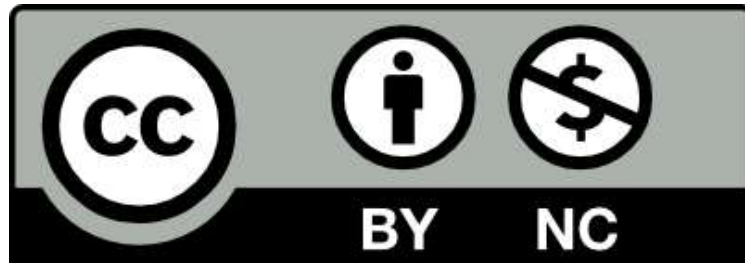FEMINISM, THEOLOGY AND EVERYDAY DOMESTIC SKILL

WITHIN A

PHENOMENOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC REFLECTION

BY

PATRICIA MARY BUTT

A Thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

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Department of Philosophy, Theology and Religion,

College of Arts and Law,

University of Birmingham

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Abstract

Academic theological writing on the incarnation avoids or contains very little phenomenologically unless informed by a feminist approach, such as that of Karen O'Donnell. This demeans or diminishes, implicitly or explicitly, the value of everyday lived experience in the life of faith, especially that of women, with whom the shaping of people's everyday remains, excluding them from a sense of being incarnated. To this end, my project reflects theologically on an autoethnographic account of my everyday domestic lived experience. Recognising the complexity of representing such an elusive concept/activity, I interweave five different thematic approaches because I work from a conviction that human lived experience is always embedded, entails integrative elements of 'both/and', and doesn't fit into reductionistic binaries, however convenient those categories are in writing about human living in a dissociated fashion. Wanting to be explicitly inductive in my approach, and framing the study within the phenomenological viewpoint of Maurice Merleau-Ponty on lived experience, especially in relation to his notion of 'flesh', I use an emergent analysis of Constructive Grounded Theory (Kathy Charmaz). My inability to 'untangle' the 'tangled web' of my everyday life into a dominating thread of theory leads me to the theorisation of the everyday in the work of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Ben Highmore, and Luce Giard. I turn to the theopoetics of Catherine Keller, Richard Kearney, Mayra Rivera and Heather Walton to provide a richer, edgier, more mysterious sense of the flux, fluidity, dynamism and messy chaos of fleshy being in the home than are to be found in many feminist theories of embodiment. Finally, I resolve that all of these lenses are needed to enable the 'appearing' or making 'visible' the 'flesh' that creates my daily living, especially when it comes to the facilitation of relationships with those whose are non-verbal, pre-verbal, or 'othered' in some way, as Iris Marion Young and Mary McClintock Fulkerson, amongst others, have identified.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

To Chris and all the family, for their patience and longsuffering in living with this thesis (and me) for a very long time!

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'The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together'

Introduction

This tangled web: 'minding the gap'

To be human is to know by living, to be enfleshed. To be enfleshed is to experience the complex and fluid existential-phenomenological details of the habitual and ordinary. By lived experience, I mean the 'small things' of living: how I sleep, what I eat for breakfast to remain healthy, how I keep myself clean, what I wear to harmonise with or counteract the weather, how I keep my abode clean, who I talk to during the day, who loves me and who values me, whose birthday it is today, who would miss me if I died.

I am aware of how 'tied into' the world I am, of how I am formed by my context in the home and derive a sense of who I am from living within it with those who may live there too, in what Heidegger termed '*leib*'. This awareness arises from a phenomenological framework with which I began to contextualise my everyday. Aware of 'the gap' between lived experience – *leib* - and the theorising about it - *'korper'* (another Heideggerian term) in phenomenological terminology - I have had to turn to multiple disciplines to 'flesh out' the lived experience of my research, constantly struggling with each discipline's attempt to 'mind the gap' between lived experience and words, or to disentangle bodies and words.

Feminist and theological views of knowledge

Because both feminism and theology are concerned with 'knowing' and 'knowledges': the sense-making of knowing, how it happens and what is acquired. Especially with 'bodily inscribed' knowledge (feminism), I had assumed that both would be resources with which to engage to help with the sense-making of the phenomenological detail of my autoethnography. This was not to be the case. Although Christian thinking appears to be interested in sense-making in the face of the deepest questions which living presents, in the light of Christian theology's astonishing foundational belief in the person of Jesus as both human and divine, incarnated as 'the Word became flesh', theologians tend to focus on the divine in a dissociated manner, leading to the extinction of any sense of the enfleshed ordinariness of living. It's hard to know whether the dematerialisation that theology engages in is due to discomfort or denial. With the classic Cartesian binary focussing on rationality, language and systems of belief to the repression of sense, affect and lived experience in theology and the academy, the question arises: how to move from talk *about* lived experience, to talk *with* lived experience, while giving credence to the fabric of daily living: how to address this 'somatophobia'?[1] (my italics). Feminism writing gives a nod to lived experience but prefers to follow the path to academic credibility by resorting to dissociated 'theory' that mimics the masculinist path and possibly because of difficulties defining a woman' in the light of awareness of an unfolding and bewildering spectrum of human (womanly) diversity.

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[1]MacKendrick, *"Word made skin"*, 2004:6.

The (multiple) literature reviews

This project demands several (simultaneous) approaches to understanding the incarnate, lived experience of the everyday, each with its own independent theme because no one discipline or viewpoint is complete on its own, so I won't be starting with a literature review here. Using the knowledges from other disciplines with which to identify aspects of being human is something that I have done throughout this project. All lenses are crucial as human beings are multiple and manifold, and the conversations between disciplines absolutely essential for the continuity of the human species, if the language of the different paradigms in which disciplines operate, allow. An example of one such interdisciplinary conversation is Tobias Tanton's thorough and scholarly review of psychological neuroscience, in what he calls 'Corporeal Theology' (2021), which I have reviewed later in this thesis. While engaging deeply with several neurosciences, Tanton's exposition of corporeal theology lacked, for me, the element of the phenomenological-human-enfleshed-fleshy aspects of being a human being.

In situating this project among other similar studies about the theories and practices of the everyday, writing and studies about 'home', 'domesticity' and 'spiritual bodily living' are to be found in the work of Anna Fisk, Tish Warren, Jo Swinney, and Rebecca Kneale Gould. Anna Fisk writes about how domestic skills - doing activities with her hands such knitting and crocheting - have given her solace and restored to her a coherent sense of being, something which many millions discovered during the enforced 'staying-home' of

the pandemic[2]. I recognised the validity of this from my own experience, yet wanted to focus on the process – the 'tactile-kinetic-kinaesthesia' of it[3]– rather than the product, vital as I know product is for a sense of completion and fulfilment. Tish Warren and Jo Swinney use a daily pattern of activities and readings with which to structure contemplative prayer and meditation during an ordinary everyday, delving into the biblical foundations of hospitality as a core Christian belief in action, respectively.[4] In a way, both of these authors carry on where my reflection ends, as they have a different readership, and different intentions. Their primary focus is not the theoretical framing which I believed necessary to embed the readings and patterns within. Their writing is usually deemed to be 'devotional' and not academic by the academy.

In terms of other autoethnographic studies with a theological (or spiritual) intent, I warm to the detailed and measured approach of Rebecca Kneale Gould in her autoethnographic study of 'homesteading' in North America and how integral to the establishment of a spiritual centre (yet not overtly theological) was the valuing of the everyday in the evolving and patterned practices of responding to the materiality of their surroundings both inside and outside the home. For the homesteaders, their intention to "get back to nature" as their "sacred centre" was an act of 'resistance' to American consumerist society.[5] This was evidenced in the apprenticeship of caring for the farm: chopping wood, tilling the soil, weeding, planting corn, composting, and being vigilant about the weather and its impact on the crops, after the death of the original

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[2] Fisk, "To Make and Make Again" , 2012: 160-174.
[3] Sheets-Johnstone, "*Primacy of Movement*", 2011: 266.
[4] Warren, "*Liturgy of the Ordinary*", 2022. Swinney and Harris, "*A Place at the Table*", 2022.
[5] Gould, "*At Home in Nature*", 2005: 3, xxii, 105.

'homesteaders' during Gould's research. Under Gould's care, the Good Life Center in Maine into a centre of pilgrimage, affirming beliefs about humankind and their relationship with Nature, the earth and deep spirituality. I empathise with Gould's project but 'Nature' is not my "sacred centre". I remain in the home and do not exclude the divine. Rather, I expect God to appear in the doing and patterning of being in the home, in the materiality of myself, those I am in a relationship with, and the things that surround me and my relationship with them, in however distorted an appearing this may be because of dysfunctionality within the humans involved.

Feminist theologians such as Karen O'Donnell provides a much deeper, more affective and effective understanding of flesh and blood[6], within the focus of traumatised (womanly) flesh, and its relationship with the Eucharist. I did not wish to branch into an ecclesiological context of womanly flesh and blood, such as O'Donnell makes, or into an ethnography of ecclesiastical settings or practices with Pete Ward[7], although I do give Mary McClintock Fulkerson's research as one example of the extension of domestic practices in creating transformation and change within the church. While theologians such as Sarah Coakley[8] and Marcella Althaus-Reid[9] emphasize bodily desire and sexuality, my primary focus is the preconscious involved in the acquisition of skills, habits and practices within the home, however much the home may be a place of subconscious desires and suppressed motivations which erupt in ordinary activities.

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[6] O'Donnell, "Flesh and blood: reproductive loss", 2023: 320-329.
[7] Ward, "*Perspectives in Ecclesiology*", 2012.
[8] Coakley, "*God, Sexuality and the Self*", 2013.
[9] Althaus-Reid, "*Indecent Theology*", 2002.

Methodological pitfalls in representing the everyday

In resisting epistemological pitfalls, I'm aware of how methodology, by 'grasping', can change what is 'found' and make it appear 'certain'. There is always the danger of losing the raw immediacy of 'data' in the process of methodological reflection or slipping into a post-modern swamp of relativities in an attempt to include all points of view. Describing something so elusive and resistant to representation as my domestic everyday has not been straightforward. Sensuality and movement operate together with affect. My descriptions need to retain some 'porosity' and fluidity to prevent them from falling into harmful binaries and polarising certainties. Searching for an adequate representation of the preconscious activity of habitual behaviour in a familiar place, with familiar objects, I have had to be awake to the possibility that focussing on one aspect of human behaviour could exclude attention to, or representation of, the spiritual.

The construction of this thesis

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 charts the framework of phenomenology, with the foundations in the work of Edward Brentano, Edmund Husserl, but focussing on key concepts in the theorising of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, especially his understanding of 'flesh' as that which makes 'being-in-the-world' 'visible'. My research question has grown organically, twisting and

turning with each knowledge base I have investigated, but the thread of this tangled

skein began with phenomenology as I understand it from Merleau-Ponty and others. As

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (an evolutionary biologist) states, 'Being true to the truths of

experience obviously requires a methodology up to the task. Phenomenological

methodology is unparalleled in this respect'[10]. Phenomenology is just one of several

methodologies I have used to begin to understand what the habitual looks like in the

domestic space day by day. As the phenomenological method is used extensively in

studies spanning a wide range of disciplines (e.g. nursing, medicine, psychiatry,

education, sports science), I use phenomenological dance studies (Rebecca Lloyd,

Michelle Merritt) to highlight the sensorimotor and intersubjective elements of

movement.

Chapter 2

In this chapter, I chart my autoethnographic journey of eight years ago, as a cisgender,

white, middle-class, middle-aged female Christian living overseas as a 'trailing spouse' in

another faith culture, attempting to validate academically the overlooked nature of my

daily existence, which, along with voluntary work, made up my waking hours, because I

believe the 'invisible' (people and actions) are important, and have more to do with the

theological doctrine of incarnation than is currently ascribed to them. I believe that not

only is highlighting the value of the habitual or ordinariness of the everyday significant

for women of my generation: it is important for human beings generally to understand

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[10] Sheets-Johnstone, "*The Body Subject*", 2020:9.

the everyday, and through that exploration, find theologically something of what it is to be human, and also something of what it is to be divine, a hunch underlined by the experiences of a global pandemic two years after I begin writing regularly. My attempted thematic analysis with an emergent analytic method, Constructive Grounded Theory (Kathy Charmaz), of the thousands of words I have written, looks for emotional, social and skill-based threads to emerge, with possibly one strand as dominant. At one level, it is disappointing to discover that attempting to 'unmingle' the yarn of my doing and being is as effective as untangling woollen thread – shaking it vigorously has no effect. At another level it is unsurprising, as it is something I suspected intuitively. In this chapter, I discuss the advantages of autoethnography as a methodology, and 'seed' my chapters with excerpts from my journal to bring something of the elusiveness of my everyday into the light.

Not revealing an overarching narrative in my analysis, I turn to issues of authorship. My research on autoethnography raises questions of the reliability of my witness and shows that my writing falls somewhere on the continuum of forms such as those of 'factional' literary accounts blurring the boundaries of 'fact' and 'fiction', memoirs, and other forms of written witness which have flourished in the publishing world of late. In the claustrophobic, closed world of my upbringing's fundamentalist religious sect, I have long been aware of the situatedness of particular 'points of view' according to how unequally shared power is being exercised and also of how foundational the home is for the formation of lifelong, emotion-invested habits and routines.

Chapter 3

In chapter 3, having discovered the fluidity, elusiveness, porosity and patterned nature of my everyday, I turn to theories of the everyday for explication of my everyday practices in the home to construct the material aspects of home I am concerned with – the 'stuff' in which everyday lived experience is enmeshed - but also balancing 'stuff' with action and response: the activity in which the home is invested, beginning with the Marxist analysis of the everyday from Henri le Febvre's perspective[11], then that of Michel de Certeau and his colleagues[12]. The work of Luce Giard in her collaborations with de Certeau in the sixties and seventies is a delight to discover, in her sociological investigations of French working-class women as they budgeted, cooked and kept house. Materiality comes to the fore in sociological and anthropological studies such as those of Tim Ingold, Daniel Miller and David Howes[13], but without an explicit recognition of how this materiality is also enmeshed in harmful, asymmetric and disproportionate power dynamics, according to aspects of gender, race and class, or to the embedment in intersubjectivity intertwined with agency which Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology draws out.

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[11] Lefebvre, "*Critique of Everyday Life: Volume Two*,"1961/2002.
[12] De Certeau et al, "*The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living Cooking*". 1988.
[13] Ingold, "*The Perception of the Environment*", 2000. Miller, "*Stuff*", 2012. Howes, "In defense of materiality", 2022.

Chapter 4

In this chapter, I look at what I thought would be an obvious source - feminist theory - to construct the framework of embodied, lived experience to supply something of the elements of the unequal power dynamics of social activity that needed changing. However, research here evidences an ambiguous and ambivalent relationship with lived experience in the home, especially when looking for research into the habitual, despite overt head-nodding towards bodiliness. Unfortunately, 'home' and the domestic is avoided in feminist theory, or denigrated as a place of 'imprisonment', so that I need to turn to the work of Iris Marion Young[14]. I find more to resonate with in the work of those feminists whose bodies refused to follow 'normal' lines and orientation, for example, in the work of queer phenomenological feminist Sara Ahmed[15]. Iris Marion Young's seminal essay of 'Throwing Like a Girl' is well known: what is less remarked upon is her challenge to the denigration of home as a 'prison', and her defence of home as a place for all people, a place of privacy, security, preservation, remembrance and resistance, the place of the birthing of a singular sense of self and new roles, to which all are entitled.

Chapter 5

In chapter 5, to counter any assumption, as some might have, that by using a phenomenological method I am automatically excluding the possibility of divine

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[14] Young, I.M, "*On Female Body Experience*", 2005.
[15] E.g. Ahmed, "*Differences That Matter*", 1998; "Orientations: Towards Queer Phenomenology", 2006: "*Living a Feminist Life",* 2017.

revelation, (which some readings of Merleau-Ponty assume), I search for theologians who acknowledge the usefulness and importance of working within a phenomenological frame without excluding talk of God. This includes Edward Farley, Taylor Carman and surprisingly, Judith Butler[16]. But the question of where God 'fits' in this paradigm is a tricky one, or even whether God is meant to 'fit' at all! The question of committing to a binary description that heralds God as 'breaking in' to human nature means assuming there is an implacable distance between Godself and myself as a human being, constructing God as domineering authority. I prefer to conceptualise God and God's power at work in a different mode through the whole of creation, including my human self, whether I am cognizant of this or not, as expressed in some of the writing of those in the theopoetic stream of theology, such as Catherine Keller, Richard Kearney, Mayra Rivera, and Heather Walton.

Feminist theology seems happier with words and concepts writing *about* bodies, 'tidying things up' in the tendency to use the term 'the body' which has a more 'scientific' ring about it, but which dehumanises my particular experience[17]. I prefer to use the term 'flesh' which better reflects actual living *with* the messiness, vagaries and perceived 'carnality' of real human bodies. As textuality is my required mode of representation and communication, negotiating my texts in relation to so-called 'authoritative', religious texts which are themselves constrained by contexts and threads of traditional, cultural biases, deriving their authority from entanglements within metaphysical,

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[16] Farley, "*Ecclesial Man",* 1975. Carman, "Merleau-Ponty on body", 2006. Butler, "Merleau-Ponty and the Touch", 2006.
[17] McKendrick, "Review of Mayra Rivera's *Poetics",* 2017.

epistemological and anthropological paradigms, means navigating between the Scylla of lifeless 'certainties' and the Charybdis of meaningless vagueness. Words carry implicit baggage of gender, race, ethnicity, and post-colonial biases. My interpretation of the religious texts brings an expectation of address to my lived behaviours: my text and my body do not exist in isolation – there will always be another body or bodies, past or present, to whom I relate – and ritual and communal entanglements. Text 'touches' me at home, and 'in the world'.

To be valued as an equal to males leading a church, to rewrite women back into religious texts, or to retreat to a distinctively female language and form of worship when addressing God in ex-cathedra settings, seem to be the dominant themes in feminist theology. The feminist theologians I have found most aware of the enfleshment of bodies in sense and movement as an integral part of ordinary human skill tend towards the 'theopoetical' end of the spectrum of theological writing, including Catherine Keller, Karmen MacKendrick, Richard Kearney, and Mayra Rivera, with *theosis* as the making of God in the human and the taking of God into the divine, grounded in the Johannine gospel. In their writing, knowing is apophatic, limited and provisional, especially knowing God, touching is opposed to grasping, hospitality opens to The Stranger who remains strange. With this comes a recognition that bodily knowing is not exhausted by intersubjectivity, and ordinariness, but holds the gracious possibility of the 'touch of God'. Janet Martin Soskice[18] and Emily Holmes[19] extend the sense of incarnation into a wider kind of theosis as they write of the everyday practices of women mystics as they

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[18] Soskice, "The Kindness of God", 2008.
[19] Holmes and Farley, "*Women, Writing, Theology"*, 2011.

prayed in their cells, worshipped, dug in gardens for their daily food, and served the sick and the poor. This is sense-making (*aesthesis*), making (*poiesis*) and wise doing (*phronesis*) and practices (*praxis*) expressed in all settings: God-making, being made godly (*theosis*) here on earth, especially with those who only have bodily comportment with which to communicate. Finally, Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Iris Marion Young celebrate domestic skills and home as places of formation of identity and solace, recognizing their place in enabling others to 'appear' and be 'made visible'[20].

Conclusions

In my **Conclusions,** I reiterate the intertwining of *aesthesis, phronesis* and *praxis* evidenced in the outworking of *theosis* in the home, and briefly, in the church, showing the validity of the skill and flow of domestic action as vital for the facilitation of others in their 'appearing'. I describe the preconscious sensorimotor and affective aspects of establishing relationships with those who are non-verbal or preverbal as a means of hospitality and openness in the home and in the church, and as the space in which the 'the Stranger' may appear.

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[20] Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear", 2007. Young, "*On Female Body Experience*", 2005.

Chapter 1

Phenomenology and bodily being: my frame of reference

My life as an accidental phenomenologist

Rowan Williams talks of human growth as learning 'not to bump into things', a metaphor for living and as the reality of human development[21]. The two are intimately linked. My own body bumbled about in the world, my internal script read 'failure' as I fell into and out of scrapes: my body just didn't quite work like other peoples'. That life was unstable, contingent and could not be contained adequately in words was something I was sure of, from my early years. Intuition told me we are all situated, even those who assume they are inviolable and appear more powerful. Perhaps being one of eight children in our family made me aware at an early age of the fluid, communal nature of being, and how differently people of the same blood and background could view the world. I was acutely aware of the dissonance between my volcano of senses and emotions that had to be suppressed or denied, and by the austere Protestant worldview I was meant to inherit. 'Good' children were invisible: neat and tidy, didn't ask questions or challenge authority, kept out of the way of the adults, did well at school, and presumably were 'good' in the eyes of God. My bodily struggles drew me to becoming a therapist with adults and children diagnosed with neurological and developmental damage, using experimental techniques based on whole-body sensation, emphasizing kinesthesis and 'integrative' sensory responses. My clinical experience confirmed to me that the commonly accepted *explananda* of how the brain works proved inadequate to my own bodily history or to a client's history of 'recovery' or 'rehabilitation'.

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[21] Williams, "*Being Human*", 2018:8.

It was decades before I met the words 'phenomenology'. So it was with great delight, that having started to study theology in my later years, I discovered that my point of view, thought to be naïve, idiosyncratic, and limited to a population of one, was actually called something and that it could be a legitimately held worldview. I found a language, a history and a discipline, and my equally inarticulate feminist views identified 'misogyny' and 'patriarchy' at work in my own history. I was convinced my intuition of how life was lived and actually 'went along' was accurate, and apposite, and I wanted to show why. In a way, my phenomenological worldview, and this study, chose me, rather than the other way around.

We are all phenomenologists now

The year in which I first wrote this chapter, 2020, ushered in a strange world, a world that continues strange, despite the global pandemic being 'over' to those in the Western world, in which we have all become phenomenologists unbeknownst to ourselves. The existential threat of death for the whole of the human race puts living and the foundational phenomenological truth of my living in sharp consciousness. It is the very particularity of death, death coming close to me - that strikes fear into people's hearts. My continued existence depends on something as 'trivial' as washing my hands, how I breathe, what I eat, how much I move. I attend to natural patterns as if my life depends on them (which it did before, too, but without much notice); my continued breath may depend on the hands and bodies of (medical and paramedical) others. When the (bodily) rites of the human journey around birth, marriage, and death, quite apart from the rites

of regular worship, were constricted, nostalgia for their meaningfulness was brought into stark contrast by their absence. Disembodied forms of communication help reduce the existential loneliness, but the transience of the encounter only serves to underline what I am missing – touch, movement, being held by another person's body, belonging to another loved being. There is now no shame in admitting my human intersubjectivity is recognizable as interdependency. I am more aware than ever of what that actually means in 'lived-experience' terms.

Other existential truths emerge as aspects of the basic phenomenological attitude of viewing and understanding of life situated by my body – 'myself' known and disclosed by what my body does. My body can no longer be perceived as 'merely' a vehicle or automaton for more important purposes – earning a living, getting an education. The often misrecognized, below-notice, everyday 'habits' by which my day is constructed and on which my perception of myself as a uniquely endowed, loved, useful, valued member of my society depends, are revealed in their significance. This leads me to a discussion of what phenomenology as a branch of philosophy actually is and means for me.

In this chapter, I shall be laying the groundwork for the whole thesis by examining in detail the philosophical framework of phenomenology, in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his predecessors in the field. Phenomenology is one of the tools I shall be using to focus attention on my everyday domestic skills, in which I shall collect autoethnographic evidence before situating my reflections within theories of the everyday and feminist theory. Lastly, I shall weave theological reflection through this rich

fabric of everyday life, believing that the everyday is both transcendent and immanent, and this 'both/and' character' highlights the sacramental character and significance of human ordinariness.

What is phenomenology?

Phenomenology has been variously described as 'a school of philosophy', a 'worldview', a 'movement', a research 'method', a 'discipline' or as an adjective applied to other disciplines, such as 'phenomenological sociology', or 'phenomenological pedagogy'[22] Lester Embree finds at least four categories of phenomenology: existential, hermeneutic, realistic, and constitutive, although he has identified 'at least three dozen other disciplines' which are using a phenomenological framework in their thinking[23].

As Dan Zahavi notes in his Introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology*,

> 'Phenomenology shares the conviction that the critical stance proper to philosophy requires a move away from a straightforward metaphysical or empirical investigation of objects to an investigation of the very framework of meaning and intelligibility that makes such straightforward investigation possible in the first place... Rather than engaging in first-order claims about the nature of things (which it leaves to various scientific disciplines), phenomenology concerns

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[22] Harre, "*Phenomenology*" in Juppe, "*SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods*," 2006: 2020.
   Eberle, "*Phenomenology*" in Flick "*SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*," 2014:185.
   Van Manen "*Phenomenology of Practice*," 2014:15, 22.
[23] Embree, L "Interdisciplinarity within Phenomenology", 2010: 1.

itself with the precondition for such empirical enquiries… the basis of that knowledge and asks how it is possible… in as much as consciousness is world-disclosing… Phenomenology should… be understood as a philosophical analysis of the different types of world-disclosure (perceptual, judgemental, imaginative, recollective and so on)'[24].

As a philosophy, phenomenology emerged in the late nineteenth century, as a reaction to the post-post-Cartesian and post-Kantian definitions of the mind-body problem: 'how is that human beings manage to think thought/s'? Where does consciousness reside? Can it be assumed that consciousness is the '*synthetic a priori* descriptor of human being', as Kant assumed, or it is one of the 'conditions of possibility which allow us to constitute the world as true, valid and objective, and ourselves as beings in this world'?[25] If thought is in 'the mind', how to bridge the gap – 'the abyss', between the mind (characterized as rational and logical) and the contingency and 'chaos' of the body, as felt and sensed? Classically, the Cartesian-Lockean position had posited mental acts – perception, cognition, imagination and will - as 'ideas', 'objects of consciousness', with no clear understanding of how thoughts arose in consciousness or what constituted these different processes[26]. The psychology and natural sciences at the turn of the nineteenth century understood human behaviour mechanistically and reductively as a reaction to external reflexes, or a mental organization of the passive senses via language. Idealism as a philosophical position, put very simply, presumed the stability, constancy, and independent reality of the external world, and its identifiability in words and 'mental

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[24] Zahavi, "Introduction", 2018:1, 2,3.

[25] Beyer, "Husserl", 2016.
[26] Carman in Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception* ", 1945/2012: viii.

concepts' such as 'judgment' to plug the gap between the philosophical accounts of what was thought and what was known physiologically, failing to account for the need to explain who made the judgements, how the judgements were made, or to account for such factors as 'attention' and 'recognition' implied in the making of these judgments[27].

It was the goal of Franz Brentano (1838 – 1917) to bring to philosophy the rigour and clarity of the natural sciences. In his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874), he proposed the 'intentional relatedness of the mental act to its object as an essential positive characteristic of the mental'[28], i.e. consciousness is always *of* something. Lecturing in philosophy at the University of Vienna, Brentano, a former priest who left his religious orders over the controversy surrounding the newly introduced dogma of papal infallibility, attracted a circle of gifted students, who became influential thinkers. Among them were Edmund Husserl, out of whose writing on mathematics phenomenology emerged, Christian Ehrenfels (1859 – 1932), founder of the Berlin Institute of Psychology and the idea of *Gestalt psychology*, and Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), founder of psychoanalysis. In Freiburg, Husserl drew his own coterie of students, including Martin Heidegger (1880 – 1976), who developed his investigations in *Being and Time* (1927), although the directions that Heidegger took overshadowed his teacher, to the point that Husserl publicly declared himself without successors amid 'heresies', and Edith Stein (1891-1942) who edited Husserl's papers posthumously and wrote extensively on empathy until her untimely death in a concentration camp. Maurice

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[27] Landes, translator, in Merleau-Ponty "*Phenomenology of Perception*", 1945/2012: xxxix.
[28] Moran and Mooney, "Edmund Husserl: Introduction", 2002: 11.

Merleau-Ponty (1906 – 1961) was influenced by reading Husserl's *Ideas 1* (1913/1982), and *The Crisis of European Sciences* (1970 [1936/1954]) in the Husserl Archive in the Belgian city of Leuven, and publicized phenomenological philosophy in France, but departed from his predecessors by integrating findings from the findings of the behavioural, biological, and social sciences with philosophy in his writing[29].

Phenomenological activity revolves around the exercising of 'intentionality', 'intuition', and 'recognition' in human engagement with self and others, leading to the 'disclosure' of 'being-in-the-world'. Husserl distinguished between the 'contents' of consciousness, which he called *noema,* and the mental act of experiencing that content as *noesis.* The two were correlated in the 'horizon of significance' which distinguishes that particular correlation from every other[30]. Other terms that Husserl devised that brought phenomena 'into the light' in the search for the 'essences' of human existence were the '*epoche'* or 'suspension of the natural attitude', 'lifeworlds', the '*reduction',* and 'givenness'. These terms will be examined below.

The phenomenological framework has entered the mainstream of philosophical and sociological theory and practice, often synthesized with other concepts in theories such as existentialism, hermeneutics, structuralism, interactionism, neo-Marxism, post-structuralism, and discourse analysis[31], with some terms becoming commonplace while others remain arcane, ill-defined, and in dispute. The heterogeneity of present-day

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[29] Moran and Mooney, "*The Phenomenology Reader",* 2002: 20, 21.
[30] Carman in Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: lx.
[31] Smith and Pangsapapa "New Controversies in Phenomenology" in Outhwaite and Turner, "*The SAGE Handbook of Social Science Methodology",* 2007: 384.

phenomenology is evidenced by the use of phenomenological principles and attitudes in contemporary practices and disciplines such as nursing[32], psychology[33], medicine [34], psychoanalysis[35] and management studies[36]. This makes the identification and defining of a single, united approach difficult, especially given the variance of interpretations of the work between the 'founder' of the discipline, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and his twentieth-century disciples including Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Internal debates dog the contemporary exponents, e.g. Husserlians versus Merleau-Pontians, and practitioners versus theoreticians. This brief introduction can only be a broad-brush description.

What I do not intend to do here is to discuss phenomenology's contribution to the study of religions, perhaps exemplified at the time of the first phenomenologists by the work of Rudolf Otto (1869 – 1937)[37], or Mircea Eliade(1907-1986)[38], investigating the texture of everyday religious life of non-Europeans compared with Europeans – their patterns of life, their social communities, their art, their architecture, their types of worship – and generalizing these investigations and aspects of concepts of 'the Sacred' into concepts about the universality of religions. Although a lot of this is phenomenological in nature, this is not the purpose of my study, nor is my focus a phenomenological 'turn' to the 'devout life', such as that which George Pattison makes[39].

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[32] Finlay, "The intertwining of body, self and world", 2003.
[33] Ashworth and Ashworth, "The Lifeworld as Phenomenon", 2003.
[34] Carel and Meachem, "Philosophy and Naturalism", 2013.
[35] Fuchs, "Phenomenology of body, space and time", 2005.
[36] Gourlay, "Towards conceptual clarity", 2006.
[37] Otto, "*The Idea of the Holy*", 1968.
[38] Eliade, "*The Sacred and the Profane",* 1968.
[39] Pattison, "*A Phenomenology of the Devout Life",* 2018.

Idealism and realism

Husserl's philosophy has been labelled by successive generations of philosophers as 'transcendental idealism'. The 'transcendental' or 'idealistic' worldview has a variety of meanings within and without the discipline of philosophy, meanings that have changed over time. There are essentially two points of view. Firstly, 'that something mental (the mind, spirit, reason, will) is the ultimate foundation of reality' ('metaphysical' or 'ontological idealism'). Secondly, 'although the existence of something independent of the mind is conceded, everything that we can *know* about this mind-independent "reality" is held to be so permeated by the creative, formative, or constructive activities of the mind (of some kind or other) that all claims to knowledge must be considered, in some sense, to be a form of self-knowledge' ('formal' or 'epistemological idealism')[40]. By contrast, the realist worldview regards language and knowledge as reflecting, as in a mirror, the actual events of 'out there', of things existing in objective reality. My phenomenology is not 'realist', or 'idealist' but something in between, because most human beings don't take a 'pure' stance on the 'real'. I'm aware that my senses can be deceived, and that the boundaries between the so-called 'inside' and 'outside' are permeable. 'Naturalism' is another form of realism, by which it is believed that all that is 'out there' is natural, as opposed to supernatural, and open to be measured and explained by forces within the realm of the cosmos. In this view, the premodern world was full of a hierarchy of supernatural spirits and cosmic forces that had to be placated. By contrast, the naturalism of the Newtonian world appears stable, external to myself,

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[40] Guyer, "Transcendental Idealism", 2015.

open to being investigated by my senses, recorded, and operated within, as a closed universe. In the twentieth century, with the awareness that quantum physics brings of matter as both wave and light simultaneously, and such possibilities as anti-matter, the Newtonian model of a stable, empirical world of 'either/or' and 'inner'/outer' is disrupted and boundaries become porous once again.

With the expansion of computational models of brain function within neuroscience, in which the 'physicalist', 'nothing-but' hypothesis in its strongest sense believes aspects of thinking are completely linked to structures in the brain and cognition alone, but also of increased awareness in the neuro-cognitive world of the limitations of behaviourist models for human thinking, the possibility of a rapprochement between forms of naturalism and phenomenology has been proposed by cognitivists such as Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, two philosophers and a psychologist positing the embodiment, embedment and extension of the mind[41], later conceptualised as the '4E's' characteristic of embodied cognition: 'embodied', 'embedded', 'extended' and 'enacted'. These terms will be defined below in the discussion of Shaun Gallagher's work. Dan Zahavi, for the phenomenologists, has been quick to point out that 'identifying the neural substrate/correlates of subjective reports' is not what phenomenology is about[42], but Zahavi has collaborated with Gallagher[43], another philosopher of the mind, who continues the dialogue between phenomenology and the empirical sciences in multiple collaborations with other scientists.

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[41] Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, "*The Embodied Mind*", 1991.
[42] Zahavi, "Naturalized Phenomenology", 2013.
[43] Gallagher and Zahavi, "*The Phenomenological Mind*", 2021.

Intentionality

That human consciousness has a 'towardness', an intentionality, or directedness towards objects, whether the objects were 'real' or not, is a key insight of phenomenology[44]. To understand the directionality of intention to 'the other' is to understand how intuitions form the constitution of meaning in the 'modes of consciousness'- imagination, perception, judgement, feeling – without first presupposing how this occurs, or bringing concepts to what is being described. Phenomenology begins with the 'essential correlation between objectivity and subjectivity, between the thing that appears and the conscious subject to which it appears'. This is what Husserl calls in *Ideas 1* 'the *noetic-noematic* correlation uncovered by reflection[45], using key words such as 'comportment' to describe the human body moving in space and time towards something, and the 'inherent affinity' between myself and the object of my attention:

> 'Every lived experience, every psychic comportment directs itself toward something…. We thus have an inherent affinity between the way something is intended, the '*intentio*,' and the '*intentum*,' the intended, whereby '*intentum*,' the intended, is to be understood… not the perceived as an entity, but the entity in the how of its being-perceived, the '*intentum*' in the how of its being-intended. Only with the how of the being-intended belonging to every '*intentio*' as such does the basic constitution of intentionality come into view at all, even though only provisionally'[46] .

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[44] Husserl in Moran and Mooney "*Edmund Husserl: Introduction*", 2002: 84.
[45] Husserl in Moran and Mooney, "*Edmund Husserl: Introduction*", 2002: 84.
[46] Husserl in Moran and Mooney, *"Edmund Husserl: Introduction",* 2002: 84.

Intuition and givenness

The *modus operandi* of phenomenological understanding is intuition. For Husserl, and for all phenomenologists, intuition (*'Anschauung'*) was 'the highest stage of knowledge', 'the primary mode of evidence', regardless of whether the thing intuited was actual or imaginary[47].

> 'Experiencing is consciousness that intuits something and values it to be actual; experiencing is intrinsically characterized as consciousness of the natural object in question and of it as "the original" … Even intuitions in phantasy… are intrinsically phenomena that are obviously not characterized as actualities… Natural objects must be experienced before any theorizing about them can occur'[48].

For Heidegger, intuition was equivalent to ''seeing' in the broad sense of that word: *'apprehending the bodily given as it shows itself…* through *'expressed'* experiences, even if they are not uttered in words'. Apperception of the world as given begins from the first day of development. Consciousness begins in simple, whole-body, sensory intuitions of perception, but could be related to intuitions of complex situations[49] (author's italics). Heidegger made a distinction between the *'bodily-given'* and the *'self-given'* in which the 'self-givenness' of an object was the moment of recall. 'Bodily-givennness', on the other hand, was bodily presence, (*'Leibhaftigheit'*), 'a *superlative mode of the self-givenness of an entity'* while affirming that 'the authentic moment in the perceivedness of the perceived is that *in perception, the perceived entity is bodily there'.* This translated

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[47] Husserl, in Moran and Mooney, *"Edmund Husserl: Introduction"*, 2002: 7.
[48] Husserl, in Moran and Mooney, *"Edmund Husserl: Introduction"*, 2002:125.
[49] Husserl, in Moran and Mooney, *"Edmund Husserl: Introduction"*, 2002: 7,8.

to 'presence-at-hand', 'readiness-to-hand' or *Vorhandheit* for Heidegger (author's italics)[50]. The presence of the 'ready-to-hand' world becomes my own as I apprehend it.

The two terms, 'intuition' and 'givenness' were interlinked. 'Givenness' (*'Gegebenheit'*) was 'the magic word' for Husserl, an active faculty beyond the Kantian notion of perception as passive and purely sensuous, and a 'legitimizing source of cognition' in the apperception of the 'categorical forms which appear in judgements' [51]. As Moran elaborates, 'givenness and intuition are correlates: the character of the intuiting corresponds to the character of the givenness or manifestation'. The essences of experiences are not speculated on or philosophized about: they are grasped 'immediately and intuitively'. By this logic, consciousness is always performative, intimately linked to movement 'towards' or 'away' from the apperception and underlying all reasoning and judgements[52].

**The search for 'essences': the 'natural attitude', the *'epoché'* and the *'Reduction'*

The search for the 'essence' of a phenomenon, its 'raw moment', that which 'makes a thing what it is (without which would not be what it is) in itself, rather than its being or becoming something else' drives phenomenology. 'The phenomenological gesture is to lift up and bring into focus, with language, any such raw moment of lived experience and orient to the living meanings that are embedded in the experience'. The ordinary is given

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[50] Heidegger, in Moran and Mooney, "*Phenomenology Reader*", 2002: 275, 268, 294-297.
[51] Husserl, Moran and Mooney "*Phenomenology Reader*", 2002: 8, 60.
[52] Moran in Moran and Mooney "*Edmund Husserl: Introduction*", 2002: 5.

full attention, or disclosed, but not removed from context or objectified[53]. To do this, assumptions that the scientist or researcher or even the ordinary person searching for more knowledge may have from previous thinking (the 'suspension of the natural attitude') have to be 'bracketed out', a move which Husserl called the *'epoché',* leading to a 'reduction' of the experience to that which is most immediate. For Husserl, the *epoché* meant:

> 'a disruption of existing constellations of attitudes… however logical I believe myself to be, to prevent myself grouping perceptions I am aware of too readily into concepts or ideas, was the first *epoche,* or suspension of belief'[54].

The reduction Husserl speaks of appears to be a contradiction in terms, but is *not* the 'reductions' of reductionistic science, which seeks to isolate only those aspects of a situation that it deems necessary to be tabulated, reducing experience to a code or number which is then manipulated, analysed, or reproduced. The 'reduction' in an Husserlian sense is the giving of full attention to the 'thinglyness' of the experience itself[55].

'Leib', 'Korper' and lifeworlds

Husserl made a distinction between the 'lived body', *'Leib', the* first-person or perceived body, and the body understood from a third-person perspective - *'Korper',* the body as a

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[53] Van Manen, "*Phenomenology of Practice",* 2014: 3, 4, 6.
[54] Husserl, 1981, in Moran and Mooney, "*Phenomenology Reader*", 2002: 15, 129 – 131.
[55] Schwinn, "Individual and Collective Agency "in Outhwaite and Turner, "SAGE *Handbook of Social Science Methodology*", 2007: 311.

physical thing, as understood naturalistically. The first-person experience is primary; the third-person experience assumes distance from the lived body and is secondary. Husserl's famous description of one hand touching the other, which Merleau-Ponty also adopted, finds the hand both subject and object, the toucher and the touched, simultaneously both first-person and third-person. This is not a difference between the non-material and the material, but between two forms of intentionality - operative, non-thematic (subjective) intentionality, and the body as understood as an explicit or intended object. Husserl came to stress the need for kinesthesis of the whole body in space and of relations between parts of the body and the perception of objects, which contributed to something he called 'optimal givenness', in which the body learns the optimal paths to take to orientate itself to the object, according to 'my habitualized tendencies' and 'my perceptual goals'[56]. My intentionality is realized in whole-body movement which constitutes my 'comportment' or orientation towards another person, or constellation of objects.

Everybody, including scientists and philosophers, operates within presuppositions about themselves and others, the society and culture in which they are situated, whether these presuppositions are acknowledged or ignored. Dividing the world into 'objective' and 'subjective' and defining oneself as 'objective', 'rational' and 'logical', is one such presupposition. Husserl called the worlds constructed on these presuppositions *Lifeworlds (Lebenswelt)* to denote the pre-existing, 'pre-given', 'taken-for-granted', 'anonymous' world of ordinary lived experience' out of which all philosophizing and the

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[56] Wehrle, "Bodies (that) matter", 2021.

'logic' of science is done, and which is disclosed upon 'reduction' and reflection[57]. The 'double constitution' of the body as both subject and object was the mediating position between the humanities and the sciences, between 'the thinking "I", the soul, and nature'. Husserl believed '"the first truth of the world is not the truth of mathematical physics but the truth of perception, or rather, the truth of science is erected as a superstructure upon a foundation of presence and existence, that of the 'world lived through perceptually"'. All so-called 'logicality' of thought '"is grounded in the lifeworld… being representations themselves, the situatedness of these human constructions acknowledged or not"'[58]. Awareness and identification of the presuppositions forming one's own lifeworld is the first step in the process of reflecting and bracketing out of assumptions, leading to an *'epoche',* such that real openness to the 'thing itself' may be made.

For Merleau-Ponty, the project of phenomenology is always incomplete, as full disclosure of an experience is never possible, given the nature of the phenomena being studied and explored. 'The world is not what I think, but what I live [*ce que je vis].* I am open to the world, I unquestionably communicate with it, but I do not possess it, it is inexhaustible'[59]. The phenomenological project was a ceaseless search, but not a search for a solution or an explication: 'The most important lesson of the reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction'[60]. Put poetically and antithetically, 'Husserl's

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[57] Husserl in Moran and Mooney, "*Edmund Husserl: Introduction",* 2002: 62.
[58] Husserl in Ricoeur, P "*Husserl: An Analysis",* 1967:9.
[59] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: lxxxi.
[60] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception",* 1945/2012: lxxvii.

essences must bring with them all the living relations of experience, like the net that

draws up both quivering fish and seaweed from the seabed'[61].

Recognition: a performative attitudinal change

To understand another's point of view or to recognize a story of another's experience as

being theirs as well, possibly leading to changes of values and attitudes, is a part of the

changes in seeing and perceiving the world, and then acting on that changed perception,

that phenomenology aims to achieve. David Cerbone highlights the performativity of the

phenomenological method, through the 'recognition' facilitated by word or text. 'If the

kind of instruction a text in phenomenology imparts is something along the lines of

enabling a kind of self-discovery – of bringing readers to the point of "determining and

expressing this *phenomenology for ourselves"* - then a successful work in

phenomenology does not seek so much to convey a body of doctrine, a set or results

that many now be transmitted from author to reader, as to instruct or train the reader

in a certain kind of *activity' (*author's italics)[62]. This is phenomenology as 'ways of seeing',

or internal reflection, aiming to bring about another 'way of seeing' in an active way.

