looked forward to, such as spankings, food deprivation and begging for forgiveness. 'Unlike sadism, which demands a true victim, [Dianne's] masochism [formed] a contractual alliance. [As] the willing victim [she] provocatively inspire[d] and . . . formally arrange[d] these punishments'⁵⁹ in order to satisfy a hunger she had not yet identified.

⁵⁶ Freedman 1986: 115

⁵⁷ Whatling 1993: 197

⁵⁸ Charney 1981: 34

⁵⁹ Studler 1990: 235

Though their friendship ended when Dianne was 13, Dianne's desire to be subordinated remained, intensifying as she entered puberty.

With new appetites to explore, Dianne's first few sexual experiences were unremarkable, losing her virginity to a farmer's son in a paddock during Easter holidays and entering a string of short lived, unsatisfying sexual encounters, all of which allowed her to play the willing slave to a dominant sexual partner. Before leaving home at 16, Dianne entered a lesbian relationship with her high school sports teacher, Marcy. Marcy was Dianne's first fully functional lesbian relationship and though she was a still student, Dianne admits to feeling a sense of liberation and excitement whenever she was nestled in Marcy's bed. Marcy was a particularly stabilising influence in Dianne's life, interested in Dianne's emotional development and intellectual needs. Teaching her the value of self awareness, honesty and trust, Marcy allowed Dianne a freedom that she had not yet experienced with any other relationship. Adopting the role of mother, lover and friend, Marcy was the experienced sexual teacher that guided the fledgling Dianne through her desire. More interestingly, she was one of the few people in Dianne's life who reflected a positive sexual image back to her. However, due to the circumstances of their relationship, this one too failed.

Knowing Dianne in the way that I have come to, I believe that though she maintains that 'it just happened', Dianne deliberately pursued the relationship knowing that it would fail and the punishment received would be extreme. It's no wonder then, that once she left her home town, she repeated the same pattern in her other relationships, 'for the person who, out of self preservation, inflicts pain on others, is someone tortured from within'⁶⁰.

It is with this baggage behind her that she entered her relationship with Sandra and pursued Lance. Dianne wanted the dominance that she saw in Sandra with the lack of inhabitation she got from Lance. Though Sandra controlled her in some ways, it was in the bedroom that Dianne really wanted Sandra's domination. For Dianne, domination is the purest form of love she can imagine, to be completely owned by another allows Dianne to explore her own limitations and desires without having to deal with the responsibility of owning her actions. By having someone call all the shots, being dominated

does not repress the desire for recognition; rather it enlists and transforms it. Beginning in the breakdown of the tension between self [Dianne] and other [Sandra], domination proceeds through alternate paths of identifying with or submitting to powerful others who personify the fantasy of omnipotence⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ghaly 2004: 21

Dianne saw Sandra as godlike in her presentation of self, however, when Sandra began to show her human-ness, Dianne's faith in Sandra's ability to be the controller that she sought faltered and instead of speaking to Sandra about her needs, Dianne switched her obsession towards Lance, sabotaging her future with both.

CONCLUSIONS:

Currently, Dianne is on a prescribed course of mood elevators to combat her fluctuating mood swings as well as counselling sessions twice weekly.

In order for Dianne to change her current behaviours, first she must realise the patterns she engages herself in prior to entering any relationship, friendship or otherwise. While she is making progress towards understanding how these patterns developed, Dianne still refuses to acknowledge that she deliberately creates situations that will ultimately lead to chaos, pain and emotional hardship. Until Dianne begins to understand her self sabotaging, self defeatist behaviours, I can not foresee her relationships changing.

At present, Dianne's relationship with Sandra remains irreparable and her association with Lance is at a standstill, neither Sandra nor Lance wanting any future contact with Dianne. This is despite Dianne's constant obsession with both having a role in her future. Hence, we are at cross roads in our counselling, having tackled some major issues already, and Dianne reluctant to take any steps towards positive and long term behaviour changes. Fearful of what might happen if she were to implement changes in her life, Dianne feels overwhelmed by what she has already revealed and how different her life may be if she were to implement the changes we've discussed. Beginning with honesty to herself and what she hungers for, Dianne looks forward to combating her fear of someone getting to know who she really is without the pretences she has previously erected.

While the above may seem somewhat self-indulgent, it does, in fact, reinforce my overall contention - that my creative writing processes are intrinsically bound to cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses. Though the subject — formerly Seanne as narrator of *Pathos* — has, in this instance, become the object of Elliot's 'examination', my overall impulse to cannibalise, gluttonise and consume remains solid. This impulse is perhaps the only consistently recurring 'theme' apparent in every piece of creative writing I produce. My characters, plots, and narrative style, are in a constant state of flux, as new arcs, ideas and 'tricks' are fashioned; however, it is the need to gorge, expel and invite others to partake that

⁶¹ Benjamin 1988: 219

always pushes me further. Indeed, this impulse is perhaps the only thing left, when the current creative resources are exhausted.

Linked to this, is the notion that my “impulses-infused” characters (that is, my characters created from my processes of autophagia, cannibalism, gluttony and consumption) are also bound by the same Ouroboros-like cycle I identified when creating *Pathos* as a whole. While ‘I’ the writer and ‘you’ the reader ‘partake’, ‘they’ the characters also become caught in the cycle, feeding on and off each other — and that cycle depends on the point of view from which a ‘voyeur’ watches. While the reader has been identified in Cultural Studies theorisation as a somewhat voyeuristic construct, the characters within the novel can also be identified in this way: they watch each other and form ideas and opinions based on what they see. It is only when ‘I’ as the writer allow such self-indulgence as the above Elliot excerpt, that what is seen is ‘actualised’. However, I also consider that ‘you’ the reader have already formulated your own ideas and opinions, and that they have originated from your own autophagic, cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses. In fact, now that ‘you’ have read my thesis novel and this exegesis, some aspect of my work will always remain part of your self — and thus, the cycle, while always in motion, always present, never really ends.

Conclusion

And Still the Beasts Feed . . .

As explored in the above chapters, autophagic/cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses offer different ways of perceiving and exploring the writing and reading experience. These impulses are far more prevalent (insidious) than I first realised when I began this PhD thesis. Given that one of my main premises in this thesis is that these impulses constantly surface as I write, my process of 'writing [then] functions not only as a catharsis of the soul but as a record of . . . regaining power' (Harris 2000: xxii) over these impulses. This catharsis — even if momentary — allows me, as a writer, to feel fulfilled at the moment of completion, and while I envision others indulging in the same process, I am, for the moment, sated. Further, while the intensity I feel when 'caught' by these impulses may differ from the reader's, 'we' are both intrinsically linked from the moment the reader reads the first word of *Pathos*. At that moment, not only have I the writer succeeded in luring the reader, in re-creating the Ouroboros process in another, the reader too is about to embark on her or his own Ouroboros-like process — one from which she or he can never fully escape.

As for my own escape, it is (was) brief.

Though *this* project is complete (or near complete, as I have yet to publish *Pathos*), and I have succumbed to autophagic/cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses in the creation of this thesis, I am still left with a niggling desire that demands to be satisfied. The continuation of this feeding process — begun by *Pathos*, affected by academic research, influenced by literature, enhanced by life, and so on — has led to me to begin another novel, ironically titled *Catharsis*. *Catharsis* picks up on the life of Kit. Written by mixing both first person narrative to portray the present and the third person omniscient to replay the past, *Catharsis* tracks Kit after his interactions with Seanne. Though I am aiming for *Catharsis* to be a stand-alone novel (that is, it can be read without reading *Pathos*), it is only through writing *Pathos* and being left unsatisfied, that *Catharsis* was born. Unable to prevent myself from once again dipping into that impulsive mixing bowl, *Catharsis* — through Kit — acknowledges *Pathos* and moves beyond it, in effect feeding on other, less explored aspects of my self. While *Pathos* allowed me to explore Seanne and be satisfied where she 'ended', the self who (that, perhaps?) created Kit desired more; as too have some of *Pathos*'s readers. Further to this, once I caved in to *Catharsis*, the cannibalistic writing monster demanded more and thus, a further novel *Solace* is planned, once *Catharsis* is

completed. Though sketchy in the details at present, *Solace* extracts one of *Catharsis*' characters from the mix and places her or him into her or his own narrative. It is via this as yet unknown character that the reader is then linked back to *Pathos*.