Reflectivity reveals what American psychologist J.J.Gibson (1904-1979) later called

'affordances': the possibilities of potential for change in people, events or situations or

all of these as they cohere or intersect. For Heidegger, the triggers to 'recognition' could

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[61] Merleau-Ponty, *"Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: lxxix.
[62] Cerbone, "Phenomenological Method", 2017:297.

be anxiety, *'being-toward-death',* guilt, and conscience in a kind of crisis, or overwhelmings which precipitated insight into the meaning of one's being[63].

The distinctiveness of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology

Merleau-Ponty followed in Husserl's use of first-person description, and the need for reductions or *'epoche'* to 'peel back' layers of taken-for-granted signification for the essences of lived experience to be revealed. Merleau-Ponty's writing placed the body centre stage, not just as Husserl's 'bearer of sensations' or as a plug of the 'veritable abyss' between consciousness and reality, which Husserl's philosophy had been unable to bridge effectively[64]. For Merleau-Ponty, '"My body is my point of view upon the world…I am my body… my experience of myself is wholly and exclusively an *experience* of a bodily self"'[65] (author's italics). To understand myself and the world, I have to understand my bodily situatedness in a space and time made my own perceptually as 'my world'. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology gives me the standpoint and language to understand bodily 'being' in the world' and how the everyday, pre-reflective, non-propositional, and often misrecognized activities of habitual spatialization, something akin to Merleau-Ponty's 'body schema' or Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus,* by which the domestic everyday, the topic of my research, is largely characterised, and which I shall go on to discuss further below.

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[63] Wheeler, "Martin Heidegger" in *"SAGE Encyclopaedia of Philosophy"*, 2011.
[64] Husserl *"Ideas 1":* 77 in Carman, "The body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty", 1999:209.
[65] Merleau-Ponty, *"Phenomenology of Perception"* in Carman, "Merleau-Ponty on body, flesh" in Crowell, *"Cambridge Companion to Existentialism",* 2012: xv, 274,275.

Although the degree to which Merleau-Ponty moved on from the Husserlian framework continues to be disputed in contemporary philosophical circles[66], complicated by the prose of both phenomenologists frequently being opaque and convoluted, and by differences in translation from the French and German into English, there seem to be two main differences between the thinking of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Firstly, for Merleau-Ponty, Husserl's writings betrayed a lurking dualism, of consciousness and reality, which Husserl was unable to breach. For Husserl, the body was a 'thing 'inserted' between the rest of the world and the subjective sphere'; there was always a 'subject-object' divide, two categories of distinction between the inner and the outer, the 'immanent' sphere of the conscious experience, and the 'transcendent domain of external objects'[67]. Merleau-Ponty 'plugged the gap' by positing the pre-cognitive, pre-predictive dynamics which preceded thought and described the 'skillful, bodily responsiveness and spontaneity in direct engagement with the world'[68]. Perception doesn't just happen to *be* bodily; it *is* essentially bodily. The content of intentionality is neither 'brute sensation nor conceptual content, but noncognitive, often unconscious, bodily dispositions'[69] . For Merleau-Ponty, thinking depended on the same structures as intuiting, with thinking depending on perspective, a sense of orientation, of figure, ground and horizon, a sense of 'grip', a sense of being simultaneously 'at the centre' and 'on the periphery of our attention'. Merleau-Ponty was very clear about what perception

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[66] Dreyfus, "Merleau-Ponty and Recent Cognitive Science",2004. Heinamaa, "Merleau-Ponty's Modification of Phenomenology", 1999. Carman, "The body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty",1999.
[67] Husserl *Ideas 11":* 150, 161 in Carman, "The body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty", 1999: 209, 212.
[68] Carman, in Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception",* 1945/2012: x.
[69] Carman, in Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945;2012: x.

was not – neither a representation nor a mental state, (as in the Kantian notion of 'ideas' which precede response and supposedly make sense of passive sensory input), neither an image nor a sign.

Secondly, for Merleau-Ponty, 'the suspension of the natural attitude' meant the suspension of the thesis, or the thetic, whether theoretical or commonsensical. He believed Husserl described intention as expressed in attitudes which were represented by beliefs or statements. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology places the body centre stage, with the 'suspension of the thetic' most obviously at work in perceiving a face, where the response to the face is not 'an originating act, but a response to the call of the face, its attraction or appeal', with perception the 'bridge' between 'inside' and 'outside'[70]. For Merleau-Ponty, there was less of an emphasis on the 'transcendence 'of the gains from reflection (the *epoché'),* and Husserl's 'second reduction', (the explication of the essences of the experience into analysis), or 'the eidetic reduction', which is 'supposed to lead… from the lived experience to the pure transcendental consciousness and its structures'[71]. For Merleau-Ponty, 'the living body must be understood as an expression, a system of significant postures, gestures, attitudes, and styles that evolves in an environment of meanings. Expression is not just one of our bodily functions, but our fundamental way of being and becoming'[72].

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[70] Heinamaa, "Merleau-Ponty's modification of Phenomenology", 1999: 54.
[71] Heinamaa, "Merleau-Ponty's modification of Phenomenology", 1999: 5.
[72] Heinamaa, "Merleau-Ponty's modification of Phenomenology", 1999: 56.

To Merleau-Ponty, Husserl's 'second reduction' was equivalent to a stage of analysis of linguistic meaning, and hence a form of representationalism, what Carman calls the 'semantic paradigm'[73]. This meant there was always the danger, once the eidetic reduction was made, of an apparent 'separation' of the essence into language, of the forgetting of the non-propositional roots of experience,

> 'since through language they still rely upon the pre-predicative life of consciousness. What appears in the silence of originary consciousness is not only what these words mean, but also what these things mean, that is, the core of primary signification around which acts of naming and of expression are organized'[74].

Heinamaa says that 'instead of accepting Husserl's transcendental is of pure consciousness', Merleau-Ponty seems to 'propose a transcendentalism of sensuous flesh'[75].

There are many features of Merleau-Ponty's thought which are distinctive and worth identifying, some of which are his notions of the body as 'flesh' and 'intertwined' (or the '*chiasm*' as he also termed it), his ideas of 'body schema', 'body image', and 'sedimentation' and how these relate to the 'habitual body', and the development of 'attunement', 'intercorporeality' and 'intersubjectivity'. These will be discussed below.

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[73] Carman, "The body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty", 1999: x.
[74] Carman, in Merleau-Ponty, *"Phenomenology of Perception",* 1945/2012: lxxix.
[75] Heinamaa, "Merleau-Ponty's Modification of Phenomenology", 1999:57.

Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh'

Merleau-Ponty elaborated on Sartre's 'flesh of objects' to identify the tactile properties of 'flesh' as sensed through the medium of skin, but also linked to vision and visibility. He called this 'the flesh of the world'. In his later unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964), Merleau-Ponty abandoned the 'primacy of consciousness' and wanted to emphasize the unconsciousness of perception, of which the body is 'the hinge – To have a body is to be looked at'[76]. Where he previously 'posited ''the body as sensible and the body as sentient is what we previously called objective body and phenomenal body'', with the 'objective body as secondary and relative to the phenomenal body of sensorimotor awareness', Merleau-Ponty now 'grounds the whole sensorimotor experience in a new kind of *pre*phenomenal being… the flesh of visibility… To see the world, we must be in a kind of bodily communion with it'[77] (author's italics). Although not developed sufficiently to be free of ambiguity in its interpretation subsequently by contemporary theoreticians, 'flesh' captures the 'depth' or 'thickness' of the world around, sensed through what Sheets-Johnstone calls 'tactile-kinesthesis' to emphasize the fact that touching is never free from movement, and that 'things' are 'fundamentally palpable', but also linked to vision in what could be described as 'hapticity'. Sheets-Johnstone notes:

> '[o]pening ourselves to (these) non-linguistic in-depth morphologies… mirrors our capacity to open ourselves to the flesh of another and to the flesh of objects in our everyday lives – not only our clothing, air, or the wind, as Sartre indicated,

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[76] Merleau-Ponty, in Carman "Merleau-Ponty on body, flesh" in Crowell, "*The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*", 2012:278.

[77] Carman, "Merleau-Ponty on body, flesh" in Crowell, *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism",* 2012: 280, 281.

but to equally mundane items such as tables, chairs, plates, cabbages, trees, stones… we let our surface sensitivities come to the fore… In turn, we open ourselves to fathoming the density of another living being or thing. We allow a certain form to carry us from our own surface densities to a density of flesh. We open ourselves to new possibilities of attunement'[78].

The twofold nature of the Husserlian '*Leib'* and *'Korper'* continue in Merleau-Ponty's thought as 'intertwined'; 'situated in the world', and 'in-situation', the 'habituated body' and the 'actual body', not a binary, but a concreteness that is nevertheless ambiguous[79]. Perception has both receptivity - the inner 'feel' of what is (relatively) passive in sensation - and activity: the (relative) spontaneity of the outer 'grip' on the world of motor activity but intertwined, inseparable aspects of a single, unified phenomenon, as opposed to Descartes's separate 'substances'[80]. For Merleau-Ponty, contrary to the notions prevalent in the physiology of the time, the bodily response to the world perceptually was not a behavioristic or mechanical stimulus-response, but a 'fleshly sensual intertwining' of the 'flesh of the body' with the 'flesh of others' and 'the flesh of the world'. Perception is also a 'dynamic presence-absence', an intertwining of the internal and external, 'its inner "feel" and outward "grip"'. 'We have a pre-reflective grasp of our own experience, not as causally or conceptually linked to our bodies but as coinciding with them in relations of mutual motivation'…'we are a very knot of relations'[81]. The perceptual act, the acting directed towards a human, non-human, event or imaginary something is posited by past and present experience, understood by

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[78] Sheets-Johnstone, "*The Corporeal Turn"*, 2009: 138, 144.
[79] Merleau-Ponty, *"Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: 84.
[80] Carman, in Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: xiii.
[81] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: lxxxv.

perceptual experience which is not a series of atomistic, sensory segments such as discretely kinesthetic, proprioceptive, tactile or visual, but the body experiencing itself as a whole with all these sensations intertwined, in relation to the perceived and the intended act.

The intertwining of the 'outer' and the 'inner' (although Merleau-Ponty did not make these distinctions) means the boundary between my body and the environment cannot be drawn sharply, as the body is both 'given' and taking part in the world-at-hand, appearing at the edges of the perceptual field. There is a dynamic correlation of 'subject' and 'object' by being both at the same time, never completely collapsing into my body, but never separate. The properties of my body, by which I touch and am touched by my hand on my opposite arm, both sensing and giving sense, 'disclose the body as simultaneously subject and object', which characterizes the human body's simultaneous, intertwining sense of 'inside/outside' and 'presence/absence'[82]. 'When it comes to my body, I never observe it as itself. I would need a second body to be able to do so, which would itself be unobservable'[83]. My perceptual field or horizon is constantly changing, expanding, or contracting according to my 'comportment' within it. The fluidity of the perceptual horizon depends on the constant interaction of my sensory and movement state at play in the situating of my bodily-expressed intentions and attentions within the world around.

> '"The phenomenal field is neither caused nor defined but *constituted* by the sensorimotor structures and capacities of the body… My body is my perspective

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[82] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception*", 1945/2012: 363.
[83] Carman, "Foreword" in Merleau-Ponty "*Phenomenology of Perception*", 1945/2102: xv.

on the world, and so constitutes a kind of background field of perceptual *necessity* against which sensorimotor contingencies show up *as* contingent… the space of possibilities"'[84].

'Body schema' and the acquisition of habits

The animation of the intertwining of my body occurs within what Merleau-Ponty calls the 'body schema' ('*schema corporel')* – not a representation of the body in the brain, as the sensory and motor homunculi once were supposed to do – but 'our practical ability to anticipate and (literally) incorporate the world in our actions and dispositions… skills – or exercises of bodily 'habit'… pre-established circuits… that operate according to their own logic… below the threshold of self-conscious intention'[85]. Body schema' is to be distinguished from 'body image', an older terminology which emphasized the visual content of bodily awareness, and has a static, structural sense.

My body is part of the space around as well as its own internal space, and my body schema orients me to where my limbs are, how they move in relation to my head, eyes, torso, and each other, and to the objects in the world around, including other people. It is what Merleau-Ponty calls 'the global awareness of my posture in the inter-sensory world'. My body 'dynamically' inhabits space, as a 'situational spatiality', and through my inhabiting of space and time, I build up a sense of pre-cognitive actions which become

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[84] Merleau-Ponty, in Carman, *"*Foreword" in Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: xii, xiv, xv.

[85] Carman, *"*Merleau-Ponty on body, flesh" in Crowell, "*The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism"* ,2012: 275.

habits and skills[86]. The body 'projects a certain 'milieu' around itself, insofar as its 'parts' know each other dynamically and its receptors are arranged in such a way as to make the perception of the object possible through their synergy'[87].

The acquisition of habits is the reworking and renewal of the body schema, an 'open system of an infinity of equivalent positions in different orientations in this system' within a space which becomes 'correlated' with my own body space, the 'motor acquisition of a new signification' so that I learn to negotiate furniture, walk through doors (even when wearing a hat with a feather (Merleau-Ponty's illustration) and not to bump into things. This 'tacit cogito' is not 'alien' to language, but 'prior to its actual operation' and may be extended through the use of technique and technology – through the use of tools and mechanical devices[88]. The person with diminished visual field finding their way around with a white cane is an example of extended 'tacit cogito'. Their perception of the world and hence their 'cogito' expands and extends tacitly, kinesthetically, and acoustically through the cane[89]. The 'habitual body' is simultaneously movement and sensation, with the horizon of both fluid and dynamic, pre-conscious and moving between possibilities and actualities. Merleau-Ponty applies what he understands about motor habits to

> 'all habits. Every habit is simultaneously motor and perceptual because it resides… between explicit perception and actual movement, in that fundamental function that simultaneously delimits our field of vision and our field of action'.

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[86] Merleau-Ponty *"Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: 102.
[87] Merleau-Ponty "Phenomenology of Perception*,* 1945/2012: 241.
[88] Lefort, "Preface" in Merleau-Ponty, "Phenomenology of Perception*,* 1945/2012: xxvii.
[89] Merleau-Ponty, "Phenomenology of Perception*,* 1945/2102: 153.

Elsewhere, 'the habitual body constitutes a horizon of capacities for the present body… which is taken for granted'[90].

This dynamic engagement with the 'field' or 'milieu' develops 'according to a law of internal equilibrium, as if by '*auto-organization*'[91]. As Walsh explains, 'a subject becomes coupled with its environment (broadly construed) in a unique part-whole relation that Merleau-Ponty understands as 'form'[92].

The body is a 'totality of lived significations that moves forward towards its equilibrium' or, in an alternate translation, the body is 'an ensemble of lived meanings that finds its equilibrium', however contingent and arbitrary my bodily movement may appear to others[93]. The word 'ensemble' captures the essential orchestration of my living body, expressing the unity and interplay of differing bodily parts as actors. As an ensemble of lived meanings or significations, the only certainties about me are that I perceive, I orientate myself in space and time, and, because neither is the focus of my attention, I'm not conscious of doing either of these, unless or until something goes wrong with any of this. As well as a personal horizon, I am situated in a pre-personal horizon of experiences I initially know nothing about, including my birth and my death, as well as my situated cultural pre-history[94].

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[90] Moran and Mooney, "*The Phenomenology Reader"*, 2002: 424:425.
[91] Walsh, "Intercorporeality and the first-person plural", 2020: 36.
[92] Walsh, "Intercorporeality and the first-person plural", 2020:36.
[93] Merleau-Ponty, *"Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: 142, 143, 144, 155.
[94] Merleau-Ponty, *"Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: 223.

'Sedimentation'

The term 'sedimentation' refers to the pre-reflective, 'implicit' distillation of multiple intentions, actions and sensorimotor endeavours with many repetitions and experimentation into becoming a background for future action. In Merleau-Ponty's words, there is:

> '"a world of thought, of sedimentation of our mental operations which allow us to count on our acquired concepts and judgments, without our having to repeat their synthesis at each moment… my comportment only remains around me as my familiar domain if I still 'hold in my hands' or 'in my legs' its principal distances and directions, and only if a multitude of intentional threads run out toward it from my body"'[95].

Sedimentation carries the sense of 'intentional threads' carrying on, holding movement together, giving it a past and a future, so that the 'phrases' of movement become. Incorporated into whole sequences. Repetition of the movement is necessary for the development of habits and skills, as seen in the endless iterations of the developing child's gross motor and fine-motor skills, in walking, running, grasping, and releasing, prompted by the satisfaction of the movement itself, but also dependent on a rich environment of 'affordances' or opportunities which present themselves to be explored intentionally or spontaneously.

> '"Even if it is not surprising that sensory and perceptual function – given they are pre-personal – deposit a natural world in front of ourselves, one might be

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[95] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception*", 1945/2012: 131-132.

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surprised that the spontaneous acts through which man [sic] has articulated his life themselves become sedimentation on the inside"'[96].

Normativity in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty

Although Merleau-Ponty and Husserl do not talk about normativity explicitly, Husserl refers to 'empty' and 'fulfilled' intentions, in which normativity refers to intentions towards objects. If 'perception is normative for Husserl, it is not because it is realized in the form of a judgement, but it is rather because it *aims* at its object'.[97](author's italics). Normative is used in the sense here of success or failure, rather than a cognitively expressed rule or mathematical standard. 'The norm is... relative to the purpose or goal the perceiving agent is pursuing'[98]. Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty speak of 'the gap of perception': 'what separates the Ego from the optimum... the tension between my actual perspective and the optimal perspective I covet or anticipate'[99] which in Husserlian terms, is experienced kinesthetically, first developmentally through the movement of the eyes, but also 'enmeshed with the entire body... forming a practical horizon of possibilities of action' that allow the 'transformation of empty intentions into expectations... within an optimal system of appearances'[100]. Husserl's emphasis on kinesthesis and proprioception as integral to the unfolding 'success' or 'failure' of the intention is apposite in that it allows for 'self-regulating'[101]. To decide to act, to know

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[96] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception",* 1945/2012: 363.
[97] Doyon, "Husserl on Perceptual Optimality", 2016: 210.
[98] Doyon, "Husserl on Perceptual Optimality", 2018:172.
[99] Doyon, "Husserl on Perceptual Optimality", 2018: 183, 184.
[100] Doyon, "Husserl on Perceptual Optimality", 2018: 181, 182.
[101] Doyon, and Breyer, "*Normativity in Perception"*, 2015:41.

what I can do, I have to understand how things stand in relation to myself in relation to my past experiences, constrained by my success or lack of it in the same intention, activity, or object. But the 'I can' of the developing child and the adult will depend on the attractiveness of that 'thing' or person to which movement is directed so that I experience 'satisfaction… with the intentionality fulfilled, … or the lack thereof'[102], that exploration of perceptual possibilities which is iterated multiple times as I become embedded in my world before it becomes an embedded skill for me.

Merleau-Ponty develops Husserl's indirect references to normativity in the sense of 'optimal fulfilment' but without the 'success' criteria. His understanding of how body schema allows the body to be constantly readjusting the body in relation to context works on a sense of 'attunement' and 'equilibrium' of intentions and task, or 'the affordances of the environment' that give my body its 'best grip' on the world, whether this is changing my posture at my desk, or moving around the kitchen to find tools as I make a meal. When I am absorbed in my task, this facility of 'optimal grip' carries on pre-reflectively, so I know where the knife is before I reach, without looking, for it, or I adjust the potato in my palm without thinking so I can peel it quickly. This process is happening all the time, as I gain and lose my 'grip', metaphorically or sensorially, on what I feel to be appropriate. As I adjust and readjust to what is being perceived internally and externally, I find my 'true north': the position of equilibrium and attunement, which I depend constantly on intimations both in my body and through my body to know how I'm 'making my way'. Developmentally, the response of others to my attempts to find my

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[102] Doyon, "Husserl on Perceptual Optimality", 2018: 185.

way and acquire skills is crucial from the first parental encouragement of feeding, sitting up, rolling over, reaching to grasp a toy, standing, and walking, to the acquisition of special skills with tools as extensions of my body such as cooking or fixing a bike. When my anticipations are fulfilled and movement and skills unfold appropriately, I learn to expect and anticipate more, and I find an 'appropriateness' or 'attunement' between myself, my motivations, and the world.

> '"My body is geared into the world when my perception provides me with the most varied and the most clearly articulated spectacle possible, and when my motor intentions, as they unfold, receive the responses they anticipate from the world. This maximum of clarity in perception and action specifies a perceptual ground, a background for my life, a general milieu for the coexistence of my body and the world"'[103].

'Skilful coping' and 'salience'

For contemporary phenomenologists, how conscious, logical, linguistic cognition emerges from and is related to actual perceptual activity remains open to debate. Hubert Dreyfus contributes to the exegesis of phenomenology by proposing what he calls 'skillful coping' in the 'flow' of skills and habits: also using the terms 'fluid coping' and 'absorbed coping' - 'the consummate form of human intelligence'[104]. Working from the study of adults acquiring expertise in chess, tennis or driving a car, Dreyfus makes the claim that the fluidity of skillful coping is not achieved by cognitive processes. Dreyfus

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[103] Merleau-Ponty, *"Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: 261.
[104] Dreyfus, "Merleau-Ponty and Recent Cognitive Science", 2004, in Dreyfus and Wrathall, *"Skillful Coping"*, 2014: 3.

goes so far as to say that deliberation actually interferes with the smooth flow of 'skillful coping', refuting John McDowell's assertion that perception is conceptual "all the way through"[105]. By refuting the linguistic basis of perception, Dreyfus readily acknowledges that phenomenologists then (Husserl, Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty) and since 'lack a detailed and convincing account of how rationality and language grow out of nonconceptual and nonlinguistic coping'[106].

For Merleau-Ponty,' "the phenomenon of absorbed coping' is *motor intentionality... To move one's body is to aim at things through it: it is to allow oneself to respond to their call,* which is made upon it independently of any representation"'[107](author's italics). For Dreyfus, and Merleau-Ponty, the intention does not necessarily have conditions of success within it: it is more about what they call a 'satisfactory gestalt' or 'attunement' felt by the one performing the action. As Dreyfus notes, *'Absorbed coping is the background condition of the possibility of all forms of comportment'*[108](author's italics). Through 'learning and practice, I become attuned to the world in such a way that the situation itself presents to me "reasons" for action that immediately draw my body'[109].

> 'Fortunately, the expert usually does not need to calculate. If he (sic) has enough
> experience and stays involved, he will find himself responding in a masterful way
> before he has time to think. Just as Aristotle, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty saw,
> such mastery requires a rich *perceptual* repertoire - the ability to respond to
> subtle differences in the appearance of perhaps hundreds of thousands of

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[105] McDowell, "Mind and World" in Dreyfus, and Wrathall, "*Skillful Coping*", 2014: 104.
[106] Dreyfus and Wrathall, "*Skillful Coping*", 2014: 124.
[107] Merleau-Ponty in Dreyfus, "The Primacy of Phenomenology" 2001 in Dreyfus and Wrathall, "*Skillful Coping*", 2014: 150.
[108] Dreyfus, "The Primacy of Phenomenology" 2001 in Dreyfus and Wrathall, "*Skillful Coping*", 2014: 156
[109] Wrathall, "Introduction": 1-22 in Dreyfus and Wrathall, "*Skillful Coping*", 2014: 3,5,9.

situations – but it requires no *conceptual* repertoire at all. This holds true for such refined skills as chess, jazz improvisations, sports, martial arts, etc.… but equally for everyday skills such as cooking dinner, crossing a busy street, carrying on a conversation, or just getting around in the world' [110](authors' italics).

Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, bringing together her interpretations of Merleau-Ponty and Dreyfus, highlights the importance of 'salience' in the apprehension and perception of the world around. 'Certain affordances are more salient than others and will solicit the agent more strongly… How the agent perceives her surroundings is affected by her current task so that those affordances that are salient to what she is doing are more urgent' [111]. But she parts company with Dreyfus when it comes to the role of cognition, which she believes he devalues as merely a 'trigger to action' expressed in intention to act[112], although Dreyfus acknowledges the role of thought in the early stages of acquiring a skill, when a skill breaks down, or flow is interrupted [113]. Romdenh-Romluc believes Dreyfus 'misconstrues the phenomenology of human action. Thought plays a far greater role in our behaviour than he allows… thought plays an ongoing role in guiding action'[114]. Finding Dreyfus' concept of 'acting-in-flow' as 'paradigmatic' (and more related to sporting expertise), it may not actually generalize to all human action, as Dreyfus proposes. Romdenh-Romluc makes her own proposal of when thought may enter the realm of doing. She suggests that thought interrupts flow when the 'agent starts to think about what she is doing'. These 'conceptually represented requirements' which may

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[110] Dreyfus, "Overcoming the Myth of the Mental" 2005 in Dreyfus and Wrathall, "*Skillful Coping"*, 2014: 119.
[111] Romdenh-Romluc, "Embodied Cognition and Agency", 2011: 90,91.
[112] Dreyfus, "The Primacy of Phenomenology" 2001 in Dreyfus and Wrathall, "*Skillful Coping" ,*2014: 150.
[113] Dreyfus, "A Merleau-Pontian Critique" 2000: 300 in Romdenh-Romluc, "Embodied Cognition and Agency", 2011.
[114] Romdenh-Romluc, "Thought and Action" in Zahavi, "*Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology",*2013: 202, 203.

come after the action has begun, and which form part of the 'composite apprehension of her environment which includes perceptual solicitations', will be 'inferior' and hence 'adversely affect' the doing of it, a proposal which appears very close to Dreyfus' own conclusions[115].

Habit, '*habitus*' and 'hapticity': Mauss, Bourdieu and Merleau-Ponty

Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'habit' and its relationship to body schema has already been noted above. Often used in a pejorative sense, the term '*habitus'* has overtaken 'habit' because it appears to convey a more active sense of the habitual in the inhabiting of a space. But Merleau-Ponty's use of habit emphasizes the movement basis of 'habit': '"my own body is the primordial habit, the one that conditions all others… the motor significations"' which Merleau-Ponty often equated to 'body-schema'[116]. 'Habit' is 'a modification and enlargement' of Merleau-Ponty's 'corporeal (body) schema' as 'a sediment of past activity that remains alive in the present… shaping perception, conception, deliberation, emotion and action' [117]. Habit includes the flux of the material world which is inhabited as well as the affective, kinesthetic, sensual and cognitive engagement of the agent, never in isolation. Nick Crossley notes that Merleau-Ponty's 'corporeal schema' is more dynamic than the metaphor 'sedimentation' allows, so that habit is the manner of incorporating 'aspects of my environment' and '"expressing our

[115] Romdenh-Romluc, "Thought and Action" in Zahavi, "*Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology",* 2013: 204, 205, 214.
[116] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception",* 1945/2012: 84, 93, 143, 144.
[117] Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus", 2001a: 104.

power of dilating our being-in-the-word, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments"'[118] . Body skills

> ' are transferable to other body parts, and that to acquire a habit is to grasp and incorporate, within one's bodily schema, a tacit and 'practical' principle.. Knowledge and… know-how… which permit new ways of acting… it is a moving equilibrium… Habits are open to reflection and change'[119]

The term *'habitus'* is connected with sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), and sociologist Marcel Mauss' (1872-1950), but, as Crossley notes, it is a 'question-begging concept'[120] as no two theorists agree or are definitive in their use of the term. Mauss used the term '*habitus'* relating its meaning to the word '*hexis'*, referring to 'practical reason', in his study of human bodies in action in a variety of societies, in which he referred to 'body techniques' of people doing ordinary activities such as walking and squatting. Their unique patterns of postures and gestures revealed the distinctive actions that 'mark one individual from another, dispositions and skills that were an 'acquired ability', a 'means of knowing, handling and dealing with the world' which 'are shaped by biology and other "facts" of the natural world' as well as by the communities in which they live[121].

By contrast, Bourdieu's '*habitus',* 'a conception designed to account for the regularity, coherence, and order' of human practices 'without ignoring its negotiated and strategic

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[118] Merleau-Ponty in Sigurdson, "*Heavenly Bodies",* 2016: 320.
[119] Crossley, *"The Social Body",* 2001b: 125-127.
[120] Crossley, "Habit and Habitus", 2013: 137.
[121] Mauss, in Crossley, "Habit and Habitus", 2013: 140, 141.

nature', 'an active sediment for [the agent's] past which functions within his (sic) present' emphasizes the 'schemas' which underly human practices like 'players' of a game, always operating within the boundaries of 'the rules… operating with interlocking fields… as the context of action'[122]. Bourdieu appears to privilege the role of "rational and conscious calculation… entering everyday life as a matter of course"'. [123] This 'repertoire of practical reason' includes 'aspects of the body' such as "skin colour and disability" which could be perceived as belonging to 'economic, cultural and symbolic capital'[124]. Crossley notes that the more 'deterministic' nature of Bourdieu's concept diminishes the impact of the role of flux of both the social 'fields' and the material aspects in which people develop their habitus, as well as diminishing the role of agency, and believes phenomenology 'fleshes out' Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' to allow for more intersubjectivity and interaction between 'the actor' and 'the world'[125].

Because hands are an integral part of habitual activity, self-care activities and domestic skills, I will briefly examine 'hands-on' making, whether there is a product (as in crafting) or not (as in the maintenance activities of domesticity). Making or '*poiesis*' (Greek) from an anthropological viewpoint is the activity of hands and bodies, usually with material and tools, the 'process of production, creation, creativity and culture' (OED). As Calhoun, Sennett and Shapira note, 'it also means making ourselves'…. creativity not just as an idea but as a concrete practice, as something we do, and as something we do not simply

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[122] Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus", 2001: 83, 84, 86.
[123] Bourdieu in Crossley, "Habit and Habitus", 2013: 117.
[124] Bourdieu in Crossley, "Habit and Habitus", 2013: 116,117.
[125] Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus", 2001a: 136-139.

in special circumstances but in our everyday lives'[126]. Crafting is 'know-how', knack, *savoir-faire,* or 'a knowing more than we can tell'[127], describing those ways of knowing and doing which are personal and practical, 'but which adhere so closely to the person of the practitioner as to remain out of reach of explication or analysis'[128]. If this inarticulacy is an accurate description of hand skills, it may also be true of whole-body habits, which are also 'personal', 'practical', and particular, extending from the bedroom and bathroom to the kitchen and living room out into the world, and being largely non-linguistic may also be pre-conscious. Habits, often judged as the 'unwanted detritus of ordinary activity' [129] are a feature of being human, of lived responsive and responsible bodily being-in-the-world.

The 'product' made by the craftsperson may be material, social, temporal or linguistic but still significant, such as a clean house, a day, a conversation, a family, or a community. Craftsmanship' (or 'artisanship' in an inclusive world) 'represents the special human condition of being engaged', where the engagement of all human faculties – sensorimotor abilities, imagination, perception, emotion and intellect – is in an interplay with the material world, evolving as a pattern and rhythm which could be termed 'flow', although Sennett doesn't label it as such.[130] For Sennett, as with Ingold, crafting or making generally is engagement in a conversation. '[E]very good craftsman (sic) conducts a dialogue between concrete practice and thinking; this dialogue evolves into sustaining

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[126] Calhoun, Sennett, and Shapira, "Poiesis means making", 2013:195,197.

[127] Polanyi, "*The Tacit Dimension",* 1966/2009:4.

[128] Ingold, "*Making: Anthropology, Archeology, Art and Architecture",* 2013:109.

[129] Ingold, "Response to David Howes", 2022: 239.

[130] Sennett, "*The Craftsman",* 2008:20.

habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem finding and problem-solving'[131]. Ingold affirms this integration of thinking and doing, contrasting it with the abstract operations of the theorist:

> 'The way of the craftsman (sic), by contrast, is to allow knowledge to grow from the crucible of our practical and observational engagement with the beings and the things around us. This is to practice what I would liken to an *art of inquiry… seeing forward…. anticipation…* being one step ahead of the material' in the process of making'[132].

Sennett and Ingold's definitions spill over into what is more usually described as '*praxis'*, a word which can carry an imperative of 'conscious, willed action' which translates into 'practical social action', with a sense of 'speech in action', or 'the performance of voluntary or skilful, purposive movement' (OED). I would suggest that making/*poiesis* is as intentional, purposeful and directed as *praxis*, even when the action is repetitive and directed towards the repetition and iteration of maintenance, rather than a product. Embedded bodily engagement, imagination, concentration, attention to the material with its possibilities and constraints, problem-solving, intellection and execution, movement and sensation: the act of making is delicately poised between abstraction and concretion.

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[131] Sennett, "*The Craftsman",* 2008: 9.
[132] Ingold, "*Making: Anthropology, Archeology, Art and Architecture",* 2013: 69.

The reciprocity of body and world in intercorporeality and intersubjectivity

What happens when the experience of the first-person singular, which forms the main focus of phenomenology, becomes first-person plural - when the 'I' becomes 'we', when awareness becomes discernment and discernment becomes interaction?[133] For the human species, intercorporeality and intersubjectivity are necessary for survival. Intersubjectivity begins and is intertwined with self-consciousness.

> '" Self-knowledge enjoys no privilege, and another person is no more impenetrable than I am myself…. If I do not learn within myself to recognize the junction of the *for-itself* and the *in-itself,* then none of these mechanisms that we call 'other bodies' will ever come to life. If I have no outside, then others have no inside"'[134].

If I am aware of the intertwining of myself with myself, as in the experience of touching myself, this reciprocity or 'reversibility' is the beginnings of 'intersubjectivity', the answer to the problem of how to grasp the otherness of others, if they, too, are not objects, but lived beings as I am – 'first-person plural'. Developmentally, this journey to first-person plural begins from the first day of birth. In the pre-reflective and pre-linguistic dependent neonate, expression of the 'I' is by affect, face, gesture, sounds and whole-body behaviour, in a relationship with the carer which is characterized by what Merleau-Ponty calls 'reciprocity' between myself and the other. But there is always a gap between my flesh and your flesh, for all of the intensity of the relationality of the early years. This is

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[133] Walsh, "Intercorporeality and the first-person plural", 2020:21.
[134] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception*", 1945/2012:353, 391.

the increasing awareness of the 'chiasms' between my flesh and yours, of the 'double folding over of my flesh', the 'fundamental gap or dehiscence of being' that both mediates my intersubjectivity and allows my intertwining with others and the world – 'speaking with my body' - but is also the means by which I recognize the (fluid) boundaries of my own flesh[135].

Elsewhere, Merleau-Ponty calls this a '"kind of precommunication, an anonymous collectivity with differentiation, a kind of group existence"'[136].

> '"Communication or the understanding of gestures is achieved through the reciprocity between my intentions and the other person's gestures, and between my gestures and the intentions which can be read in the other person's behaviour"'. [From the developing child's perspective,]' "everything happens as if the other person's intention inhabited my body, or as if my intentions inhabited his body"'[137].

Merleau-Ponty uses an example of a baby 'mirroring' an adult's playful pretend 'biting' as evidence of this resonance of two human bodies moving together. Other examples can be made of acrobats, dancers or soldiers moving together, their symmetrical gestures harmonizing without 'intellectual interpretation'.

> '" It is precisely my body that perceives the other's body and finds there something of a miraculous extension of its own intentions, a familiar manner of handling the world… Just as the parts of my body together form a system, the other's body and my own are a single whole, two sides of a single phenomenon,

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[135] Grosz in Weiss in Evans and Lawlor, "*Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh",* 2000:204, 205.

[136] Merleau-Ponty, in Walsh, "Intercorporeality and first-person plural", 2020: 38.

[137] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception",* 1945/2012: 190,191.

and the anonymous existence, of which my body is continuously the trace, henceforth inhabits these two bodies simultaneously"'[138]

The communication of bodily gestures and movement grounds communication prior to language. It is not an intellectual interpretation, but a series of "available significations", which establish a "common world between speaking subjects… which grounds them in turn" in orientation to a specific world [139]. As Walsh notes, 'Merleau-Ponty's notion of behaviour *indexes* the body to its surroundings… the immediately surrounding environments' or 'field' [140]. The perceptual and bodily coupling of the 'I' with the environment 'couples' with another 'I' to become a 'We'.

> 'My being-toward the other is guided by the way the bodily behaviour of the other solicits or frustrates my own (or vice versa). I become coupled to the other through the affectively charged dynamic interplay of an interlocking system of bodily behaviour, not on the basis of perceptual recognition of the other *as* other or *as* some sort of unique perceptual object'[141].

This coupling with another's affect-infused sensorimotor behaviour is 'read' subconsciously with my own present and past experience as a dynamic 'text', demonstrated in an originary way in the neonate-carer relationship by the 'attunement', 'reciprocity' and interplay of the sounds, gestures, facial expressions, and bodily comportment of the two involved.

> '" Perception's silent thesis is that experiences at each moment can be coordinated with the experiences of the preceding moment, and with that of the

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[138] Merleau-Ponty, *"Phenomenology of Perception",* 1945/2012: 369, 370.
[139] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception",* 1945/2012: 190, 191, 192.
[140] Walsh, "Intercorporeality and first-person plural", 2020: 34.
[141] Walsh, "Intercorporeality and first-person plural", 2020: 41.

following one, that my perception can be coordinated with the perceptions of other consciousnesses – that all contradictions can be removed, that monadic and intersubjective experiences is a single continuous text"'[142].

In Husserl's accounts of perception, the role of kinesthesia is mentioned as making intentions fulfilled or successful. Merleau-Ponty highlights 'motor signification' as the mechanism for the acquisition of habits, skills and 'skillful coping'. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone believes understanding of kinesthesia should take a more prominent role in the discussion of the development of perception and cognition. Her long-term belief is that thinking animates movement but that the reverse is true also - 'thinking *is* movement' – to which I now turn.

Movement is where everything begins

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone has been writing and lecturing consistently and powerfully about the kinesthetic and kinetic foundations of animate (human and non-human) being for over fifty years, beginning with her studies in dance and moving on to research into the evolutionary foundations of movement in animate creatures, including nonhuman ones. An avowed Husserlian phenomenologist, despite earlier approving citings of Merleau-Ponty's work, she now finds much in Merleau-Ponty's work with which to disagree. Merleau-Ponty has become 'a man in search of a method'[143]. She finds his writing opaque and too 'poetic', his attempts to integrate the findings of then-current

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[142] Merleau-Ponty, *"Phenomenology of Perception"*, 1945/2012: 54.
[143] Sheets-Johnstone, *"Primacy of Movement"*, 2011: 238.

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psychology with unverified statements from phenomenology failing to hold up his arguments.

One of Merleau-Ponty's methodological failings is the use he makes of studies of pathology (of neurologically dysfunctional people) rather than from using reflection on 'normal' phenomenological experience. In Sheets-Johnstone's estimation, the study of pathology has replaced 'bracketing' which is the true phenomenological method. Instead of 'making the familiar strange' with a 'suspension of the natural attitude', Merleau-Ponty has made a study of pathology, by which the strange is made 'ontological'[144]. This charge is not a new one and could be directed against most generations of researchers in brain function and neurology since the inception of the discipline as a science rather than a philosophy.

Along with this critique of Merleau-Ponty's methodology is Sheets-Johnstone's argument that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is 'adultist', i.e. Merleau-Ponty has no explanation for the conceptual leap from the 'undifferentiated' world of the child to the 'ambiguity-stricken… undifferentiated (in fundamentally significant ways) but normal' world of the adult. The 'motor intentionality' of (adult) human life is 'open to the world', in the formation of 'pre-personal' 'autonomous functions', but Merleau-Ponty has no explanation for how this occurs: he glosses over the process[145]. Merleau-Ponty's term 'basic motor intentionality' skates over the need to 'examine the *mute* post-natal introductions to being a body and learning to move ourselves, precisely in terms of a

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[144] Sheets-Johnstone, *"Primacy of Movement",* 2011: 240-242.
[145] Sheets-Johnstone, *"Primacy of Movement",* 2011: 245.

developing openness to the world, a *developing* capacity to 'see the things themselves', indeed of a *developing* 'basic motor intentionality. Is not our tactile-kinesthetic body in this sense fundamental?'[146](author's italics).

Glossing over the dynamics of the 'tactile-kinetic-kinesthetic modalities' in the growth of selfhood and self-consciousness from child to adult is a charge Sheets-Johnstone makes not only against Merleau-Ponty but a host of other phenomenologically influenced philosophers who use the four 'E-words' referred to earlier: 'embodiment', 'embedment', 'enactivism', or 'extended mind'[147]. For her, these 'e-words' are 'lexical band-aids' which are phenomenologically inaccurate and obscure the dynamism of 'kinetic memory' [148]. To refer in a general way, as Gallagher and Zahavi do, to a '"recessive consciousness of our body"'[149], is to 'deflect attention from the challenge of bona fide phenomenological descriptions of *everyday synergies of meaningful movement,* synergies that were honed from infancy and early childhood onward and that adult humans reap in the form of "getting on with our task".[150] It is indeed *not* that the body "tries to stay out of our way so that we can get on with our task" [151] but that in learning our bodies and learning to move ourselves, we have amassed an incredibly varied and vast repertoire of "I cans" along with an incredibly varied and vast kinesthetic memory'.

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[146] Sheets-Johnstone, *"Primacy of Movement"*, 2011: 266.
[147] Gallagher and Cole "Body Image and Body Schema" 1998. Zahavi, "Introduction" in *"Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology"* 2018. Varela, Thompson and Rosch, *"The Embodied Mind"* 1991.Noe, *"Action in Perception",* 1979.
[148] Sheets-Johnstone, "Kinaesthesia: An Extended Critical Overview", 2019: 143-169.
[149] Gallagher, and Zahavi, *"Phenomenological Mind"* 2012:185 in Sheets-Johnstone, "Kinanesthesia: An Extended Critical Overview", 2019: 152.
[150] Sheets-Johnstone,"Kinaesthesia: Extended Critical Overview", 2019: 152.
[151] Gallagher and Zahavi, *"Phenomenological Mind"* 2012: 163 in Sheets-Johnstone,"KInaesthesia: Extended Critical Overview", 2019:152.

To gloss this as an infant's' '"' sense of their own bodies as organized and environmentally embedded… and an early perceptually based sense of themselves"'''[152] is 'hardly a sufficient developmental story' and a 'basically spatial notion of subject-world relationships [that] falls far short of a phenomenologically informed analysis'[153].

Linked to this glossing over of the developmental process of 'tactile-kinetic-kinesthetic modalities and what they reveal of adult functioning of the same is Sheets-Johnstone's charge of 'pointillism', the viewing of movement as a series of positions between points that puts proprioception, the position sense, (which literally means 'one's own taking in'[154] as more important than kinesthesis, the sensing of the dynamics of movement with its own synergies and qualities. Sheets-Johnstone finds this charge, ascribed by her as stemming from Sherrington's 'postural specification of proprioception', is seen in Merleau-Ponty's description of bodily movement as '"a system of present positions… but an open system of an infinite number of equivalent positions directed to other ends"'[155]. This quote is not representative of Merleau-Ponty's description of perception generally. She describes the work of 'embodied cognition' of Gallagher and Zahavi in their text, *The Phenomenological Mind* (2012), as a 'posture-tethered rendition of "the kinestheses" [which] turns movement into a spatially pointillist and temporally punctual system of positions that clearly distances itself from and compromises the foundational dynamics of animate movement'[156] 'Pointillism' or a static sense of proprioception ignores the

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[152] Gallagher and Zahavi, "*Phenomenological Mind*", 2012:229.

[153] Sheets-Johnstone, "The Body Subject", 2020: 15,17.

[154] Sheets-Johnstone, "*The Corporeal Turn",* 2009: 140.

[155] Merleau-Ponty, 1962:141 in Sheets-Johnstone, "Kinaesthesia: Extended Critical Overview", 2019: 152, 153.

[156] Sheets-Johnstone, "Kinaesthesia: Extended Critical Overview", 2019:150.

'dynamic realities of movement' 'along a 'gradient of awareness' and the qualities of movement exhibited in them, such as 'vigorous or weak, energetic or nonchalant, ambling or swift'[157].