Hence, it is not only the creative physical act of writing that pulsates with Ouroboros-like impulses - my entire writing realm beats to the same drum. While each novel does not need the others to 'complete' it, tying the three novels together via the use of certain characters, allows each novel to devour the other two on a deeper level. For example, the reader (if she or he reads all three) can consume the characters from both an external vantage point (the reader as voyeur to the narrative) and from an internal position (how those characters see themselves and others), which then in turn, offers the reader a great choice of consumption and creates further Ouroboros-like spirals. For example: in *Pathos*, readers are forced to accept the world as *Seanne* sees it, even if they do not completely 'swallow' it. By also reading *Catharsis*, readers are able to get a taste of *Seanne* from a different point of view. Seeing these characters from shifting positions not only gives them the presence of being 'whole', but also offers the reader — and to a point, the writer — different ways to consume the same character. Without *my* desire to cannibalise, to gluttonise and to consume these characters, almost to the point of obsession, the reader could only consume one character layer. By intertwining the three novels and their characters, the reader can then choose which layer she or he most wants to swallow. However, the reader needs to be compelled to read all three novels, in order to gain that perspective. This is yet another way in which as the writer, I attempt to ignite the reader's own impulsive desires.

It is not only the novels (and their titles) that are reflective of my impulses, the writing process itself also replicates the circular nature of autophagia/cannibalism, gluttony and consumption. Once I have cannibalised, but have neither the time nor the opportunity to write, I am tormented by this inaction, by this lack of opportunity to purge. This inaction then becomes a form of suffering (pathos). It is only when I am free to write that I experience a sense of liberation (catharsis). The subsequent peace that results from seeing fiction evolve grants me a sense of relief (solace).

Unfortunately, solace never lasts long because, like wanting something delicious, I crave the next, even more decadent taste, ad infinitum!

Recognising these impulses within myself and attempting to create (exploit) the same urges within the reader, deepens the already implicit relationship between the writer and the

reader. As a writer, for me to recognise that I am deliberate in my attempt to excite the reader to consume, then makes me more aware of the ways in which I attempt to lure via narrative. Though a narrative may be uncomfortable for a reader to read, by sprinkling the right ingredients through the narrative, a reader can still be compelled to partake. These ingredients are crucial for an entire novel to be consumed.

According to Hunt and Sampson, 'when [writers] sit down to write, [we] are not simply finding the best words to express what we want to say, but finding the best words to what we want to say to *someone* [sic] (Hunt and Sampson 2006: 73). Imagining the reader and writing specifically for that imagined reader, I as a writer create that imagined reader from my own experiences of being a reader.⁶² By doing this, I not only cannibalise those experiences and incorporate them into the writing process, I also envision ways in which I can further indulge and share these impulses. Like an egg, I the reader (the white) and I the writer (the yolk) may be separate, but I am still bound together, so that both positions of reader and writer operate cohesively and in circularity. Hunt and Sampson state that 'being our own reader-in-the-writing process, then, is an essential part of the dialogic or reflexive relationship with ourselves that the writing process involves' (Hunt and Sampson 2006: 89). Without my reader self, my writer self may not have been to create the fictional world it has. Without my writer self, my reading self may not have been exposed to the theoretical material it has. This PhD project has been indeed, a long 'suffering' but ultimately pleasurable experience.

In conclusion, I write because I succumb to autophagic/cannibalistic, gluttonous and consumptive impulses inherent in my creative writing process, and I indulge in this process in order to write. Like Seanne and Kit's relationship, my constant 'struggle' may have a pinpointable beginning – that is, my first taste of literature as a child – but it has no end; it remains, as always, my personal Ouroboros – and I can not envision escape . . . Bless you, Ouroboros.

And for you, dear reader, one last taste . . . from *Catharsis*:

⁶² That is, both a fictional and academic reader.

Friday afternoon. First there's the flash, then the sound of heavy breathing and a husky voice, 'look at me, that's it, good boy'. Next, a shuffle behind me and a rough hand clamps over my mouth, digging fingers into my cheek. Then I'm thrown onto a bed as my 'attacker' pushes my face into the bare motel mattress.

'Hold him,' says husky voice of Stephan, the photographer. I'm flat on my stomach and pinned down, hot breath on my neck. I pretend to squirm and the camera fires off a series of flashes in quick session.

My 'attacker' — Aaron — releases his grip and begins to strip me, yanking at my clothes, almost tearing them off. He strips himself, slapping his cock against my arse and thighs.

Stephan moans behind his lens.

'Face me,' Stephan says and I turn onto my back, looking at the camera up side down.

'You joining us, Stephanie?'

'Hmm. Give us a sec . . . and what did I tell you about calling me that?'

Aaron chuckles and, while Stephan fiddles with his camera, I sit up and put my hands on Aaron's cock. He grabs my face and forces his cock into my mouth. He face fucks me a few times before he pulls out and slaps his cock across my face. Then he's back in my mouth.

'Easy, man,' says Stephan, 'He's not going anywhere.'

Aaron grunts and Stephan pushes me forward until I'm kneeling, Aaron lying in front of me. Stephan spreads my arse cheeks and inserts one, then two fingers. Aaron once again grabs my face and pushes me to his cock. Behind me, Stephan tears open a condom packet and in one thrust, he's in and up my arse, fucking me deeply. Aaron matches his pace, and for a while they fuck me in at the same pace. Then they swap. Aaron gloves up, rams his cock into me, grabbing my hips and pulling me on to him. He fucks me with anger.

'You like that, whore?' he growls at me. 'That's it, you take all my cock, you take it all, you dirty whore.'

Excited, Stephan fucks my face harder, fucks until I gag and he groans loudly. Then he pulls out, jerks his cock a few times and shots cum over my lips and chin. Without warning, Aaron also pulls out, grabs me around the waist and slams me — face first — against a wall.

'You want it back in, you whore?' he hisses at me, rubbing my face into the plaster. 'You miss having a cock inside you?'

'Take your hand away,' says Stephan, 'then he'll answer.'

'Will you, you bitch? Will you be a good boy?'

I nod and he releases me.

'Well, whore, you want my cock back in your arse? Want me to bust your hole wide open?'

I swallow.

'Yeah, fuck me.'

'That's all? Yeah fuck me? Come on, whore, talk dirty . . . I wanna hear how much you need cock in your hole. Everyone knows you love it, you love a hard cock in your dirty hole.'

He shoves back into me. Fucks as hard as he can. I make a show of moaning and panting, occasionally giving him the required 'oh yeah', 'that's it', and pretending I like it, that I'm not bored and sore. I think about buying cigarettes and stealing chocolate bars.

'Oh God, you dirty whore, you love it, you LOVE IT,' Aaron groans, exciting himself. Then he grunts, pulls out. He whirls me around, forces me to my knees and face fucks me until he cums. I spit his cum out.

'I wanted you to swallow,' he says and slaps my face. He grins when I hold my cheek. He stares down at me until I lower my eyes.

'I'm gonna go,' he says, turning his back on me and patting Stephan on the shoulder, whispering something in his ear. Stephan smiles and I stand, grab a pillow case and wipe my face. I watch Aaron dress quickly and then leave without looking back. Stephan's body language changes the moment he's gone.

He turns to me, a concerned look on his face.

'So . . . you're okay?' he says.

'Yeah.'

'You're not hurt?'

'Nah.'

Silence. I gather my clothes.

'So, what do we owe you?'

'Double, cause there were two of yah. Plus the stuff yah filmed and shit. Four hundred.'

'Three fifty.'