The growth of agency and ownership of my bodily movement

For Sheets-Johnstone, Husserl is the only phenomenologist who emphasizes the kinetic-kinesthetic structure of learning to move and live in the world. This is the 'I move: I do: I can' that Sheets-Johnstone calls Husserl's 'trinity of phenomenology' which describes the growth of agency and ownership of my bodily movement entangled with emotional development in an intersubjective relationship. Kinesthesia is entangled with tactility and affect from the first breath of life. 'There are '"perceptions" of movement as well as "feelings" of movement: 'we "perceive our movement as a three-dimensional happening: we "feel" the qualitative dynamics of our movement'[158]. Sheets-Johnstone emphasises movement as a series of flows or phrases which can be likened to phrases in music: 'Movement is replete with flows, flowing habitualities… [which] are synergies of meaningful movement that precisely flow forth without our having to monitor them in any way'[159].

To move is to be spontaneous, predisposed to consciousness and reflectivity, agency, language and self-consciousness in an environment which 'calls forth' a response. The

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[157] Sheets-Johnstone, "Kinaesthesia: Extended Critical Overview", 2019: 151.
[158] Sheets-Johnstone, "*Insides and Outsides: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*", 2016: 9.
[159] Sheets-Johnstone, "*Insides and Outsides: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*," 2016: 9.

newborn infant engages with herself and others through movement. But movement is not discrete sensations joined like beads on a string: movement occurs in a nonstop 'flow' of 'kinetic melodies', and it is through this interactive experimentation with responsive others who care for her bodily needs that the infant learns that when she moves, things happen, and she learns 'I can' [160]. For the developing infant, the recognition of her agency, her sense of subjectivity, of the 'I' in the 'I can', comes much later, preceded by the experience of the flow of 'tactile-kinesthetic-kinetic melodies' of movement. The affective and kinaesthetic intermingle in the registers of intersubjectivity as 'serious play'. Relationships with others (in the first instance, with those who love and are loved) are elemental in the attunement to one's own corporeality, and to the 'moving in concert' with others in the doing of deeply satisfying corporeal tasks together (e.g. clapping, singing, walking, dancing, crafting, cooking, gardening, swimming – the list is endless), and being able to pass this corporeal knowledge on to others. Daniel Stern called this dynamic interplay of intersubjective energy, power, meaning and aliveness 'vitality affects': the gestural, sensory and movement conversation between a child and her carer which contributes to the developing child's sense of self[161]. Stern also emphasised the agency of the child in setting change in motion by searching for 'need satisfaction' and 'intrinsic pleasurable feelings', and the fundamental connection between 'whole body… somatic states' and the child's 'contour of emotional activation' experienced as 'dynamic shifts and 'patterned changes' within. 'The vitality forms of interpersonal happenings are part of implicit knowing'[162]. ' 'Vitality affects' are also a key

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[160] Sheets-Johnstone, 'Kinaesthesia: Extended Critical Overview", 2019:160.
[161] Stern, *Forms of Vitality* 2010 in Lloyd and Smith: "Life Phenomenology and Relational Flow", 2020: 540.
[162] Stern, *Forms of Vitality* 2010 in Ammaniti and Ferrari, "Vitality Effects", 2013: 368.

ingredient in the passing on of sensorimotor skill, as occurs between a parent or carer

and a child, a teacher and a learner, or a therapist and a client[163]. The dynamism of

'vitality affects' is best described in 'metaphors to live by' (evoking Lakoff and Johnson's

phrase) 'which use verbs and adjectives rather than nouns' for their ability to invoke 'the

pulse of life that swells, surges, rises, crests or fades'[164]. In the dynamism of 'vitality

affects', gestures are formed and habits and 'habitualities' grow.

Sheets-Johnstone believes her interpretation of Husserl provides for a more sound basis

of understanding movement in time and space, and the development of one's ownership

and agency within that, than does the work of Merleau-Ponty, by defining 'the

construction of the spatial world' as the 'playing together of two *correlatively related*

functions' of perception and kinesthesis, in which '*functions of spontaneity* belong to

each perception' which puts 'dimensions of agency to the fore and in an experiential

way' [165] (author's italics). Yet I find that same correlation of perception and kinesthesia,

and dynamic awareness of agency in my reading of Merleau-Ponty. She feels he

contradicts this 'growing into space' by his statement that '" The problem of the world,

and to begin with, that of one's own body, consists in the fact that *it is all there"'[166]*. But

Merleau-Ponty does not perceive the body as a 'ready-made repository of knowledge

about itself or the world', not deny the 'unfolding' and 'infolding' of the body with the

world, contrary to Sheets-Johnstone's reading[167]. Merleau-Ponty's phrase about the

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[163] Lloyd and Smith, "Life Phenomenology and Relational Flow", 2020: 540.
[164] Lloyd, "From Dysfunction to Flow", 2015: 29.
[165] Husserl in Sheets-Johnstone, "Kinaesthesia: Extended Critical Overview", 2019: 156.
[166] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception"* 1962 in Sheets-Johnstone "Kinaesthesia: Extended
Critical Overview" 2019:157. Sheets-Johnstone, "The Body Subject", 2020:2.
[167] Sheets-Johnstone, "Kinaesthesia: Extended Critical Overview", 2019: 157.

'pre-givenness' of the world (a term which Husserl also used) can be as read either as being 'already there, fully formed', or 'a being there, open to be explored' contingent on the infant with already 'given' tendencies to move towards or move away from it, much as a blossom is 'already given', but the full blooming occurs over time. I believe that in the context of his complete writings, the latter understanding is more accurate.

Phenomenology, 'flow' and dance studies

If movement really is 'our mother tongue', then movement-based disciplines such as dance give multiple examples of whole bodies in intentional, intersubjective action, i.e. bodies in 'flow'. 'Flow', the term first used extensively by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1931-2021), a psychologist, is a much-appropriated interdisciplinary term, but the use of the term in dance is much more wholistic. The term was first used in exploring the self-recorded emotions of pleasure and apathy in adults and young people at work, in leisure activities and at home[168]. Csikszentmihalyi described emotions and skill as 'information' ordered by thought and cognition in his development of what has been called Positive Psychology, in which flow is 'an optimal state of engagement', essential for human flourishing, in which 'mental effort, happiness, sense of inner strength, and intrinsic motivation are at their peak': in 'high levels of concentration, alertness, activity, strength, creativity, freedom and openness', across a range of intensities[169]. 'Those engaging in these 'intrinsically motivating' 'autotelic' activities, i.e. 'activities which people [do] for

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[168] Csikszentmihalyi, "*Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*," 1975/2008.
[169] Csikszentmihalyi, "'The Future of Flow" in Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, "*Optimal Experiences: Psychological Studies of Flow*," 2012:364, 368.

the sake of doing the activity', have a level of skill already matched with an 'appropriate level of challenge so that boredom or anxiety do not cloud the experience'[170]. Levels of intentionality and motivation are perceived as open to being changed by the right kind of cognitive approach to challenges of skill, presupposed by success in the past. Comparative studies across cultures purport to show this autotelic engagement as a universal characteristic while also recognizing that other social factors may play a part[171], but the theory betrays Csikszentmihalyi's systems approach to the human body, affect and bodiliness. 'Think positively, and tragedy turns to a happy ending', or 'self-belief is all you need', seem to sum up his approach. He and his team believe that changing one's attitude from apathy to energy is a matter of decision-making, 'mental effort and inner strength'[172]. 'Positive Psychology' fails to give credence to the phenomenology and complexity of lived experience, and the neuropsychological and emotional baggage people acquire with painful sensory and/or movement experiences, especially when the flow is lost with damage, decline or dysfunction of some kind, such that challenge overcomes skill, or the challenges of skill acquisition or their lack overwhelm. Most of all, Csikszentmihalyi's theory focuses completely on skill as an individual activity, ignoring the relationality and intersubjectivity necessary in the acquisition of skill in the first place. People become skilful at doing things because they have learnt those same skills from others, and move on through challenges to skill, or not, because of the support from others, or lack of it.

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[170] Csikszentmihalyi, "*Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience*", 1990/2008.

[171] Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, "*Optimal Experiences: Psychological Studies of Flow*", 2012: 364.

[172] Lloyd, "From Dysfunction to Flow", 2015:26.

In contrast to Csikszentmihalyi's Positive Psychology, dance studies downplay cognitive action and elevate the sensorimotor[173]. Rebecca Lloyd, a medal-winner salsa dancer and prolific writer on dance and movement, writes movingly of her own journey from dysfunction to flow again after an accident, demonstrating in her account her debt to a more phenomenological approach to returning to dancing again, using what she calls a 'Heideggerian steadfastness' in a journey of relearning matched with 'attunement to the nuances of simple taken-for-granted acts, such as walking'[174]. Lloyd emphasises the necessity of intersubjective attunement through eyes, hands and bodies in the process of dancing, especially in improvisational dance. In a more recent article, Lloyd and co-worker Stephen Smith (an Olympic equestrian) express this intersubjective attunement and synchronicity of affect and bodily movement in a variety of sports as 'radical immanence'[175]. Quoting Michel Henry, Smith and Lloyd note, '"[T]his felt sense of life's immanence inheres in the very condition of self-awareness and sensitivity to other selves", of engaging with the world and others in a ''fecundity' 'of 'affectivities, resonances, synergies, synchronies and attunements'''[176].

Dance researcher Michelle Merritt expands her earlier (1981) article on 'Thinking-*is*-moving' in which she analyses improvisational dance. Fully aware of Sheets-Johnstone's sharp critiques of the 'enactivist' term, Merritt calls her approach 'radical enactivism' in which her dancers are using an extended version of cognition in the way they devise movements of their bodies with each other, with only gestures and bodily movements

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[173] Lloyd, "From Dysfunction to Flow", 2015:26.
[174] Lloyd, "From Dysfunction to Flow", 2015:26.
[175] Lloyd and Smith "Life Phenomenology and Relational Flow", 2020: 539.
[176] Henry 1990/2008 in Lloyd and Smith "Life Phenomenology and Relational Flow", 2020: 539.

expressed, in a context of movements which have been rehearsed repeatedly, but are 'called forth' by the movement of the other[177]. Merritt uses the distinction between 'body image' - movement which has conscious components relying on vision - and 'body schema' as the 'pre-reflective, automatic, sensorimotor "know-how" that the body possesses in familiar action' expressed in dancing, to highlight the dynamism of improvisational dance, where dancers' movements are not planned in advance and 'feed off one another', the aesthetic experience emerging from the "bodily logos"[178] The neuroscience of attuned movement between people identifies mirror neurones 'in the motor cortex and posterior parietal cortex' activated unconsciously 'during both action and observation', demonstrating 'that others' behaviours, emotions and sensations are mapped into our internal motor representation, thus creating a direct connection between self and others'[179]. Monkey studies show mirror neurones 'not only 'decode "*what*" of an action …but also the '*why*' of it (i.e. underlying intention)'[180].

The 'coupling' of bodies, skill, affects and the environment: Shaun Gallagher

Although I have cited Sheets-Johnstone's critique of Shaun Gallagher and others in the neurosciences that use the '4E' label, this can only be a partial view because of the evolution of Gallagher's position in the decades of his prodigious output of writing and speaking. As a philosopher, Gallagher uses the phenomenology of both Merleau-Ponty

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[177] Merritt, "Thinking-is-moving: dance, agency", 2015: 96, 97.
[178] Sheets-Johnstone in Merritt, M "thinking-is-moving: dance, agency", 2015: 98.
[179] Ferrari in Ammaniti and Ferrari "Vitality Effects", 2013: 371.
[180] Ammaniti and Ferrari "Vitality Effects", 2013: 372.

and Husserl when describing interaction, intentionality, agency, ownership of non-linguistic and voluntary movement, and intersubjectivity, working experimentally in collaboration with specialists in multiple disciplines to demonstrate empirically different aspects of the phenomenological paradigm. 'What is at stake is the lived body… the lived body is, and has to be, the same as the biological body. The perceiving agent exists as and experiences the structures and processes that constitute the biological body, so anatomy, body chemistry… all of which can be described from a third-person perspective, are also describable from a first-person perspective, and also enter into our intersubjective (second-person) experience of others'[181].

Building on Varela, Thompson and Rosch's work, and framing his philosophy within a phenomenological paradigm, Gallagher works against the 'computational model' of the brain, mind and consciousness, and prefers to describe 'Extended Cognition as having the four 'E's': 'Embodied' – 'the brain as having co-evolved with the body'; 'Embedded' – 'the mind/body as coupled to the environment; 'Enactivism' – the body/mind/environment working together and shaping each other', and 'Extended' – the notion that cognition extends all over the brain and throughout the body to the environment and even to social institutions, such that material aspects (equipment, technology, institutions) may be termed 'intelligent' because of the sense of distributed 'mind' through these artefacts. To these four 'E''s, Gallagher now posits another 'E' - 'empathy', the ability to feel with another, and an 'A' – affect, from which no movement

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[181] Gallagher in Nowakowski et al, "Interview with Shaun Gallagher: Part 1", 2011: 82.

or sensoria may be disentangled[182]. Although aware of disagreements between 'enactivists' and 'extended mind hypothesists', Gallagher's approach takes its lead from the work of pragmatist philosophers such as Dewey and Mead, namely that 'emotions are not reducible to bodily states since the body is always coupled to an environment'[183]. In Gallagher's terminology, the 'coupling' of body/mind 'grounds… interaction with the world' from the earliest stages of development, 'where the co-regulation and the coupling mutually affect each other and constitute a self-sustaining organization of relational dynamics' such that 'the autonomy of the agents involved is not destroyed, although its scope may be augmented or reduced', interaction which is 'pragmatic not representational' and aligned with 'intrinsic temporality'[184].

In the several 'waves' in the evolution of the 'extended mind' hypothesis (EMH), Gallagher describes the beginning with Andy Clark and David Chalmers' proposition (1998) that the mind does not stop at the cranium or even the body, but extends into the world, coupled with technologies and artefacts in the environment (e.g. pen and paper, computers, phones and other instruments). Clark and Chalmers' original paper produced an avalanche of critique and experimentation in a wide range of fields. Critics questioned the 'reliability, trustworthiness and accessibility' of these extensions, and whether 'non-derived content' could claim to be cognitive [185]. The chief criticism of the EMH is in the difficulty of deciding whether the coupling of cognition with the

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[182] Gallagher, "Phenomenological Approaches to Consciousness" in Schneider and Velmans, "*Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*", 2017: 711-725.
[183] Gallagher, "The Extended Mind: State of the Question", 2018: 421-447.
[184] Gallagher, "*Action and Interaction*", 2020b: 35, 199, 200.
[185] Gallagher, "The Extended Mind: State of the Question", 2018: 424, 425.

environment is causal or contingent, or 'creates that which is constitutionally cognitive'[186]. Gallagher also notes the distinction some critics of EMH make between 'embedded cognition' ('cognition that is causally scaffolded by external devices and practices, but not constituted by them'), and EMH [187]. While EMH 'captures our world-agent' activity, Gallagher notes the impact that 'neural plasticity' makes 'to our practices and to our brains'[188]. While aware of the many distinctions that could be made about the sources of human engagement within the world, amid the tsunami of neuropsychological experimentation currently being explored (much of it in a reductionistic mode), Gallagher remains open-ended, recognizing the limits of descriptions and descriptors when applied to neural activity, perception, and cognition. Somehow, through the maze of collaborations he has made with diverse human scientists with their own specific terminology, Gallagher has managed to keep his focus phenomenologically grounded while recognising that a multiplicity of methods in any investigation is vital, including studies which are not definitively phenomenological in method and may not include first-person accounts.

Although I am not comfortable with the privileging of 'cognition' in any of the '4-E's' accounts because of their concomitant (perhaps unconscious?) devaluing of bodily experience, and the high priority placed on language as the primary and originating organiser of developmental bodily experience, Gallagher manages a harmonisation of body, mind and social context while maintaining a pragmatic approach to

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186 Gallagher, "The Extended Mind: State of the Question", 2018: 426.
187 Gallagher, "The Extended Mind: State of the Question", 2018: 431.
188 Gallagher, "The Extended Mind: State of the Question", 2018: 433.

phenomenological method in his model of intersubjective interaction as 'second-order',

'second-person minds', in the context of 'first-order, first-person awareness from the

very beginning', while finding a 'continuity… between interaction and the social

practices that involve language', of which gesture and body language in general are

'first-order communicative practices'[189]. Aware of the limits of the field in which he

engages as a critical cognitive neuroscientist, Gallagher warns against the entanglement

of the neurosciences in all their manifestations and add-ons with the pharmacological

industry, media, corporate wealth, and governments and the institutions which now

support these paradigms[190], such that the human self is reduced to 'nothing-but' the

neuronal or molecular level as a 'concerted liquidification or neurofication of the

personal level, including the common-sense lifeworld'[191]. Rose's truism, which Gallagher

often quotes - '"The mind is wider than the brain"'- is worth bearing in mind[192].

Summary of Chapter 1

In this chapter, I have examined several key concepts in Merleau-Ponty's

phenomenology, situating his theory within the thought-stream of Brentano and

Husserl. In my discussion I examined the fundamental principles of the search for

'essences' in first-person reflection on the 'givenness' of phenomenal experience, using

the 'reduction', and the '*epoché*' within an awareness of 'the natural attitude'. To

Husserlian notions of 'intentionality', *'leib'*, '*korper'* and 'lifeworlds', I added Merleau-

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[189] Gallagher, "*Action and Interaction",* 2020b: 85.
[190] Slaby and Gallagher, "Critical Neuroscience and Socially Extended Minds", 2015: 49.
[191] Slaby and Gallagher "Critical Neuroscience and Socially Extended Minds", 2015: 43, 44.
[192] Rose 2012, in Slaby and Gallagher "Critical Neuroscience and Socially Extended Minds", 2015: 53.

Pontyian notions of 'flesh', recognition, habit, and body schema, 'sedimentation', 'the intertwining', the 'chiasm', and 'intersubjectivity'. I briefly looked at both theorists' understanding of 'normativity'. In the critique of Merleau-Ponty, I have used the work of contemporary phenomenologists (some more explicitly phenomenological in attitude than others) such as Taylor Carman, Dermot Moran, Timothy Mooney, Maxime Doyon, Hubert Dreyfus, Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, Sara Heinamaa, Nick Crossley, Tim Ingold, Shaun Gallagher, and Dan Zahavi. Multiple contemporary interpretations of both Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's work abound and continue to proliferate, some of which have polarized into opposing camps. As Steven DeLay notes, 'If the divergences between Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's views of perception are commonly exaggerated or oversimplified, that can be because of a fundamental background ambiguity in what we mean by the world', or indeed, 'what is meant by a whole host of terms which generations of phenomenologists have used'[193]. I believe Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's interpretations of Husserl, to which she brings her formidable experience in ballet studies and evolutionary biology, enrich the Husserlian account, highlighting the freedom, flow, spontaneity and intersubjectivity of movement in the process of learning that 'I move: I can: I do'. The studies from other dance theorists working within a phenomenological model, such as Rebecca Lloyd and Michelle Merritt, give Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept of 'flow' its true dynamism. Sheets-Johnstone is correct to give kinesthesis in its rightful place along with tactility and emotional intersubjectivity in the development of the precursors of human bodies 'finding their way' in the world, from child to adult but does not do justice to the strengths of Merleau-Ponty's writing

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[193] Delay "Some Remarks on Phenomenology's Past", 2019: 28, 339.

or to the '4E' scholarship, which Gallagher amply provides without losing sight of the phenomenology of what he is describing.

There is much more that could be discussed in either theoretician's work. An exegesis of Merleau-Ponty's work brings to the continued study of phenomenology so much of the intertwined sense, affect and movement in the interplay of perception and tactility, intentionality, intuition, and recognition, intersubjectivity and intercorporeality, and the agency of movement and skill in habituation. All are fertile, valuable insights into my body in the world, especially of my non-verbal, habitual, world, and the skills I use in my everyday life. More scholarship continues to bring light to dense, incomplete texts from both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty which will continue to influence the interpretation of both. Phenomenology remains an alternative frame to analytical thinking and an appropriate methodology for my autoethnography by highlighting the validity of the first-person account. For this, I turn to my autoethnography and situate my findings within a study of the theory of the everyday.

Chapter 2

Autoethnography in phenomenological research

An anecdote

The Lady in the Van is an autobiographical piece by Alan Bennett, in which he describes his relationship with an ancient, irascible, vagabond lady, played by Maggie Smith, who haunts the London street where he lives for fifteen years, taking up residence in her van on different parts of the street, much to the dismay of his middle-class neighbours. She wheedles her way into parking on his driveway and using the toilet in his house, and he charts the entangling of his life with hers and his reluctant attempts to help, as she and her van become more and more decrepit and smelly with her descent into incontinence. She guards her van and her privacy fiercely, with varying and conflicting stories about her past – is she really an ex-nun? What is her troubled relationship with music? Although apparently in her eighties, she is still able to drive and makes mysterious visits to Bournemouth and is visited by a shady man occasionally at night. Social workers from the local council fail to understand the complexities of her manipulations of Bennett, with her oscillating dependency and independence.

Bennett in the film becomes two people – the Alan Bennett who writes and the Alan Bennett who lives his life, cleaning the toilet when Mary? Margaret? has gone and the

faeces off the paving stones outside his front door, coping with the hostile (at least, towards himself) interventions of the social workers, attempting to communicate with the lady in the van when she appears in need of help. Alan Bennett the author sits in his chair at the window, always writing, or watching dispassionately from the front window. There is a perpetual conversation going on between the two Bennetts – 'Did she say that?', which the lady in the van joins in with, either imaginatively or in the real world – it's difficult to tell which is which. There is also comment from the neighbours when they meet him after he returns in the evening from performing in his monologue pieces on stage in the West End. The lady in the van chides Bennett for exposing the vulnerabilities of his mother (and others) in public through the mouthpiece of his staged, dramatic pieces. His mother lives in 'the north', is dementing and doesn't recognize him any more. 'You should be ashamed of yourself', she says. 'We're just material for your plays'.

The film epitomizes the tension within ethnography and autobiographical writing: the ethical dilemmas presented in the search for 'authenticity with integrity', the questions of anonymity with accuracy, the inability to 'pin down' who I am and who 'they' are, the fluctuating context of my perceptions, the consciousness of the inadequacy of words and the dilemma of when to use them and when not, the issues surrounding 'my material', which 'who' is 'on display' publicly, the overarching concern with 'truth', accuracy, 'fact' or 'fiction'.

Which is the 'real' Alan Bennett? Is it the one who sits at the desk, reflecting on events, representing himself with words, or the one who interacts with the lady in the van, his

neighbours, and various members of the 'helping professions', such as the police, a doctor, a social worker, and, in the end, a priest and an undertaker? Or is it both, perpetually see-sawing between the present moment and the making into text that is all part of communicating the reflections, trying to make sense of and understand what is happening? Perhaps there is no 'real' Alan Bennett, standing 'outside' the represented one, but only the one who relates to his mother, his partner (who remains invisible), his ever-present neighbours, his theatre agent, his 'public'. Alan Bennett's monologues and stories falter between one genre and another, showing the 'messiness' of the categories of 'autobiography', 'autoethnography', 'phenomenology', and 'literary faction'; raising questions about the reliability of the narrator's viewpoint, and what happens to the experience when words are used to 'capture', as in a wild animal, the experience being reflected upon.

In this chapter, I shall be gathering some autoethnographic evidence of what the everyday constituted for me in an overseas setting, and how this evidence may be situated and understood phenomenologically, with the aid of the emergent analysis of 'Constructive Grounded Theory'. I shall reflect on what my 'failure' to find 'dominant' themes in the process of creating "theory" meant, and how it revealed several characteristics of my everyday.

Autoethnography: what is it?

The term 'autoethnography' was first coined by David Hayano, in 1979, to describe 'traditional ethnography among one's own people', fully aware that the

autoethnographic studies he quoted would not necessarily even be 'applicable to other

cultural members', and not to others of a different culture[194]. Considered originally by

many to be 'avant-garde' in the social sciences, autoethnography now covers a wide

range of themes, such as finding meaning in difficult situations[195], personal issues in an

explicitly acknowledged social setting,[196] a literature review relating to significant

personal issues[197], work and academic activities and experiences, illness and injury[198], or

being part of an alternative 'cultural community'[199]. Autoethnographic methodologies

are now used in the fields of nursing, social work, education, sports science, corporate

management, the sociology of art, cultural studies, cultural anthropology and cultural

sociology, indigenous studies, global health research, post-structural psychology,

communication studies, and many more[200]. Whether 'evocative' (with the aim of evoking

different emotions), or more explicitly 'analytic', autoethnography has the explicit aim of

changing readers' attitudes and behaviours by engaging the reader with the immediacy

of first-hand experience, to make a difference in social and cultural settings.

Autoethnography walks a tightrope between evocation and analysis, that is, situated and

phenomenological bodily knowledge usually expressed in a first-person narrative, and

the knowledge of reflection, distance and analysis, usually expressed in a third-person

narrative, between the 'auto' and the 'ethno'[201]. Not every writer in this mode of

qualitative methodology gets the tone or the content 'right'[202]. Carolyn Ellis uses the

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[194] Wall, "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography", 2016:2.
[195] Ellis and Bochner, "*Composing Ethnography* ", 1996.
[196] Sparkes, "Novel Ethnographic Representation", 2009.
[197] Wall, "An Autoethnography on Learning about Autoethnography ", 2006.
[198] Ettore, "Making Sense of My Illness Journey" , 2006.
[199] Calley Jones, "Playing at the queer edges", 2010.
[200] *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*, www.icqi.org 2018.
[201] Winkler, "Doing Autoethnography: Facing Challenges", 2018: 237.
[202] Roth, "Auto/ethnography and the Question of Ethics", 2009: 5.

metaphor of a lens: 'Back and forth autoethnographers gaze. First, they look through an ethnographic wide single lens, focusing outward on the social and cultural spectrum of their personal experiences and then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretation'[203]. Or as Stacy Holman Jones writes:

> 'Autoethnography is a blurred genre . . . a response to the call . . . it is setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections between life and art . . . making a text present . . . refusing categorization . . . believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world'[204]

There has been an 'explosion' of autoethnography as a qualitative research methodology of choice, as seen in the number of ethnographic studies published per year[205]. This surge of professional interest was also evidenced in the pre-Covid (2019) *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry,* held annually since 2005 at the International Institute for Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. With over one thousand six hundred sessions and over two thousand presenters of short papers, panels, and keynote talks, the Congress is a gathering point for those influenced by the writing of Carolyn Ellis, professor of communication and sociology at the University of South Florida and her co-author and partner Art Bochner, an influence also expressed in the *Handbook of Autoethnography* co-authored by Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Stacy

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[203] Ellis, "Telling Tales: Neighbors Ethics", 2009 in Winkler, 2018: 237.
[204] Jones, Stacy Holman, "Autoethnography" in "*Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology",* 2007: 765.
[205] For example, 35 plus from 2003 to 2010, in Wall "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography", 2016; 2.

Holman Jones[206]. The Emeritus Director of the International Congress was (until his death in August 2023) Norman Denzin, noted for his leadership in the field of experimental, performative ethnography[207].

In the introduction of the *Handbook* she co-edits with Adams and Holman Jones, Ellis identifies autoethnography as 'mushy', and 'sentimental', which I interpret as synonyms for a more confessional style of writing, similar in the tone to that of blogging, reality shows, gossip columns, and increasingly found in journalism. As Ellis writes in her response to Leon Anderson, an analytic autoethnographer,

> '"The last thing I want is for autoethnography to be tamed," I respond. "Autoethnography shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning. Autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate. Intimacy is a way of being, a mode of caring, and it shouldn't be used as a vehicle to produce distanced theorizing. What are we giving to the people with whom we are intimate, if our higher purpose is to use our joint experiences to produce theoretical abstractions published on the pages of scholarly journals?" [208]

This viewpoint is not universally held by those using an autoethnographic approach. Pat Sikes, herself an editor of one such Sage *Handbook*[209], reviews Ellis' *Handbook* by noting

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[206] Ellis, Adams, & Holman Jones, *"Handbook of Autoethnography",* 2013.

[207] Denzin and Lincoln, "*The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research,*" fifth edition, 2017.

[208] Ellis and Bochner, "Analyzing analytic autoethnography ", 2006: 433.

[209]Sikes "*Autoethnography* "in "SAGE Benchmarks", 2013.

that 'this is a Handbook written by a group of people who see themselves as constituting a distinct community sharing foundational beliefs and values about autoethnography', and that 'evocative' autoethnography, 'is not simply a way of knowing about the world, it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally and reflexively'[210]. Sikes emphasizes that the articles in the *Handbook* should be 'read critically', as not all autoethnographers 'embrace these descriptors'[211].

The subject is one: me

Autoethnography is ethnography in which 'the subject is one', that is, 'highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding'[212]. The 'one' in this case is the researcher herself. 'Autoethnography combines elements from autobiographical research (to write about past experiences retroactively and selectively with specific focus on turning points that are perceived as having a particular influence on the course of life) and ethnographic research (to study cultural practices, within one's own culture or a different culture'[213]. The purpose of the reflection – to extend sociological, philosophical, educational, or even theological understanding – is crucial to prevent the autoethnography from 'tipping over' into autobiography. Yet the 'dividing line' between

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[210] Sikes, "Book Review of Stacy Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams and Carolyn Ellis", 2015: 413.
[211] Sikes, "Book Review of Stacy Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams and Carolyn Ellis", 2015: 416.
[212] Sparkes, "Autoethnography and narratives of self ", 2000 in Wall "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography ", 2016: 1.
[213] Ellis, Adams & Bochner, Autoethnography: An Overview" 2010 in Winkler, "Doing Autoethnography: Facing Challenges", 2018: 236.

these two genres is blurred, because the autoethnography will include elements of autobiography. Autoethnography may not necessarily be performed individually or in isolation: there is also collaborative, 'duo-ethnography', or 'co-constructed autoethnography', allowing a 'polyphony' of voices, which 'help to avoid the risk of privileging one perspective'[214].

Autoethnography problematizes the relationship between the researcher and the researched by suggesting that the 'socio-cultural position of the researcher' and 'the identity of the researcher' are constructed: both by the research process and because the researcher is embedded in an academic setting and constrained by academic protocols. Because of this awareness, autoethnography as a methodology has been labelled 'post-modern' in its deconstruction of accepted mores of knowing or paradigmatic discourses, 'in which the realist conventions and objective observer positions of standard ethnography have been called into question'[215]. This 'transgression of boundaries or threat to disciplinary identities' between the genres of social science and the humanities in an interdisciplinary form of inquiry does not mean the end to boundaries. Rather, it is a heightened awareness of the constructedness and fragility of those that are made, and a recognition of the complexity of the social and cultural contexts in which research is conducted[216]. Winkler believes interdisciplinary discussion must surely lead to enrichment[217], as I do. 'It encourages a reconsideration of established

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[214] Chang, "Individual and collaborative autoethnography" 2013, in Winkler, "Doing Autoethnography: Facing Challenges", 2018: 239.
[215] Reed-Danahay, "*Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the Self*" 1997, in Winkler, "Doing Autoethnography: Facing Challenges", 2018: 239.
[216] Becker, "Book review of H.I. (Bud) Goodall Jr: "*Writing the New Ethnography*"",2001: 495.
[217] Winkler, "Doing Autoethnography: Facing Challenges", 2018: 244.

forms of discourse about how research is conducted, constituted, and evaluated'[218], reaching across disciplinary boundaries to find new possibilities of meaning and engagement, leading to seeing afresh commonly accepted language and paradigms.

A different view of 'knowledge'

For autoethnography, assumptions about what 'knowledge' is and what knowledge counts as significant take a form at odds with that commonly accepted by the academy as the 'objective view' view of knowledge. Qualitative research in an objective mode begins with observations of a cultural setting in which the participant-observer is immersed, and in which those observations are written as 'findings'. By doing so, the researcher distances herself from 'the researched' and their and her experiences to make the analysis, linking what is 'found' with what is understood about the field of research as a whole. The distancing is considered necessary 'to preserve objectivity and neutrality'[219]. The particular circumstances, emotions and embodied experiences of the researcher are not deemed part of these 'findings', or only admitted as 'context', or 'background' in a minor form. This view of 'knowledge' has been contested for several decades, both within and without the social sciences. 'Postmodern sensibilities' find 'knowledge' partial, embodied, perspectival, and not easily 'tidied up' into 'theoretical' notions[220]. Autoethnography participates in this post-modern sensibility, and 'in

[218] Becker, "Book review of H.I. (Bud) Goodall Jr: *Writing the New Ethnography*", 2001: 493.

[219] Bolen, "Autoethnography" in Allen, "*The Sage Encyclopaedia of Communication Research Methods*", 2017.

[220] Wall, "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography", 2016:2.

response to the crises of representation and legitimation, autoethnographic texts engage creative language practices (e.g. personal narrative, performance)'[221]. But autoethnography is not alone in this sense of the provisionality of all knowledge, and the need to reflect upon and examine, one's own position as researcher: qualitative researchers should carry this with them throughout their research, whether they are intentionally 'post-modern' or not.

'Evocative' vs 'analytic' autoethnography

Although there is some disagreement within the broad field of autoethnography about categorization, there is general agreement that there are several strands: evocative, analytic, narrative and literary/performative. Evocative, narrative, and literary autoethnography have similar methodologies. Evocative ethnography hopes to evoke an emotional response in the reader, usually by the narration of traumatic or painful experiences, and uses 'poetic', or 'experimental' modes of writing as 'a mode of inquiry… designed to be unruly, dangerous, vulnerable, rebellious and creative', outside of the 'control of reason, logic, and analysis'[222]. Ellis is the best-known advocate of this method, which favours the 'messiness' of 'creative' methods as a more accurate, if problematic, representation of 'real life', as part of the 'therapeutic' nature of autoethnography in advancing understanding of 'misrecognized' or 'invisible aspects' of unique experiences, which any qualitative study needs to be more aware of, but which a more analytic

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[221] Bolen, "Autoethnography" in Allen, "*The Sage Encyclopaedia of Communication Research",* 2017.
[222] Ellis and Bochner "Analyzing analytic autoethnography" 2006: 433, in Wall "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography", 2016: 2.

approach might deem as irrelevant when making conclusions and generalizations about trends within the 'data'.

Other voices urge the contrary. As an analytic ethnographer, Leon Anderson argues that '"autoethnography loses its sociological promise when it devolves into self-absorption"', and that '"the goals of analysis and theorizing are too often lost to sight in contemporary fashions for subjectivity and evocative ethnographic work"'[223]. The charges made by autoethnographers using more analytic modes of qualitative research, and throughout the social sciences generally need to be considered. If the purpose of the written work is to advance empathic and wholistic understanding of people in a particular situation to move others to a response, I don't believe there is much difference between autoethnography well done, and meticulous journalism, a well-researched autobiography, a thoughtful blog, or historically situated memoirs. All of these modes of narrative have a story to tell, a commitment to truth-telling within the boundaries and contexts of situated human living, an intention to expand their readers' horizons and challenge assumptions, with the hope of changing hearts and lives.

A critique of autoethnography as a methodological tool

It will be noticeable from what has been said in the previous chapter how intimately linked phenomenological research and autoethnography are as methodological tools, so

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[223] Anderson, L, 2006 in Wall, "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography ", 2016: 2.

that the issues which haunt phenomenology - around epistemology, representation and

how much the immediacy of an experience is changed or distorted by the attention given

to it in reflection and attempts to 'pin it down', ethical issues and generalizability issues

- also surround the use of autoethnography as a methodology. Some of the problems

around autoethnography's use as a methodology will now be examined.

Both within and without the field itself, autoethnography is critiqued as being:

1.   'Narcissistic', 'solipsistic': the privileging of one perspective only[224]

This is the most common charge against those using autoethnography as a qualitative

tool, as Wall and Winkler affirm[225] [226]. The argument against particularly 'evocative'

autoethnography is related to the academy's understanding of knowledge, and how it is

acquired and transmitted. The conventional stance in the social sciences assumes a

distanced point of view, even if the researcher is using participant observation, with the

move from the first person to the third person. This is meant to signal a more

'theoretical' basis for making statements, usually relating to generalizability to a wider

population. Knowledge here is being perceived as removed from bodily experience, and

of a nature to pass on as a bundle of 'facts', almost as one passes a package on to a

willing recipient. Key to this passage of 'knowledge' is an understanding that what is

being said in the 'results' analysis bears a direct relationship to what has been

experienced, that is, that there is a direct relationship between the words *about* an

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[224] Ploder and Stadlbauer, "Strong Reflexivity and its Critics", 2016: 756.
[225] Wall, "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography", 2016:7.
[226] Winkler, "Doing Autoethnography: Facing Challenges", 2018: 239.

experience adequately and what has been seen, felt, tasted, moved, and emoted phenomenologically. This issue of the complexity of the representation of experience tends to be skirted around by those working with a more analytical mode. Those who prefer analytic autoethnography struggle with the associated issue of how useful a 'study of one' can be – how representative is that 'one' of the populations from which she comes, and different but similar populations elsewhere? Sarah Stahlke Wall's work as a nursing educator evidences these concerns.

Wall, a nursing educator, writes from her experience of supervising evocative ethnographic 'manuscripts', finding herself troubled by 'terminology and appropriate applications of the method, the emotional dimensions of autoethnography, the quality of data and its analysis and presentation, and the ethical issues pertinent to this approach to knowledge development'[227]. Wall notes that 'locating oneself in the research' or 'in a reflection on the research process' is *not* the same as the autoethnographic method. Rather, these should be understood as 'methodological articles' rather than contributing to 'explorations of substantive social issues'. The use of autoethnography as 'healing' or 'therapy' makes Wall very uncomfortable at the 'level of emotion and disclosure contained in the writing', such that she wondered 'what topics might there be for autoethnography that aren't about personal redemption and healing?'[228].

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[227] Wall, "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography", 2016: 3.
[228] Wall, "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography", 2016: 4.

One example of autoethnography as therapy is an account by Caroline Allbon, of her experiences as a Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patient in New Zealand. Although very evocative of her experiences at the hands of health professionals and nursing staff, conveying well what it feels like to actually be a patient at different stages of the condition, and capturing the 'ante-narrative process' of making the phenomenology of the condition legible, Allbon's stated intention to help health professionals and nursing staff understand better would have been more effective if she had placed her study within a wider field of the sociology of patient-professional relationships and behaviour. She could have made recommendations for staff, such as a determination to become better listeners and how this might be achieved, for patients to be better able to highlight their need for attention, or how organizations (such as her workplace) could be more alert to the needs of people with MS to 'manage the dynamic balance between stability and change as being central to individual wellbeing'[229].

Clare Madge's study of living with cancer and facing death, within the context of the academy in the UK provides a useful counterpoint. She achieves her threefold aim of 'enfleshing' accounts of living with cancer and the prospect of dying; using 'creative, cathartic methodologies which unsettle commonly held discourses about dying and surviving; and '"an opening into learning" that provokes 'emotional enquirers about what it means to be taught by the experience of (traumatised) others'[230]. Using a variety of media (photographs, poetry as well as prose), which enabled her to regain her 'sense

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[229] Allbon, "Down the rabbit hole – curiouser and curiouser", 2012: 62-71.
[230] Madge, "Living through, living with and living on from breast cancer", 2016: 207.

of being' and gave her 'agency' as a kind of 'precarious theorizing', Madge 'destabilizes…

the 'emotional detachment', 'often a symptom of trauma studies' which distances the

'difficult terrain which unsettles and disturbs, that critical and risk-laden pedagogic

potential might be opened out'[231]. For Madge, describing herself as *'being beside'* her

condition, rather than *'beneath'* or *'beyond',* was a more helpful image for her of her

illness, of her body 'in a constant state of oscillation', of 'this perpetual process of

dissolution and regeneration, of "livingdying"' (author's italics). She is acutely aware of

the inability of others to 'speak for' her and her experiences, or for her to do this for

others, even those with the same condition[232]. Madge calls for 'politicized compassion'

in the policies of the UK government, as well as in the 'working practices of academics'

(of which she is one), with an acknowledgement of the 'precariousness and vulnerability'

of people's lives in the consequences of living with cancer outside the hospital ward, in

homes and places of work, such that it would mean 'doing academy differently, 'making

space for *all* marginal and marginalised bodies (not just those living through, with or on

from cancer)'[233].

2. 'No arguments, no theory, no tangible results'[234]

Tied in with the critique by analytic autoethnographers of autoethnography as being

solipsistic is that of 'results', how to obtain them, or what to do about the lack of them.

Andrea Ploder and Johanna Stadlbauer pose their critique from the perspective of the

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[231] Madge, "Living through, living with and living on from breast cancer", 2016: 224.
[232] Madge, "Living through, living with and living on from breast cancer", 2016: 221, 222.
[233] Madge, "Living through, living with and living on from breast cancer", 2016: 225, 226.
[234] Ploder and Stadlbauer, "Strong Reflexivity and its Critics", 2016: 757.

German-speaking cultural and social sciences, as academics, one a sociologist/philosopher, the other a cultural anthropologist, both working in Austria. Both are convinced of the inadequacy of the academic model of 'knowledge', speaking positively for the use of what they call 'strong reflexivity' – a strong connection between the researcher, the research and those receiving the research - in the social sciences (as teachers themselves of courses of autoethnography) 'transgressing the borders between academic and artistic work' , but also aware of the pitfalls[235]. If evocative, narrative, and performative autoethnographers are going to talk about themselves in a largely 'confessional', 'emotive' and 'mushy' manner, is it possible to analyse what they write? Does the intentional evocation of emotion in the reader create difficulties with being able to analyse what is read? How can the reader decide whether the autoethnographic research has achieved social change? Wall, Winkler, Sikes, and Anderson are practitioners in their field who have difficulties with the lack of attempt to locate the personal details within 'the broader social context, so that knowledge is advanced'[236]. In their critique, autoethnographers from the 'analytic branch' claim there are no arguments, no theory, no tangible results to be shown which to have had an impact on a population, e.g. the attitudes of nursing staff changing after reading a patient's autoethnographic account. This is not 'science' according to the common conventions associated with deductive methodology, in which a problem is raised and defined, decisions are made about how to investigate it, intentions and interventions are clearly defined, and then judged according to the impact of that intervention so that others can do the same.

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[235] Ploder and Stadlbauer, "Strong Reflexivity and its Critics", 2016: 753, 754.
[236] Wall, "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography", 2016: 4.

Autoethnography is not the only area of qualitative science to reject the deductive method. Some other areas of qualitative inquiry, such as participant-action research, prefer the inductive method, which allows a trajectory of the evolution of the project judged by the participants according to their own pace, perceived 'problem' and 'input'. This process of induction allows the 'issue' to emerge into a mode of the participants' own definition. But Ellis' styling of evocative autoethnography as 'wild' and 'rebellious', more like 'poetry' than 'science', seems to imply that the structuring of research - defining intent, intention, modes of intervention, findings, and analysis, however loosely conformed to, do not apply in the case of evocative autoethnography, in an unhelpful binary. Poetry has its own disciplines, and the most evocative poetry is the most disciplined, however challenging that may be. Holman Jones notes that the theorizing in which 'critical autoethnography' situates its critique is also 'an ongoing, movement-driven process that links the concrete and the abstract, thinking and acting, aesthesis and criticism in what performance scholar Della Pollock describes as "living bodies of thought" …. Theory and story share a reciprocal, inter-animating relationship'[237]

Another of Ploder and Stadlbauer's critiques of evocative autoethnography – 'not criticizable because of 'affective immediacy'[238], follows a similar line of reasonging as the 'no arguments, no results' argument, and assumes that emotions, because of their immediacy, are not thoughtful or include judgements. But I would reject this, as feelings and thoughts do not operate separately; I can identify how I'm feeling, even if the

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[237] Holman Jones, "Living Bodies of Thought: the 'Critical' in Critical Autoethnography", 2016: 229.
[238] Ploder and Stadlbauer, "Strong Reflexivity and its Critics", 2016: 758.

emotion is very strong and immediate, based on strong judgements of others or a situation, however biased, and even if I am not sure why I feel as I do. Effective texts depend on strong emotions to communicate powerfully and effectively.

3. 'Hard data or soft impressions?'

This quote from Winkler [239] reveals one of the tensions of doing research reflexively and also feeds into criticism No 2, of the intentions of autoethnographic research, which is to move the reader. Winkler himself stands for autoethnography constructed from memory 'as being valid and rigorous', pointing out that most ethnography itself is 'fieldwork... shaped through memory', and 'the interpretative work in autoethnographic research is informed from many sources and one of them is our memories.... memories constitute data that should be acknowledged as equally valuable to the written note, recorded material, or otherwise collected information'. Expecting autoethnography to Include entries from diaries as opposed to writing from memory 'creates an illusion of objectivity', creating a false distinction between judgements shaped by emotion which are labelled 'soft, and judgements shaped by analysis, which are labelled 'hard' and hence more 'scientific', which the diary entries purport to 'evidence'[240]. I find this distinction of 'soft' and 'hard', like the 'thought/emotion' distinction, ignores the process of reflection and interpretation which is happening, dynamically, throughout the memory process or the collection of 'impressions' or 'data', in whatever format collection is made.

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[239] Winkler, "Doing Autoethnography: Facing Challenges", 2018: 237.
[240] Winkler, "Doing Autoethnography: Facing Challenges", 2018: 237, 238.

4. 'Unethical'

The most pressing and serious problem with evocative autoethnography, and with autoethnography as a whole, is the area of ethics. 'Do we own our stories?'[241]. How do I tell my story without negatively affecting those within my social sphere? I am socially situated, hence my understanding of myself (my 'living document') will involve understanding the sociality of those within my living web. This is the 'nexus'[242] in which I am situated. Although autoethnography as a research methodology does not expect permissions from my family, relatives, and friends, the least I can do is to anonymize my account sufficiently for them not to be identified, or to create fictional identities to narrate a similar story. I shall also have to be careful how much I reveal, given that I am bound to have relationships, significant or otherwise, with those who are inevitably part of the story. Once published as a thesis, journal article or book, the private moves into the public sphere. As Ellis indicates repeatedly, because ethics are relational, the ethical considerations of an autoethnographic piece cannot be reduced to a notion of 'consent' or 'box-ticking': they have to be constantly revisited, during analysis, before publication and afterwards. A summary by Andrew Sparkes of Ellis' points in considering the ethics of autoethnographic writing notes:

1. 'You have to live the experience of doing research with intimate others, think it through, improvise, write and rewrite, anticipate and feel its consequences.
2. No matter how strictly you follow procedural guidelines, situations will come up in the field that will make your head spin and your heart ache.

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[241] Winkler, "Doing Autoethnography: Facing Challenges", 2018: 240.
[242] Gell, "*Art and Agency*", 1998.

3. Think about the greater good of your research – does it justify the potential risk to others? And be careful that your definition of the *greater good* isn't one created *for your own good.*

4. You do not own your story. Your story is also other people's stories. You have no inalienable right to tell the stories of others. Intimate, identifiable others deserve as least as much consideration as strangers and probably more. You have to live in the world of those you write about and those you write for and to.

5. Be careful how you present yourself in the writing.

6. Be careful that your research does not negatively affect your life and relationships, hurt you, or others in your world'[243](author's italics).

Ellis is aware of the detrimental effect of publishing data (as in conversations and opinions) of people in a community in which she is intending to stay, for example, the mountain community where she spends recreation time with her partner, against a recognition of her naivete as a postgraduate student among the people of the fishing village she studied decades ago[244]. Ellis muses over the pros and cons of revealing personal, religious, and political stances of those with whom she and her partner live. The 'fisherfolk' were negatively affected by her results, and Ellis resolves to engage in "permanent vigilance" [245], given that

> 'the best we can do is navigate ambivalence…These decisions are complex in terms of integrating our own moral positions with society's call for scholarship that contributes to social justice; readers' demands for truthful and multifaceted accounts and research participants' and characters' desire for privacy, positive representation, and control over the stories of their lives'[246]

The ethical demands of reportage remain, both within and without autoethnography.

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[243] Ellis, "Telling secrets, revealing lives", 2007: 22-26 in Sparkes, "Autoethnography At the Will of the Body", in Short, Turner, and Grant, "*Contemporary British Autoethnography*", 2013:207.
[244] Ellis, "Telling Tales: Neighbors' Ethics", 2009: 22.
[245] Zylinska, "*The Ethics of Cultural Studies*" 2005, in Ellis, "Telling Tales: Neighbors' Ethics", 2009:22.
[246] Ellis, "Telling Tales: Neighbors' Ethics", 2009: 23,24.

Autoethnography suffers from a bad press by virtue of 'transgressing' academically accepted 'boundaries', 'threatening academic identities' or academically respectable points of view, by suggesting all researchers are situated and need to reflect on and take account of this situatedness in their research[247]. Autoethnography which fails to take account of these critiques contribute to a sense of autoethnography as failing to be 'thoughtful'. As Sikes notes in her review of Ellis' *Handbook,* 'all methodologies and methods can offer as a result of bad examples but when, as is the case with autoethnography, there is already a serious struggle to establish credibility, the impact of poor works tends to be more significant and far reaching'[248]. For Sikes, while the 'growing popularity of the approach is at least partly down to the persuasive and accomplished writing of leading exponents, such as Ellis, Richardson, Denzin, Gannon and Rambo (in the *Handbook)',* it is unfortunate when autoethnographers 'without talent or the same degree of academic capital' make 'execrable' attempts to 'emulate these craftspersons'[249]. But despite these caveats, there is still virtue in attempting to do the same.

What I did

In the account below of what I did, I will use examples of my autoethnography as narrative illustrations, recognizing that the context for these entries changed

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[247] Ploder and Stadlbauer, "Strong Reflexivity and its Critics', 2016: 759.

[248] Sikes, "Book Review of Stacy Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams and Carolyn Ellis, eds. *Handbook of Autoethnography",* 2015: 414.

[249] Sikes, "Book Review of Stacy Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams and Carolyn Ellis, eds. *Handbook of Autoethnography*", 2015: 416.

dramatically as I moved house from one country and continent to another, my authorial skills developed as I wrote, and my analysis became more nuanced with wider reading. The entries were made during 2018 and 2019, as I was living overseas prior to returning to retire in the UK, as a white, expatriate, middle-aged, middle-class woman, actively involved in maintaining the home which was part of my husband's job and role there. The house was large enough to have a self-contained flat upstairs. The unspoken expectation on me was to provide meals and residential hospitality to my husband's colleagues, diplomatic personnel, and expected and unexpected visitors, related and unrelated to my husband's role. I was supported in this role by staff who lived both on and off-site; an administrator, a married caretaker/verger, and a cleaning lady, with whom I had warm relationships, while being aware of how asymmetrical, and laden with colonial baggage, the power dynamics of these relationships were.

In an excerpt from my first autoethnographic entry, in March 2018, I wrote:

> "*Is this a blog? What is the difference between life-writing, memoirs, journalism, travel writing, auto-ethnography, and a blog? And what can I do about my 'authorial' voice? When does reflexivity become solipsistic? Can any of us know what is 'our' voice, as opposed to pastiche, or direct mimicry? Is this meant to be news, or chat, or confessional as for an agony aunt, or something more perceptive and thoughtful? Who is my audience? Can any author truly say they are writing only for themselves? Somewhere in the flow, there has to be some nuggets of gold*".

I had been writing and reflecting on my life experiences since a very early age. I have always been interested in autobiographies, memoirs, especially memoirs of writers, and

in-depth, thoughtful journalism in English newspapers. This research was an opportunity to begin with what I knew or thought I knew – an opportunity for reflection on the significance of my everyday domestic living. Rather than set up a project with local women, given the volatility of the place in which I was living where contracts were short and liable to be terminated unexpectedly for the expatriates living there, with immediate return to their place of origin, I felt I had to begin 'small', as I recognized that any plans for interviewing a group of people could immediately become complicated. If my 'pilot' on myself came to anything, I could always expand its remit, to include other women. Quite apart from issues of size, I felt that the autoethnographic method was valid and valuable. My experiences were my own, singular, unique and worthy of examination. I wanted to set my thoughts, emotions, and practices within a wider horizon of what other people had experienced and written.

Wanting to convey the immediacy of what I was experiencing, initially, I wrote my journal entries daily full of enthusiasm. As life intruded, I settled into a pattern of writing entries several times a week and wrote from March 2018 until July 2019, and more spasmodically from July 2019 to July 2020. This covered the period of moving from overseas to the UK, (April 2019) where we had bought a home in the part of the country we had never lived before, and the beginning of the Covid pandemic. Throughout any one day, I would write myself notes of words which I thought would be useful 'trigger words' to spark memory about a particular thought or experience that day. At first writing by hand in a journal and then moving to a laptop, I wrote more than 100,000 words.

Before I began an analysis of my tranche of words, I embarked on an online Coursera

course on Qualitative Social methods, a course which was not readily available to me at

that time through the University. Through this course, I became aware of the process

Kathy Charmaz (1939 – 2020) describes in her numerous articles and books as

'Constructivist Grounded Theory' (hereafter CGT)[250]. As an 'emergent, inductive,

indeterminate and open-ended methodology'[251], it appealed to my creative point of

view, not wishing to depend on word analysis software or a digital linguistic tool to

conduct my analysis, but to deal with my data 'hands-on'.

Constructivist Grounded Theory' (CGT)

Kathy Charmaz first developed her form of grounded theory after her doctoral studies at

San Francisco State University in the late sixties with Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser,

who published the first text on Grounded Theory in 1967. As one of just a few women

studying sociology at the time and influenced by her professional experiences as an

Occupational Therapist working with people with chronic pain and illness, and the work

of pragmatists such John Dewey, she was encouraged to publish the reworking of her

doctoral thesis using a grounded theory framework as propounded by Glaser and

Strauss, in *Good Days, Bad Days* (1991). In this, Charmaz expanded on the role of the

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[250] Charmaz, "The legacy of Anselm Strauss", 2008; "*Constructing Grounded Theory* ", 2014;
"Constructivist grounded theory" 2017a; "The power of constructivist theory for critical inquiry", 2017b.
[251] Charmaz, "The legacy of Anselm Strauss", 2008: 155 in Charmaz, "The power of constructivist theory
for critical inquiry", 2017b: 35.

researcher as she interviews, turning the spotlight of qualitative research from the viewed to the viewer, and the 'co-construction' of the interview – its 'flow, style of questions', interaction... emotion... subtleties... a lot of checking, categorizing'[252]. But the aim of this research is always 'social justice... aiming at informing and reforming the practices and institutions doing health care... making treatment programs more social and sustained'[253]. Despite plagiarism of her original work on grounded theory, she published *Constructing Grounded Theory* in 2006 and was asked to contribute to Denzin and Lincoln's *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research.*[254]

Charmaz defines CGT as thriving on 'doubt... interrogating ready explanations', 'concerned with social justice... the plight of disadvantaged peoples and the effects of structural inequities on that'[255]. More than just a 'post-modern' reaction to positivism, CGT is 'emergent: "inductive, indeterminate and open-ended...[which] begins with the empirical world and builds an inductive understanding of it as events unfold and knowledge accrues"[256]. Alert to 'taken-for-granted methodological individualism', CGT defines 'intersecting relationships with power, identity, subjectivity, and marginality for both the researcher and the research participants'[257]. For Charmaz, the emphasis on 'collective, communal, relational traditional and contextual ways of knowing anchored in time and place' with which 'indigenous and international researchers' approach their

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[252] Charmaz in Keller, "A Personal Journey with Grounded Theory Methodology", 2016.

[253] Charmaz in Keller, "A Personal Journey with Grounded Theory Methodology", 2016.

[254] Denzin and Lincoln, "*The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*", 5th edition, 2017.

[255] Charmaz, "The power of constructivist theory for critical inquiry", 2017b: 34, 35.

[256] Charmaz "The legacy of Anselm Strauss",2008 in Denzin and Lincoln, "*The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research",* 2017: 35.

[257] Charmaz in Denzin and Lincoln, "*The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*", 2017: 36,37.

research is in striking contrast to the 'pervasive methodological individualism which pervades Anglo-American inquiry'. Charmaz felt her research needed to honour 'tradition, stories, storytelling and history', and see 'collectivities, and subjectivities as interrelated, rather than discrete and separate'[258] .

A key notion of CGT is that of 'abduction': of going back and forth from data to theory and back again, 'interrogating theorising again and again', which 'furthers the process of methodological self-consciousness'[259]. The movement between 'data' and suggested theorising means constant re-examination of theory, a process of feeding back findings to those who have been providers of 'data'. 'We move back and forth between stories and analysis and thus create a delicate balance between the evanescence of experience and the permanence of the published word'[260]. Although rooted in the pragmatist philosophical tradition associated with the 'Chicago School', CGT provides the method to study 'agentic action', 'seek multiple perspectives' of the interaction of action and meaning, and 'make few assumptions about the roots of action'[261]. For Charmaz, coding as a CGT tool 'leads to more theoretical and critical questions… revealing a nascent critique which otherwise may have been invisible'[262].

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[258] Charmaz in Denzin and Lincoln, "*The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*", 2017: 37.
[259] Charmaz in Denzin and Lincoln, "*The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*", 2017: 38.
[260] Charmaz in Denzin and Lincoln, "*The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*", 2017: 41.
[261] Charmaz in Denzin and Lincoln, "*The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*", 2017: 40.
[262] Charmaz in Denzin and Lincoln, "*The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*", 2017: 41

How I used CGT

Using the series of searching questions Charmaz and Mitchell list in their explanation of Grounded Theory [263], (see Tables 1 to 6 in the appendix), I identified the actors and the personal, domestic, and socio-cultural contexts of the recorded action, the values inscribed implicitly or explicitly in the contexts described, the symbols being invoked in each of these settings with the actors identified, and the skills, stratagems and motivations developed and experienced in these contexts. The temporal context in which the autoethnography was recorded was the last year and a half of our stay overseas. I attempted to tease out affects, sensations and movements in my autoethnographic writing. The 'positive' affective element was much easier to tabulate, and a much shorter list than the 'negative' emotions list. The backdrop of the intended move gave an edge to everything I did, heightened the emotions I felt and took away any sense of certainty about my life. I began the process of clearing and sorting our belongings for transport back to the UK three years before our leaving date, but the process became more intense as our leaving date approached.

Following Charmaz and Mitchell's list of questions to be asked as research continues and emerges, tables of the copious notes I made on each of these points are summarized in Tables 2, 3, and 4 in the Appendix, with a Table of the emotions identified, and a summary of notes made in 2020 of the explanation of my actions, as suggested by Charmaz and Mitchell's list.

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[263] Charmaz and Mitchell, "Grounded Theory in Ethnography", 2007.

Coding and theory

The assumption to be made from Charmaz and Mitchell's delineation of CGT give the impression of the emergence of codes as a natural phenomenon, if not necessarily easily done, over a period of intense abduction. No stable codes evolved in my analysis. The sub-text of 'transitioning' with its associated grieving at 'letting-go' of people and objects in the prolonged process of 'sorting out' the house continued in parallel as a *basso continuo* against the patterns of my everyday life. I was aware that I had created and curated a 'home setting' enfolding the public and private roles I played, a role dependent on other people for its achievement, for example, in creating a 'sparkling' house as a backdrop. The role of objects within this curation dominated my thinking, as well as having to identify and deal with their history and eventual destiny. I was aware that I was 'saying goodbye to a way of life' in which my domestic skills were valued and applauded. I would not be in this privileged position again in the invested, intense way I had experienced for just under ten years.

What CGT didn't do

CGT was a useful methodological tool to identify phenomenologically the emotions, roles, and motivations of my research. But it failed to be sufficient methodologically to explain what I was searching for – a means of conveying something of the preconscious, sensory and movement flow of work in the home and how these were linked to my sense

of self or my theology. It became clearer as I carried on with multiple levels of analysis, that all the notetaking, journal writing, codifying, or clustering of words into similarities still failed to convey the 'tactile-kinetic-kinesthetic' aspects of what I was doing in the home, which involves taking a more a "praxeologically informed approach" which allows access to bodily information by 'becoming the phenomenon' and involves a different perspective from fully evocative autoethnography[264].

Sophie Müller used her experience as a beginner ballet student to 'create data' by using her own body as a 'friction surface'. The 'knowing-how' of learning ballet helped Muller to understand how the 'presencing' of the ballet dancer on the stage was 'interactionally constituted and regulated' by the teacher and the other ballet students and she was frustrated and joyful over her own bodily experiences of flow or inadequacy as she learnt. Her body became her 'researcher's tool' with her body revealing the 'complex web of the practice-specific logic', with reflexivity more than just looking in the mirror, but including alertness to felt bodily senses[265]. She wrote of her experiences under a pseudonym as a 'condensation' of her own experiences and the other students[266], and this 'decoupling of experience and data' gave anonymity but also, Muller felt, greater reflexivity, 'with an according constellation of critical alertness, corporeal sensitivity, and employment of the researcher's subjectivity'[267]

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[264] Müller, "Becoming the Phenomenon?", 2016: 708.
[265] Müller, "Becoming the Phenomenon?", 2016: 708, 709, 710.
[266] Müller, "Becoming the Phenomenon?", 2016: 712.
[267] Muller, "Becoming the Phenomenon?", 2016: 712.

For the most part, I was not aware as I carried on doing all the activities associated with 'normal' housework and the additional work of sorting, packing, and throwing out, of any kind of skill, or even of isolated movements of parts of my body, or of my whole body in action, making adjustments in my stance, posture and balance as the activity required. Rather, I was concentrating on the task in hand - cleaning, ironing, cooking, providing hospitality, or sorting out stuff – whatever I deemed to be necessary in building that day. I moved my arms and my hands because the pillowcase needed to be pulled along the ironing board so I could iron that side. The pillowcase and the iron were the focus of my attention, so that one moved smoothly over the other and I didn't get burnt. I reached for the ingredients to put into the stew, or stirred the flour and butter paste in the saucepan, not overtly conscious of what I was doing, but avoiding cutting my fingers or getting burnt by the gas, adjusting the gas' speed as I went to achieve the quickest and smoothest result. I leaned forward on my chair, pausing momentarily to think about objects in my hands (book, clothes, toys, household objects), remembering people, places, and emotions, perhaps wiping them with a damp cloth, before putting them in one of three piles – 'keep', 'give away', 'throw'. In an attempt to expose the tactile-kinesthetic aspects of skill in the kitchen or the house, I tried to video myself doing several household tasks: ironing, cooking, washing up, cleaning, and making a bed, but was frustrated by my amateurish results and the inability to do and record at the same time. The photography which heads this chapter is a snapshot from one of these videos of me cooking, with one of me shaking out a duvet prior to ironing it at the heading of chapter 1. I should have asked someone else to do it for me or identified at an earlier stage in my research that dynamic 'capture of movement' was called for. I tried using a

GoPro camera strapped to my head but found it was a major irritant and distraction and failed to capture what I wanted.

What autoethnography taught me about the everyday:

Both the process of collecting my thoughts on paper and in a document file, reflecting on this collection and attempting an analysis, and being frustrated in this and the actual contents of what I discovered about my everyday activity surprised and intrigued me. Examining my everyday activity drove me to an examination of 'the everyday' in theory, which follows in the next chapter. I highlight the discoveries I made below with illustrative journal entries.

If my autoethnography taught me anything, it was to find that my everyday life had the following characteristics:

1. Of being 'both/and':
The tension of cohering of two apparent opposites at the same time: not 'paradox', which attempts alignment of two opposing ideas or concepts such that one idea or concept dominates, but 'antimony', where the two are held together as equally valid.

"May 21st, 2018"

> *"Sit up. Take the pillowcases off the pillows. The familiar routine steadies my jitters. Stretch the wet sheets taut on the line – it makes less ironing when they're dry. They will be dry before I've finished my breakfast. Do my stretching exercises and recover the limits and movements of my body. Make some granola with the*

bits and pieces in the cupboard – a few weevils won't hurt! Substitute olive oil for coconut, honey for maple syrup – it makes it different, but just as delicious. The oven beeps persistently and it's ready – I gobble some hot. The faithful washing machine sings its merry little finishing song, with a slight discordance on the last note – thank you, Mr Washing Machine! Have you got a bug, too? Or are you just tired? (Why is it 'Mr' and not 'Ms'?)."

"December 2018"

"Facebook posts (mine and others) say, 'lovely to be together', but 'lovely' is not the right word. It doesn't capture the joy, the familiar frustrations, the hard physical labour of putting food on the table for each meal, and into the fridge, checking food is not going off, suggesting a plan for the day to have it changed, once they are all up."

2. Of being difficult to identify in its separate and constitutive parts:

Difficult to entangle separate strands but also difficult to identify as a whole, the characteristic of irreducibility.

3. Having more to do with 'flow' and 'pattern' than individual 'pockets' of action:

Having a characteristic of being sense-bound and sense-mediated: foundational to the bodily nature of human beings in the rhythms and flow of patterns of movement and sense, affect and relationality.

"7 January 2019"

I prepare bread and butter pudding with brioche infiltrated with chocolate chips, adding currants to my usual recipe, and set it aside for this evening's meal. We will be six and the table in the dining room is still covered with

the Christmas tablecloth. My husband sets the table… his [boss] is flying in for a brief, overnight, stop. I peel potatoes and set them to boil while I thaw out and cut up the Christmas beef and make gravy, improvising with the very little beef stock from Christmas Day. Marmite, brown sugar, wine and stock cubes… I layer fat tomatoes and aubergines from the garden – great to be able to use fresh produce like this. I shall mention it to the caretaker, who is the chief gardener. My [resident] visitor (female) offers to help so I set her to peeling and cutting up carrots, [as I] grate cheese on the cottage pie, and put it in the oven. The carrots are steamed in honey, broccoli and peas are steamed together. I warm some blackcurrants in the microwave to accompany the bread-and-butter pudding. My husband returns from the airport pickup, hands around drinks, and the meal is ready to be eaten at precisely 6.30 pm. Both dishes turn out well, especially the bread-and-butter pudding. No writing has been done, but at least I produced a very satisfying meal. I empty the dishwasher, put the empty sweet-water container by the door, turn off the lights and go to bed."

4. Of being resistant to being 'explained' in words:

Non-logocentric; elusive and not easily 'contained' in words, being at the edge of words.

Of having no voice or being silent, non-verbal, not conscious or explicated – more to do with movement and sense than with words.

"April 2018"

"[On] alternate Saturdays my cleaning lady comes, and with her strong arms and sheer determination, changes beds, cleans, wipes, vacuums and generally creates a house that once again gleams, in a way that I can't achieve. She is so strong that sometimes things get broken, but I don't

mind. It is such a joy to have a gleaming house. But having her is bitter-sweet, as we have become quite attached, and I know that, once we leave, and the British couple who sponsor her leave, she will be thrown onto the river of life again. Rescued from trafficking by her present employer and from being subject to repulsive racism, she provides for a son who was conceived while she was a teenager... a cousin, her grandmother and mother in an Asian country. She doesn't know how old she is – she has never celebrated her birthday until now. She knows she has to keep on working, and cannot return just yet, for fear of not having the paperwork to leave her home country."

5. Of being definitively below notice:

And hence, unexceptional, a characteristic which is turned on its head when attention is given to the everyday.

"March 2018"

"Lunch of my homemade soup, bread and cheese is on the table in ten minutes. (I have a competition with myself to see how few moves around the kitchen I need to get it ready... [C]ooking at least two meals a day. At least I don't cook breakfast; my husband cooks his own porridge. Soup is an essential part of my day, even in the summer. I make soup to feel at home".

6. Of being more about the acts of deciding and solving within the *multiplicities* of the daily, ordinary acts of being.

"15 June 2018"

"What's in a day?... here goes!

Light floods into the bedroom, and I pull the thin pillow that I sleep with on my head (until it falls off….) back over my face and decide 5.50am is too early to get up. It's 6.45am when I wake again, and decide I had better get up, as I'm [in charge] this morning, in my husband's absence. Standing up stiffly and painfully… I check my iPad and note it's already 37 degrees…. Back to the ensuite bathroom to put eye drops in and brush my hair to wake up my head. I splash twenty splashes of water on my face and dry and apply face cream.

I make my bed, being careful not to tuck sheets in, as that always creates back pain, and go to the kitchen to put the electric kettle on to make a cup of peppermint tea…. I put away the dishes from the evening meal while I'm waiting for the kettle to boil and find my pills in the Irish dresser – some to take before breakfast, some to take afterwards. I notice the pump for the tank that waters the garden underground is still going incessantly and decide to mention it again to the administrator's husband - she is away in her home country because her mother is dying, so all sorts of things that she normally chases are dropping between the cracks.

The house has to be wakened up – curtains opened, air-conditioning adjusted, books and journals removed from the coffee table - because one of the… groups meets here in the living room. I water the pot plants in the living room and discover I have over-watered one of them, so do a surgical-type procedure of reducing the water in the bottom of the pot, with bits of paper towel, so as not to drip on the window ledge or the carpet. And put the recycling in the recycling bins in cupboards in the front porch. I check that the [holiday] begins today as published in the newspaper… and take my rather cold cup of tea into the bedroom, to accompany my morning stretches and exercises. As I do them, I check sites and sources of pain – feet, ankles, knees, hips, shoulders… Lying on my tummy, flat on the floor, summoning up strength to do the plank exercise

I usually do, I ponder what my supervisor said about my being anxious. It's true, I am, but I wasn't when I was a young adult. Who's to blame – life? Moving to another country, marrying into another culture, a body that lets me down, having difficulties with my fertility, lots of surgical procedures? If I am so anxious, why do I keep throwing myself into anxiety-producing situations, like living overseas, or starting a PhD?

Breakfast is a banana cut up, with muesli, homemade granola, a spoonful of natural yoghurt, and almond milk. I debate whether to have a boiled egg and decide against it for today. While I eat, I say Morning Prayers… I enjoy the aftertaste of fennel, which I added to the granola, just for fun.

I could spend all day in my pyjamas if it weren't for people often coming to the door, to check on arrangements, offer us food, deliver water. This time, I'm still in my pyjamas when one of the caretakers… comes to the door… with a great plastic bag of fruit. He has a brother working in Central Market. This time, there are oranges, apples, bananas and melons, as well as his famous mangoes. I don't open the front door very much but hope to convey our grateful thanks effusively.

My glasses are folded carefully on my bedside table – I have sat on them on my bed before. Getting dressed means decisions. If I wear white or cream trousers, I need to wear natural-colored underwear, so they won't be seen through them. Having decided the level of respectability required means long cream linen trousers, but a T-shirt top, I then have to decide on the appropriate necklace. Pyjamas under my pillow, dress in bra and pants, and find deodorant, body lotion on my arms and legs, perfume… in the bathroom. A look in the bathroom mirror makes me wish I didn't have so many lard-like folds. I look at my fully dressed self. Checking on my back hair, I decide it is too straggly to be out, and anyway, as I'm leading, I need to convey a sense of authority, so brush hair into a ponytail, and check my

back hair again for smoothness and evenness of colour. Then foundation to cover my age spots on my face, and my underlying red skin (rosacrea). I go to the kitchen to find my handbag and powder the shiny bits on my face in front of the large, old, gilt-framed mirror in the hall. I go back to find my glasses.

Recording all my activities is getting in the way of doing them!.

Back to the bathroom for toilet once again, clean teeth, apply lipstick, pat with a tissue, check for lipstick on teeth, or too much powder. I realize I need to put my knee support on, as I shall be standing for some hours this morning, so back to the bedroom to apply a herbal remedy, wash my hands, and trousers back on…. I go to the toilet once more, put on my sandals, brush off the dust, go into the kitchen to wash my hands again, and once I'm out the door, back again to find a clean cotton handkerchief. "Never leave the house without a clean handkerchief"….

Lunch is homemade soup, cheese on toast done in the oven, a glass of water and a piece of dark chocolate. There's a bottle of opened white wine, so I have a glass of that too, knowing it will make me melancholy later, but grateful for the sense of relaxation it gives. I read emails again while I'm eating, wash up my things, then settle down to type.

Doing a load of washing from the thrift shop for the caretaker's wife, reminds me of rummaging through the thrift shop bags people left, in other places where we've lived. There were some good items, bed linen in no longer fashionable colours, but still useful and intact. She is taking them back home for family members. When the load is done, I fold it up and leave it inside the door to the cottage…

Rest! I do actually fall asleep on the bed, but possibly like a cat, with eyes slightly open, as I wake in an hour's time to wash my face, reapply make-up, brush hair, check back hair, clean teeth, apply lipstick... and head off to help... My husband arrives at the door as I leave. His chest is worse, and his voice thinner, so I'm glad when he says he will go to the local hospital this evening to be investigated, which he actually does, and is able to tell me on my return from church that the doctor thinks it's bronchitis still.

We have more soup together, with two pieces of toast, a cup of tea, and watch the news. My husband goes to bed early; I am interested in a programme following the news, then have a message chat with a friend in the UK. No news of the two [children] on holidays in Indonesia, but presumably they are well! Feeling decidedly empty and bereft, I shower, clean teeth, apply cream to face and body, put on my pyjamas, and fall into bed."

7. Of being embedded in the concrete and material world and intimately entangled with it.

"April 2018"

"I wake up with Pharrell Williams' 'Happy' an ear-worm in my head. I take the songs in my head as an unconscious indicator of my emotional and spiritual temperature. This is the first time 'Happy' has been playing. No make-up today – it's a 'home' day. Over breakfast, I calculate that, of the seventeen weeks that have passed this year already, eleven were offering hospitality, and four were visiting, separately or together, other countries for family or meetings.... Although relishing a return to 'normalcy', I wonder what 'normal' is and how long it will last, before the next bed-making, menu-planning, meal preparation begins. This morning, the bed

linen and towels our guest had helpfully put ready for washing were in the washing machine and out before the day could decide if it was raining or not. But the sun has come out, and the rhythm of hanging out sheets and pillowcases soothes me, against a background of the distant rooster crowing, and the birds' riotous sounds of feasting on insects disturbed by the gardeners' activities yesterday. The outside temperature is in the early thirties again, and I savour the contrast of the coolness of the house. It comes to me that 'normal' cannot be applied to any days; each day is different, I am different, there is only one 'now' as time as we know it moves inexorably on. I mentally note I shall have to make soup again, once I have journaled, and avoided reading too many messages on my iPad."

8. Of being distinctively, determinedly personal, and unique:

yet having aspects which are generalisable to other human beings.

"April 2018"

> *"It's a pleasure to wander barefoot around the house, as relief from sitting too long at my desk. There is comfort in the Saturday rituals of changing bed linen, emptying bins, hanging washing out, putting another load on, bringing the dry ones in, folding them up and putting them away in cupboards and drawers. The rough abrasiveness of the towels – I much prefer them rough than hotel-soft – the smell of fresh laundry, the warmth of the afternoon sun after the cold of sitting in air-conditioning – are all reassurances that I am alive, and not totally cerebral, or robotic, with just eyes and hands moving at the service of my thoughts."*

9. Of having a sense of vulnerability to the greater 'other':

the preconscious groping for sense; the sense or presence of myself mediated *intercorporeally*-through other bodies-as both actuality and necessity.

> *"21 May 2018"*
>
>> *"Waking to an empty, hollowed-out feeling, I am not sure if I want to open my eyes. I slept through and wasn't woken by my husband's coughing, so why am I feeling this way? The last wisps of a sad dream hang at the edge of my mind… I feel a need to make sense of it all… Why do I have to 'work it all out?' Does that give me control? … I realise I was avoiding getting stuck into the sorting after our evening meal, dreading the dismantling of the nest, again; this is the third time for the youngest child that we will have moved from what is known to the unknown. Having spent Christmases and Easters here, over the past eight years, this is the second time her home is being destroyed. Is this the tail-end of the chesty bug I've had, the dreary convalescent period, when you are too tired to do anything, but very aware of what has to be done, no longer able to sink into refreshing sleep, absolved or all responsibilities, for a time? How shall I get through the next few days*?"

Summary of Chapter 2: The next step

My research began, where all research begins, with an 'itch' and a 'hunch': because I was keen to reflect on my own experience. I followed an emergent theory of qualitative research using the method of CGT devised by Kathy Charmaz as far as I could. Reflection on my autoethnography showed that, despite its evident 'failure' to tease out thematic material, it was impossible to divide myself into threads of sensations, movement and affect or any other divisions – my everyday is inextricably entwined, irreducible and

inexhaustible. The 'praxeological' evidence Mueller refers to that I needed was very difficult to quantify, and 'mixed up' in emotions, thoughts and intentions. Anecdotally, I have found most women whom I share my lack of results with agree with that finding.

My very long-winded analysis using multiple iterations of abduction was a 'failure' in that no dominant themes emerged, but that was no surprise in another way as it confirmed the impossibility of attempting to 'capture' what was not admissible to capture – the sheer complexity of everyday living merely could only be hinted at by the descriptive narrative of my journal entries. I didn't have the time and resources to check out my findings with other women in a focus group or some other form of qualitative research: that would constitute another research project. The process of reflection made me realise how deeply socialised domestic rituals and routines are: I found myself repeating rituals and routines that my mother made, despite being in a different country, culture and seasonal rhythms. It would be interesting to find out how many of my inherited routines have been passed on to my own daughters.

Being made aware of daily routines made me aware of how entangled routines or habits were with memory, gesture, time, flux and flow, daily rhythms and seasonal rhythms, and of the need to make sense of 'non-identical repetitions'. Again, all of these aspects constitute an avenue of research in their own right. I couldn't resolve whether the entanglement of my routines and habits with all of these constructs was because each strand was too intimately involved with another, and it wasn't possible to do justice to each separately, or whether the process of what I call preconscious activity, what Sheets-

Johnstone calls 'thinking in movement', by its invisibility rendered access difficult. As Sheets-Johnstone notes, 'particular energies, spatialities, and temporalities come into play with self-movement and together articulate a particular qualitative dynamic… a particular kinetic form of an emotion is not identical with the emotion but is dynamically congruent with it'[268]. Caught up in the ongoing nature of my doing, doing actions which I had repeated endlessly for decades, I wasn't always noticing what I was doing, attending to outcomes rather than the actions themselves, not always enjoying my doing, but exhibiting a measure of competency and skill, which I sensed as 'flow', 'pattern' and 'rhythm'. I realised I needed to know more about 'flow' and 'rhythm', and 'synergies of movement'.

I became aware of different levels of attention occurring simultaneously during the unnoticed activities that accompanied my daily business domestically: attention to visible outcomes (e.g. this pillowcase is straightened so I can send the hot iron over it), while simultaneously monitoring specific actions of the arms and hands (so I don't burn myself), within a background level of gross-motor balance reactions (I remain upright but move from one foot to the other as I reach with the iron), and sensory input (listening to the radio at the same time), while checking that no one is using the front doorbell to call. Calling attention to one level of attention meant obliterating attention to background skills and other equally significant levels of attention.

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[268] Sheets-Johnstone, "*The Corporeal Turn*", 2009: 205-207, 209.

Affect varied throughout the day and the week, according to the daily routine my husband and I developed together (although my husband's work programme took precedence) with continuity with routines we had developed as a family over decades. Self-care and housework overlapped and were often difficult to distinguish. At times, I resented having shouldered the responsibility for the majority of the domestic activity; at other times I welcomed the solace of the familiar rhythm and pattern that it brought to a life which sometimes felt adrift in another culture. Retrospectively during the attempt to record my daily day, I could tell myself that I was proud to have a smoothly running household, or that guests felt welcomed and loved by my offering of clean beds, comfortable rooms, and tasty food, but this cognitive and emotional affirmation was additional to the satisfaction and equilibrium I felt in the doing the task. The domestic doing contributed to how I perceived myself and consoled myself in my role as a homemaker. Yet, throughout my reflection and my journal-writing for my autoethnography, I never shook off the sense that doing ordinary things was somehow not 'worthy' of being noticed or written about, or could throw off the niggling doubts about their significance, although I sometimes had moments of joy in the material aspects of my doing, celebrating a cleared space, a clean floor, a folded cloth, a smooth surface or a freshly smelling garment.

My data was evocative, but not, as Ellis calls it, 'mushy' or 'soft', although there are aspects of the confessional within it. I haven't been able to determine whether it has the power, as evocative autoethnography intends, to change the attitudes of others who experience similar experiences, or how generalisable it is. I anonymised entries but did

not seek permission from other actors to include them in the entries. I acknowledge that it *was* therapeutic to write it, but this was not the end of my analysis. I realised my entries needed to be set into a wider context. It made me recognise the need to investigate the theory base of the everyday further and sensitised me to references to everyday life as I went about my living: in film, television, and written media, exhibitions and installations, noting that references proliferated with the impact of the subsequent pandemic and lockdowns soon after our move back. Not wishing to remain within the bounds of my autoethnographic explorations, intrigued by the different characteristics of the everyday which I had identified – non-verbal, silent, multiple, both/and, intertwined with sense, movement, body and affect, intracorporeal, intercorporeal and relational - and in order to situate my experience and make sense of my 'data', I turned to the study of the everyday from a theoretical point of view which follows in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Confronting the inexpressibility of the everyday

Introduction

My autoethnography brought me up short with having to reflect and identify how I spent my day. It made me ask the question, 'What *is* "everyday life" and does my 'ordinary' look like anyone else's ordinary'? One possibility is that it could be repetitive action in an over-familiar place, at work or at home, or it could be skills acquired in childhood relating to self-care, or the weird behaviour people exhibit in their own space when they're home alone, or none of the above. Is it 'unexceptional', 'ordinary', or 'anything common or trite, lacking originality'? (Oxford English Dictionary, OED). I have considered 'intention', 'situatedness', 'intertwining' , 'tactility' and 'habits' from a lived, bodily-experience point of view in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, and contemporary interpretations of the same, and will bring phenomenological perspectives in conversation with the broader context which examining the everyday brings.

In this chapter, I shall look for a definition of the everyday in all its elusiveness, engaging with the work of two dominant theorists in the field, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, and de Certeau's colleague, Luce Giard, in their examination of one aspect of

the everyday which I am particularly interested in: culinary skills. Because the everyday is rarely homogenous, typical, or straightforwardly in the domain of one discipline or another, the 'complexification' of the search for the everyday, or 'the making the familiar strange' in the uncovering of unrecognized aspects will be aided by engagement with contemporary theorists Ben Highmore, Rita Felski, Michael Gardiner, and Barry Sandywell. Expressions of the everyday may be found in all avenues of contemporary art: I will limit myself to the discussion by literary theorist Liesl Olson of some modernist literature which has a close connection with the work of Lefebvre and de Certeau.

Defining the everyday

There is no consensus as to the boundaries and dimensions of the word: the only consensus is that there is no consensus. Everything about the everyday is disputed: philosophically - how to frame the chase; methodologically - over the 'capture' of the elusive, and linguistic/metaphorically - the signification of what is 'caught'. In his review of Ben Highmore's *The Everyday Life Reader*, David Alvarez finds 'the everyday' as a reaction against the 'hegemony' of theory in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, literary studies, cultural studies, and social geography.

> 'Perhaps it is one of the symptoms of our theory-saturated, post-everything moment that everyday life has recently become not just an object of cultural analysis, but a crucial interpretive category in its own right… 'What is still up for grabs is how best to approach and assess its protean personality…. that complex congeries of times, spaces, technologies, practices, institutions, ideologies,

material conditions, emotional states, thoughts, sensations, signs, and symbols in the midst of whose force-field we all live'[269].

I will touch on a range of possible properties: the everyday as 'everywhere'; 'tactics' [270]; 'a para-field, or a meta-field', 'ambiguous' and 'capacious aesthetics'[271]; 'the ultimate, nonnegotiable reality'[272]; 'its essential trait: it allows no hold... It escapes'[273]; 'embodied in gesture'[274]; 'black rock which resists assimilation'[275]; 'society's most fundamental ontological category'[276]; 'ongoing, common activity, typically but not necessarily aesthetic'[277]: 'the everyday skills that get us by... the non-representational'[278]. Some of the characteristics on this long list appear to relate to a similar field, others are completely contradictoryAs in the parable, is 'the everyday' an elephant being described by many blind men standing in different positions around it?

Ordinariness becomes extraordinary when attention is given to it, because turning attention to 'that which escapes notice' or is 'below notice' (OED) will change its essential character. And there is not neutral 'noticing', no panoptical, Godlike view from nowhere: speaking of 'attention' means there must be a human perceiver who is situated, and a human context to this mundanity which is variable and in flux. Highmore

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[269] Alvarez, "Excursions into Everyday Life ", 2004: 1.
[270] De Certeau, *"The Practice of Everyday Life"*, 1984: xix.
[271] Highmore, "*The Everyday Life Reader*", 2002b: 4.
[272] Felski, "The Invention of Everyday Life" in "*Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*", 2000: 77.
[273] Blanchot, M, "Everyday Speech", 1987: 140.
[274] De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living Cooking"* , 1998: 157.
[275] De Certeau, *"The Practice of Everyday Life"*, 1984: 60.
[276] Heller, A, in Gardiner, "Everyday Knowledge", 2006: 205.
[277] Melchionne, "The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics", 2013.
[278] Thrift, "Summoning Life", 2004: 81.

and Rita Felski each note the paradoxical nature of the everyday, veiled, and elusive, resistant to being mastered by reflection and language, because of its intertwining with the human embodied self: 'The everyday offers itself up as a problem a contradiction, a paradox: both ordinary and extraordinary, self-evident and opaque, known and unknown'[279]. As Felski notes,

> 'Much of the unthought of our thought must remain opaque, recalcitrant, and beyond the reach of understanding and critique. One's own form of life is never fully available for retrieval and analysis, thanks to the irreducible embeddedness of thought and action, the impossibility of turning all of one's background into the foreground. The life world in this sense offers a stubborn resistance to the mastery that is implied in the intellectual's claim to penetrate the veil of illusion'[280].

Pinning down the everyday will be an exercise in 'complexification'; of recognizing historical moments and the limits of perception and re-presentation of this tantalising 'no-thing' in word and image, and of the stumbling blocks within the field of the everyday as 'the field of experimentation' and the 'disciplinary doubt' it casts when an enterprise to understand it is undertaken[281]. In my critique of the term's use philosophically, I will begin first with the Marxist analyses of Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) in his study of what he called the general 'alienation' of modern humankind, which has been foundational to study of the everyday.

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[279] Highmore, "*The Everyday Life Reader*", 2002b: 16.
[280] Felski, "*Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*", 2000: 614-615.
[281] Highmore, "*The Everyday Life Reader* ", 2000b: 4.

Although many theoreticians, Lefebvre included, began their analysis of the everyday in the city and on the street, I would like to focus on the 'domestic' everyday, qualifying the noun because there seem to be two kinds of 'everyday' implicitly referred to in Lefebvre's analysis of routine, differentiated on a gender basis. Lefebvre's analysis of the routinization of work and the 'labour' and dehumanization of production are theorised as creating the alienation of modern urbanism, but 'work', 'labour' and 'production' all relate to the men in factories. 'In factory life, the young worker sees himself[sic] caught up in fragmented linear time, the time of production and technology'[282] . The domain of the domestic was assumed to be that of women and the working class[283]. Although recognizing feminism's contributions to social change, for Lefebvre, 'women' and 'home' were still linked concepts:

> 'From time immemorial… women have been the custodians of a treasure chest of these norms and representations. How prosaic and tedious these norms and representations are but also how tenacious in praxis, and how profound: everything involving the house, the 'home', domesticity and therefore the everyday… symbolically and as conscious 'subjects' they embody the loftiest values of art, ethics, and culture… But these come into conflict with other supreme values: sensual delight, total pleasure. Luxury and lust. These conflicts are… reduced to ambiguity…and in spite of the mind-numbing nature of housework… women are less likely than men to be stultified by the specialization and fragmentation of labour… *Therefore, women symbolize everyday life in its entirety. They embody its situations, its conflicts, and its possibilities. They are its active critique'*[284](author's italics).