'Nah, four.'

Stephan grins.

'Can I give you two hundred now and owe you the rest? Maybe you can come round my place about six and I'll give you the other two hundred. I'll even shout you dinner. Whatever you want.'

'Yeah . . . alright.'

'And you sure you're okay?'

'Yeah.'

'I sometimes get carried away when Aaron's around . . . '

'Yeah I know.'

'And you know I'm not usually like that. . . '

'I know.'

'And I sometimes I don't . . . '

'Look, it's 'k, I'm fine.' He sighs. 'I wanna have a shower before I go. 'k?'

Stephan smiles.

'Of course. Towels should be in there. Let me know if you need anything else.'

'k.'

I begin to walk off.

'Oh, and Kit . . . '

'Yeah?'

'Thanks.'

I nod and head for the bathroom. When I walk back out, Stephan and his camera are gone and two crisp green notes lay on the freshly made bed.

He wakes slowly, needing to urinate and instantly knows he's in a strange bed. He looks around a little and then down at himself. He sees tubes in his arms, a cast on his leg, and he can't see through his left eye. His head is wrapped tightly and it makes it hard for him to hear things. It hurts him when he breathes and his tummy and hips are covered with bruises and a large red streaked bandage. He gently feels the bandage and knows that there's a big cut underneath. He wants to look and moves forward a little to peel off an edge to peek under. As he moves, pain shoots through him and he yelps. His screams bring a nurse in to see him and she rushes over to his bed, putting her hand on his.

'You okay, darling?'

He tries to speak but his lips are cracked and his mouth is dry. He shakes his head.

'Yeah, I know it hurts, darling, but you'll be better soon.'

She fiddles with a machine near him and he begins to feel sleepy again. He closes his eyes, and the last thought he has is that he's about to wet the bed.

When next he wakes, his head a little clearer but his sheets are wet. He feels embarrassed by this and looks about to see if anyone has seen. As he looks about, he notices a water jug on a table in front of him and a bowl with jelly and ice cream. He gently leans forward and picks up the water. His hands shake as he does and he spills water over the table and onto the bed. The water gives him an idea and he tips more into his bed,

hoping people will think it's water and not him that wet the sheets. Then he drinks what's left of his jug and eats slowly, his tummy feeling strange inside him.

As he eats, he realises that he's hospital and he doesn't know why or how he got there. He looks for his Mummy and his Daddy but they're not beside his bed — not like they were when his baby brother Lincoln was in hospital. They saw Lincoln every day until Lincoln went to heaven to play with the angels. He still doesn't understand why Lincoln didn't want to stay and play with *him* instead of some stupid angels in heaven. He reckons they wouldn't even play monsters up there. Stupid Angels! And Stupid Hospital too! He sighs. He just wants his Mummy and Daddy. He wonders where they are.

Thinking about Mummy and Daddy makes him cry and his tummy hurts as he heaves. He tries to stop, to be a tough boy, but the more he tries, the more he hurts. He cries harder. He doesn't know how long he's crying but as he does, a different nurse comes in and pokes needles into his hand and thighs and makes the machines he's connected to beep. He tries to smile, but his face hurts where the bandage is so he stops.

'Hello,' he croaks and she nods at him before walking out the room. He thinks of calling her the B word, but he's not allowed to say that, so he instead, raises his left hand and sticks his middle finger up at the doorway. Stupid *bitch*, he thinks. He's still allowed to *think* the B word and often he *thinks* all the other words that Mark Dawson's dad calls Mark Dawson's mum when he's *been boozing*. His own Daddy doesn't *booze*, he doesn't smoke either, he just stays up late at night, going through piles of papers and shaking his head. A week ago, he caught Daddy crying over the papers and Mummy came in and hugged him, saying it will be okay, we'll find the money. Daddy then said the F word and said 'that fucking treatment didn't even work, but we still have to pay for it!' Mummy said 'Shh, I know babe, but we had to try to save him' and then they sat on the floor and cried and he got scared and ran back to bed and hid under the covers. The next day Mummy and Daddy were happy again and gave him lots of kisses. He wishes they would give him kisses now.

He sighs. He feels so alone. He lies back and closes his eyes and without realising it, he drifts to sleep.

He doesn't know how long he's asleep, but when he wakes again it's daylight and two women and a doctor are near his bed. His head feels clear and his lips wet. No one has said anything about his wet bed, but now it's dry again.

'Where's my Mummy?' he says.

'Hello Lockie,' says the doctor. 'This is Mrs Waynewright and Ms Galandi, they need to talk to about something. Now it's very important that you listen to them and answer any of their questions. Can you do that?'

'Yes.'

'Good boy.'

'Hi Lockie,' says Mrs Waynewright, 'do you know where you are?'

'Yes. Hospital. Where's Mummy?'

'We'll get to that . . . but for now, I need to know if you remember how you got here?'

He shakes his head a little and his nose and neck hurts. The doctor says something about impact am-nes-sha and Ms Galandi writes something down in her notebook. He doesn't know what am-nee-sha is, but he gets scared and starts to cry again. He doesn't want am-nee-sha anymore if it keeps him away from Mummy.

'Oh, honey,' says Mrs Waynewright, 'I know you're scared, you need to be strong just a little longer, then you can have some more ice cream, okay?'

'k.'

Mrs Waynewright sits on the bed and touches his leg.

'Lockie, honey, do you want know an accident is?'

'Yes,' he says nodding, 'When somethin' bad happens and it's not mean ta.'

'Yes,' Mrs Waynewright says and looks at Ms Galandi. Ms Galandi nods, filling in more pages in her notebook. 'Yes, that's exactly it.' She pauses. 'Well . . . you and your mummy and your daddy were an accident. A big one. A truck lost control and smashed your mummy's car into a wall . . . '

Everyone stares at him and tears run down his face. 'I'm sorry, Lockie, but your mummy and daddy were killed . . . '

He doesn't hear anything else. He starts to scream.

Stephan hands me twenty-three photos, one by one.

'They're the ones that came out the best,' he says. 'From the other day.'

'Yeah.'

'There's some great shots in there. You're very photogenic. Artistic even.' he says.

I flick through the photos slowly.

'Yeah, they're cool,' I say and he smiles at me. I really couldn't care less.

'Wait here, I'll get your money.'

Stephan turns and walks barefoot across the polished wood floor. He shuts a sliding door behind him, locking me away from the rest of the house. I sit back on his overstuffed couch and light a smoke. I know from previous visits that hidden cameras film my every move and the only room free of his camera's eye is his bedroom. Stephan likes to watch, believing that the only real way to know someone is to see what they do when they're alone. I don't know if I believe that, but know that he makes me aware of every movement I make. I take another drag of my cigarette and I exhale slowly. I look around.

Since I was here last, Stephan has finished redecorating. In less than a month, he's changed his walls from a bright blue to a milky white, his lounge suite from a deep red to a boring beige. All his paintings are gone, replaced instead with floodlights that point towards a huge entertainment system. Only his glass coffee table with a mermaid underneath it survived. I'm not surprised — he told me once his mother gave him that. She's dead now. Maybe that's why this was his last room, the last one she would have visited. Or maybe it's because this was the last room that still hinted of his life before his wife and daughter left. I've never asked him why they left, but for some reason, a year ago, he began removing all traces of them, almost as if they never existed. Since then, I see Stephan more often and sometimes when he's drunk and stoned, he calls me his daughter's name — Holly.

The door slides open and he walks back into the room. I turn to him. He smiles and hands me an envelope. I don't bother counting the money, Stephan never pays short.

'Thanks,' I say.

He smiles again, sits down next to me.

'Thank you,' he says. I nod. 'So, pizza for dinner?'

'Yeah, pizza's cool.'

'The usual?'

'Yeah but no hairy fish this time.'

'Check, no anchovies.'

Stephan reaches over me, picks up the phone and dials. He winks at me while he places the order and then mimics for me to get him a drink. I nod and head towards the kitchen, amazed at his change of attitude over the past six months. Before then, I was not allowed to wander about freely.