[282] Lefebvre, "*Critique of Everyday Life: Volume Two":* 1961/2002:50.
[283] Felski, "The Invention of Everyday Life" in "*Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*", 2000:80.
[284] Lefebvre, "*Critique of Everyday Life: Volume Two"*, 1961/2002:223.

Lefebvre calls women's work at home 'numbing', the norms which saturate women's work 'prosaic' and 'tedious'. Although to him, women are 'custodians', they are also victims because of housework combined with other social factors: he cannot help but perceive housework negatively as secondary and less important. But there is an ambiguity about his description. Women are uniquely able to reflect on society, becoming its 'critique'. The negativity extends towards women's work outside the home, describing the work of caring for vulnerable people and the places in which they are set as 'in the margin of the 'lower depths' - 'certain jobs reserved for women' – 'cleaning, basic non-technical repairs, an endless response to the permanent process of erosion, soiling, wearing out and ageing which all that is used or has life must suffer'[285].

Back to the everyday

I sense intuitively that domestic activity is more than Lefebvre's analysis admits. Situating his thinking within the wider context of continental philosophy and sociology, I find a pleasing symmetry in sitting down to write about 'the everyday'; to read Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Raymond Williams, and Ben Highmore more closely, because it evokes an array of mixed memories from more than a decade ago. I remember myself as a part-time student juggling family life with post-graduate studies, encountering the discipline of Cultural Studies in London for the first time, in a bewildering change of paradigm from my previous part-time, undergraduate studies. The manner in which I engaged with the 'knowledges' of 'Contemporary Art Theory' as compared with

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[285] Lefebvre, "*Critique of Everyday Life: Volume Two*," 1961/2002: 54.

'Contemporary Theology' seemed to symbolise their respective pedagogical frameworks: receiving regular parcels in the post of my distance-learning readings and essay assignments for my Theology degree, contrasted with the deliberately 'immersive' deconstruction of my second context, this time 'in the flesh', in a grimy part of East London noted for its murders and soiled mattresses outside decaying Victorian terraces. I was often lost there, psychologically, intellectually, and geographically, an Alice in Wonderland down the rabbit warren of long, black- and white-tiled corridors and temporary huts, and on my way to review the next, 'cutting-edge' art installation in some edgy part of London, and thinking back, bemused at how determined I was to survive this assault on my head and my senses for the sake of following my passions.

'Art Theory' as I found it was a 'hybrid', the lovechild of Cultural, Media and Communication Studies and the Fine Art departments. Different lecturers, drawn from international educational institutes by the 'radical' flavour of the College, had their cultish 'followings' according to their own inimitably impenetrable styles: pastoral care was not part of their skill sets, and a conservative middle-aged housewife from Kent was hardly worthy of any attention in the exotic jungle of my international student cohort. But, having encountered continental philosophy already in my Theology course, I knew intuitively that this was what I needed to explore, despite the constant sense of confusion and confrontation, to equip me to understand my everyday experience.

Now I am back again sixteen years later with these old textual acquaintances, and each iteration means something deeper, an expansion of understanding, more aware of, and

at ease with, myself and the meaningfulness, even the necessity, of my search. Post-pandemic, the tide of post-modernity has gone out, exposing the shores of human experience littered with the detritus of people's lives enduring a 'plague' year which has destablised 'the everyday' for everyone, putting the 'ordinary' in existential relief. The inexpressibility, the sense of being deluded but still finding the significance of the 'left-overs'[286], indivisible in their singularity, overwhelmingly abundant in their presence in life, still haunt me in my search for an apposite theology to express the significance of what I believe to be true. Except, this time, I want to catch the White Rabbit long enough to make the words about it grounded, authentic, 'real', and connected to my life experiences.

Complexifying the 'myth' of everyday life

Finding the everyday is not going to be straightforward. Describing the real will not be a matter of mirroring what is apparently there, describing 'specific kinds of activities or conditions' but 'as a mode of attention that attempts to animate the heterogeneity of social life… the name for an activity of finding meaning in an impossible diversity [287]. This exercise of 'complexifying' the apparently simple is not to tie myself in knots but to recognize the entanglement of many threads, and the to-and-fro-ness of reflection, attempting to be alert to subtleties and nuance.

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[286] Lefebvre, *"Critique of Everyday Life: Volume Two"*, 1961/1991: 97.
[287] Highmore, "*The Everyday Life Reader* ", 2002b: 173.

To use the term 'everyday life' is to already make assumptions about its homogeneity and to elide inherent assumptions of the everyday as an homogenous state of being for all humans, bearing the same overall structure regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, and social context[288]. The 'everyday' becomes an 'equivocal signifier' such that the inherent unique embodiment, 'inherent undecidability', imponderable flux, and concrete multiplicities of each person's particular existence, are 'denigrated' in the 'quest for cognitive foundationalism'[289]. This creating of an abstract metaphysical concept holds implicit assumptions about what and who count and what and who don't: what activities, objects, spaces, which relationships are deemed significant and which insignificant. 'Mundanity frames the order of daily life denuded of its ambiguities as eternally the same'[290]. The concepts of '*Lebenswelt'* or '*Lifeworld'* which Husserl proposed of 'a prelogical realm composed of everyday experiential typifications and interpretative schemes by means of which habitual patterns of social interaction are practically managed', fall prey to this reification of '*existential presuppositions',* conflating 'everyday life', 'the world of work', 'the ordinary' and 'quotidian experience'(author's italics)[291]. This 'grammar' of everyday life, this 'homogenization' of people's experiences needs to be 'problematized' by 'complexifying' the language use in its description, to allow for what Sandywell calls 'a heterology of the ordinary', 'recovered as an immense domain of defeasible practices and transgressive experiences that are continuously in play as individual and groups construct and reconstruct the configurations through

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[288] Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life: Toward a Heterology", 2004: 167.

[289] Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life: Toward a Heterology", 2004: 166, 174.

[290] Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life: Toward a Heterology", 2004: 163.

[291] Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life: Toward a Heterology", 2004: 163.

which they reflexly make sense of their lives'[292]. The everyday becomes 'an index of 'the undecideable' which 'resists *theorizing,* a recalcitrant ordinariness through which bureaucratized and technocratic worlds and discourses are put into question and transformed'[293](author's italics). I empathise with Sandywell's project and the evocativeness of his term 'index of the undecidable' but recognize the limits of his theorizing in the homogenization of human experience which his term creates itself.

Henri Lefebvre's Critique of Everyday Life

It's important to establish the outlines of Henri Lefebvre's paradigm at this point, as his work has overshadowed critical responses since. His massive oeuvre has been overviewed elsewhere[294] [295] [296], and this merely summarizes the main structures of his argument. To understand Lefebvre is to understand the historical moment to which he spoke and his continued critique of other modes of thought – existentialism, the Situationists, phenomenology, structuralism, and semiotics. His embrace of early Marxist thought recognizes its debt to Hegelian dialectics – of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis in the progressive movement of History – but a dialectics 'not prone to either nostalgic ruminations about a lost 'golden age' or abstract utopian predictions about a future perfect society', evident in his *Dialectical Materialism* (1939), 'stressing the themes of alienation, praxis and human self-realization' [297]. He believed in the practice politically

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[292] Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life: Toward a Heterology", 2004: 175.
[293] Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life: Toward a Heterology", 2004: 175.
[294] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life "*, 2000.
[295] Highmore, *"Everyday Life and Cultural Theory"*, 2002a, *"The Everyday Life Reader",* 2002b.
[296] Jay, "*Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept",* 1984.
[297] Gardiner, M, "*Critiques of Everyday Life",* 2000: 77, 73.

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of what he upheld theoretically: he fought in the French resistance of World War Two, and in the subsequent post-war euphoria and optimism, grappled with the changes brought about by capitalism in European industrial societies. His disillusionment with the invasion of Hungary in 1956, his analysis of the 'blind-spots' in Marxist theory, and his explicit rejection of Stalinism, led to his subsequent expulsion from the French Communist Party. *The Critique of Everyday Life: Introduction* (1947) had a long supplement added in 1957, with the next *Critique of Everyday Life: Volume 11* in 1961[298].

The everyday as a 'site of resistance'

Everyday life was a 'site of resistance' for Lefebvre because it was here that the 'technocratic rationality' of capitalism which had 'colonized the ordinary' (Lefebvre here exporting a phrase from the Situationists and Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* 1967), that turned people into unthinking, uncreative consumers losing their connection with their humanity, had to be resisted. Lefebvre contrasts everyday life today with what he believed life in pre-modern times to be, where an 'undifferentiated totality of human practices... a distinct *style of life*', integrated in a 'common culture... of speech patterns, gestures, habits, and rituals' was linked to the rhythms and cycles of the natural world. The growth of the middle class and the ascent of 'bourgeois ideology' changed that. Modern daily existence is 'fragmented, regimented, and specialized, with family life and leisure...detached from work... Separated from organic community and from authentic intersubjectivity, the individual becomes 'isolated and inward-looking'. This division of

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[298] Gardiner, "*Critiques of Everyday Life*", 2000:72.

productivity and labour splits the human subject into a 'public and private self', and the elevation of the *cogito* in Cartesian dualisms denigrates 'the manual' against 'the intellectual', so that people 'spend their lives constrained and defined by rigid, immobile social roles and occupational niches'[299]. Everyday life is lived unreflectively. 'Many men, and even people in general, *do not know their own lives very well, or know them inadequately*'[300](author's italics). For Lefebvre, to live unreflectively was to be swept along by the shallow, fragmented inhumanity of modern-day capitalism. To live well is to stop and think about ordinary life and the individual choices I can make.

As the site of resistance to technocratic domination, as Lefebvre believed it was, everyday life has the potential to be the place in which the uniqueness of each person is created, or not, of the empowerment of humanity – what Lefebvre called 'the total man [sic]', the space in which resistance to the grip of capitalistic consumerism can be made, 'where we enter into a dialectical relationship with the external natural and social worlds in the most immediate and profound sense, and it is here where essential human desires, powers and potentialities are initially formulated, developed and realized concretely'. This relationship is not determined, but 'open-ended, provisional and flexible'. Everyday life is the 'connective tissue' giving life 'its coherence' [301].

> '"Everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by what is 'left over' after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out for analysis, must be defined as a totality... Everyday life is related to *all* activities and encompasses them with all their differences and conflicts; it is their meeting

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[299] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000:76.
[300] Lefebvre, "Introduction." *Critique of Everyday Life: Volume One"*, 1961/1991: 94
[301] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000:76.

place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and form. In it are expressed and fulfilled those relations which bring into play the totality of the real, albeit in a certain manner which is always partial and incomplete: friendship, comradeship, love, the need to communicate, to play, etc…"'[302].

Lefebvre's Marxism was not deterministic or uncritical and he recognized how lopsided Marxist thought was in emphasizing the economic to the detriment of the sensual, the bodily and the non-rational, 'a plethora of creative, imaginative, and emotive practices he called *poesis*'[303]. Freedom *from* was not enough; human beings needed freedom *for,* to live well. Although initially, Lefebvre believed that freedom to live well meant mastery of the non-human environment, he later modified these views, finding '"Nature is being murdered by "anti-nature" – by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse… by labour and its products. Along with God, nature is dying… Humanity is killing both of them – and perhaps committing suicide into the bargain"'[304].

In his critique of human needs, and in the light of the Stalinist project, he recognized that Communism as it was manifested politically, ignored human needs. Modernity did no better, with human needs becoming '"atrophied and debased"'. The '"solipsistic consciousness"' of modernity '"centres on an individual's particular occupational specialization, family life and class-determined forms of commodity consumption"',

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[302] Lefebvre, "Introduction." *Critique of Everyday Life: Volume One* 1961/1991:97, in Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000: 79.
[303] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000: 80.
[304] Lefebvre in Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000: 81, 83, 90.

leading to '"hyper-inflation of the self-contained, imperious ego"', and the '"adoption of a purely instrumental attitude toward the world, seeing it as a means to an end"'. The hyper-individualistic choices of late modern capitalism led to the denigration of the material world in which modern people 'made' themselves by elevating the choices of the solo,('I') perspective[305].

For Lefebvre, modern life and modernity as a project, and everyday life within it, may be described negatively and positively, at the same time – a space and place both of possibility and repression. Everyday life is 'both/and': a place of routine and possible stagnation, but also the place of identity formation, wherein 'our mundane interactions with the material world… both subject and object are fully constituted and humanized through the medium of conscious human praxis'[306]. Modern life could be both 'repressive' or 'emancipatory', a place of 'deadening routine' as well as a place of 'potentiality' but is described by some as contradictory: 'where the contradiction between the material and technological potential for freedom and the subjective and objective effects of alienation is most acute, but also where the possibility of a transformed social existence is glimpsed clearly for the first time in human history'[307]. The decline of the technocratic power accrued by the state would be evidence of this 'emancipation', and anything which contributed to its demise was to be applauded, making Lefebvre a key figure in the student movements in Parisian universities leading to the events of 1968. Yet the 'anti-intellectualism' of the student protests alarmed him,

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[305] Lefebvre in Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000: 83.
[306] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2002: 76.
[307] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2002: 77, 79.

seeming to counter the possibility of a 'return to human values', release from the bonds of 'colonising capitalism' and 'freedom to create' inherent in his formulation of the everyday.

If the everyday is the 'both/and' of an antimony (two opposite positions held in tension because both appear to be true), but without the resolution of a dialectic (a movement from one position to an opposite one before a synthesis of the two positions is made), seeming to contain within it a 'shadow' of the opposite 'pole', what does this look like in practice? Highmore finds that the range of dualities that characterize approaches to everyday life move between tendencies or poles, and that characterising a particular theory as manifesting one pole against another simplifies theoretical positions without nuance. It is the actual movement between poles which remains true to the elusiveness of the constitution of the everyday. Highmore believes the questioning of everyday life, and how everyday life questions everyone is to 'specifically invite a theoretical articulation of everyday life', but the 'kind of theorising that throws our most cherished *theoretical* values and practices into crisis', theory that attends to the everyday, 'not via its systematic interrogations, but through its poetics, its ability to render the familiar strange' [308](author's italics).

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[308] Highmore, *"Everyday Life and Cultural Theory "*, 2002b: 3.

Making the familiar strange

The Lefebvrian method of coming to an understanding of what constitutes everyday depends on the bringing to light, to consciousness and to language, the alienation of today's person, in what Lefebvre called 'de-alienation' or the making strange of what is familiar – 'defamiliarization'. As Lefebvre notes,

> 'To study the everyday is to change it. To change the everyday is to bring its confusions into the light of day and into language: it is to make its latent conflicts apparent, and thus to burst them asunder. It is therefore both theory and practice, critique, and action. Critique of everyday life encompasses a decision and precipitates it, the most general and the most revolutionary of them all, the decision to render ambiguities unbearable, and to metamorphose what seems to be most unchangeable in mankind [sic] because it lacks precise contours'[309].

This process of 'de-alienation', 'defamiliarisation', or 'making the familiar strange' is both a Freudian technique – the condition of alienation is experienced until it is intolerable (as 'angst') to reveal the unconscious - as well as the less dramatic move of the *epoché* in phenomenology, in which the presuppositions brought to a situation are identified and set aside so that the situation is perceived in a fresh light. Although the everyday may carry 'the unmanaged continuation of the past in the present', such that 'the everyday becomes the unknowing host for the return of traumatic material'[310], I believe that the everyday is largely pre-conscious rather than unconscious. This is to say, it is *prior* to conscious thought as a sensory and movement process, rather than *sub*conscious, loaded with emotions and thoughts which are suppressed by other

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[309] Lefebvre, "*Critique of Everyday Life: Volume Two",* 1961/ 2002: 226.
[310] Highmore, "*Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*", 2002a: 237.

thought processes. But this process of 'making the familiar strange' runs the risk, as Lefebvre noted, of altering what is perceived. 'Our methods of accessing the everyday are provisional and awkward, when not inadequate and opaque'[311]. The very process by which the familiar is made strange, the raising to consciousness and the inevitable expression in language is bound to change the character of the experience to which the person has become habituated. While the phenomenological method aims to maintain the 'heterology' of the everyday[312], inevitably the intellectual focus and 'tidying-up' which language invariable imposes must transmute the experience from non-language to language, sense to thought, prelogical to logical, emotional to conceptual. I will examine the approach that Michel de Certeau took with his colleague Luce Giard in the seventies, to mediate heterologies more closely.

Situating de Certeau: 'strategies' and 'tactics'

Against Lefebvre's broad framework of Marxist principles, Michel de Certeau wanted to base action more securely in the material world. Strongly influenced by Lefebvre amongst others (the Situationists, Foucault, Adorno and Horkheimer, Lacan, and Freud), De Certeau believed that institutions - political, academic, and social – operate with 'strategies', which contrasted with the singular personal 'tactics' of ordinary people. The modernist (scientific) model supposes that a '"subject of will and power "(a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment"', and on this basis, 'relationships with an exterior distinct from it ("competitors", "adversaries",

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[311] Alvarez, "Excursions into Everyday Life", 2004.
[312] Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life: Toward a Heterology", 2004.

"targets" or "objects") can be generated'[313]. As soon as '"subjects"' (understood as 'perfectly rational and autonomous') are removed from their environment to include them in a '"technocratic discourse"', all '"singularity", "otherness and difference"' are expunged'[314]. By contrast with this objectivist, reductionistic, deterministic view of human beings and societies (which de Certeau believed Lefebvre's view entailed, even if unintentionally), de Certeau believed that "ordinary people" were capable of agency when it came to processing the chaos of everyday life. In Lefebvre's view of modernity, the 'masses' were left 'gullible and susceptible' to 'the fleeting relief from the drudgery of everyday life' that 'mass culture offered'[315]. In de Certeau's philosophy, 'tactics' were creative ways that ordinary people had of making practices their own, of creating their own identities in their own spaces[316].

Ordinary agency and 'tactics of consumption'

In contrast to Lefebvre's more pessimistic view of what rampant American capitalism was doing to post-war French society, de Certeau believed working-class people know 'how to get away with things', with 'maneuvers, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike'–'makeshift' 'opportunities… seized "on the wing"', manipulating 'events in order to turn to their own ends… to turn them into "opportunities"' in 'the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements' which are 'the irreducible multiplicity of human social and

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[313] De Certeau, "*The Practice of Everyday Life*", 1984: xix.
[314] De Certeau in Gardiner *Critiques of Everyday Life*, 2000: 167
[315] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000: 160.
[316] De Certeau in Gardiner, "*Critiques of Everyday Life*", 2000: 172, 173.

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cultural forms' [317]. De Certeau's idealism was more optimistic, more sceptical of 'formalized discourses' and 'their adequacy' or 'superiority' 'in representing everyday cultural practices' and more aware of the 'limits of sociocultural criticism'. De Certeau was committed to an understanding of personal human agency and 'anonymous creativity', of "making-do", or *poesis,* which Lefebvrian theory overlooked or demeaned[318]. For de Certeau, this 'practical consciousness', practical knowledge, 'know-how' or *savoir-faire* is 'unaware of itself', finding 'metaphors for its 'tales of the invisible'' in the stories of psychoanalysis. De Certeau's 'tactics' have a lot to do with time, because 'real' time and 'tactics' are fragmentary and discontinuous. How to render these 'wandering lines', this 'ephemeral dance', this 'drift', this operation below the level of the 'panoptic gaze of bureaucratic power'?[319] [320]

De Certeau's methodology: the commitment to 'heterogeneity' and 'heterologies'

Rather than pretend to some 'total critique', de Certeau was committed to uncovering the 'more subtle moments of creativity and festivity within the delicate skein of everyday life as it was actually experienced, which included mundane acts of consumption, cultural or otherwise'[321]. The multiplicity of 'mundane acts of consumption' or 'tactics' he labelled '"heterologies"'. 'Tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices'[322].

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[317] De Certeau, "*The Practice of Everyday Life",*1984: xix
[318] Gardiner, "*Critiques of Everyday Life",* 2000: 162, 184, 168.
[319] De Certeau et al, "*The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: xvill, xxi.
[320] Gardiner, "*Critiques of Everyday Life",* 2000:16.
[321] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000:164.
[322] De Certeau et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1984: xvi.

Contrary to Marxist beliefs in a distinction between 'real' and 'false' needs, de Certeau and his colleagues showed by examining the 'practices of consumption' in their studies how the people of that society appropriate and 'make do' with the materials they consume, making their appropriations their own.

The methodologies to uncover the 'tactics' of ordinary people were a 'multiplicity of knowledges and methods' with 'analysis on three levels: the modalities of action, the formalities of practices, and the types of operations specified by the ways of operating… Each theoretical proposition is immediately put to the test of a concrete practice, here walking in the city, there the description of a living space, elsewhere silent reading' to see if there were 'common categories'[323]. By 'refusing to let himself be enclosed within the practice of one particular model or to accept the preeminence of a certain model', de Certeau refused 'pompous statements' which make all kinds of generalizations about society – or to fall into the opposite trap of procuring 'through direct observation… an "encyclopedic description" of everyday life'[324]. As well, in his critique of Foucauldian theory, de Certeau wanted to understand '"anti-disciplines"', the silent and unacknowledged forms of resistance that '"break through the grid of the established order and accepted disciplines"' [325]. De Certeau's' 'rehabilitation' of popular culture' was closer in tone, viewpoint, and content to the work of Raymond Williams at the Birmingham Centre of Cultural Studies, 'later to become the hallmark of British cultural studies'[326].

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[323] Giard in de Certeau et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2"*, 1988: xxvii.
[324] Giard in de Certeau et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2"*, 1988: xxxiv.
[325] De Certeau, 1986: 197 in Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000: 168.
[326] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life"*, 2000: 161.

Epistemological doubt about the 'technocratic' narratives of the academy or any other social institution is central to understanding de Certeau's method in whatever areas he was investigating in a wide range of specialisms. His approach to 'writing culture' is 'experimental, responsive and ethically committed'[327]. De Certeau wanted always 'to tell it like it is', but without 'privileging his authorial voice'. His approach to his historiography, political analysis, ethnography, and social activism, is phenomenological but not explicitly so: a kind of 'meta-methodology… dedicated to encouraging heterogeneity and allowing alterity to proliferate … historical work is no different from contemporary ethnographic work – there simply is no privileged access to the real. "There is no choice but to work in a world of partial views"'[328]. But it is not just epistemology and historiography: psychoanalysis and literary studies are also 'bent to use' in the urge to 'search out better ways of making contact with the actual, the real' in a process of 'attention' which changes each discipline.

> 'The cultural world… under investigation exceeds or escapes the grip of analysis – but not before it has marked and altered the form that attempts to grasp it… the analysis is the performance of a form of attention that has been fashioned as the result of meeting the concrete social and ultimately ungraspable cultural world'[329].
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[327] Highmore, "An epistemological awakening", 2007: 15.
[328] De Certeau in Highmore, B, "An epistemological awakening", 2007: 16.
[329] Highmore, "An epistemological awakening", 2007: 18, 19.

Highmore believes de Certeau 'heterogeneity' is akin to Mikhail Bakhtin's 'heteroglossia' or polyphony in literary form, especially that of the novel, whose form is 'a synecdoche of heteroglossia because it always contains a multiplicity of voices or speech genres'[330].

The tactics that were uncovered should not be amalgamated to be labelled a trend.

> 'The practices of consumption are the ghosts of the society that carries their name. Like the "spirits" of former times, they constitute the multiform and occult postulate of productive activity' [331]... 'we must give up the fiction that collects all these sounds under the sign of a "Voice", of a "Culture" of its own – or of the great "Other's"' [332].

These 'marginalized' and 'minor practices' of those whose voices have been excluded, such as women and children, de Certeau suggests, 'have remained "unprivileged by history"', yet they 'continue to flourish in the interstices of the institutional technologies'[333]. De Certeau believed that all human beings have 'the intrinsic capacity' to 'reflexively monitor their actions' and not be overpowered by 'sign-systems or power/knowledge relations', because they exercise non-discursive, 'practical consciousness', yet he refuses to perceive these attributes and actions of marginalised people as having 'some kind of abstract unity' or of being 'micro-narratives'[334]. To de Certeau's marginalized and excluded voices must be added the voices of black and brown people in the majority contemporary world, suppressed by a history of white privilege.

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[330] Highmore, "An epistemological awakening", 2007: 19, 23.
[331] De Certeau," *The Practice of Everyday Life",* 1984: 35.
[332] De Certeau," The *Practice of Everyday Life",* 1984: 132.
[333] De Certeau, 1986: 189 in Gardiner, "*Critiques of Everyday Life",* 2000: 168, 177.
[334] De Certeau, 1984, in Gardiner, "*Critiques of Everyday Life",* 2000: 174, 178.

Luce Giard and 'doing-cooking'

The first French edition of *L'Invention du quotidien* was published in 1980, the first publication of results of a long study from 1974 to 1978 by de Certeau with a close circle of young doctoral researchers from the anthropology seminar at the University of Paris VII-Jussieu, one of whom was Luce Giard. Writing an introduction to the second edition fourteen years later, and ten years after de Certeau's premature death in 1986, Giard's admiration for her professor as one of this group of researchers, and the excitement at the work they had done together, fizzes through her introduction; 'a joyous brouhaha of new ideas, of concepts knocked together'- 'a seething of ideas and plans, of laughter and voices, of naïveté and enthusiasm, and the all-too-rare feeling of participating in creation'[335]. Asked to do the study on 'problems of culture and society' by the French government, because of his academic reputation and his timely, perceptive published responses to the traumatic, revolutionary events in the universities and streets of Paris in 1968, de Certeau gathered around him those whom he fired up with his particular approach. He wanted "to procure neither a history of theories concerning practices" nor "the constitution of semiotics"...'limiting himself to proposing "some ways of thinking about everyday practices of consumers, supposing from the start that they are of a tactical nature"'[336], de Certeau's riposte to Lefebvre's notion of 'technocratic domination', the 'colonization of the consumer by capitalism', and of 'daily life as irredeemably corrupted by capitalism'[337].

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[335] Giard in De Certeau et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: xiii, xxxv.
[336] Giard in De Certeau et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: xxiii.
[337] Gardiner, *"Critiques of Everyday Life",* 2000: 159.

Despite the absence of women in the original studies, Giard states that, for de Certeau, the housewife was a prime example of combining 'heterologies', confronting 'heterogeneous and mobile data – what she has in the refrigerator, the tastes, appetites and moods of her guests, the best buys and their possible combinations with what she already has on hand at home… the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is "seized"'[338]; practice with its own internal logic or 'characteristic way of thinking and acting'[339].

Luce Giard's colleague, Pierre Mayol, worked on the theme of 'the practice of the city, in the relation between neighborhood and private housing space' in his study of a neighborhood of Lyons. Giard's own study 'was rapidly changed to define a field and a method' after noticing that women were 'strangely absent' from the original study. With fellow researcher Marie Ferrier, Giard chose 'cooking for its primary necessity, its ability to cross over all divisions, and its intrinsic relation to *opportunity* and *circumstances*'[340] (author's italics).

'Kitchen Nation Women'

Giard called the twelve women that her colleague Marie Ferrier interviewed between 1974 and 1978 her Kitchen Women Nation: '*le peuple feminin des cuisines',* all women

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[338] Giard in De Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: xix.
[339] Gardiner, "*Critiques of Everyday Life",* 2000: 169.
[340] Giard in De Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: xxviii.

for whom the sole responsibility for putting daily food on the table fell, regardless of whether they worked outside the home or not. These women also felt the weight of past history, of the need to be faithful to the cooking of their region, their grandmothers, and mothers, and wondered aloud in interviews what was special about their lives that they were being chosen to be studied. They expressed a mixture of emotions about their role as housewives. Giard felt they needed celebrating. She recognized how much domestic practice had changed, even in the short time between writing the Introductions for the first and second editions, with changes to the modes of '*active sociability* in the family, at school, in the neighborhood', the acquisition of cars, and the inroads of urbanization and commercialisation of food purchase and preparation[341](author's italics).

The open-ended interviews of twelve lower-middle class and middle-class women between the ages of 31 and 70, some with children, some without, were not representative of French women in general. Half had spent their childhoods outside of Paris before coming to live there. The interviews were built around the themes of planning meals and choosing a menu; shopping and organizing purchases, recipe sources and mode of culinary apprenticeship, preparation and the role of personal invention, the use of industrial food products and the use of electrical appliances, and the role of the man of the house and his inventiveness in the kitchen. The women identified complex negotiations between budget, available food, and 'rules of propriety unique to each cultural area' – 'a detailed code of values, rules, and symbols' of ways of preparing and serving food, (differing from English culinary practices), taking into account her skills and

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[341] Giard in De Certeau et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: xl.

abilities and the needs and desires of those she feeds. Giard's interviewees note the irony of being a good cook: "the better it is, the faster it goes", and the inevitable iteration: '"it's such a mess, and then in almost no time, everything disappears. And I have to start again… I find that hopeless" '(one of the interviewees). '"Each invention is ephemeral… In the kitchen one *battles with time'''* (another interviewee), but despite this constant juggling and ephemerality, the connection with the past goes deep. 'The nourishing art has something to do with the art of loving, thus also with the art of dying… In the past, in the village, a burial was the chance for an extended family reunion around a solid meal, serious and joyful, after the interment. People thus began the work of mourning by sharing earthly foods' [342](author's italics). Those Giard interviewed, whose husbands or partners were under forty-five, found the men did actually cook, but only for special occasions, when the food was more expensive and elaborate than the daily menu, using '"an inordinate amount of space and an unbelievable number of pots and pan"' (an interviewee). Giard adds tartly: 'And he can stop playing this game as soon as it no longer amuses him: he is not tied to this kitchen work by an implicit contract'[343].

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> *It will definitely be chicken [in] broth tonight… dried on kitchen paper, [the chicken] goes straight in, braising in the sizzling olive oil, with herbs thrown either side as it braises. Love that smell of roasting chicken.. no recipe book here – just use what I find. Always the same, always different…. in it all goes, no veggies to crunch on, no rewards for the cook because of the fear of breaking another tooth. And no wine.. we've run out of 'ordinary' wine.."*

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[342] Giard in De Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 168, 169.
[343] Giard in De Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 219.

Giard's vivid, honest, phenomenological account of her own bodily, affective, gestural, and sensual journey to becoming an accidental cook, and how that influenced her choice and conduct of research is a delight to read and a model of phenomenological research, combining a bricolage of viewpoints, styles and methods, first-person and third-person narratives. Having studiously avoided learning to cook or doing cooking through her teenage years in her determination to have a 'real' profession – 'I refused this women's work because no one ever offered it to my brother' - 'I still regarded as elementary, conventional, and pedestrian (and therefore a bit stupid) the feminine *savoir-faire* that presided over buying food, preparing it and organizing meals' - she was amazed to discover that she actually had imbibed, quite unconsciously, skills and practices from watching her mother and grandmother cooking.

> 'My childhood gaze had seen and memorized certain gestures, and my sense memory had kept track of certain tastes, smells, and colors. I already knew the sounds: the gentle hiss of simmering water, the sputtering of melting meat drippings, and the dull thud of the kneading hands. A recipe or an inductive word sufficed to arouse a strange anamnesis whereby ancient knowledge and primitive experiences were reactivated in fragments of which I was the heiress and guardian without wanting to be. I had to admit that I too had been provided with a woman's knowledge and that it had crept into me, slipping past my mind's surveillance. It was something that came to me from my body and that integrated me into the great corps of women of my lineage, incorporating me into their anonymous ranks…. I had been invested with the secret, tenacious pleasure of *doing-cooking'* [344] (author's italics).

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[344] Giard in De Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 151-153.

But Giard does not focus only on the pleasure to be gained by cooking. She is too aware of the burden it becomes, conscious or otherwise, when the gender distinctions of society rigidly bind women in the home and the kitchen. Recognizing her place in this long line of anonymous women, 'ceaselessly doomed to both housework and the creation of life, women excluded from public life and the communication of knowledge', Giard does not rail against the current mores but resolves to keep their memory alive, in the manner of her writing an 'impoverished writing', by

> '...recording the ordinary practices so often regarded as insignificant... the fleeting and unpretentious ways of operating that are often the only place of inventiveness available to the subject... I have dreamed of practicing an impoverished writing, that of a *public writer* who has no claim to words, whose name is erased. Such writing targets its own destruction and repeats, in its own way, that humble service to others for whom these illustrious women (no one know their names, strength, or courage anymore) represented for generations basic gestures always strung together and necessitated by the interminable repetition of household tasks performed in the succession of meals and days, with attention given to the body of others'[345].

In their very ordinariness and humility, the Kitchen Nation women create 'precarious inventions without a language to articulate them; they are bricolages subject to the weight of economic constraints, inscribed in the network of concrete determinations'[346]. This anonymity and humble precariousness of the language of domestic skill is mimicked in the author's own intention not to draw attention to herself as Author with a capital 'A': she wants the subjects of her study to have the accolades for their ingenuity and

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[345] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 153, 154, 155.
[346] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 156.

'tactics'. Giard's narrative wants to do credence to a panoply of aspects: gesture, rhythm, sensation, time and memory all are interwoven in her narrative, as aspects of the domestic skills she calls 'the nourishing arts'.

Gesture, rhythm, time, and memory: the 'nourishing arts'

Giard's prose is deceptively fluent and accurately perceptive, identifying the basis of kitchen skill in gesture, of women as 'gesture trees' like 'Shiva goddesses with a hundred arms', operating with 'a restrained tenderness'. These are the same gestures which she imbibed as a child, unconsciously, by watching her mother and grandmother, until necessity drew them out of her. The gestures she refers to are not just gestures of hands and upper body, but a choreographed movement of the whole body through the domestic space doing cooking and other domestic activities, and outside the home, as in shopping. Gestures are a 'succession of…. steps, repeated and required… inside (preparing, serving, checking food constantly, clearing away, washing up, putting things away) and outside (to the various shops for food) …" then back to the house, arms full of shopping bags" …." I'm just the family packhorse. All I do is carry, carry, carry" and 'inside again (emptying the bags, putting the food away in cupboards and refrigerator, checking the receipts(an interviewee)'. In the phenomenological intertwining of body and mind, Giard questions: 'how to find a word that… includes the movements of the body as well as those of the mind?', noting that cooking is much more than physical skills but also includes the intertwined emotional and intellectual tasks of planning menus and recipes, calculating cooking times, anticipating food in relation to the home residents' routines, improvising when food doesn't turn out well, when an essential ingredient is

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missing, when guests indicate they don't like a particular food, or an unexpected guest arrives, remembering likes and dislikes, and being true to the ways 'Mother' or a significant other made this or that[347].

Gesture in the kitchen grounds rhythm in a concrete, bodily, sensual centre, 'a rhythm that connects us to childhood and to childhood possibilities'[348]. Giard invokes Marcel Mauss' photographic studies of *'body techniques'* (referred to in chapter 1), as the basis of her study of gesture[349]. Gestures may be technical ('defined by its utilitarian aim, its operating intention') or expressive ('generating a feeling or a reaction'). Gestures may be performed with a tool or with the bare hands, e.g. kneading dough, involving the whole body in a rhythmic way, either with the torso stabilized so the arms and hands can move, or the whole body, 'swinging in cadence to the rhythm of successive efforts demanded by the task at hand'[350]. Repetitive gestures and movements are never isolated or static: gesture is dynamic and responsive. As Sheets-Johnstone notes constantly, rhythm and flow characterise gesture: movement is not 'pointillist' but the 'tactile-kinetic-kinesthesia' is a flowing process, movements segueing smoothly into routines as they become over-learned, 'grafted onto the rhythms of the body'[351].

Gesture is part of a whole gamut of *savoir-faire* or 'know-how', in which gestures are adapted, very often without conscious thought, according to the 'conditions of

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[347] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 200.

[348] Highmore, "Homework: Routine, social aesthetics and the ambiguity of everyday life", 2004: 324.

[349] Mauss, 1997: 97 in Giard in de Certeau et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1998: 202.

[350] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988:202.

[351] Sheets-Johnstone, M in Highmore, "Homework: Routine, social aesthetics and the ambiguity of everyday life", 2004: 323.

execution' and 'the obtained results': 'an orderly series of basic actions, coordinated in sequences of variable duration according to the intensity of the effort required, organized on a model learned from others through imitation, reconstituted from memory, or established through trial and error based on similar actions'[352]. The *savoir-faire* of learning to do as it 'always has been done' requires apprenticeship: a relationship that inspires and encourages a desire to mimic and freedom to experiment, and a mentor or model. As Giard notes, 'In the private space of domestic life, far from worldly noises, the Kitchen Women Nation's voice murmurs that it is done this way because it has always been done more or less like that'[353]. Learning to make in the kitchen 'this way' calls for

> 'a basic, humble, and persistent practice that is repeated in time and space, rooted in the fabric of relationships to others and to oneself … a multiple memory: a memory of apprenticeship, of witnessed gesture, and of consistencies' (textures of ingredients), a 'series of techniques [*tours de main*]'.

But not just movement skills: '*doing-cooking*' demands an awareness of timing: 'for a programming mind' to 'calculate preparation and cooking time, insert the various sequences of actions among one another, and set up the order of dishes in order to attain the desired temperature at the right moment'. The senses – smell, taste, sight, sound, kinesthesis - simultaneously come into play with the tumult of mental decision-making: 'judging smells coming from the oven or the saucepan, inventiveness when an ingredient or utensil is missing, improvisation when guests suddenly appear'[354].

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[352] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 202.
[353] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 171.
[354] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 157.

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> *Part of the ritual of cooking is 'clearing the decks' of the dishes from lunch, so that whoever washes up, can jump straight in. This tendency to clear the table, clear the preparation surfaces, clear everything, is inbuilt, instinctive now, perhaps a leftover from my childhood days, a way of making order out of chaos, like a waiter in a restaurant, as everyone left the table….'take a plate with you when you leave the table'.."*

The social context of gesture is people-based memory, language, and relationality, bearing a time-worn and time-honoured status, linked to so many bodies, so many hands and feet, so many mouths, so many intelligences which remain anonymous. Although 'singular' and personally unique to my place and my time, there are broadly social changes in the life of gestures:

> '[g]esture lasts only as long as its utility function, maintained by the thousands of reactualizations of its practitioners…. its life linked to the belief that is invested in it: it must be judged necessary, convenient, operating, beneficial; one must believe in its possible success in order to continue repeating it'[355].

In the past, the seasons stimulated associated practices: 'the necessity of preserving provisions for later, fruits and vegetables for winter, was the cause of a thousand ingenious practices' [356] Modern language evokes resonances with the past, so that the language of 'the hearth' still resonates when it is no longer a fireplace in the modern house: its closest approximation being the symbolism of the hearth in the oil or wood-fired Aga stove. 'When gestures die out, when objects disappear or become immobilized

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[355] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 203.
[356] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 207.

in the darkness of an attic, or in the display window of a museum, words sometimes still subsist, in memory of the bygone past'.[357]

Giard calls cooking a 'vocation' demanding a 'subtle intelligence full of nuances and strokes of genius, a light and lively intelligence that can be perceived without exhibiting itself, in short, *a very ordinary intelligence'*(author's italics). This is intelligence in the most integrated sense of the word, melding non-cognitive gesture, movement and sense, emotional responsiveness with spontaneous decision-making. Deemed to be 'devoid of mystery and grandeur; it 'unfurls in a complex montage of things to be done according to a pre-determined chronological sequence'. And in Giard's final flourish, the cherry on the cake, she notes: 'it haunts the memories of novelists'[358]. Giard's pean of praise for 'culinary activities' and the 'ordinary' cooks who do them is worth quoting in full:

> 'Alimentary habits constitute a domain where tradition and innovation matter equally, where past and present are mixed to serve the needs of the hour, to furnish the joy of the moment, and to suit the circumstance. With their high degree of ritualization and their strong affective investment, culinary activities are for many women of all ages a place of happiness, pleasure, and discovery. Such life activities demand as much intelligence, imagination, and memory as those traditionally held as superior, such as music and weaving. In this sense, they rightly make up one of the strong aspects of ordinary culture'[359].

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[357] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 208.
[358] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988: 157, 158.
[359] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988.

> *How long will it take to assemble moussaka? I had planned this last week when adding up how many meals till I go [on holidays], so no decisions to be made about what to make. It takes 20 minutes in the end, with lamb [in tomato] sauce "I'd prepared earlier" heating in a saucepan on the stove, ratatouille in the freezer which I defrost, and a large potato sliced and cooked in the microwave, which I bother to peel this time – it fits snugly into my hand as I peel from pole to pole, and then thinly slice – grated cheese on a layer of natural yoghurt (one of Jamie Oliver's trick) and into the oven. Ready twelves minutes later, the smell and taste invite the company of a glass of red wine...I've finished and washed my dishes before he returns from his meeting.. He enjoys his moussaka and has a glass of wine, too".*

Tools, techne and poiesis

Present-day cooks may still hold on to their 'original' (primary) tools – the knife that cuts these vegetables just so, the peeler that fits into my hand, the relationship with the tool expressing a direct vector of action, energy, and *savoir-faire*. Tools may be used for tasks they were not made for, enabling intuitive leaps of function: 'tools used in certain ways organize this imaginative experience and with productive results'[360]. Giard bemoans the disappearance of the cook as 'artisan... in love with the worked matter', the 'making-do' and creating with what she has to hand of *poiesis*[361]. Technology, the relationship of human beings with tools and machines, is disputed territory. Ingold traces the trajectory

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[360] Sennett, *"The Craftsman",* 2008: 212, 184 -189.
[361] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1988:212.

from tool to machine, where the guidance of the 'working point' of the one using the tool or machine moves from immediate to remote, echoing both Marx and Lefebvre in reflecting on technology as the move from 'the personal to the impersonal'. In Ingold's account, the classical association of '*techne*: skill' associated with *'mekhane:* tools' in which the skilled practitioners used manually or bodily operated devices to assist them, has changed to the modern situation in which knowledge is divorced from lived experience, and 'the machine has come to signify the independence of technical operation from human sensibility', the humans mere 'appendages to the lifeless mechanism of the factory'[362] [363]. Other accounts of the crucial importance of the evolutionary development of human hand skills give detailed analyses of the 'specialist' skills of car mechanics, goldsmiths, puppeteers, climbers, magicians, therapists, musicians and surgeons, but fail to mention skills and tool-use in cooking, apart from illustrations demonstrating different types of grip [364] [365] [366]. With electrical tools, the immediate relationship with matter is lost: to Giard, the cook becomes 'the unskilled spectator', although I would argue that even in this 'secondary' or distanced relationship with matter that using electrical equipment brings, there is still *savoir-faire* and gestures associated with their use to be learned, and although mediated, contact with the material remains a characteristic throughout of making-do in cooking.

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[362] Marx, 1930:451 in Ingold, "*Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*", 2011: 316, 317, 332.

[363] Ingold, "*The Perception of The Environment*", 2000: 291.

[364] Napier, "*Hands*", 1993.

[365] Tallis, "*The Hand: A Philosophical Inquiry into Human Hands*", 2003.

[366] Wilson, "*The Hand*", 1998: 119, 133.

My attempt at dhansak [in my daughter's kitchen] yesterday was not my best. Not knowing where knives, cutting boards, cutlery and ingredients were, and the struggle to find things in a rather haphazard kitchen, made my movements clumsy and uncoordinated and affected the result. Nevertheless, it was welcomed as a winter warmer, as is my offer to cook some more the next two mornings. They decided on one of my signature dishes, which I haven't made for a very long time – potato pie. I sallied forth this morning for the first time since being here… my sense of how much 'ordinary' things cost here is skewed – it all seems much more expensive here…

Vegetable peelers respond to their user's grip, and this one is not mine, but it works in a fashion, and I know where to find it now, with the wooden spoon and the knives I need… and the ingredients I need. Confidence returns. My movements are smoother, less clumsy… I offer to clean tomorrow and make shepherd's pie, an offer greeted with enthusiasm. I shall have to buy more potatoes".

'Making the earth livable'

'*Doing-cooking'* is just one of the 'nourishing arts' exercised in the home which has 'profoundly' changed but the human need remains. The movement away from family roots, from buying locally, seasonally or storing in bulk, from cooking 'from scratch' to using convenience foods, and the use of more electrical equipment has entailed a 'profound reworking of culinary knowledge, a distancing of tradition…. the nourishing arts have come down to us from the depths of the past, immobile in appearance in the

short term, but profoundly re-worked in reality over the long term'[367]. Yet Giard's summary of '*doing-cooking*' as one of the 'nourishing arts' remains apposite, even if the women (or men) doing the cooking are just preparing beans on toast.

> 'But the everyday work in kitchens remains a way of unifying matter and memory, life and tenderness, the present moment and the abolished past, invention and necessity, imagination and tradition – tastes, smells, colors, flavors, shapes, consistencies, actions, gestures, movements, people and things, heat, savoring, spices and condiments…Good cooks are never sad or idle – they work at fashioning the world, at giving birth to the joy of the ephemeral; they are never finished celebrating festivals for the adults and the kids, the wise and the foolish, the marvelous reunions of men and women who share room (in the world) and board (around the table). Women's gestures and women's voices that make the earth livable'[368].

Time in motion and timelessness: an 'accidental' definition of the everyday

Time is a thread which has been woven into this whole narrative of the everyday, from the time aspect of movement itself as kinaesthesia, to notions of 'flow' and use of the term 'routines'. Strangely, time and timelessness are also crucial aspects of John Dewey's 'accidental' definition of 'the aesthetic of the everyday'. Dewey's publication of *Art and Aesthetics* in 1934 was a landmark publication in the post-Kantian, post-*Kulturkritik* clarification of what was art and what was not. Dewey specifically set out to make a distinction between the 'refined' aspects of life, and the ordinary or everyday. In doing

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[367] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1998: 222.
[368] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2",* 1998: 222.

so, Highmore notes, by contrasting the everyday (*not '*aesthetic') with what he deemed 'aesthetic', Dewey unwittingly and 'accidentally' defines the aesthetics of everyday life. While wishing to contextualise artworks and to restore something of the original Baumgartenian sense of aesthetics as applying to a sensibility towards the whole of life experience taking both the viewer and viewed into account, Dewey continues to reiterate the commonly-held distinction between art and non-art: between '"refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday event, doings and sufferings that are universally recognized as constitute experience"'[369]. According to Dewey, the 'aesthetic experience' category really only applies to 'stand-out' or intense experiences. Clarifying his earlier statement, Dewey goes on:

> 'Things happen, but they are neither definitely included nor decisively excluded; we drift. We yield according to external pressure or evade and comprise. There are beginning and cessations, but no genuine initiations and conclusions. One thing replaces another but does not absorb it and carry it on. There is experience, but so slack and discursive that it is not an experience. Needless, to say, such experiences are anaesthetic'[370].

The timelessness, lack of 'formation', vagaries of concentration and attention and temporal irresolution of the everyday which Dewey describes as 'drift', 'slack' or 'anaesthetic' seem very accurate. As Highmore explains,

> 'precisely at the moment when Dewey is busy excluding the kind of experiences that seem characteristically routine, just at the moment when he demands that we reserve aesthetics for those experiences that are more fully formed, he

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[369] Dewey 1934: 3 in Highmore, "Homework: Routine, social aesthetics and the ambiguity of everyday life", 2004:315.
[370] Dewey 1934: 50 in Highmore, "Homework: Routine, social aesthetics and the ambiguity of everyday life", 2004: 316.

himself seems to find a way of producing an aesthetics of routine. I cannot think of many better descriptions of the experience of everyday routine than those offered by Dewey…'slack'… seems eminently suited to the diffuse consciousness of routine… similarly 'drift'… the picking up and letting go of concentration… Dewey beautifully articulates the impossibility of finding an origin to routine: the way routine and habit creep up on you, the way you can never locate that moment when an activity became routine'[371].

Time is intimately related to rhythm and rhythms to routines. Routines are an expression of macro- and micro-rhythms: micro-rhythms of lived bodily experience in the home interplaying with the rhythms of the cosmos – the lunar calendar, the seasons, the movements of the stars and sun, sometimes working in synchronicity, sometimes jarring with each other. Highmore quotes Lefebvre and Regulier in linking the rhythms of the everyday to the wider world, or cosmos, and like de Certeau, finds a disjunct between modernity and lived experience now, and how he believes premodern life was lived.

'Everyday life is shot through and cut across by the larger rhythms of life and the cosmos: days and nights, months and seasons and mores specifically still, biological rhythms. In everyday life, this results in constant interaction between these rhythms and repetitive processes linked with homogenous time… [modernity] redirects[s] and exploits[s] the rhythmic capacities of the body… [resulting in] non-synchronicity between the cyclical rhythms of the body and the linear rhythms of some routines… [bringing] stress, illness and frustration… [because] crucially, technological modernization is only interested in the bodily capacities that it can profitably exploit' [372].

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[371] Highmore, "Homework: Routine, social aesthetics and the ambiguity of everyday life", 2004: 316.
[372] Highmore 1984: 190 in Highmore, "Homework: Routine, social aesthetics and the ambiguity of everyday life", 2004: 322.

While I recognize the dangers of contemporary living a 'virtual life' in front of a screen or a box which excludes the vicissitudes of the world outside may well lead to dissociation from the seasons and biorhythms of embodied living, as occurred during the pandemic, there may be both stress and solace in routines or their disruption. Highmore finds 'Non-synchronicity in bodily rhythms with technological or temporal demands may also bring 'reminiscence and nostalgia… reminiscence and stress are linked because they both perform implied critiques of modern linear rhythms simply by reminding the body of other possible rhythms…. Stress, frustration and involuntary memory poke holes in the smooth surface of the present: they do so by insistently invoking history (a history of the body) and disturbing the fake continuity of the present'[373]. Yet the micro-rhythms of routine can become what Bernice Martin calls a 'typical magic trick' allowing displacement of stress. She notes in her discussion of women's domestic power, carrying on with my earlier quote from her article,

> 'Various emotional or family problems may be chronic and insoluble… but if one can displace the locus of the chaos on to the kitchen mess, then there is solace and a kind of substitute solution in restoring order in the minor sphere which, unlike the site of the real problem, is genuinely under one's control'[374].

Aesthetics of the everyday continues to struggle with the 'ambiguity' and 'formlessness' and the unresolved temporality of routine, and the valorizing of re-presentation. 'Routine sits ambiguously on the borders of form and formlessness'[375]. The 'regular chaos' of daily life makes the imposition of form tricky and artificial, with the

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[373] Highmore, "Homework: Routine, social aesthetics and the ambiguity of everyday life", 2004: 324,325.
[374] Martin, "'Mother wouldn't Like it': Housework as Magic*", 1986: 23.
[375] Highmore, "Homework: Routine, social aesthetics and the ambiguity of everyday life", 2004: 307.

impossibility of a particular form being adequate to the task of 'standing in' as a symbol for the multiple forms of everyday life but also by having the everyday having no beginning or end other than that marked by sleep. No one day of my days is the same as my previous day, or your day today, or any other body's everyday.

The 'haunting' of modernist literature by the everyday

Portraying the 'nourishing arts' in 'impoverished writing' meant for Giard as a sociologist (and a feminist) an array of 'humble' words and phenomenological methods to approach the task. Teasingly, Giard noted how the everyday 'haunted' novelists and it is to some examples of their 'polyphony' and indirect phenomenological techniques that I turn for my final examples of the portrayal of everyday life. Despite my everyday being unlike anybody else's, reading modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce brings shafts of recognition of this 'haunting' by the everyday. In examining their rejection of realism, as the predecessors of philosophical and sociological analysis of the everyday, Liesl Olson makes the bold claim that the 'movement from the everyday in literature to the everyday as a theoretical subject occurs when literature gives up on it', that is, when modernist literature abandons its attempt to represent the everyday in the form of plays, novels, film, and other media.

> 'Theorists like Lefebvre begin to write about the everyday when it becomes a question of whether the novel or postmodern writing more generally can represent the everyday through the conventions of realism. For instance, *Ulysses* attempts to catalog all facets of ordinary life while at the same time embracing the impossibility of such an enterprise, the impossibility of preserving the immediacy of the ordinary as o*rdinary.* The extraordinary energy of much

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modernist experimentation is fueled by the problem of representation as a kind of inevitable transformation'[376].

Michael Sheringham suggests: 'Lefebvre opens *Everyday Life and the Modern World* (1968) – an abridgement of the three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947-1982)- by suggesting that James Joyce's *Ulysses* achieves something for which his work also strives: ''Joyce's narrative rescues, one after the other, each facet of the quotidian from anonymity''[377]. Joyce saw his novel as '"encyclopedic" … calling attention both to the material thingness of what we encounter when we enter a room or walk down the street…. in an environment chock-full of everyday *stuff*"' *[378]* (author's italics).

The structure behind *Ulysses* of '"nothing happening twice"' or the '"pattern"' that Woolf sees beneath what she calls '"the cotton wool of daily life"' is 'always counter-balanced by a valued interest in the diffuse and messy particularities of that life'[379]. As Woolf writes it, the everyday is full of '"stuff"' and everyday errands; lists of things, the repetitive routine of the day and the week in the activities of meals, posting letters, reading the paper, sewing. Contrary to Beckett, who saw routine and habit as '"a compromise effected between the individual and his environment… the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit"'[380], for Woolf, 'routine and habit, enacted by linguistic repetition, become more important than heightened or chronologically ordered events', despite, or perhaps intended to create, the boredom such repetition provokes in the

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[376] Olson, "Everyday Life Studies: A Review", 2011: 176.
[377] Sheringham in Olson, "Everyday Life Studies: A Review", 2011: 176.
[378] Joyce, in Olson, *"Modernism and the Ordinary"*, 2009: 6.
[379] Olson, *"Modernism and the Ordinary",* 2009: 5.
[380] Beckett in Olson, "Virginia Woolf's 'cottonwool of daily life",2003, 50 n39.

reader[381]. 'While Woolf sought to remove the heavy furniture of the realist and naturalist novel in order to render the inner workings of the mind…. she knew the modern novel could not flee from the external world of everyday things, from "the common objects of daily prose, the bicycle and the omnibus"'[382]. The bridge between the mind and the apparently, common 'real' was to be found in the writing of 'the things people always do', 'repeated acts and habits'[383]. Woolf was committed to including '"the facts and things"' such as the experience of the impact of the World Wars, but not the minutiae of subjects such as appearance, manner of dress, and occupation (which she criticised the Edwardians for emphasizing) while recognising the 'elusiveness of the ordinary that facts embody'. Writing in her essay 'Phases of Fiction', Woolf says,

> '"The novel is the only form of art which seeks to make us believe that it is giving the full and truthful record of the life of a real person. And in order to give that full record of life, not the climax and the crisis but the growth and development of feelings, which is the novelist's aim, he(sic) copies the order of the day, observes the sequence of ordinary things even if such fidelity entails chapters of description and hours of research"'[384]
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For Woolf, and other female authors, for example, Gertrude Stein, who spoke of 'the rhythm of anybody's personality', the repetitive texture of everyday revealed 'character', one aspect of the novel which modernism does not discard[385], and that 'character' was

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[381] Olson, "Virginia Woolf's 'cottonwool of daily life'", 2003:7.

[382] Olson, "Virginia Woolf's 'cottonwool of daily life", 2003: 43, 44, 45.

[383] Olson, "Virginia Woolf's 'cottonwool of daily life'", 2003: 44.

[384] Woolf in Olson, "*Modernism and the Ordinary"*, 2009: 84 n84.

[385] Stein in Olson, "Virginia Woolf's 'cottonwool of daily life'", 2003: 45, 47.

revealed in the insignificant details of the everyday. 'Routine and habit, enacted by repetition, become more important than heightened or significantly ordered events' [386].

Summary of Chapter 3: A complex narrative

I find phenomenological descriptions of concrete lifeworlds draw attention to something of the singularity of individual experience, allowing a greater immediacy, such as the investigations of 'doing-cooking' which Luce Girard entered as part of a wider study of everyday life led by Michel De Certeau. Giard's reflections manage to negotiate opposite poles and tendencies of theory/practice, ideological/real, by using a multiplicity of methods, a bricolage that engages classic interviews with the description of sense, emotions, gesture, values, history, and time, which both Merleau-Ponty and Sheets-Johnstone highlight as 'habitualities' and Sheets-Johnstone as 'tactile-kinesthetic-affective melodies' which give a richer flavour of what De Certeau and his colleagues were investigating. They celebrate ordinary skill rather than focusing on specialized skills such as those of teaching yourself to play jazz on a piano[387], or those of the craftsman[388]. Giard 'weaves the indeterminate cloth of culinary practices within the intimacy of kitchens' with bodies and gestures, memories and emotions evoked by the senses (taste, touch, smell), acknowledging her debt to her professor[389], although even in the more concrete de Certeau, (that is, more concrete than the writings of Lefebvre, whose theory, despite his protestations to the contrary, is conceptually and semantically-focused, with

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[386] Olson, "Virginia Woolf's 'cottonwool of daily life'", 2003: 47.
[387] Sudnow, *"Ways of the Hand"*, 1978.
[388] Sennett, *"The Craftsman"*, 2008.
[389] Giard in de Certeau, M et al, *"The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2"*, 1988: 199.

the sweep of a metalanguage), it is noticeable that the remit of de Certeau's study of the everyday views life in an urban setting outside the home, with his 'spatial practices' describing walking the streets, travelling on a train, maps, tours and boundaries.

My story of the everyday so far brings me to a view of the everyday which is disputed and 'complexified' as to how to frame 'it', how to 'capture' 'it' and how to signify what is thought or understood about 'it'. It is easier to say what 'the everyday' is not, than to gain consensus of what 'it' is. Different schools of philosophical thought frame the everyday in a totalising way, as a kind of 'metanarrative' about human beings, fundamental to all human beings, or find the complete opposite: the everyday as fragmentary, multiple, better described with the word 'heterologies' (which may also, inadvertently, be a 'metanarrative''!). The multiplicities of definition run the risk of any definition so broad as to be useless. Describing the everyday as 'paradoxical' (seemingly self-contradictory) isn't accurate, either. 'Undecidability' or Sandywell's '" equivocal signifier"' do better. No single term 'gets it right'. The sheer multiplicity of every person's singular and unique human experience defeats the game. Time runs through all of these ruminations, and Dewey's 'accidental' descriptors of the everyday as '" slack"', '"drift"' and temporally irresolute are very accurate. But there are also gendered perceptions of time which warrant examination.

Any metaphor, adjective or intellectual notion is going to prove inadequate to the complexity and dynamism of 'real life', its sensuality, mediation by embodied experience including movement, gesture, emotions, feelings, memory, and all of these

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characteristics being very singular and personal. Giving credence to dynamism is not an excuse to be woolly – rather it is an attempt to bring rigour to that which is so often assumed, ignored, or glossed over. This is the work of an artisan or poet, dancer, or athlete, but also the homemaker and the cook. Amongst modern iterations, this is the world of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

Then there is the emphasis on 'defamiliarisation', the process by which the everyday is almost 'forced' to appear to the conscious gaze, whether by speech, expectant silence, angst, an '*aha*' moment of recognition in an aesthetic encounter, or some human (perhaps catastrophic) life event, a process familiar to psychoanalysis or 'mindfulness'. I am uncomfortable with both 'defamiliarisation' which smacks of authoritarianism and unequal power dynamics (a la Freud), or 'mindfulness', which emphasizes intellection, forces my gaze, and could actually interfere with the flow of activities, as indicated in the work of Dreyfus mentioned in chapter 1. I find both processes fail to give full credence to the intrusion and deformation of words on preconscious experience and fail to be nuanced enough to enable deeply socialized emotions and habits to emerge.

There can be no literal, straightforward hermeneutic from the inarticulacy of preconscious experience to the written or spoken word. Words are an asymptote to the bodily experience, which is felt as I stand, sit, or work side by side with the one who is teaching me that skill, whether by the operation of mirror neurones in particular parts of the brain, because I love my teacher or I simply enjoy tasting new things or feeling

new textures, or all of these. If I am uncomfortable with the intrusion of words into bodily experience, I am also uncomfortable with an unthinking realism about the representation of the everyday aesthetically, particularly as evidence of 'resistance', which has been a powerful strand in modernist art practices since the twentieth century.

 The 'everyday as an act of resistance' assumes a coherent, rational, logical self-aware subject, with a capacity to express her autonomy equal to those already within existing nodes of power, able to speak for herself loud enough to resist those in (usually masculinist) power while using a language deemed appropriate enough to be heard. For the majority of 'ordinary' women in global societies as they go about their daily business of growing, storing and making food, supporting a family and keeping their children alive and safe, as they exercise the 'nourishing arts', and make life 'livable', this is absurd. They have no power to resist or amplify their voice: they are too busy or too tired, or both. And the question always needs to be asked: if I speak up (as a white, European, middle-class, educated woman) to validate the significance of my everyday, even within my own society, who do I presume to speak for? How is the everyday materiality of experience being judged? 'Ordinary' people's agency is multiple, often subversive in nuanced and subtle kinds of ways, and here I cede to de Certeau's notion of 'tactics': the 'making-do' or *poiesis* of the ways ordinary people 'wing it', 'making it up as they go along' because 'that's what life does to you', recognizing their interdependency. Perhaps this is resistance after all.

My task of uncovering hidden assumptions about the domestic space and what goes on there, within time's own descriptors and assumptions - linear, predictable, and controlled time as masculine; fragmented, meandering or disjointed time as feminine and within the 'world' has only gone so far – the temporal aspects of the everyday could be explored so much further. This elision of assumptions about time may also be seen in the definitions of skill, and the kind of formulaic assumptions made about gender, tools and technology. These may be: 'complicated machine' + 'heavy-duty' materiality = 'masculine', 'simple' tools + food, textiles, and bodies = feminine' (despite the many machines that women tend – electric kettles, washing machines, fridges, vacuum-cleaners – the list of machines in the contemporary home is endless!). It's time for an examination of feminist theory around domesticity and women.

Chapter 4

Feminist theory, 'flesh', home and me

Introduction

Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford preface their edited volume of feminist epistemology with the significant sentence: 'Feminism's most compelling epistemological insight lies in the connections it has made between knowledge and power'[390]. For feminists knowledge is 'situated' and 'bears the marks of its producers'. There is no distancing of the 'knower' and 'the known', which is the traditional stance of 'objective' knowing, nor does it only include those who are powerful and empowered - white, educated and middle-class male - but also those who are consciously or unconsciously excluded - women, people of colour, people of non-binary or non-heteronormative sexuality, people differently abled. Knowledge is carried by bodies and bodily experience, 'sensory experience… of the subject…who is both seer and seen'- what Merleau-Ponty termed 'flesh'[391]. As I have discussed in a former chapter, and as Gilbert and Lennon show, the phenomenological point of view of 'flesh', as expressed by Merleau-Ponty, is that 'flesh' is what 'the experiencer and the experienced have in common' that 'allows the former to apprehend the latter as other than itself … experience reveals something beyond itself only because it is the experience of creatures themselves situated among

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[390] Lennon and Whitford, *"Knowing The Difference",* 1994: 1.
[391] Lennon, "*Imagination and the Imaginary",* 2015: 30.

such things as equally the objects…This common element is prior to, though presupposed in, any world-making activity in which subjects engage'[392]. My body gives me information about the world because I can move in it – touch it, taste it, see it, move it and move myself in it – and I understand these experiences of 'tactile-kinetic-kinaesthesia' (Sheets-Johnstone) because all of the world has this 'in common' with me, what Merleau-Ponty calls a '"concordant operation… that makes our reactions intelligible"' and "because an other is associated with my relations with them"'[393] [394].

The problem with 'experience'

But in saying that 'knowledge is situated' and 'marks the producer', there is also a hermeneutic issue of interpretation of what this knowledge is meaning to the 'knowledge-producer', and how this 'knowledge' is 'read' by the society in which she is set, something which not only feminism but phenomenology has also attempted to disclose by suggesting how knowledge is bound up with bodily experience. Phenomenological philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had come to similar conclusions as those of feminism, finding Western thought in thrall to a Cartesian binary view which privileged intellect over sensory experience, minds over bodies, action and rationality over passivity and emotionality, and thought over nature. But feminism asks, 'whose bodies? The inherent 'correlation' of women with the 'lesser' of these pairings (to which phenomenological philosophers seemed blind) had become obvious

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[392] Gilbert and Lennon, "*The World, The Flesh and the Subject",* 2005: 32.
[393] Gilbert and Lennon, "*The World, The Flesh and the Subject*", 2005: 33, 43.
[394] Merleau-Ponty in Gilbert and Lennon, "*The World, The Flesh and the Subject* ", 2005: 44.

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to women thinkers as early as Mary Wollstonecraft, in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* 1792, and became increasingly 'problematic, with the female regarded as enmeshed in her bodily existence in a way which makes attainment of rationality questionable. "Women are somehow *more* biological*, more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men"'[395], and hence, more animal, less cognitive, and less rational.

To answer the question of what feminism has to say about 'flesh' and 'bodies', and how phenomenology relates to feminism, I will explore what bodily existence and experience mean to a spectrum of feminist thinkers, and what that exploration means to me. Although it seems to be stating the obvious, I need to find out what feminist thinkers understand about the lived, bodily and everyday domestic skills that I am interested in. Somewhere between the Scylla of 'standpoint' or 'difference' feminism (attempting to justify that which is 'different', 'characteristic' of women), and the Charybdis of post-modern feminism ('woman' is not a monolith') and many other potential rocks on which to shipwreck, I need to find my way through all of these tensions and multiplicities, while holding on the essential feminist insight of fleshly-inscribed, 'womanly' knowing, although the problem of whose knowledge is a 'referential point' remains[396].

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[395] Grosz 1994:14 in Lennon, "Feminist Perspectives on the Body", 2019.
[396] Lennon and Whitford, *"Knowing The Difference"*, 1994: 4.

Second-wave feminism and 'Our Bodies, Our Selves'

My first meaningful introduction to feminism was through the medium of buying and reading from cover to cover the book published by the Boston Women's Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves.* First published in 1970 by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective and originally called that, this book was formative for my understanding of myself and my sexuality as a newly graduated young adult, negotiating my first encounters with the secular world after growing up in a fundamentalist religious cult. In my family's religious sect, sexuality and gender were supposed to be clear categories of difference, defined by traditionally exegeted biblical statements and controlled by the male elders; homosexuality was doomed in the eyes of God, there was no such thing as bisexuality, and sexual relationships were legitimate only within marriage. Marriage and childbearing initiated womanhood and defined girls' identities. Married women were meant to be subject to their husbands within a doctrine of male headship derived from Christ's (gendered) headship of the Church. As Mary McClintock Fulkerson says:

> 'As a dominant ordering of reality, compulsory heterosexuality regulates pleasure and bodies: it cuts up reality into two human identities and defines how they may experience…. Desire is channelled and defined by the sexes it connects and these sexes are two – male and female. Any thinking about desire and human relations is locked into this grid; any subject which does not conform is disciplined'[397].

My body and myself as a human body, was and is, all mixed up with sex, gender, marriage, religion and faith, but most of all, with 'patriarchy', new to me in 1974. In one way, 'second-wave' feminism gave me back my body or legitimised my discovery of what

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[397]Fulkerson, 1999:193 in Beattie, "The Theological Study of Gender", 2014: 37.

I was finding to be my body as 'mine'. But there were so many questions: was this all there was to "me" and how had 'patriarchy' described and circumscribed, 'disciplined' the 'me' I thought of as 'me? I wondered how much of me would have to be jettisoned if feminism was going to change my patriarchally defined values and views. The impact of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* continues fifty years later, in multiple translations, in women taking control of their bodies, their fertility and reproductive rights, their health and their relationships, as it did for me. My hope in this chapter is to discover how deconstructing power dynamics in my life, and suggesting an alternative way of perceiving myself and others, feminism creates an alternative framework to examine my bodily-mediated subjectivity and what might be the limits of this framework. To do that, I will have to look at terms that are foundational to feminist thinking: 'patriarchy', 'gender', 'sex', 'sexuality' and 'femininity', and with these terms, bodies and bodily experience.

The default position of 'patriarchy'

In considering contextually what operates on my body from birth to death as a gendered person, feminist theory asks what conditions prompt women to be as they are, what supports womanhood and what denies or denigrates it. The feminist answer is 'patriarchy'. In the Marxist sense, patriarchy is an ideology in that it is the prevailing social practice 'by which men constitute the dominant social group' with masculinity as 'the dominant social practice. Under patriarchy, this masculine perspective is presented as universal, and thus invisible as a perspective…. it is so successful ideologically that it

has become the default perspective of the subordinate group as well'[398]. The latter, default perspective constitutes 'androcentricity', a subset of patriarchy, in which the feminine perspective is subsumed under the masculine perspective and the male speaks for all of humankind, as in use of the word 'mankind' for all of humankind. As Chambers notes, there are three senses in which feminism is also an ideology in the Marxist sense, and three in which it is not. In the first sense, 'it i) presents an analysis of how things are, it interprets reality…; ii) it emerges from a particular social group: the perspective of women by women…, and iii) it has an inescapably reforming nature – it wants things to change'. Feminism is *not* an ideology in that ' it is i) not mainstream; ii) not hegemonic – it doesn't represent the dominant group; and iii) feminism is diverse, neither dogmatic nor pre-determined, which makes definition difficult'[399]. As bell hooks shows, a 'central problem within feminist discourse' is 'our inability to either arrive at a consensus of opinion about what feminism is or accept definitions that could serve as points of unification'[400] , yet this diversity is viewed by feminists themselves as a sign of creativity and response to the singularity of each woman's experience.

Defining 'woman'

'What is a woman?' is the title of a famous essay by Toril Moi (1999) which highlights a central difficulty in feminism: how to define a woman outside of masculinist categories, and, recognizing that 'woman' is not monolithic in character, what to do if women's

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[398] Chambers, "Feminism", 2013: 1.
[399] Chambers, "Feminism", 2013: 1.
[400] hooks, "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance", 2014: 4, 5.

experience is so diverse? If the central tenet of feminism is that the dominant mode of existence for women everywhere needs to change, yet even now, almost seventy years after the first 'wave' labelled a wave, (which ignores important predecessors such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) or the International Alliance of Women founded in Berlin in 1904), fault lines appear when the means by which that change should occur of change is raised. The very diversity which characterises the feminist attempt to address all women, regardless of ethnicity, culture or sexuality, while remaining sensitive to their cultural context means it is not possible, helpful or even logical to describe 'woman' as a single entity. Successive movements of feminist change have queried their predecessors' certainties and actions. Who is speaking on behalf of whom? What discourse is being constructed or deconstructed? The possibilities for discourse and deconstruction, dissent and disagreement, between activists and academics, radical feminists and conservative feminists, queer and heterosexual, queer and transsexual feminists, Christian and Muslim feminists, Christian and Buddhists, Christians and pagan feminists, are endless.

Black activists in the era of the second wave of feminism in the US in the 1970s had already felt and expressed their frustration and sense of being excluded by their lived experiences from those expressed by the majority of visible (white) feminist activists. They knew that the actions of black abolitionists, advocating voting rights for black men, had galvanised white middle-class women to protest as suffragettes, and that civil rights activists had become a similar prompt for second-wave feminists in the 1970s. Betty Friedan claimed to speak for all women when she wrote in *The Feminine Mystique* (1983)

about the isolation and alienation that housewives experienced, and the difficulties

women had of accessing satisfying work and being accepted as peers in the workplace.

The 'woman' whose full humanity was being affirmed, whose experiences were being

validated and given scholarly authority, was, in the eyes of many critics, white, liberal,

middle class, and heterosexual[401].Black, Latino and immigrant women were rendered

invisible by terms being used, based on assumptions of freedom of choice, that did not

relate to their lived experience of race and class. 'A wide range of contextualized feminist

voices soon began to speak from positions of otherness in ways which undermined the

concept of 'woman' as a singular theoretical category and political subject'[402]. Black

theorists felt that by describing themselves as 'womanist' (Alice Walker's term in a story

published in 1979) their Black identity could be understood for what it was, rather than

being subsumed into 'white' feminism, viewed with suspicion if not hostility.

'Womanism' continues to define itself against Black feminism and feminism generally, as

having the five overarching characteristics of being 'anti-oppression, vernacular,

nonideological, communitarian, and spiritualized'[403].

With the urgent need to devise laws to create and protect women's rights (which assume

a common, reproducible identity of 'woman') on equal pay, adequate childcare and

maternity leave, successive waves of feminist thought and writing have picked away at

the problem of representation; of generalising from the particular, of finding a common

core of the experience of 'being a woman', at reacting towards any 'metanarrative' of

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[402] King in Beattie, "The Theological Study of Gender", 2014: 35.
[403] Phillips, *"The Womanist Reader"*, 2006: xxiv.

what 'woman' is, by distinguishing concepts of 'sex' (the 'material givenness') from the culturally coded and symbolic constructs applied in and through language surrounding feminine (and masculine) bodies which constitute 'gender'[404]. Toril Moi notes that feminist theory's 'craving for generality' has meant theory has become more and more abstract and dissociated from concrete experience and the 'power of the particular case' in its search to be 'complete' and exhaustive. She advocates 'thinking through examples' using the principles of Stanley Cavell and the later Wittgenstein, to 'escape from the logic of representation – the logic of inclusionary/exclusionary – that dominates feminist theory today'. Her response is 'Ordinary Language Philosophy': a philosophy which uses ordinary language 'to find its audience' which 'it does not take for granted… more attentive to particulars, to individual experience, more attuned to the way we actually use language, more open to the questions that arise in actual human lives, than standard attempts to "do theory"[405]. I will discuss Moi's proposal in more detail later.

Gender as 'discourse'

Gender as a social construction based on the 'psychosexual neutrality of humans', or the newborn 'as a clean slate' at birth. Natal gender neutrality was the basis of Judith Butler's arguments in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), in which she proposed that what was considered 'real' and 'natural' arose out of 'repetitive practices, coercions and exclusion, both individually and culturally'[406]. In Butler's argument, gender

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404 Beattie, "The Theological Study of Gender", 2015:34.
405 Moi, "Thinking Through Examples", 2015: 191, 192, 195.
406 Rodemeyer, "Feminism, Phenomenology, and Hormones", 2014: 184.

divisions of masculine/feminine and heterosexual/homosexual are 'prior significations' 'circumscribed by acceptable discourse and by what is performed… Language (or discourse) … limits or guides how bodies appear'[407]. Natal gender neutrality had been accepted by many feminist theorists in the 1970s as foundational in the deconstruction of gender, with 'sex' specifically related to external genitalia visible or designated as such from birth. Explicitly proposed in articles and a book by John Money, a psychologist studying transsexuals, who purportedly showed that a biologically born male (David Reimer) could be raised successfully as a female, these claims were later demonstrated to be false[408]. Butler revised her position on 'psychosexual neutrality' with a discussion of David Reimer's case in a subsequent book, *Undoing Gender* (2004). In Butlerian philosophy, gender as biologically determined is rejected, and sexual differences, including assumptions about 'natural heterosexuality' are deemed to be socially constructed, seen in fluid performative bodily action and self-perception, but largely constructed from birth via language as 'discourse' in 'a negotiation, a struggle, a way of dealing with historical constraints and making new realities… an ongoing assignment of gender'[409]. Butler takes up Simone de Beauvoir's' view that 'One is not born, but becomes, a woman'[410]. Women's subjectivity is produced by the narratives that are created around them from birth, by the dominant masculinist myths naturalised in social performance according to long-prescribed 'scripts' which uphold the power dynamics rendering white, heterosexual, European males as the more powerful 'normal', and all

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[407] Butler, "*Bodies That Matter* ", 1993:30.
[408] Fausto-Sterling, *"Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World",* 2012: 43-49.
[409] Gleeson, "Judith Butler: 'We need to rethink the category of woman', *The Guardian,* 8 September 2021.
[410] De Beauvoir in 1949/1982:295 in Lennon, "Feminist Perspectives on the Body", 2019.

'the others' as lesser or abnormal: women, black, brown and Asian people, those with differently abled bodies, gay people, transgender people, and people who don't conform to binary genders, all of whom are socially penalised for being 'other'[411]. Feminism's role from a discursive point of view is to deconstruct these 'scripts' and highlight the incipient inequality due to social and cultural reasons. Disrupting gender inequality is perceived by those in power as 'unnatural' and 'unjust' because of what Chambers calls the 'fetishism' of 'free choice' in Western liberal societies, in which every individual, whether male, female or otherwise, is assumed to have the perspicacity, power, education and agency to make choices surrounding gender in all its social ramifications, although these assumptions will not be explicit because of assumptions of male dominance and female passivity as 'natural'[412].

Butler's notion of discourse highlights how mediated human bodies are, and how such aspects of 'flesh' and bodies as gender and sex are assigned and created by the societies in which they are set. Yet, in defending her argument and proposing political change, Butler's dense prose style excludes the very people she wishes to defend (and to reach?) from understanding her point of view, although she has always asserted her theory is derived from the soil of her activism in defence of the freedom to critique 'heteronormativity' and women's rights to subjective autonomy[413]. Its very abstraction and intellection dissociate the gritty earthiness and the material nature of the flux of 'flesh' itself and my understanding of it from text, appearing to render her writing as

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[411] Lennon, "Feminist Perspectives on the Body", 2019.
[412] Chambers, "Feminism" in Freeden and Steers, "*The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies",* 2013.
[413] Gleeson, "Judith Butler: 'We need to rethink the category of woman'", *The Guardian,* 8 September 2021.

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'immaterial', a claim she herself picks up and responds to, in *Bodies That Matter*. 'What about the materiality of the body, Judy?... an effort... to recall me to a bodily life that cannot be theorized away... for surely bodies live and eat; eat and sleep; feel pain and pleasure; endure illness and violence; and these facts... cannot be dismissed as mere construction'[414]. Butler's response to this critique now is to describe what she is theorizing as all part of what she calls the process of 'materialisation', by which she acknowledges the 'instability... and restlessness... of identity formation [as] always uprooted', such that 'what we count as material, as nature, as given is not something to which we have unmediated access', and 'materialisation' 'stabilises over time... to produce the effect of boundary,... fixity' [415].

Both Michel Foucault and Judith Butler rejected phenomenology 'on methodological grounds', stating that experience is 'already discursive' because of being language-saturated from the moment of birth (if not for the newborn, then for those who constitute her social context). There is no space to enter into a discussion of the work of either, significant as both have been for successive generations of feminists and others. But in rejecting the notion of 'experience', Rodemeyer finds that they 'take up their own kind of positivism'[416]. From a discursive stance, the very singularity of my particular experience is rejected in the sweep of 'genealogies' of language and behaviour which produces a kind of 'metanarrative' of its own in which individual experiences and

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[414] Butler, 1993: ix in Lennon, "Feminist Perspectives on the Body", in Zalta, "*The Stanford Encyclopaedia Online*" 2019.

[415] Butler, 1993: 9 in Lennon, "Feminist Perspectives on the Body", in Zalta, "*The Stanford Encyclopaedia Online*," 2019.

[416] Rodemeyer, "Husserl and queer theory", 2017: 312.

particularities are diminished and lost. Yet, Rodemeyer quotes Foucault's own debt to

Husserl and finds in Butler's notion of performativity the roots in phenomenology,

erased in her later work[417], 'a tendency to subsume the body or leave it behind'[418]. There

are no pure concepts or purely unmediated bodies, and 'the body exceeds any attempts

to capture it in discourse'[419], yet in describing bodies within discourse, it is as if the lived

materiality of my flesh leaches away under the weight of the focus of the discussion

taking place at a level other than the intimate, personal, local or situated.

Feminism and phenomenology

 In the past, many feminists rejected the framework of phenomenology as first proposed

by Husserl, on several grounds, primarily for his blindness to gender and race, his elision

of female into male as the universal subject, appearing to ignore the contextual aspects

of the constitution of 'the self', and Husserl's lack of awareness of the foundational

nature of the mother-child relationship in the development of the child's coherent self.

Husserl's use of 'normal' and 'abnormal' is also, unsurprisingly, problematic to a modern

reader[420]. From a contemporary feminist perspective, Husserl's discussions of

intersubjectivity appear to be almost naïve in their unawareness of power differentials,

> 'assuming groups of rational, apparently friendly, subjects who share openly and
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> honestly with each other their perspectives on the objective world…. people who
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> are not invested in power relations, who aren't worried about what they might

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[417] Kall, 2015 in Rodemeyer, "Husserl and queer theory", 2017: 313.

[418] Rodemeyer, "Husserl and queer theory", 2017: 313.

[419] Lennon, "Feminist Perspectives on the Body" in Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia Online",* 2019.

[420] Stoller, "Expressivity and Performativity: Merleau-Ponty and Butler", 2017: 335.

gain or lose by sharing, and who generally are equal in the sense of physical ability and political/social status'[421].

One feminist who from early in her career found phenomenological methods an apposite home for understanding women's experience of physical activity, pregnancy, menstruation, having breasts, wearing clothes and home-making is Iris Marion Young (1949-2006), most well-known for her essay 'Throwing Like a Girl' (1980). Young used the Husserlian or Merleau-Pontian methodology of 'reduction' and '*epoché*' in a much looser, broader sense, concentrating on the 'primordial structures of existence', locating subjectivity in the body 'as the first locus of intentionality …. always layered with social and historical meaning and not some primitive matter prior to or underlying economic relations or cultural meanings'[422]. In 'Lived Body vs. Gender: Reflections on Social Structure and Subjectivity' in the same volume, Young notes approvingly Moi's argument for 'existential phenomenology':

> 'the concept of the lived body, unlike the concept of sex, is not biologistic… [but] can bring the physical facts of different bodies into theory without the reductionistic and dichotomous implications of the category of "sex"… The idea of the lived body thus does the work the category "gender" has done, but better and more… categories of gender, race, ethnicity, etc are shorthand for a set of structures that position people… that [do not] add together constitute individual identities… The individual person lives out her unique body in a sociohistorical context of the behaviour and expectations of others, but she does not have to worry about constituting her identity from a set of generalized "pop-beads" strung together'[423].

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[421] Rodemeyer, L, "Husserl and queer theory", 2017: 317.
[422] Young, "Introduction: *On Female Body Experience"*, 2005: 7.
[423] Young, "Lived Body vs. Gender: Reflections on Social Structure and Subjectivity" in "*On Female Body Experience"*, 2005: 17, 18.

The 'lived body' concept allows the particular 'constraints and possibilities' of my experience to be acknowledged in a way that the categories of gender, race, ethnicity and social class do not, being 'shorthand' for sociological groupings. In answer to her own question, 'Is the lived body enough?', Young finds 'gender' as 'an attribute' of social structures, rather than of individuals, in her examination of gender intersecting with policy, such that individuals find themselves '*passively* grouped according to these 'structural relations, in ways too impersonal to ground identity'(author's italics). 'Gender structures' tend to be grouped around 'three basic axes of identity: a sexual division of labour, normative heterosexuality, and…. gendered hierarchies of power'[424]. In Young's view, gender should not be dispensed with as a category, but is better served in 'confining its use to analysis of social structures for the purpose of understanding certain specific relations of power, opportunity and resource distribution'. Gender is then understood as a 'personal experiential response' with all the 'constraints and possibilities' that 'their positioning in the social structures… offers and 'not as a set of attributes that individuals have in common'[425]. To those who followed her, Young's work in writing on structural injustices, social inequality and political policies affecting women nationally and globally was an extension of her phenomenological critique of 'illegitimate oppression of group differences'[426].

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[424] Young, "Lived Body vs. Gender: Reflections on Social Structure and Subjectivity" in "*On Female Body Experience*", 2005: 22.
[425] Young, "Lived Body vs. Gender: Reflections on Social Structure and Subjectivity", in "*On Female Body Experience* ", 2005: 25, 26.
[426] Scheuermann, "In Remembrance: Iris Marion Young", 2005: 688.

In 'Throwing Like a Girl', Young assumed that 'at the most basic level, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's account of the relation of the lived body to its world…. applies to any human existence in a general way'[427]. As Marguerite la Caze notes, 'This basic level is contrasted with more specific modalities of existence, such as the difference between women's and men's situation… in which the 'I can' is limited and girls and women make less use of space and keep their limbs closer to their body than boys and men… [evidencing] Young's hunch that women have a basic doubt concerning bodily abilities'[428]. Writing in retrospect twenty-five years later on from the original publication of*'Throwing Like a Girl'*, although it's an account that has stood the test of time in terms of accuracy of description for both men and women, Young's self-criticism reaffirms her description of '"femininity as contradiction" 'drawn from Simone de Beauvoir, but refuses a Beauvoirian 'dichotomy' between nature(women) and culture (men), finding '"femininity… a specific modality that is presented as an experience of victimization"'[429]. The Beauvoirian 'dichotomy denigrates embodiment and nurturing activity, and celebrates abstraction and fabrication'. Transcendence and immanence don't have to be in opposition, nor does 'the body's thingness distract from active transcendence through the body'[430]. In her self-criticism, Young finds in her earlier work an acceptance of 'equivalence between the values of universal humanity and a masculine role' and too great a readiness to accept 'an instrumentalist model of action as universal and fundamental'[431]. Young suggests projects that might 'interrogate the adequacy of

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[427] Young, "*On Female Body Experience",* 2005: 144.
[428] La Caze, "Iris Marion Young's Legacy", 2014: 432.
[429] Young in la Caze, "Iris Marion Young's Legacy", 2014: 432.
[430] Young, "On Female Body Experience: Twenty Years Later", 1998: 288.
[431] Young, 1998: 288 in la Caze, "Iris Marion Young's Legacy", 2014: 432.

Merleau-Ponty's theory', looking for 'specifically feminine forms of intentionality that cannot easily be brought under the unifying instrumentalist model but are nevertheless about work or accomplishing goals'. Citing one such project of a young farmer cooking while coping with a 'colicky' young baby on her hip, Young identifies the young woman's coping as 'plural and engaged, to and fro, here and yonder, rather than unified and singly directed'[432]. This is very similar to the project I have described in Luce Girard's phenomenological account of her 'Kitchen Women' in my previous chapter.

There is much to find in Young's writing which helps to situate my own experience. I resonate with Iris Marion Young's account of home and home-making, a rarity in feminist literature, which I will examine later. But first, a brief resume of the work of an influential phenomenological psychoanalytic feminist, Luce Irigaray, who takes a very different view from either Butler or Young.

Luce Irigaray : 'flesh' and finding *'parle-femme'*

For Luce Irigaray, 'flesh' is an active philosophical category. While accepting the context of social discourse in the making of men and women's subjectivities, Irigaray takes a divergent point of view from Butler in advocating strongly for 'morphological differences' between men and women: 'sexual difference' is 'a given of reality'[433]. Irigaray is not aiming for a simplistic biological difference or an ascription of feminine traits (which will have been framed by masculinist presuppositions). 'To speak from the body' means to

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[432] Young, "On Female Body Experience: Twenty Years Later", 1998: 289.
[433] Irigaray and Pluhacek et al, *"Conversations"*, 2008: 17.

identify the fluidity of the body, and to situate strategies that reflect 'the site of the overflow of culture into nature and vice versa'[434]. Mulder draws out a distinction Irigaray makes between 'body' and 'flesh', where 'body is associated with notions of 'place' or 'location' and with the distinctions between inner and outer, the word 'flesh' appears as more sensible matter', drawing on Merleau-Ponty's notions of 'flesh' and the 'intertwining of the chiasm' in his example of touching oneself, but highlighting the 'tangibility' of 'flesh', as 'the primary source' of 'sensibility' – 'the sense of touch insists in all the senses' - rather than 'flesh' being dependent on 'vision and the visible'[435]. Irigaray's 'body' is a touching, sensing, sensory and sensible body.