I walk into his stainless steel kitchen and open the fridge. It's filled with several different bottles of beer, some butter, a carton of milk, half a loaf of brown bread and little else. I grab two bottles from the smallest row and head back into the lounge.

Stephan is hunched over the mermaid table, carefully rolling a joint. He pats the cushion next to him. I sit like a good little doggie. I hand him his beer and crack the other open for myself. He chinks his bottle against mine. I drink and watch him. He turns to me.

'You want some?' he says, licking along the seam of his joint paper.

'Nah.'

'Aw, come on, I hate smoking alone.'

'Nah, I'm cool.'

He shrugs, 'All right then, go make yourself useful and pick a movie.'

'Like what?'

'Whatever.'

'Yah want somethin' normal or dirty?'

'Up to you.'

He sits back and lights the joint, inhaling deeply.

I sit on the floor, open the bottom draw and begin to flick through his movie collection. *Reservoir Dogs*, *The Exorcist*, *Cock Hungry Cum Sluts*, *Blackadder: the Series*. Behind me, I hear him breath out deeply, sighing as he does. I choose *Pitch Black* from the hundreds of movies he has and crawl back to Stephan on my hands and knees, movie in my mouth. He takes it off me and then offers me a hand up. I sit.

'Have you seen this before?' he says

I shake my head.

'It's pretty good,' he says, 'the monsters are well done. Very believable.'

'Sweet.'

He presses several buttons on several remotes and the TV comes to life, sound system booming around us. I settle back, drinking my beer.

About half way through the movie, the doorbell rings. Stephan hands me a fifty and tells me to get the door and keep the change. I do what I'm told, I answer the door, I carry the pizzas inside and I pocket the change. I put the pizzas on the table and ask Stephan if I can have a drink. He pauses the movie.

'Sure,' he says, 'but wait here, I'll get them.'

When he returns, he's carrying a tray with six beers, two glasses and a jug of water on it. He grins at me as he puts the tray in front of me. I smile back, aware of Stephan's obvious seduction. He really doesn't need to try that hard, for a fifty, he could fuck me anytime.

He returns next to me, flips the pizza boxes opens and gestures for me to help myself. I do. For a while, we eat in silence, gobbling down both the pizza and the monsters on the screen. I've always loved monster movies. Then slowly, as the pizza crusts harden in the empty boxes, Stephan makes his move, he puts his arms around me and rubs my head.

'I liked your long hair better,' he says.

'Yeah, yah told me.'

'You're going to re-grow it?'

'Yeah, maybe.'

'Though you look tough shaved. Kind of sexy. Especially with the scars.'

He grins, and licks along the scar on my face and the one behind my ear. At the same time, his hand creeps over my thigh and between my legs. I spread my thighs. He turns to me, lifts my t-shirt and kisses my stomach, his hands on my cock. I don't stop him. Then he kisses upwards until he kisses my mouth. I return his kiss. He breaks away, stares into my face, kisses along the cheek that Aaron slapped.

'You amaze me sometimes,' he says.

'Yeah?'

'Hmm, sometimes, the things you let me . . . let us do . . .'

'I let yah cause yah pay me.'

'So, it's just about the money?'

'Mostly.'

'Not for some other reason?'

'Like what?'

'I don't know, we've known each other a while now . . .'

'Where yah goin' with this Steph?'

'I don't know, I just thought . . .'

'Thought what?'

'That maybe it could be more?'

'Like what? Yah wanna date me?'

'No, not date.'

'Then what? Yah want freebies?'

'No.'

'So, what do yah want?'

'I don't know exactly. I thought, since we get along so well I could see you more . . . well . . . permanently.' Pause. 'And you wouldn't have to do this anymore, I'd pay for everything. You could even stay here.'

'Woah, Steph, hold up. Yah want me to live with yah?'

'I have the room. And you'd have your freedom.'

'But no whorin' right? I only fuck who *you* want me to, yeah?'

'Is there something wrong with that? You could do worse than me, you know.'

'I know, but I ain't anyone's pet.'

'I'm not asking you — '

'Yeah, yah are.'

I stand, notice the hurt, insulted look on his face, but ignore it.

'Look,' I say, 'thanks for the pizza and stuff, but I think I oughta go. Yah stoned and lonely or somethin' and this conversation is gettin' weird and I don't think we oughta get into this. So, I'll talk to yah later, 'k.'

I start to walk off.

'Kit, I didn't mean . . .'

I don't hear the rest of what he says, I close his front door behind me.

He hovers, wary, just outside the door. Mrs Wayneright said this will be his new home for now and he promised to be a good boy, but he doesn't want to walk inside the room. He doesn't want a new home but he knows he has no old home anymore, so he peeks his head around the doorway. Mrs Wayneright catches him and tells him to come here and meet Mr and Mrs Brenning. He reluctantly walks inside.

'Why hello there,' says the woman and the man smiles at him. He stands still, eyes wide, watching them watching him. He knows it's rude to stare, but he stares at them anyway. The man has a beard and fuzzy hair and she has a big nose and red hair — just like him. He touches his head where they had to shave him after 'the accident' and feels prickly hair growing around his new deep scar. He didn't realise he had no hair there until they took the bandage off his head. Then the laughing doctor told him a piece of glass went into his head and they had to give him an operation to get it out. She said he was lucky. He didn't feel very lucky then and he doesn't feel very lucky now. He just feels . . . not like him at all.

'Say something,' says Mrs Wayneright, dragging him out of his thoughts.

'Oh, hi,' he says and smiles a little.

'Good boy. Now Lockie, these are your foster parents, Antoinette and Dominic Brenning. Annie, Nick, this is Lachlan Ewing.'

'Pleased to meet you,' says the beard man and offers his hand. He gingerly takes it and feels the man's soft warm handshake. It reminds him of his Daddy's and he bites his lip to stop from crying.

'We're both pleased to met you,' the woman says and playfully punches beard man on the arm. 'When we heard about you, we rang Penny right away and put our name down to foster you. We couldn't believe we got you! We've wanted a boy for a while. We've only had girls come through here so far. So we're sorry if your room is a little girlie.'

'It's okay,' he says.

'Well,' says Mrs Wayneright, 'we need to go through a few things before you can settle in, so can you give us a minute? Maybe you could play outside?'

'k.'

'I'll show him the way,' says beard man and stands. He walks over to him and says 'this way'. He follows slowly. The man walks him through a kitchen and into a laundry before he opens the door and shows him the backyard. A small white dog comes up to greet him and he steps back a little, worried it will bite.

'That's Bobbie,' says the man, 'She just wants to be your friend. Why don't you pat her and let her know you're friendly too? She won't bite.'

Bobbie sniffs at his shoes and feet and he stands perfectly still, letting her inspect him.

'I've got to go back inside, but I'll leave the door open, so you yell if you need me.'

"k.'

He turns and watches him walk away. Suddenly he feels a nudge at his leg as Bobbie puts her feet up on him. He steps back, unsure what to do. Bobbie sits, wags her tail and he slowly reaches his hand out toward her. Sensing a pat, Bobbie moves her head forward, her pink tongue poking out her mouth. He touches one of her ears. They feel soft and warm under his finger tips. Feeling a little gamer now, he scratches behind her ear and Bobbie wriggles forward until her whole head is under his hand. He decides in an instant that he likes her and wants to be her friend so he crouches down and sits on the step, allowing her to come to him. He giggles when she licks his palm, her tongue making his hand feel tickly and wet. Then she pounces, jumping on him, her fluffy tail flicking between his legs, her happy smiley face nuzzling into him. He squeals in delight when Bobbie plants doggie kisses all over his face and he cuddles into her, running his hands through her soft, silky fur. He rolls around with her until he hears a cough behind him. He jumps, turns his head.

The grown ups stand behind him, stupid smiles on their faces, the beard man and red head woman holding hands.

'I think you'll fit in great,' she says.

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