A Belgian-born French philosopher, expelled from teaching at Jacques Lacan's *Ecole Freudienne* in 1974 for the publication of her second thesis critiquing Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis, *Speculum. De l'autre femme* (translated as *Speculum of the Other Woman),* Irigaray has held a research post at the *Centre National de Recherche Scientifique* in Paris since 1964[436]. At the risk of trivialising Irigary's prodigious output, with all its density and opacity, complexities of translation into English, and the industry that it has generated in acceptance and rejection of her thinking, I will attempt to indicate something of the fecundity, as well as the difficulties, of her position. Margaret Whitford has been responsible for bringing Irigaray's oeuvre to the notice of the English-speaking world in the edited collection of her writing, *The Irigaray Reader* (1991) and her commentary on it[437]. As Whitford reconstructs Irigaray's work, seeing it as

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[434] Zakin, "Psychoanalytic Feminism", 2011.
[435] Irigaray in Mulder, "*Divine Flesh, Embodied Word*", 2006: 108, 109, 110.
[436] Zakin, "Psychoanalytic Feminism", 2011.
[437] Haas, "Review: 'Of Waters and Women",1993: 150.

'"modelled on the psychoanalyst's interpretations of the analysand's speech'… the fundamental pathology of Western culture is the denial of women's subjectivity… [t]he guiding insights are that women need a language of their own - *parler-femme* or speaking (as) woman - if they are ever to assume the status of subjects and that a female system of unconscious fantasy – a female imaginary - must be collectively created and given a voice if women are to gain a language of their own"' [438].

Irigaray describes her own writing as occurring in three periods. The first is her most famous, her detailed critical analysis of Freud and Lacan to show the phallocentrism 'elevated to the universal order' with the concomitant 'extinction' of the female, and the inadequacy of their portrayal of women as defined by 'lack', as in the publication of her PhD, *Speculum.* In her second phase, her writing 'moves forward in her creative exploration into the conditions for a female subject', including the publication of *L'Ethique de la difference sexuelle,* (1984) and her critiques of Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Hegel respectively: *Marine Love of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1991)*, Elemental Passions* (1992), *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* (1999), and *I love to you*: *sketch of a possible felicity in history* (2000). These volumes relate to the violent interaction of the four elements of water, earth, air and fire believed to be the basis of life as described by the Greek philosopher Empedocles (5th Century BCE)[439]. In recent years in the third phase, she has been concerned with building relationships of respect between the two sexes, and has been involved in action in the French and Italian

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[438] Meyers, "Review of Margaret Whitford's *Luce Irigaray*", 1992: 319, 320.
[439] Kingsley and Parry, "Empedocles", 2020.

women's movements and in consultations with the European Parliament on women's rights, but also, once again, interrogating Hegel in *The Way of Love* (2002).

Irigaray's 'sexual difference' and 'sexual indifference'

Sexual difference is rooted in the bodies of men and women - men's and women's differences are defined by the 'morphology' of their sexual bodies, although the extent to which Irigaray's use of 'sexual differences' and how 'irrevocably' they are related to structural/genital differences has been multifariously interpreted. For Irigaray, the valuing of feminine difference is always framed 'in advance' by masculine perception, or 'sexual indifference', which perceives the female as the same as males but lesser, 'mirrors of male subjectivities… reflecting back their egos in an illusion of wholeness and unity'. With the assumption of male subjectivity as the 'norm', and with it the implicit (Kantian) assumption of the 'essential split between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge', the male being positioned as 'the speaker' and 'the knower' within Western thinking and social life, women's subjectivity has been subsumed into that of the male's, and women are 'silenced' and 'passive' – they have no voice of their own as 'objects of knowledge', as '"a being that does not speak"'[440]. Female muteness, the reaction by women "to a symbolic order which is alien to the female flesh"', indicates an inability 'to express and channel their desire'[441].

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[440] Schutte, "Irigaray on the Problem of Subjectivity", 1991: 65, 66.
[441] Irigaray in Mulder, "*Divine Flesh, Embodied Word*", 2006: 3.

In the words of Irigaray, the woman is 'an indifferent, insignificant little receptacle, subject to their demands alone… and what about your life? You must pretend to receive it from them'[442]. For Moi, quoting Simone de Beauvoir, women are '"deprived of transcendence"': deprived of '"the future as the horizon toward which all human beings reach"'[443]. 'Men become the norm, women need to be explained; men embody humanity, women remained imprisoned in their feminine difference'[444]. For Irigaray, the '"originary event"' for '"human conception"' - 'originary' here meaning 'substrate' rather than an event in time - of '"matricide"' continues as the counterpoint note in the story of '"human culture… omnipresent and all-pervasive"', in which ""the constitution of (male) subjectivity is built upon a "murder" of the mother"'[445]. Irigaray finds in the domestic home a substitute for the male's natal home, the womb. '"In the idea of ''home'', man projects onto woman the nostalgic longing for the lost wholeness of the original mother… To fix and keep hold of his identity, man makes a house, puts things in it, and confines there his women, who reflect his identity to him. The price she pays for supporting his subjectivity, however, is dereliction, having no self of her own"'[446]. As Schutte notes, to

> 'the divisions of - subject/object, he/she, light/dark, speaking subject/silent subject – Irigaray adds conscious/unconscious and form/matter… Women's unconscious, she argues, does not have access to the means for its self-expression, since it is given form by a discourse springing from the interest of male subjectivity. In this way, man's consciousness triumphs over woman's

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[442] Irigaray in Mulder, "*Divine Flesh, Embodied Word*", 2006: 84.
[443] Moi, "From Femininity to Finitude", 2004: 841.
[444] Moi, "From Femininity to Finitude", 2004: 844.
[445] Mulder, "*Divine Flesh, Embodied Word*", 2006: 17,21.
[446] Irigaray in Young, "House and Home" in *"On Female Embodied Experience"*, 2005: 124.

unconscious; he succeeds in mastering her even in her own realm of impenetrability and darkness'[447].

In her meticulous and 'mimetic' deconstruction of Freud, Lacan, Marx and Nietzsche, Irigaray highlights the inadequacy of their thinking by echoing back, as if in conversation, passages from their own works, noting how fallacious the description of '"these texts of the Western canon"' of women is as '"lack"', their subjectivity as derivative, or purely in economic terms as 'labour'. For Freud, there is only one libido: the masculine libido (the feminine remained an acknowledged 'riddle' to Freud), and the psychic development of the boy child reverberates around the notion of his Oedipal fear of castration by his father for desiring his mother. The female child, desiring her father, has penis-envy of the male, and must reject her mother whom she scorns for her lack. 'In the trajectory of the girl's Oedipal complex, femininity is realized as the desire to be the object of masculine desire'[448]. Freudian theory presupposes a rift between the knowing subject and himself: the 'divided self'. Lacan takes up Freudian thinking but insists the phallus is not biological, but a signifier, 'the symbolic is to be distinguished from the imaginary, which is the domain of the (bodily) ego… a visual representation…. an illusion of self-containment… of a coherent self' which Lacan links to 'the Mirror stage'[449].

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[447] Schutte, "Irigaray on the Problem of Subjectivity", 1991: 68.
[448] Zakin, "Psychoanalytic Feminism", 2011.
[449] Zakin, "Psychoanalytic Feminism", 2011.

Fluidity, bodily 'logic', symbolics and language

Creating the possibility of a feminine subjectivity, not premised on 'complementarity or opposition', 'different', but independent of masculine framing, is Irigary's lifework. To work against the 'sexual indifference' of the male in failing to recognize the female's need for a fluid subjectivity of her own 'both she [the female subject] and the male subject have to renounce the re-enactment of traditional roles and change the parameters within which subjects can develop… Irigaray's male and female are continually becoming'[450]. For Irigaray, women's subjectivity needs to be reconstructed against the rigid philosophical logic of 'male=A', and 'female=not-A'[451]. This rigid logic leaves no possibility of ambiguity, according to the Law of the Excluded Middle, one of the rules of atomistic logic favoured by positivistic philosophers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in their search for 'pure truth' to be derived from unambiguous language (e.g. Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein)[452]. If the language of philosophy and 'rationality' is constructed according to these rigid binaries and their implicit assumption of 'logic=truth' leading to control and domination, Irigaray's project is first to '"jam the theoretical machinery"' to expose these constructions[453], and '"to expose the reign of the *sexual indifference*, the fraternal order of equal brothers/citizens that is inattentive to the self-division of nature, its immanent sexual differentiation"'[454] (Irigaray's italics).

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[450] Canters and Jantzen, "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions*", 2014: 5.

[451] Irigaray, *"The Way of Love",* 2002: 106.

[452] Canters and Jantzen *"Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions",* 2014: 143, 144.

[453] Canters and Jantzen "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions",* 2014: 145.

[454] Irigaray in Zakin, "Psychoanalytic Feminism", 2011.

The fluidity of female subjectivity is reflected in the fluids of bodies, which are more than

biological substances, more than 'body' or 'flesh'. Irigaray writes about:

> ""the fluids of sexual encounter and of giving birth: sperm, mucus, blood,
> placental fluid. Without these fluids there could be no life… fluidity is significant
> if also partly metaphorical: lips, flower… All depend more or less literally or
> metaphorically on a flow from one to another or from one state to another… If
> there is to be mutuality between these subjects, then rigid boundaries must give
> way… It will not do for the man to be designated as the One, the universal or
> unmarked term, and for woman to be the bearer of the marks of difference…
> Simply adding woman on to an existing ontology or epistemology" will not
> work'[455].

Symbolics for Irigaray meant not just words, but also 'images, art, gestures, rituals,

institutions of God and the divine'. Words for Irigaray are bodily and fleshly: 'For there

to be an exchange, it is essential that the other touch us, particularly through words'[456].

Her use of words in describing language in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993) is

sacramental. '*Language, however formal it may be, feeds on blood, on flesh, on material*

elements'[457] . Irigaray recognized that women occupied a particular place in the symbolic

universe: images and symbols which use women are '"always being recaptured… by the

dominant images and symbolic economy in which woman figures-for-man… Without

symbolization of some kind, women remain "homeless" in the symbolic order"'. Without

adequate symbolics or a system of signification for 'woman' that was true to her

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[455] Irigaray, in Canters and Jantzen, "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions",* 2014: 137.
[456] Irigaray, "*The Way of Love",* 2002:18; Irigaray in Mulder, "*Divine Flesh, Embodied Word",* 2006:4.
[457]Irigaray in Mulder, "*Divine Flesh, Embodied Word",* 2006: 102.

subjectivity and did justice to that spoke to women's corporeal and psychic experience, there will be no political change[458].

In Irigaray's project of men and women respecting each other's differences, her '*strategies* of attentive listening, renunciation of a will to dominance, a willingness to try and try again for communication and mutuality' have 'wider application'[459](authors' italics). The 'I-woman', and 'you-man' of the *Elemental Passions,* appear to be 'signifiers', that could stand in for all subjects with differences - sexual, racial, class, ethnicity, or otherwise' [460]. As Irigaray says, 'Equality of men and women cannot be achieved without *a theory of gender as sexed* and a rewriting of the rights and obligations of each sex, *qua different,* in social rights and obligations'[461](author's italics). Irigaray believes that if men and women 'engender themselves reciprocally', where 'reciprocity in the respect for differences supposes that each one accepts this constitution at physical and psychic levels', there is the greater possibility of a 'fruitful relation with the other' while accepting that

> 'the recognition of the other as different means that approaching involves an irreducible distancing… like an elusive mystery that we transgress ceaselessly in an anticipation of desire… I am not you and you will forever remain other to me, such is the necessary presupposition for the entering into the presence of the one and the other, of the one with the other'[462].

Twenty years on from when these words were written, the project of mutual reciprocity and male/female respect seems to be as far away as ever.

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[458] Irigaray in Whitford, "*The Irigaray Reader*", 1991: 97, 98.
[459] Canters and Jantzen "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions",* 2014: 136.
[460] Canters and Jantzen, "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions",* 2014: 134.
[461] Irigaray, "*An Ethics of Sexual Difference",* 1993: 13.
[462] Irigaray, "*The Way of Love",* 2002: 130, 133, 163.

Critiques of Irigaray's theory

There have been several key objections raised to Irigaray's writing. Canters and Jantzen's critique of *Elemental Passions* is a sympathetic and balanced discussion[463]. The strongest reaction (after the publication of *Speculum)* is to accuse Irigaray of biological essentialism, mentioned already. There is an inherent tension in Irigaray's position, identified by Whitford and others[464], because although Irigaray potently deconstructs the male perspective, Irigaray is herself a woman. What gives her standpoint the privilege of being truly '*parle-femme'* without the traces of the paradigm in which she has been formed? It is noticeable that Irigary's conversation partners are all masculine – she does not converse or celebrate women philosophers, so there is mileage in the accusation of unconsciously participating in the same dominant (male) perspective she derides. Given all that Irigaray has achieved in challenging such a dominant discourse, Canters and Jantzen find this unfair, yet note that Irigaray 'leaves no room for other voices… the voices of women are effectively silenced, and there is as little evidence that Irigaray is listening to them as there is that Freud or Lacan or Heidegger took women's voices seriously'[465]. There is also an inherent contradiction in exhorting women to raise consciousness of the structures they are in while they are oppressed or entrenched in a male-dominated system. 'Exhortations to those from whom the most basic means of

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463 Canters and Jantzen, "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions",* 2014.
464 Canters and Jantzen, "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions",* 2014: 132.
465 Canters and Jantzen, "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions",* 2014: 127.

livelihood are removed [as a consequence of our patriarchal society and its social and economic injustices] are at best pointless and at worst callous' [466].

Most seriously for her critique, women of colour and those of fluid sexuality or non-binary sexuality ask: isn't her critique exclusionary? How can sexual difference be deemed '"an immediate natural given"' and '"a real and irreducible component of the universal"'? There are no 'innocent' categories of male or female, straight or gay, class or race, nor do any of these categories operate in isolation. The priority of sexual difference as '"immutable"' and '"foundational"' has been challenged by black theorists such as Crenshaw, as the only categories that have significance for women in practice or theory[467].

> 'What *counts as* being a man or a woman, what life opportunities result from gendered positionality, and how these factors are internalized to form our lived experience of being gendered, is mediated by the other categories which intersect with gendered ones. Being a "black man/woman", or "gay man/woman", or "trans man/woman" - each has a different content from being a "white, straight, middleclass, cis gendered, able-bodied woman or man"' [468].

There is a greater 'fluidity' of 'sexual difference' in Irigaray's later writing and in interpretations of these according to the 'fluid logic' described earlier. The weight of racial and class differences cannot be dismissed as '"secondary"' to Irigary's "primary" difference of the "sexuate". There is no choice for those who are oppressed because of

[466] Canters and Jantzen, "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions* ", 2014: 125, 126.
[467] Crenshaw, 1989, in Nash, "*Black Feminism Reimagined After Intersectionality*", 2019: 9-11.
[468] Lennon, "Feminist Perspectives on the Body," 2019.

their race[469]. The choice which white women of a certain class and education assume they have or manage to make their own is withheld from women of colour, working-class women and people who do not fit binary categories. The disadvantages of any of these social positions intersect to create a doubling of disadvantage.

> 'It is an unfortunate consequence of Irigaray's lack of attention to feminist writers that she does not notice how her own writings can hardly escape being read as complicit with racial oppression from a perspective of assumed neutrality. It is all the more unfortunate because, we would argue, Irigaray's own tactics could be used to recognize and celebrate multiple differences, not only the sexual difference upon which she concentrates'[470].

Sexual difference and 'finitude'

In discussing Freudian and Lacanian notions of castration and lack, especially feminine 'lack', Moi finds Freudian and Lacanian notions of castration stand in for '1. general human lack, finitude; 2. specific feminine lack /sexual difference; and 3. discovery that we can only ever be one sex' such that 'sexual difference grounds all other differences.' She feels their theory would be better served by a notion of 'finitude', which is

> 'the traumatic discovery of three irreducible facts: 1. there are others, 2. there are others of a different sex than mine, and 3. there is death. In this scheme, finitude does not have to be figured as 'lack'. Sexual difference is a crucial element, but it is neither more nor less important than the other two aspects of finitude. In particular, it is not the foundation or paradigm of all kinds of finitude and difference'[471].

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[469] Canters and Jantzen, "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions*",2014: 128,129.
[470] Canters and Jantzen, "*Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions',* 2014: 130.
[471] Moi, "From Femininity to Finitude", 2004: 874.

Taking gender as discourse, or finding 'morphological differences' between the sexes takes me only so far. My own experience fits somewhere in between: 'both/and'. I recognize sexual differences and sexual indifference, while also recognizing the complexity of human relationships: description of difference can ossify into prescriptiveness. Somewhere in all this theorising, between 'discourse' and 'sexual differences', my materiality is not being addressed, despite Irigaray's attention to some bodily fluids. There are other significant bodily fluids – blood, sweat, tears – which may or may not be related to sexual differences. I recognize the burden on everyday behaviour of the psychosocial 'imaginaries' that Freud and Lacan describe, but believe there is more to my ordinary life than sexual difference or the operations of my id or my superego. I would like to 'celebrate multiple differences' in the messiness of real bodies, real objects, and real time, but need to find an 'Irigarayan feminine subjectivity' free of masculinist premise. At this point, I turn to two queer phenomenological feminists to find other sources of possibility in the work of Sara Ahmed and Lanei Rodemeyer.

Feminism meets queer phenomenology

 Butler's theory challenges heteronormative' models of sex, gender and sexuality', and disputes that any of these terms are stable, or can be assumed to be, 'stable reference points'. Ahmed follows Butler in this critique of 'stable reference points', by noting 'we need to deal with the institutional politics of definition and naming', and disputes sexual

difference as 'the difference that matters'[472]. Queer theory enables a person to understand the 'multi-valenced flows of power and knowledge, the institutionalization and hegemony of certain types of constitution, the nuances of gender race, culture'[473]. There is also the question of ''who authorises theories?'' Ahmed identifies the communal 'we' which designates a "community of knowers and actors" that "does not suspend difference, division and conflict". "Differences… necessitate the critical debate" which the "we" performs [474].

> ''Gender' itself cannot be situated as a proper object which guarantees the feminist trajectory… Sexual difference cannot be ontologised as *the* difference that matters: sexual difference exists in a complex set of inter-connections with other differences'[475].

Ahmed's queer theory is both discursive and phenomenological. For Ahmed, one's bodily orientation is always directed towards something or someone: 'bodies take shape through tending towards objects that are reachable, which are available within the bodily horizon'. Orientation, whether understood as sensorimotor, spatial, sexual, social and/or historical, arises out of a directed intention, from a context of disorientation. 'Orientations allow us to take up space insofar as they take time', and humans being creatures governed by time, orientations always 'point to the future', following directions that 'we have tended towards'[476] . Yet the deconstruction of sexuality and gender can become so fluid and ill-defined as to yield no constructive understanding.

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[472] Ahmed, "*Differences that Matter* ", 1998:3.
[473] Rodemeyer, "Husserl and queer theory", 2017: 330.
[474] Ahmed, "*Differences that Matter*", 1998: 17, 19.
[475] Ahmed, "*Differences that Matter*", 1998: 15, 16.
[476] Ahmed, "*Queer Phenomenology*", 2006b; 6.

Halberstam would like to counter a certain '"tendency within queer popular culture and some queer writing to privilege gender fluidity"', by noting that '"how the sexual and gendered body is lived in an extremely specific, embodied way of being"' such that '"desire has a terrifying precision"'[477].

Queer feminism sees things 'slantwise', and queer feminist phenomenology sees things even more slantwise, allowing the possibility of seeing things afresh, interrupting commonly received patterns of perception. 'Phenomenology can offer a resource for queer studies insofar as phenomenology emphasises the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready to hand, and the role of repeated and habitual activities in shaping bodies and worlds'[478]. Objects are related to as things to be 'doing-with'. Objects which become familiar tend to become background, such that, if they are to 'emerge' to be attended to, 'phenomenology would ask under what conditions this would occur'[479]. Ahmed's most well-known discussion of a familiar object is her analysis of Husserl's table, at which he did his philosophical writing, but which his wife and boys also used, presumably at other times! 'What bodies do at the table involves gendered forms of occupation'. Ahmed also notes the significance of skin and touch in the relationship with objects.

> 'In being touched, the object does not stand apart; it is felt by the skin and even on the skin. The skin connects as well as contains… Orientations are tactile and they involve more than one skin surface... Bodies, as well as objects, take shape

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[477] Halberstam, 1994:210 in Rodemeyer, "Husserl and queer theory", 2017: 327.
[478] Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward Queer Phenomenology",2006a: 544.
[479] Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward Queer Phenomenology, 2006a: 549.

through being oriented toward each other, as an orientation which may be experienced as a cohabitation or sharing of space'[480].

She quotes Merleau-Ponty's distinction between 'straight' and 'oblique', noting his reading of them as 'distance' and 'proximity', with distance functioning 'like the oblique, as a way to transform the relationship between the body and the object it perceives', where distance is another way of describing 'loss of grip'.' "Distance is what distinguishes this loose and approximate grip which is proximity"'[481].

For Ahmed, the phenomenological approach maintains a tension between discourse and sexual difference; between the individual, sensory, 'lived body' and within that lived experience, the 'role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds' which reveal the intersubjective and cultural aspects, with queer phenomenology offering its own reading [482]. Ahmed's queer reading and writing is a vivid evocation of an

'alternative form of world-making within queer cultures and how they draw different kinds of lines, which do not keep things in their places', 'a world that fleets… the very point of disorientation'; could this also be ' the point of intersection between queer and phenomenology?'[483].

Heterosexual orientation is 'kept in line' by being 'given a future in line with the family line', the possibility of children ensuring the future of the heterosexual couple. But heterosexuality is not neutral in its stance. Heterosexual genders '"form themselves through the renunciation of the *possibility* of homosexuality, as a foreclosure which

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[480] Ahmed, S, "Orientations: Toward Queer Phenomenology", 2006a: 551,552.
[481] Merleau-Ponty, "*Phenomenology of Perception",* 1945/2012: 304-305 in Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward Queer Phenomenology", 2006a: 566.
[482] Ahmed, "*Queer Phenomenology",* 2006b: 2,5.
[483] Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward Queer Phenomenology", 2006a: 563, 565.

produces a field of heterosexual objects at the same time as it produces a domain of those whom it would be impossible to love... The objects are not only material; they may be values, capital, aspirations, projects, and styles"'[484](author's italics).

> 'Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created... To become straight means not only that we have to turn towards the objects given us by heterosexual culture but also that we must turn away from objects that take us off the line' from those objects and directions that 'are already given to us.... birth, childhood, adolescence, marriage, reproduction, death... For a life to count as a good life, it must return the debt of its life by taking on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one's futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course' [485].

Ahmed's own story of changing from 'straight' to 'gay' as an adult illustrates her argument, and what that has meant for her own family in terms of objects (e.g. photographs of weddings and children) displayed in the family home 'that measure sociality in terms of the heterosexual gift', demanding an embrace 'as embodiments of our own histories'. This 'compulsory heterosexuality', using Adrienne Rich's term[486], is a 'condition of familial as well as social love'. Tendencies to be straight are acquired and legitimised by social factors. 'Deviance' from the 'acceptable' line is not rewarded. 'The very requirement that the child follow a parental line puts some objects in reach and not others in reach.... both demands and prohibitions are generative'[487]. From this point of view, the queer body 'becomes a failed body', no longer 'in place' or 'at home'[488].

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[484] Butler 1997: 21 in Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward Queer Phenomenology", 2006a: 554.
[485] Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward Queer Phenomenology ",2006a: 554.
[486] Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", 1993: 229.
[487] Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward Queer Phenomenology", 2006a: 557, 558.
[488] Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward Queer Phenomenology", 2006a: 557, 559, 560.

Rodemeyer counters Ahmed's 'creative' thinking with several caveats, noting the 'methodological gap' between phenomenologists who 'presume we have direct access… to our immediate sensory experiences', and 'queer theorists usually understand our sensory experiences as already filtered through our discursive surroundings'[489], although it is not clear from Ahmed's analysis that she *does* presume that all experience is only and ever linguistically mediated, or that verbal processing of the objects of 'raw' emotion or sensation is what cognitive reflection is all about. Ahmed wants to maintain the same tension that Rodemeyer describes between the lived materiality and the discursive body and there appears to be more agreement between Ahmed and Rodemeyer than is being conceded in Rodemeyer's account. I turn now to a discussion of Rodemeyer's feminist phenomenology, which uses an Husserlian framework, but aims to maintain this in tension with a discursive model as well.

The 'density' of the 'sensing *Leib*'

Working also within a phenomenological framework, Rodemeyer's follows Husserl rather than Merleau-Ponty, and also finds several aspects of Husserl's theory accessible to a 'queer reading'. These are his acknowledgement of the instability of the subject and the knowing of my body and the objective world through others. Husserl described his own 'knowing' as distinctly 'slantwise' and deviant from the 'natural' understanding of

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489 Rodemeyer, "Husserl and queer theory", 2017: 328.

the world and interconnectivity so that when he communicated his ideas, his 'companions' thought him pathologically ill[490].

The self as understood phenomenologically (in a Husserlian sense) is not stable, either: 'the subject lives in a world where the identity of the perceived objects around her is always open to change at the structural level… recognizing a shift in objective identity yields a parallel shift in the consciousness of the subject as a whole'[491]. Furthermore, the Husserlian 'self' is believed to be constituted in layers, which are 'never distinct': they 'bleed into each other', and claims Husserl made for one layer, especially the '*hyletic*', do not necessarily apply to all levels[492]. These layers, according to Rodemeyer's analysis are, firstly, 'primordial or "hyletic" flow'; secondly, 'passive synthesis'; thirdly, 'active constitution'; fourthly, 'interpersonal intersubjectivity' and fifthly, 'intersubjective community'. Husserl's use of the term 'passive', is not, as may be usually understood, as an opposite to 'active'. A better description would oppose Husserlian 'active' with 'inactive', or 'non-active' (as in activation in this particular moment in time). The first layer is sensory experience, the second bodily experience, the third could be understood in contemporary terminology as cognitive experience, the fourth as intersubjective experience and the fourth discursive experience[493].

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490 Rodemeyer, "Husserl and queer theory", 2017: 322.
491 Rodemeyer, "Husserl and queer theory", 2017: 321.
492 Rodemeyer, "Layers of Embodiment: A Husserlian Analysis", 2018.
493 Rodemeyer, "Layers of Embodiment: A Husserlian Analysis", 2018.

Rodemeyer follows the Butlerian notion of 'discourse' as the process of adaptation and modification that female (and male) bodies undergo to 'fit in' with 'social limits', becoming the line by which bodies are included or excluded. '[W]here the body exemplifies the margins of discourse, it demonstrates that which has been excluded, it stands both with and without discourse at once'[494]. These limits also become possibilities of subversion, as borderlines which are crossed by those who do not 'fit' for example, in 'drag'. Without returning to 'some form of biological determinism', Rodemeyer wants to suggest that 'without denying… that the body is discursive, that the body is also more than discourse… it has its own density as well, a density that sometimes can rupture discourse'.[495] Here, Rodemeyer takes Husserl's two terms for the body, *Leib,* the body as 'sensory… my lived, embodied experience', and *Korper,* the body as 'causal object, subject to the laws of physics as well as intersubjective appropriation' and highlights the fact that biological essentialists and social constructionists are referring to *Korper* in two different ways, the former in a *physically* realist way and the latter in a *socially* realist way, and both assume the other's reality is secondary to their notion of reality. She posits a sensory *Leib* having its own 'voice' – not just of sensations, but of 'gut' feelings – of 'well-being, disgust, euphoria' and others. Husserl called these personal feelings and particularities 'sensings' (*Ideas 11).* Rodemeyer believes they are present even when people are taught to ignore them (by social discourse) and have the

[494] Rodemeyer, "Feminism, Phenomenology, and Hormones "in Zeller and Kall, "*Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine"*, 2014: 188,189.
[495] Rodemeyer, "Feminism, Phenomenology, and Hormones" in Zeller and Kall, "*Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine",* 2014: 189.

potential to destabilise and challenge discourses[496]. She finds all three senses of 'body'

resonating with each other, or not.

> 'My *Leib*-body is experienced as having a certain heaviness or lightness (which
> can change depending on my circumstances); as having abilities to move, and not
> move, in definite ways; as having pains and pleasures related to itself and to
> other objects and people; as being sexual and gendered in certain ways (including
> asexual)…. [T]his experience is in dialogue with the experience of my body as
> *Korper…* Deeper analysis would show how my *Leib*-body… is filtered and/or
> modified by the physical and social sense of my embodiment… On those
> occasions when the experience of my body contradicts, challenges or seems to
> exist outside of the realms dictated by the social and physical senses of the
> body… then we have affective evidence of *Leib* as its own ground'[497].

These three senses of the physical *Korper,* the social *Korper* and the sensing *Leib* appear

most obviously at odds in intersexual and transsexual people, who sense that they are

different from what they outwardly appear to be (physical *Korper)* and fail to conform to

the social *Korper* because of a strong 'affective pull' of otherness from their sensing *Leib:*

'where the body as *Leib* calls to me in specific ways, such that I cannot live in agreement

with certain discourses of physical senses of my body'[498].

Rodemeyer's account of Husserl's 'sensing' *Leib,* resonating with the physical and social

Korpers but being a sense of 'lived experience', would seem to harmonise with 'dwelling'

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[496] Rodemeyer, "Feminism, Phenomenology, and Hormones", in Zeller and Kall, "*Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine* ", 2014: 191.

[497] Rodemeyer, "Feminism, Phenomenology, and Hormones" in Zeller and Kall, "*Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine",* 2014: 191, 192.

[498] Rodemeyer, "Feminism, Phenomenology, and Hormones" in Zeller and Kall, "*Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine",* 2014: 192.

or 'habits' as Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty propose, with the same pre-linguistic and preconscious aspects, and is the account I find integrates most readily with the 'tactile-kinetic-kinaesthesia' that Sheets-Johonstone believes is essential to understand the dynamic responsivity, agency and intentionality of human lived experience. The 'hard-wiring' of the natal *Korper* is already being modified and adapted from the child's earliest days by the developing child's social *Korper,* as intersubjectively, the parents' social *Korper* responds to or extinguishes physical and social behaviours. With a growing sense of who she is, the developing child's *Leib* will sometimes align and resonate, and at other times, be at odds with, the discourses of those she interacts with, and especially in relation to figures of authority, parental, religious, scholastic or social. The natal *Korper* may determine some aspects of the developing child's social *Korper,* but there is always a mysterious interplay of *Korper* and *Leib,* of 'challenge and contradiction'[499]. The interaction of the developing *Korper* and *Leib* occurs in the relationship with the material world, of 'being-with' things 'to hand' of which bodies in a home are a foundational part.

Repudiating feminism: femininity and 'ordinary' women

Concepts of 'femininity' and the ebb and flow of its shades of meaning over time have a long history predating the rise of the term and the ideology of feminism. Currently, young women in Western countries have accepted equality with men as 'common sense', yet paradoxically, some generations reject the label 'feminist' because of their

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[499] Rodemeyer, "Feminism, Phenomenology, and Hormones" in Zeller and Kall, "*Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine",* 2014: 194.

associations of the word with male-hating, lesbianism, and a rejection of femininity[500]

[501]. Whether this is evidence of another wave, this time of 'post-feminism', a backlash

against feminism, or 'a regressive political stance' is debatable.

> 'Feminist ideas are at the same time articulated and repudiated, expressed and disavowed. Its constructions of contemporary gender relations are profoundly contradictory. On the one hand, young women are hailed through a discourse of 'can-do girl power', yet on the other hand, their bodies are powerfully reinscribed as sexual objects: women are presented as active, desiring social subjects, but they are subject to a level of scrutiny and hostile surveillance which has not historical precedent'[502].

Taking a Butlerian stance of performativity towards femininity, Scharff also identifies the

complexification that race and class bring to the whole performance of femininity for

young women of today, and how their 'positionings intersect with feminist dis-

identification' while noting the need for analysing the impact of 'post-feminism,

neoliberalism and individualization on their 'performance of femininity'.

> 'Race, class, sexuality and gender identity variously intersect with feminist dis-identification, but also with other vectors of difference, such as religious identification and cultural context. Thus, engagements with feminism cut across different axes of differentiation that intersect with each other in not entirely predictable ways' [503].

In her study of young women in Britain and Germany of a mix of races, class and

sexuality, Scharff found 'the construction of feminism as anti-men, lesbian and

unfeminine may pose a particular challenge to working-class and black women who,

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[500] Gill, "Postfeminist media culture", 2007.

[501] Scharff, *"Repudiating Feminism"*, 2016.

[502] Gill, "Postfeminist media culture", 2007: 148, 163.

[503] Scharff, *"Repudiating Feminism",* 2011: 472.

historically occupy the position of 'other' in regard to culturally dominant constructions of respectable femininity (Skeggs, 1997)'[504]. As one of Scharff's respondents said, 'It's a colour thing and a status thing, rather than a gender thing'[505].

But this uneasiness with the term, if not the ideology, has a longer history. Joanne Hollows analyses cultural history to note that for second-wave feminists, and particularly Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer, 'femininity was constituted a 'problem'' against which their writings fought[506]. For Friedan and Greer, 'femininity', associated with the home and domesticity, was 'household drudgery' which caused a fragmentation of identity, and feminine values and traits of 'passivity, submissiveness and dependence' led to 'dehumanisation'. 'The ordinary housewife' lead a 'vicarious life' through her husband and her children[507]. Greer went further by calling domesticated women '''feminine parasites'', not to be included in Greer's 'sisterhood'. She urges women to stop '''cajoling and manipulating''' and instead to claim '''the masculine virtues of magnanimity and generosity and courage'''[508]. Hollows notes that by critiquing women for being inferior for not having masculine qualities of energy, assertiveness, and independence, Friedan is identifying the 'masculine' traits as the only ones worth aspiring to, as well as presupposing women as passive absorbers of modes of femininity propagated by 'popular culture', at the mercy of women's magazines and Hollywood[509].

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[504] Scharff, *"Repudiating Feminism,"*2011:472. Skeggs, "*Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*", 1997.

[505] Scharff, "*Repudiating Feminism*",2012: 472.

[506] Hollows, *"Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture"*, 2000:1.

[507] Friedan 1963: 296,297 in Hollows, *"Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture"*, 2000: 11.

[508] Greer 1971 in Hollows, *"Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture"*, 2000: 14

[509] Hollows, *"Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture"*, 2000:14

The women Greer and Freidan critiqued knew better than their critics the legitimacy and integrity of the roles they assumed and nurtured.

I have already referenced the white roots of second-wave feminism in its exclusion of, and denial of, black activists and black activism, but also its blindness to class. Skeggs shows in her long-term study of working-class women in Manchester, these 'ordinary' women are unwilling to be 'talked down to' by middle-class theorists and refuse to accept the label 'feminist'. 'Why should women incur losses on their cultural capital to inhabit a position that they recognize as belonging to others…who have the power to make negative evaluations of them?'[510]. Skeggs also notes that 'the possibility of self, individualization, reflexivity, choice, mobility and entitlement' is only possible from 'a position of privilege… Class struggle in not just about collective action… But it is also about the positioning, judgements and relations that are entered into on a daily and personal basis'. For working-class women in the U.K in the early twentieth century, home was a place of pride: one in which they created their own power space and which continues to this present day. They were more concerned about appearing 'respectable', of being seen to publicly 'moral'.[511]

Moi noted a similar trend as Scharff amongst her undergraduate students to perceive feminists as 'man-haters', 'aggressive' and 'lacking in love', at a similar time [512]. Moi laid this failure to bridge the divide between academy and 'everyday' women at the feet of

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[510] Skeggs in Hollows, *"Domestic Cultures"*, 2008: 203.
[511] Skeggs, "*Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable",* 1997.
[512] Moi, "I am a Feminist, but…"2006.

academic feminists, although she also blamed 'disenchanted conservative "feminist-bashers" such as Christina Hoff Sommers'. Her cure was 'better' theory: 'feminist theory – feminist thought, feminist writing – must be able to show that feminism has wise and useful things to say to women who struggle to cope with everyday problems'. The intent of feminism remains the struggle with oppression:

> 'to have genuine global reach, to illuminate everyday life, be readable by academics and non-academic alike, yet still develop genuinely new ideas about what women's oppression today consists in so that it can point the way toward (further) liberation in every field of life'[513].

This is the function of Moi's proposal of Ordinary Language Philosophy, as noted earlier. For Moi, theory turns around the understanding of experience, and especially, the power of the 'particular case'[514]. Moi contests the 'sceptical epistemological agenda' of Joan Scott's assertion in her 1991 essay, 'The Evidence of Experience', in which Scott noted the tendency to 'appeal to experience as uncontestable evidence and as an originary point of explanation… [E]xperience is always already an interpretation *and* something that needs to be interpreted'. While agreeing with Scott's conclusion that the experience of others is 'not the origin of our explanation… but rather that which we seek to explain'[515], Moi acknowledges that this does not assume any particular experience is 'infallible', 'unbiased' or 'beyond politics', or 'unaffected by larger social or historical conditions… 'Philosophy *begins* when we realise that your examples vie with mine'[516] (author's italics). With Ordinary Language Philosophy, theory is 'liberated' from the

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[513] Moi, "I am a Feminist, but…", 2006: 1737, 1740.
[514] Moi, "Thinking through Examples", 2015: 193.
[515] Scott in Moi, "Thinking through Examples", 2015: 194.
[516] Moi, "Thinking Through Examples", 2015: 194, 195.

'bogeyman' of being 'exclusionary'. Attending to 'one particular case' means being freed from the obligatory demand for completeness, while not decrying the need for 'sharp definitions' and 'clear boundaries for every concept. Moi uses Wittgenstein's notion of 'language games' to identify Wittgenstein's 'liberation from the logic of assertion and negation' into which '"the prison-house of concepts"' locks argument, which 'the seduction' of 'emulating scientific theory' has created, while also recognizing that words 'gain meaning by their use' and cannot 'be defined in advance'[517]. Theory for Moi must be ready to look at all sorts of 'particular cases' in order to understand women's experiences better, but they don't 'need to build a general theory of identity, gender, femininity (or language, or power, or affects or matter) to get there', because that results in becoming increasingly dematerialised, abstract and unconnected to 'ordinary' women[518]. As Wittgenstein notes in the Preface to *Philosophical Investigations,'* "the very nature of [his] investigation" compelled him to "travel criss-cross in every direction over a wide field of thought"'[519]. Examining the multiplicity of concrete examples of women's experience builds up a complicated, incomplete, yet significant picture, 'criss-crossing' many fields of experience and investigations. 'If learning to understand women's oppression is like learning a language, then it is not incoherent to claim that women's oppression… is at once vastly complex, unimaginably varied, and yet stunningly systematic'[520].

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[517] Moi, "Thinking Through Examples", 2015: 196, 197, 198.
[518] Moi, "Thinking Through Examples", 2015: 203.
[519] Wittgenstein in Moi, "Thinking Through Examples", 2015: 211.
[520] Moi, "Thinking Through Examples", 2015: 211.

'Homes' and the women in them

Having complexified feminism with a queer, phenomenological viewpoint, and repudiated notions of femininity from an 'ordinary' or working-class point of view with the work of an historian, several sociologists and another feminist philosopher, I turn to another feminist whose phenomenological repudiation is also directed against the perception of 'home' by de Beauvoir and Irigaray as the place of diminished choice and agency for women. Young notes,

> 'For millennia, the image of Penelope sitting by the hearth and weaving, saving and preserving the home while her man roams the earth in daring adventures, has defined one of Western culture's basic ideas of womanhood… If house and home mean the confinement of women for the sake of nourishing male projects, then feminists have good reason to reject home as a value. But it is difficult even for feminists to exorcise a positive valence to the idea of home… House and home are deeply ambivalent values… Unlike these critics (Irigaray and de Beauvoir), I am not ready to toss the idea of home out of the larder of feminist values… the idea of home also carries critical liberating potential because it expresses uniquely human values'[521].

Phenomenologists such as Heidegger posited dwelling, '"man's mode of being"', as dependent on building as '"preservation and construction"', but seem to 'privilege world-founding' over preservation ('cherishing, protecting, preserving and caring for', … agriculture'), a skill more associated with feminine activity[522]. If by building, I establish my world 'as a subject who dwells in that world, then not to build is a deprivation… If

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[521] Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in *"On Female Body Experience"*, 2005: 123, 124.

[522] Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in *"On Female Body Experience"*, 2005: 125.

building establishes a world, then it is still very much a man's world'[523]. Most women in the world still do not build or are excluded from building in a very real, physical sense.

Young explicates Irigaray's identification of 'the maleness of Heidegger's universal ontology [of dwelling] by positing, from a psychoanalytic view, the place of the "maternal womb" as the "home" from which the male has been evicted'. In Irigary's account,

> '"the male then builds a home to replace the womb… in which he gathers the amorphous and fluid elements into solid structure… The female becomes… both the foundation of the home and that in which he sees himself reflected and dwells… She is assigned to be place without occupying place… Her jouissance is meant to 'resemble the flow of whatever is in the place that she when she contains, contains herself… Man finds things to fill the home to replace what he has lost, including the woman, and other goods"[524]

The woman's role in the home gives 'comfort' by being 'home' and also being the space to be filled', and allows 'man' to 'create. Thus, from Irigary's viewpoint, 'Woman becomes imprisoned within the home'[525].

Yet, as Young notes, 'Irigaray's rhetoric invokes a (patriarchal) universality'[526]. De Beauvoir has a similar (negative) view of 'the activity of giving meaning to and maintaining home': that housework is '"drudgery"' and a '"life confined to such activity

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[523] Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in "*On Female Body Experience",* 2005: 127.

[524] Irigaray in Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in "*On Female Body Experience"*, 2005: 129.

[525] Irigaray in Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in "*On Female Body Experience*", 2005: 129.

[526] Young," House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in "*On Female Body Experience",* 2005: 131.

is slavery"'. Female life in the home is reduced to '"the ahistorical repetition of immanence: there is no possibility of a subjectivity which sees wider horizons or other goals – the 'creative-destructive idea of transcendence' available to the male"'[527].

Young shares her own history of personal abandonment as a child and experience of a dysfunctional family home. Perhaps because of this history, she is able to positively identify what seems to be a universal need for 'home', complex and eccentric as that may be. I am with Young when she identifies the 'materialization of identity' in my home, both containing my belongings 'arranged in space as an extension of my bodily habits and as support for my routines', a place of 'habit memories', and as objects and things which 'carry sedimented personal meaning as retainers of personal narrative… an extension and mirror for the living body in its everyday activity'[528]. Despite being perceived as conforming to male symbolics, paradigms or conventions, I may actually enjoy bodily, 'fleshly' domesticated activities that allow me a sense of control and order in a familiar space, giving me solace and stability, and finding my tastes, choices, movements and senses reflected in my relationship with the materials on which my day is built. My own studies of feminism have given me a voice, but also, *contra* feminism, the dignity, space and distance to affirm 'home' and activities in the home, not as habits that need to be extinguished before I can be 'the real me', but as aspects of my identity that I can celebrate and which contribute to my own flourishing, and that of others who

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[527] De Beauvoir in Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in "*On Female Body Experience",* 2005: 138.

[528] Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in "*On Female Body Experience",* 2005: 139, 140.

live with me, or others who live outside the home. But there are no certainties in my performance of roles I've inherited from childhood.

By limiting the 'drudgery' of labour to the immanent (because of its repetitiveness and apparent lack of creation of anything new), Young finds de Beauvoir 'collapse[s] the activities that consist in preserving the living meanings of past history into her category of immanence'. The repetitive labour of the everyday does not have to produce something new to be valuable in 'guarding the things of the past'. Maintenance and preservation are valuable, too, especially for the woman away from her homelands, keeping alive traditions from her past and her linkages with her mother, grandmother, and other family members. 'Remembrance is the affirmation of what brought us here' but this 'history of what brought us here' is not 'fixed'[529]. But preservation can be 'ambiguous': both 'conservative and reinterpretive, rigid and fluid'. Preservation for women without the 'reciprocation' or support of men, means 'domination' within the home, as evidenced by the majority of childcare and household tasks being done by the majority of women during lockdown periods during the pandemic. 'Equality for women, then, requires revaluation of the private and public work of the preservation of meaningful things, and 'degendering' these activities'[530]. It also means being aware of the value of home for others with different social status. As bell hooks notes, home can be a 'political meaning as a site of dignity and resistance', an affirmation of values which may be at odds with wide social mores, a "homeplace" where oppressed people can

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[529] Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in *"On Female Body Experience"*, 2005: 143, 144.
[530] Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in "*On Female Body Experience"*, 2005: 145.

"honour their struggle" and "recover" themselves. "Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist'[531].

In her pursuit of what she calls a 'democratization' of home as a 'critical value', Young notes four 'normative values of home that should be thought of as minimally accessible to all people'. These are 'safety', 'individuation (the possibility of performing the 'basic activities of life' with a minimal set of objects for 'meaningful use and re-use'), 'privacy', and 'preservation' (the 'construction and reconstruction of one's self')[532].

Summary of Chapter 4

Aware that issues of representation continue to dog feminism's steps, I began this chapter by highlighting the most significant insights of the feminist view of knowledge – that it is 'produced by the knower' and is 'inscribed bodily'. I defined several foundational terms for feminism, aware that there is not a consensus about any of these terms apart from the first. In describing 'patriarchy' as a prevailing ideology, I also identified the same intent in feminism: that is to change the prevailing masculinist dominance, even while recognizing that feminism struggled to represent every female experience, nor could female experience be defined monolithically. As feminism developed historically, white feminists became aware of the premises implicit in their

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[531] hooks in Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in "*On Female Body Experience*", 2005: 146, 149, 150.
[532] Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in "*On Female Body Experience*", 2005: 151-153.

action for change and black and Latino feminists battled for inclusion as issues of colour and class intersect with gender and sexuality.

My search for an adequate expression of lived experience, the 'tactile-kinetic-kinaesthesia' of Sheets-Johnstone, otherwise termed 'flesh', led me to the examination of two major feminist theorists with contrasting notions of what bodies mean to each of them. Both work from a supposition of masculinist power, with its concomitant assumption (Kantian) of knowing removed from the object of knowledge and the world, with masculinist privileging of the first and suppression of the second category in the binaries of male/female, subject/object, cognition/emotion, intellect/intuition. For Judith Butler, bodies are inscribed with language – discourse - and the perceptions of powerful others from a person's first breath, hence open to change by theory and language. Her complex theory base, modified with time, has marginalised the material actuality of living bodies, a critique which she has countered with her notion of 'materialisation', recognizing that behaviours and boundaries are fluid and consolidate or congeal with time.

Luce Irigaray's theory of 'sexual difference' and 'sexual indifference', notes how Freud and Lacan dismiss females as a non-subject, with a definitive 'lack'. Irigaray is intent on encouraging female subjectivity with a voice – *'parle-femme'*- in a context not framed by masculinist subjectivity. Irigaray believes sexual difference between the two sexes, cannot be ignored and should be respected by both. Irigaray has also critiqued Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Nietzsche and Hegel in her pursuit of elucidating a bodily

experience which is authentically female. Although rich in the symbolics of the 'fluid logic' of 'mucus', and emphasizing the 'tangibility', 'permeability' and 'fluidity' of a truly 'respectful' and feminine subjectivity not defined by male logic with its visually defined symbolics, I find the focus on the 'sexuate' too narrow, and blind to the weight of race and class which becomes more pressing to women with little or no choice.

In the absence of consensus, and with a persistently missing phenomenological tangibility in particularities of the lived 'body' in these important theoreticians, I turned to two phenomenological feminist philosophers who are also queer theorists, Sara Ahmed and Lanei Rodemeyer. Ahmed follows Merleau-Ponty in her notion of the 'I move' becoming the 'I can' of bodily experience from my first response, with psychological 'orientation' being also bodily, spatial, and in flux, allowing the recognition of the 'tactile-kinetic-kinesthetic' triad of sensings (Sheets-Johnstone) in the development of subjectivity and the self with others. Ahmed follows both Butler and Merleau-Ponty in defining the pressure of the 'lines' and 'domestic objects' which dominant heterosexuality demands. Rodemeyer follows Husserl, with her examination of the 'density' or levels of Husserl's *Leib,* or lived-body experience, in the dynamic interplay between the sensing, physical and social *Leibs* , while allowing self-reflection, harmonising feminist phenomenology and feminist discourse. The interaction of phenomenology and feminist queer theory opens up the possibility of a different and more articulate viewpoint of what my particular, singular experience of being in my body is all about, especially with the awareness of the sensory and motor aspects of human behaviour, entangled with affective response to others and the world.

Beverley Skeggs has studied the intersection of issues of gender, race and class in working-class people for many years (e.g.1997, 2004, 2012), finding they refuse to identify as 'feminist' but rather focus on being 'respectable', because of the class connotations. Working-class women, women of colour, and those who are binary or do not wish to identify with a static sexual identity repudiate the term 'feminist'. The studies of Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff of young women in Britain and Germany continue to highlight issues of 'femininity' in the contemporary world, intersecting with the disciplining of their bodies in the light of social media, neoliberalism (the 'capitalisation of everything')[533], and hyperindividualism.

Lastly, I turned to the work of one of the few feminist theorists with an affirmative yet realistic view of domesticity and the home. Young's critique (with bel hooks) of Irigaray's and de Beauvoir's negative view of home as a prison establishes an alternative 'critical value of home', not romanticizing home, but valuing the possibility of home as the site of the formation of a safe, private sense of self, in the preservation of routines and objects which have linkages with past history, a site of 'resistance' (bell hooks) and allowing women a sense of 'transcendence' in the site of immanence.

In the light of all these preceding chapters, of phenomenology as my frame, phenomenological autoethnography as my methodology, the inexpressibility of the everyday as a form of discourse in which my autoethnography may be interpreted, the

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[533] Skeggs, "British Journal of Sociology Annual Lecture", 2014.

hermeneutics of 'woman', 'gender', 'sex' and 'the feminine' which feminism generates forming a kind of parallel frame of reference on women in the home, I find that the feminist theory and practice still finds the home and domesticity an embarrassment to their grander projects, so with this in mind, I turn to a theological understanding of all these intertwined elements.

Chapter 5

Phenomenology, theology and the inhabiting of my domestic world
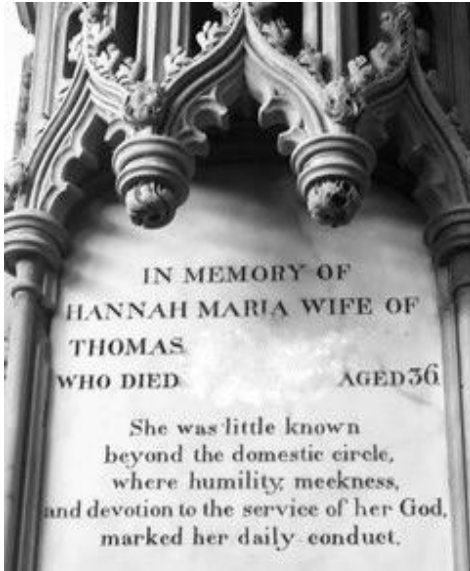
Introduction

Following the phenomenological perspective, the world and I are in conversation, constantly being opened up to each other, the significance and affective charge of each experience in all its 'thingliness' mediated by my bodily senses of touch, kinaesthetic sense, movement, sound, hearing, and sight (Chapter 1). If my autoethnography revealed anything, it showed that I am manifold and multiple (Chapter 2). I have reflected on my everyday activity in my home (Chapter 3), and discovered, contrary to expectation, just how extraordinary doing in the everyday actually is, full to excess of the unexpected, constantly changing, largely invisible or unnoticed, spatially variable and temporally in flux. Yet within this variability and flux, I create and trace bodily patterns of response and activity – they could be labelled 'habits' or 'skills' that are 'called forth' by those around me in my domestic space intertwining with my own desires and affects and which carry me forward. The high-level 'skill' - the skill of athletes, dancers and craftspeople which I discussed in my first chapter - producing exquisite objects or exhibiting a privileged or special bodily knowledge such as 'flow'[534], seems very removed from the experience of

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[534] Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, *"Optimal Experiences"*, 2012.

the ordinary person who bumbles along somehow through the 'pulse of life' in the domestic everyday, 'doing the chores' at home, chores which are scarcely 'auto-telic' (performed for the pleasure of doing them), especially when the only outcomes - a cleared surface, clean dishes, food on the table, clean bodies and fresh clothes - largely go unseen because of being part of the constant movement of life-maintenance. These devalued habits, in the home and elsewhere, may be regarded as a kind of *aesthesis* (perceptual awareness of sensation), a kind of *poesis (*making, creative production*),* and a kind of *phronesis* (wisdom, practical understanding) (OED), and the significance accorded to habitual, whole-body, affective, relational activity by other disciplines, as demonstrated in previous chapters, mean that everyday skills warrant a theological examination. Feminism (as I discovered in Chapter 4) has talked a lot about the importance of 'the body', but tends to move into referencing 'cultural constructions' of 'embodiment' in a focus on gender and sexuality. 'Flesh', with its focus on first-person experience, and the realm of domestic activity by its association with the imposition of rigid and oppressive traditional and religious gender roles, have disappeared from feminist discourse[535].

Remaining within the stream

In drawing out the relationship between phenomenology and theology, the majority of my conversation partners will be constructive feminist theologians who write within a theopoetical frame of bodiliness (*leib*). Surprisingly, perhaps, as feminism is known to be

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[535] Miller-McLemore, "Embodied Knowing, Embodied Theology", 2013:744.

deconstructive and vigilant to the misogyny and oppressions of traditional academic theology, and as I am writing as many women write theology, troubling' *the recognizable forms and categories of the theological tradition'*[536](author's italics), the feminist theologians I have chosen to converse with continue to situate their work within the traditions of Christian and academic theology. They 'do' constructive theology allied with process theology (Catherine Keller, Richard Kearney), and with philosophy, literary studies, hermeneutics and gender (Karmen McKendrick, Mayra Rivera, Janet Martin Soskice, and Heather Walton). In this, I resonate with Karen O'Donnell in her definition of constructive feminist practical theology, quoting Susannah Cornwell's work from another theological context. O'Donnell (as a practical theologian researching trauma) finds 'four principles of constructive theology: a recognition of change or development taking place; a mandate to draw on resources both within and beyond the Christian tradition; an identification of a multiple of *theologies;* and finally, the construction of a theology that is in continuity with the goods deeply embedded in the tradition of the Christian faith'[537](author's italics). I hope in my conversations to reveal these 'deeply embedded' goods in a fresh way.

The 'theological turn' In phenomenology

Before I turn directly to discuss the theological aspects of Merleau-Ponty's thinking, there is a problem with phenomenology generally that has to be dealt with. Although in

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[536] Holmes "Introduction: Mending a Broken Lineage" in Holmes and Farley, "*Women, Writing, Theology",* 2011:8.

[537] O'Donnell, "The theologian as dreamer", 2021: 345.

theology, there are as many approaches to phenomenology as theologies[538], the conversation between phenomenology and theology as my primary discipline raises questions of just how theological phenomenology actually is and whether phenomenology could be inherently theological. Several prominent French philosophers have made a case for its inhabitation of and by theology. In my first chapter, I have outlined phenomenology already as one of my methodologies, so what does theology bring to my project which phenomenology hasn't already brought? Does phenomenology restrict my project in any way, or does theology merely 'fill the gaps'?

The 'theological turn' In phenomenology was first outlined by Dominique Janicaud (2000) in a landmark publication, in which philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas (1905 – 1995), Jean-Luc Marion (1946 -), Michel Henry (1922 – 2002) and Jean-Luis Chretien (1952 – 2019), were deemed to have 'egregiously breached the boundaries of the discipline' by smuggling God into their explanations of being in the world in their 'unconditional affirmation of Transcendence', and instead of being 'presuppositionless', 'the dice is loaded… and choices made… from the outset'[539]. From a phenomenology of religions point of view, Olga Louchakova-Schwartz suggests that, rather than 'breaching' disciplinary borders, 'the presuppositionlessness of phenomenology means not an unequivocal elimination of all metaphysical assumption, but rather, brings in assumptions which preserve the givenness of experience relevant to the context of

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[538] E.g. Wells, "*Phenomenologies of Scripture*", 2017, "*The Manifest and the Revealed* ", 2018. Williams, "Embodied World Construction: a Phenomenology of Ritual", 2023. Masterton, "*Approaching God: Between Phenomenology and Theology*", 2013. O'Leary, "Review of Merleau-Ponty and Theology by Christopher Ben Simpson, 2017.

[539] Janicaud in Allen, "Merleau-Ponty: Beauty, Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn'", 2021: 71, 75.

investigations' ('givenness' being a key concept for a range of phenomenologists from Husserl to Merleau-Ponty and beyond), so that existing suppositions are 'revealed' rather than ruled 'in' or 'out'.[540] She gives examples of how Marion 'studies the forms of experience relevant to Trinitarian theology, Henry – to Christology, and Levinas – to the rhetoric of otherness which can be applied to the ethical communities of faith'.[541] As a phenomenological practitioner herself, she recognises that 'the methodological "storehouse of phenomenology – *epoché,* bracketing, reduction, transcendental subjectivity" is always modified according to the need of the phenomenon under investigation…. Without phenomenology as its ally, theology suffers from a "convincingness deficit"'[542] if approached as 'an exercise in explaining doctrinal positions'. For Louchakova-Schwartz, there is also the problem of the 'religious attitude' being both 'the subject matter' and the 'condition of possibility for theological investigations': is phenomenology truly phenomenology if it is imbricated as both subject and means of reflection?[543] As Joseph Rivera suggests, quoting Michel Henry, '"the narrative intelligence of both phenomenology and theology spring from and grow out of an identical urge to reflect on the ultimate meaning of life"'[544], yet Rivera notes the 'precariousness and tension in cross-disciplinary reflection' which the 'stretched

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[540] Louchakova-Schwartz, "Editorial: Phenomenology and Religious Research: Introduction to the Topical Issue of 'Open Theology'", 2018: 641.

[541] Louchakova-Schwartz, Editorial: Phenomenology and Religious Research: Introduction to the Topical Issue of 'Open Theology'", 2018:641.

[542] Kirkpatrick 2016 in Louchakova-Schwartz, "Editorial: Phenomenology and Religious Research: Introduction to the Topical Issue of 'Open Theology'", 2018: 641.

[543] Louchakova-Schwartz, "Editorial: Phenomenology and Religious Research: Introduction to the Topical Issue of 'Open Theology'", 2018: 641.

[544] Henry in Rivera, "Introduction: The Futures of the Theological Turn", 2018: 90.

phenomenology' of Marion, Henry and others 'broadens' in order to 'make room for the divine'[545].

The second problem in the relationship between the two disciplines is the very opposite claim, in which some philosophical theologians believe that phenomenology by its very commitment to a 'suppositionless' viewpoint, pretends to a neutrality it hasn't got, limits talk of God to that which 'is within human experience', or, by attending predominantly to human experience, excludes the legitimacy of talk of God or of the transcendent as understood theologically 'that surpasses all objectivization'[546]. Phenomenology does not replace 'revelation from God' as the primary source of my faith or an alternative form of transcendentalism but is one of the lenses through which I understand the significance and meaning of my experiences, in which I include God (recognizing the limits of my (human) perceptions), not as a methodological 'add-on' but integral to understanding theology, in the search for an adequate way of describing the phenomena of faith, people's 'reality-apprehensions', as Edward Farley noted decades ago[547]. Robyn Horner makes a similar point. Phenomenology properly conducted does not 'place conditions under which God reveals Godself', as a means of 'proving' God exists[548]. Doing theology phenomenologically means resisting the 'reduction of all phenomena to objects or entities (including God)… What is given should be interpreted

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[545] Rivera, "Introduction: The Futures of the Theological Turn", 2018: 91, 96.

[546] Masterton, "*Approaching God: Between Phenomenology and Theology*"in Simmons, "Review of Patrick Masterson's *Approaching God*", 2014: 891.

[547] Farley, "*Ecclesial Man: A Social Phenomenology*," 1975: 21.

[548] Horner, "Towards a Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Methodology for Theology", 2018: 154.

in keeping with its character, and not dismissed too easily as impossible *in advance'* [549] (author's italics).

I acknowledge the 'tensions in cross-disciplinary reflection' that Joseph Rivera points out, trying to cross the divide between two disciples with opposing paradigms or different languages. One very recent example of a cross-disciplinary study is Tobias Tanton's thorough conversation between theology and the psychological sciences in the development of his 'corporeal' theology, an important conversation which has consequences for many areas of contemporary life, including most obviously the biomedical and biopsychological sciences. I examined the details of the '4E' neurosciences ('embedded', 'enactive', 'embodied', 'extended') in the work of Shaun Gallagher in my first chapter as part of the project of understanding how cognition, the senses, movement and affect, all necessary aspects of brain function, enable relationships with, understanding of, and meditation on, God, without 'proving' God. Although there is a whole spectrum of views on the relationship between the physical aspects of the body and the operation of the brain in the cognitive sciences, which Tanton forensically reviews, Tanton's approach to the 'embodiment' in his title is to view the human reliance on metaphor and the 'scaffolding' (Clark and Chalmers' term[550]) of the physical/material environment as part of the limitations of being human. 'Experiential and metaphorical ways of grounding God are, on their own, incomplete and

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[549] Horner, "Towards a Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Methodology for Theology", 2018: 160.
[550] Clark and Chalmers, "The Extended Mind", 1998.

insufficient'[551] to which the theological response is 'accommodation'[552]. 'Accommodation' is understood to be the term describing the God who becomes human, in the incarnation, taking on human limitations, so that human beings could understand God and has a long history in the development of the doctrine of the incarnation[553]. While Tanton's analysis is accurate and comprehensive, I fear the 'neutrality' of the conceptual level he is speaking from operates as if 'corporeal theology' and 'accommodation' were parts of a formula which 'resolves' the 'cognitive dissonance' of the doctrine of incarnation from a cognitive point of view, and ends up losing the spiritual and the personal, fleshly material aspects of my own singularity in living in faith and being alive in the world.

Not 'Ordinary' or 'implicit' but 'enfleshed'

It might seem logical if I'm dealing with the 'ordinary' world that I should be doing 'Ordinary Theology', a term coined by Jeff Astley[554](and used by Leslie Francis[555]) in which Astley identified the 'broad type of God-talk to be found among churchgoers and non-churchgoers who are innocent of theological education', located within Edward Bailey's 'implicit religion'[556], or Thomas Luckmann's 'invisible religion'[557]. Astley's

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[551] Tanton, "*Corporeal Theology: Accommodating Theological Understanding to Embodied Thinkers*" ,2023: 111.

[552] Tanton, *"Corporeal Theology: Accommodating Theological Understanding to Embodied Thinkers"*, 2023: 15.

[553] Tanton, "*Corporeal Theology: Accommodating Theological Understanding to Embodied Thinkers"*, 2023: 15.

[554] Astley, "Ordinary Theology for rural theology and rural ministry", 2003:4.

[555] Astley, and Francis, *"Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church"*, 2013.

[556] Bailey, "The 'implicit religion' concept as a tool for ministry", 1990, 2010.

[557] Luckmann, "Shrinking Transcendence", 1967.

emphasis is on what is articulated, however coherently or not, as the stated basis of people's faith. While not decrying the linguistic process as essential for theological reflection, or Francis' extensive collaborations on the psychological aspects of people's interpretations of their own experience in the light of their beliefs and the Bible[558], my own study differs from the work of Astley and Francis in that I am not examining articulated beliefs or worship practices, but am concerned with meaning-making as expressed phenomenologically, sensed or felt in everyday praxis at home.

Luckmann and Bailey's concepts are useful, but not directly applicable to my study because they remain at the conceptual level of discussion. Of Luckmann's proposed three levels of 'transcendences'[559], from 'little' transcendences ('of everyday life, experienced in our bodies'), to the 'great transcendences' which 'leave reality', it could be the 'little transcendences' with which I'm concerned, but the everyday as I've found it doesn't have the boundaries he uses, which only serve to make the ordinary 'extraordinary'[560]. Bailey's 'implicit religion'[561] draws attention to the unspoken of people's ordinary reality which he variously defines as: '*commitments*', '*integrating foci*' and '*intensive concerns with extensive effects*', labels which still derive from cognitive

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[558] Francis, "*Personality Type and Scripture",* 1997." Faith *and Psychology*", 2005. "Five loaves and two fishes: An empirical study in psychological type", 2010. "What happened to the fig tree", 2012."Ordinary readers and reader perspective on sacred texts", 2013. Francis with Jones "Reading and Proclaiming the Resurrection: An Empirical Study in Psychological Type Theory", 2011 & "The mysterious case of the Ethiopian eunuch", 2022.

[559] Luckmann, "Shrinking Transcendence", 1990.

[560] Knoblauch, "Europe and Invisible Religion",2003: 269, Luckmann, "Shrinking Transcendence", 1990: 129.

[561] Bailey, "Implicit Religion", 2010: 273.

assent in the personal, habitual intentionality of people's 'voluntarily adopted' religious choices[562] (author's italics).

In my search for meaning-making through bodily lived experience, I will return to three Merleau-Pontyian terms: 1) 'flesh', 2) 'intertwining' and 3) 'intersubjectivity'. In 'flesh', and 'enfleshment', I understand to be firstly my lived experience 'in the flesh', and secondly, Jesus' 'flesh', and the intertwining of words and flesh in 'the Word made flesh' (John 1:14) in the Christian doctrine of the incarnation. My study of Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh' in relation to theology is certainly not the only one[563]. However, the focus of these prior discussions by academics/theologians is Merleau-Ponty's 'ontology' in relation to Merleau-Ponty's concept of God or notions of 'freedom', 'doxastic' behaviour or religious 'ritual' i.e. they use the notion of 'flesh' conceptually. I want to come down to earth and find 'flesh' in everyday *praxis* (practices) that relate to God but do not necessarily occur in religiously sacred places.

'Flesh' and 'enfleshment': my flesh and 'the Word made flesh'

Merleau-Ponty's use of the term 'flesh', with its biblical undertones, refers to bodily experience of the whole self, of 'flesh' as the 'bedrock of being', prior to consciousness and perception. It was a radical new direction in his writing in displacing consciousness

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[562] Bailey, "Implicit Religion", 2010: 273.

[563] Cadwallader, "'Looking Down on Creation': Reconceptualising Incarnation with Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray", 2011. Berman, "Reflection, Objectivity, and the Love of God", 2022. Low, "Merleau-Ponty, Theology and GOD", 2023. Orion, *"Things Seen and Unseen: The Logic of Incarnation in Merleau-Ponty's Metaphysics of Flesh"*, 2016. Simpson, *"Merleau-Ponty and Theology"*, 2014. Williams, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the Philosophy of Religion", 2021; "Embodied World Construction: a Phenomenology of Ritual", 2023.

as 'the ontological ground of phenomenology' and gave his later, unpublished book its name -*The Visible and the Invisible.* 'The flesh is the invisible which makes the visible visible… drawing on a Christian imaginary… to deconstruct the hierarchisation guaranteed by Platonic Christianity'[564]. More than just the material of the body, (*korper),* as might be portrayed in the illustrations in *Gray's Anatomy* or dealt with in anatomical dissection, *'*flesh' for Merleau-Ponty was alive, dynamic, emergent, 'bodily immersion in the world…: '*leib*.''

> 'Flesh' is 'the ontological foundation of sensory receptivity and motor spontaneity… the stuff common to ourselves and the world, what we are and it is both made of… the *sensibility* of the things, the perceptibility both of the perceptual environment and of ourselves as perceivers – the *visibility* of vision, the *tangibility* of touch, the *exposure* of anything to which the world itself can be exposed in experience, including the bodily sense or experience of motor intentionality'[565].

To highlight this 'Christian imaginary' in Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh', I turn to an examination of what incarnation means theologically. ' "We are always and inevitably downstream in relation to the practices, formulations, thinking and traditions of earlier generations" ' [566] and none more so than the doctrine of the incarnation. This involves a discussion of *theosis,* the shortened form of *theopoesis,* 'God-making', which could have the double meaning of God becoming human both in Jesus and in us, or the sense of the human

[564] Cadwallader, "'Looking Down on Creation': Reconceptualising Incarnation with Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray", 2011: 175.
[565] Merleau-Ponty in Carman, "Merleau-Ponty on body, flesh and visibility",2012: 279, 280.
[566] Rosengren, 2003, in Sigurdson, *"Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze and Embodiment in Christian Theology"*, 2016: 37.

taken up into the divine, as two theologians find it, in the work of Catherine Keller and Richard Kearney.

Theopoetics and the incarnation

Theopoetics, a theology which works to cross boundaries of word and matter, links contemporary science with the conscious appropriation of the writings of the early church fathers, in the formulation of the doctrine of *theosis.* Theopoetics as a contemporary theology is a broad church, and one stream within it is that headed by Keller, who, as an avowed process theologian in her early academic career, was quite transparently wary of theopoetics, querying whether she was ready 'to trade process theology for process *theopoetics?'*, reluctant to give up process theology's 'capacity to argue with classical theism, to expose the fallacies of an imbricated metaphysics of substance and formulate doctrinal alternatives'[567]. As a term first coined by Stanley Hopper, Dean of the Graduate School in Theological Studies, Religion and Literature at Drew University sometime in the 1960s, in a reaction to the provocations of the 'Death of God' in theology, the 'movement' challenges religious knowledge through a 'deconstruction of modernist radical theology' and is often aligned to the process thinking of A.N. Whitehead, putting human existence in solidarity with the Earth's ecosystem and the cosmos[568].

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[567] Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process", in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness*", 2013 :179.
[568] Keller, "*Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility",* 2017: 107.

Theopoetics is 'not reducible to a literary style', nor, as Keller notes, 'lovely bouquets of language' 'camoflag[ing] the tawdry sanctuaries of dying belief'[569], but is '"a formal thinking about the nature of the making of meaning"'[570]. Both theopoetics and process theology point to the human constructedness of language about God. Apophatics, i.e. the recognition of the inability of words to 'pin down' ideas of God or the divine exhaustively, featuring large in theopoetics, at times teeters close to nihilism and 'nothingness'. Process theology shares with the 'Death of God' theology a questioning of the 'dependence' on 'God as signifier', or the "Ultimate Signifier"', yet Keller notes the tendency in the deconstruction of words about God to be 'tempted towards our own reifications of "God"'.[571] Rejecting traditionally-held signifiers risks making another set which are held to be equally inviolable. 'God is not constructed ex nihilo' [572]. Theopoetics might 'reframe' itself as beginning 'where theology *ends* but where it *negates itself… becomingly…* knowing that we finite creatures cannot *know* the infinite God except in the cloud of its own unknowability'[573]. Keller finds in theopoetics a 'supplement' rather than a replacement of, theology, because of the way theopoetics 'works to uncork the effervescence of language, the force of metaphor, icon and story, which every systematic form (including the process form) of theology can but discipline'[574]. Her theology operates by way of a three-way 'tension' between the 'ancient apophatic, the modernist

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[569] Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness",* 2013: 184, 185.
[570] Miller, 2010, in Keller, "*Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility*", 2017: 111.
[571] Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds." *Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness*", 2013: 187.
[572] Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness* ", 2013:186.
[573] Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness".* 2013: 187, 188
[574] Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness*", 2013: 180.

mythopoetic and the process cosmological forms' as the way ahead for the life of the theological enterprise as a contemporary discipline[575].

For Keller, describing God or matter separately means not being true to the nature of either. The same constraints that human words or minds face in the search to know God absolutely and exhaustively, should also be applied in the description of matter. Keller believes that 'God and matter name, indeed materialize, *different*, but not *separable*, becomings' within contemporary understandings of quantum physics and the 'new materialism' in which matter actualizes in apparently contradictory ways as both wave and light simultaneously[576] (author's italics). These same constraints apply to the 'matter' of the incarnation.

> 'To materialize, to become incarnate, means to actualize a possibility. In itself, that possibility is the abstract eternity, not actual, not living; in concrescence it takes *place,* it becomes body. Only then does the eternal *matter'*[577] .

'Concrescence' here is a Whiteheadian term which means 'the instantaneity of the event of becoming, not *out of time and space but within it,* and thus constitutive of it' [578](author's italics). The theopoetic understanding of the incarnation portrays the human matter of Jesus in the incarnation as found within the matter of the universe but not depleting it while simultaneously upholding the matter of the creation as the One who makes and sustains all matter.

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575 Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness*", 2013: 181.
576 Keller, "*Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility*", 2017: 78.
577 Keller, '*Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility"*, 2017: 58.
578 Keller, '*Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility"*, 2017: 58.

To support her claim of *theosis,* Keller identifies its roots as 'ancient mystical apophaticism', referring to the expansion of scriptural references to the possibility of humans becoming god-like by several early church fathers: Clement (3rd century) and Basil of Caesarea (4th century) and expressed most explicitly in Ephrem of Syria (poet-theologian of the 4th century): '"He gave us divinity/we gave him humanity"', merging Hebraic understandings of being made in the image of God with 'Plato's "likeness to God as far as possible"'[579] and the scriptural references of 2 Peter 1: 4 and the phrase from Psalm 82:6: 'I declare, ye are gods' which Jesus used in his retort to the accusation that he was 'making himself God' (John 10:34-36)[580]. As Keller notes, *theosis* is 'a high Christology accompanied by a high anthropology', a belief in the possibility of the 'perfectibility' of human beings reflected in her quote of Irenaeus: ' *"Gloria dei homo viviens:* the glory of God is the human fully alive"'[581], a thought which Grace Jantzen echoes in her statement: '[W]e generally fail to recognize that becoming divine corresponds to becoming perfectly human' [582]. Yet this is not a *theosis* of closure, stasis or perfection, but, as Gregory of Nyssa (3rd century) wrote, '"a process of growth that must be infinite, because it is growth forward and in the divine infinite"', the divine infinite here being atemporal and 'limitless', such that the life of faith is always 'growing

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[579] Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness",* 2013: 181.

[580] Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness",* 2013: 187, 183, 188.

[581] Keller, "*Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility*", 2017: 107, 108.

[582] Jantzen, 1999, in Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process", in "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness",* 2013: 183.

in goodness' towards an unknowable God, as distinct from an 'infinity' which is 'chaotic and formless'[583].

But what of the 'gap' between human nature and the divine nature, even if 'the divine nature could be adequately described using the tools of human language and cognition'?[584] For Keller, incarnation shuns 'Logos clothed in the flesh of His single and exclusive materialization'[585] and works with 'multiple' 'possibilities' of 'intercarnations' in a 'pluralist redistribution of incarnation', of God's 'becoming' expressed in 'relations' of 'mutual immanence' rather than of 'attributes possessed by substances'[586]. Keller prefers the 'experimentation' of the apparently contradictory term 'apophatic bodies', a kind of apophasis that refers more to the language used than to the material of bodies themselves, a reaction against the 'fallacious concreteness of all that lifeless, separatist stuff' in a deconstructive 'refusal' to name either 'God' or 'matter' in ways that would make either 'knowable, predictable, or controllable subjects of each other', using the Merleau-Pontyian term 'chiasmus'[587].

> 'Not just a mirror-game between the apophatic God and the apophatic matter is in play but a chiasmus: The infinite folds in and out of the spontaneously materializing intra-actions. God as *complicatio/explicatio* nicknames that very

[583] Keller "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness",* 2013: 187,188.
[584] Keller, "Theopoetics and the Pluriverse: Notes on a Process" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness",* 2013: 183.
[585] Keller, "*Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility",* 2017; 65.
[586] Keller, "*Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility",* 2017: 71, 72.
[587] Keller, "*Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility",* 2017: 74,75,78.

enfolding and unfolding, is embodied, broken up, multiplied by it'[588](author's italics).

Keller's response to the concrete certainties, lack of vitality, closedness to contemporary science, and absolutist claims of conservative or dogmatic Christian theology is to propose 'a polyamorous panentheism' which rejects boundaries of an 'inside' and an 'outside'.[589] Instead of a 'transcendent being "coming down" and donning external human flesh, there appears the figure of a 'becoming-body,' in an incarnational poetics, or a phenomenology of the flesh of the world. The singular incarnation undergoes radical redistribution'[590]. Because the world is evolving, all matter must still be evolving, including the human matter taken up into the divine, and it would seem from Keller's exegesis, God and divine matter as well. The incarnation cannot be limited to just one event or one person, but would appear to be a continuing 'evolution' or process of 'entanglements'. Keller quotes theoretical physicist Karen Barad:

> "If we hold on to the belief that the world is made of individual entities, it is hard to see how even our best, most well-intentioned calculations for right action can avoid tearing holes in the delicate tissue structure of entanglements that the lifeblood of the world runs through"[591].

Exciting and creative as her language is, quite what is meant by a 'pluralistic distribution of incarnations' is hard to pin down and appears to deny my bodily materialism (and Jesus'). Where is my real, differentiated self and human body in the cosmic 'all'? Her

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[588] Keller, *"Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility"*, 2017: 75.
[589] Keller, *"Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility"*, 2017: 71, 72.
[590] Keller, *"Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility"*, 2017: 78, 80.
[591] Barad, 2007 in Keller, *"Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility"*, 2017: 82.

prose points to her refusal to be locked into an empirical, literal Newtonian universe where distinctions are made between static binary forms which would only add support to a misogynistic agenda of redemption and salvation, determined by a singular incarnation. Against the cosmic metaphors of Keller's apophaticism in the face of God, the deconstruction of fleshly bodies and boundaries of matter, I look for indications that the particularity of my daily experiencing of my own personal fleshliness matters. Recognizing my smallness in the swirling majesty of the universe and its maker is one thing: being known and valued personally is another, and necessary for my material and spiritual flourishing. The gritty reality of a less-than-cosmological daily life cycle, of rhythms of repetition in the household finds little foothold in the deconstruction of boundaries and matter, other than to affirm the chaos of the everyday. Christian claims for the individual personhood of the incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ do not exclude the understanding of the work of God's presence and ongoing activity in creation, or in other human beings, or conceive of this presence in a static and unchanging way. I agree with Keller's challenge that God's 'immutability' (the classical doctrine of God's unchangeability) needs rendering in a language that affirms God's constancy without losing the excitement and mysteriousness of knowledge about the evolution of the world and possibly the Creator. There is no denial of the troubling complexity of human matter in all its fragility, porosity, vulnerability and unknowability, but I find myself searching for concrete connection points in her prose about habit, skill and practices. The solidity of the incarnation and flesh seems to have dematerialised.

Theopoetics and *Theologos*

For John Thatamanil, theological words count, especially in representing the incarnation, but the apophatic trajectory is too abstract: cataphatic discourse is needed. But not only discourse – flesh on the 'bone' of discourse. '[T]heological speech… must also be marked by an appropriate prolixity lest any narrow repertoire of images come to seem normative and final on account of repetition, inertia or lack of imagination'[592]. Thatamanil disputes the claim of John Caputo's process theology that there can be a 'theology without logos'.

> 'Only if there can be incarnation without flesh and bone. To speak of a theology without logos hardly seems congruent with the deep intuitions of a tradition that from its beginnings speaks of the logos who becomes flesh... If the world can condescend to becoming flesh, surely it can also condescend to become concept while simultaneously exceeding it, just as the logos becomes flesh but without evacuating itself from the whole of the cosmos that it grounds and structures'[593].

But concepts depend on the use of language which risks 'a more mundane and accountable prose', not 'promising mastery' but 'avoid[ing] undisciplined evasions' and 'a solipsistic recourse to a purely private, privileged speech'. Theopoetic language must be humble about its own agenda, recognizing its limits. 'There is no escaping the need for unpretentious, fallibilistic 'theologos' – one that courts necessary failure always speaking about what exceeds speech in the discursive and conceptual register'[594]. Thatamanil's discourse is still *about* enfleshment but allowing its speaking to echo flesh's

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[592] Thatamanil, "Silence, Theopoetics and Theologos", in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, *"Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness",* 2013: 242.

[593] Thatamanil, "Silence, Theopoetics and Theologos" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness*", 2013: 248.

[594] Thatamanil, "Silence, Theopoetics and Theologos" in Faber and Fackenthal, eds, "*Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness",* 2013: 252.

vulnerability, undecidability, porosity and humbleness in the tone and registers it uses, being genuinely open, dialogic conversations – all characteristics of the profundity of the mundane (my italics).

Feminist theologians who are able to face negativities without losing hope tend to have experienced 'difference' as it has been inscribed on their own bodies. One such is Mayra Rivera. Another is Heather Walton. I shall examine their work briefly below, and follow complementary thoughtlines in the work of other feminist theologians, including Karmen MacKendrick, Janet Martin Soskice, Emily Holmes, and Grace Jantzen.

Poetics of the flesh: Mayra Rivera

Using a theopoetic frame for her writing, which is given an extra charge by being formed by her experiences of racial discrimination as a Caribbean-born woman, Mayra Rivera also draws from Merleau-Ponty's conceptions of 'flesh', 'intertwining' and 'intersubjectivity'. In her *Poetics of the Flesh*, Rivera argues that Merleau-Ponty 'articulates an incarnational poetics to reorient philosophy toward the world, to foster bonds of love and responsibility between human beings'[595]. For Merleau-Ponty, '"The incarnation changes everything"'[596], although Merleau-Ponty's language was often opaque and not explicitly religious. For Merleau-Ponty, 'fidelity to the incarnation is "consenting to be flesh"[597]. Rivera explains that 'The incarnation implies for Merleau-Ponty a change in the ways of conceiving the self, from a subjective interiority to an

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[595] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 57.
[596] Merleau-Ponty, 174 in Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 62.
[597] Merleau-Ponty, 174 in Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 65.

embodied relation to the world'[598]. God moves from being a God who speaks to the interior self to a visible God : '"God is no longer in heaven but in human society and communication"[599]. God is no longer distant in the heavens. God's complete self-emptying (*kenosis)* in the incarnation means God is in the world' requiring a 'reorientation of life as well as a reconceptualization of God'[600]; it 'entailed abandoning the illusion of gazing at the world as if from the outside, seeing things as objects, to instead conceive the philosopher as engaged in the very problems with which she wrestles'[601]. No knowledge (of God or of ourselves) Is free of this 'entanglement' of human experience of bodiliness in the world, however 'obscure' or 'enigmatic' those experiences are [602].

For Merleau-Ponty, "flesh" is what makes possible the communication between the world and 'the seer', 'the sensing and the sensed'. Sight (not operating as the primary sense) depends on bodily sensing to make sense of the world. 'Seeing and touching interlace, and flesh figures as a joining element for both'[603]. 'Flesh', Merleau-Ponty argues, is a '"coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body, of the tangible upon the touching body"[604]… 'of the sensing and the sensed… never returning to the same'; "the body sensed and the body sentient are as the obverse and the reverse"'[605]. Rivera aims to do the same 'coiling' with theology and philosophy. She demonstrates two competing

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[598] Rivera, M, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 62.
[599] Merleau-Ponty, 174 in Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 62.
[600] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 62, 64.
[601] Rivera, M, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 61.
[602] Rivera, M, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 63.
[603] Rivera, M, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 76.
[604] Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 146 in Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015:76.
[605] Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 137-138 in Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 75.

lines of thought about flesh in the contrast of the Johannine message with that of the Pauline epistles, the latter demonstrating the 'rejection of its many flaws and limits in favor of the clean, enduring purity of that idea [of 'body' rather than 'flesh']'[606]. Rivera refuses to capitalise 'word' in her text because of the implicit privileging of words over the flesh, while still exegeting around the Johannine text in John's gospel, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"(John 1:14).

Against the 'sharp' distinctions that the apostle Paul makes between 'flesh' and 'spirit', especially in the letter to the Romans: "While we are living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death" (Rom. 7: 5); "with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh, I am a slave to the law of sin" (Rom7:25); and "the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God" (Rom. 8:7)[607], Rivera puts the Johannine 'the word became flesh' with their 'different metaphysical assumptions, rhetorical aims and poetic registers'[608]. For Rivera, the words conveying Jesus's fleshy 'elemental' existence, which is to be given for their eating, , although shocking to its hearers, keep 'insisting on the fleshy terms of the message', such that 'the creative word becomes not only audible, but also visible and touchable' as 'word, life, light, flesh and glory converge into and swerve from one another' and later, water, blood, wine and bread are added to the mix [609].

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[606] MacKendrick, "Review of Mayra Rivera's 'Poetics'", 2017: 98.
[607] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 34-38.
[608] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 18.
[609] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 21- 23.

Karmen MacKendrick supports this distinction between the two threads in Christian thinking on the flesh (Johannine and Pauline): 'when we think of the Christian attitude to the body, we are most likely to think along the Pauline and Augustinian axis… this somatophobic tradition, if dominant, hardly exhausts the interpretations of the flesh in Christianity'[610] . Although Paul in other texts includes a bodily sense of resurrection which modifies his negative position, these two lines of Christian thinking have remained in tension, so that, 'in the popular imagination, Christianity's disincarnating desires have won out over the search for a deeper incarnation'. "Body" seems 'so much tidier and more concrete, potentially more scientific. But flesh, linked not least through Christianity to word, can be poetic, relational, transient, and mutual'[611].

Flesh and 'natality'

'Flesh' troubled the early church fathers, so it is no surprise that the dominant theological narrative emphasizing the 'carnality' and 'corruptibility' of the flesh is uncomfortable with the juxtaposition of flesh with Christ's divinity. Rivera notes that for Tertullian, the Carthaginian apologist (155 – c. 220 CE), in his *On the Flesh of Christ,* Christ's divinity is not in question: the problem is 'flesh'. As Rivera notes, 'The incarnation is divine love for flesh, and welcoming that love implies accepting the

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[610] MacKendrick, "Review of Mayra Rivera's 'Poetics'", 2017: 25,26.
[611] MacKendrick, "Review of Mayra Rivera's 'Poetics'", 2017: 98,99.

dishonour of the flesh'[612]. Parodying the views of the day with rhetorical overstatement, Tertullian writes of the 'disgusting' features of human birth:

> 'the nastiness of genital elements in the womb, the filthy curdling of moisture and blood, and of the flesh to be nourished on that same mire. Draw a picture of the womb getting daily more unmanageable, heavy, self-concerned, safe not even in sleep, uncertain in the whims of whims and appetites'[613].

if the incarnation is real, then *all* of Christ's bodiliness, all of his living, is real, and nowhere more obviously than in Jesus' nativity. Flesh 'witnesses to its origins' and is inextricably related to 'earth', from which it has been created and shaped by the loving touch of God's hands, even as Tertullian never forgets the womb from which flesh is taken, carrying ' "with it some part of the body from which it is torn… The flesh of Christ adheres not only to Mary but also to David through Mary and to Jesse through David"… Mary's flesh carrying them all'[614]. Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo gives a contemporary version of Tertullian's account. 'The liberating good news of divine incarnation begins with a socially high-risk pregnancy, with a humble, messy and painful birth, and the natal body of a squalling, dependent and vulnerable child'[615]. To be earthed means to be human, in the bloodiness of conception, the mess of Mary's labour, and with Jesus' birth,

> 'his bruised and misshapen head finally emerging through the torn perineum… After the mucus is wiped from the baby's mouth and nose, he gasps for his first breath, his umbilical cord is cut and tied and he is wrapped in swaddling clothes',

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[612] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 44.
[613] Tertullian, 1972 in Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 45.
[614] Tertullian, 1972 in Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 47.
[615] Gandolfo, "A Truly Human Nativity", 2014: 384.

he roots around for Mary's breast, the afterbirth is expelled, and Mary is exhausted[616].

Using Jantzen's term of 'natality', Gandolfo notes that 'the natal life taken on in the Incarnation, like all human life, is inherently vulnerable from the start'. Natality is not limited to motherhood. Jantzen develops her understanding of natality by calling the focus on Jesus' death a ' necrophiliac obsession with death and other worlds', with the hope that natality can 'function as a transformative suggestion, a therapeutic symbol to destabilize the masculinist necrophiliac imaginary'[617], borrowing Irigaray's use of the Lacanian term 'imaginary' (that which feeds my self-perception framed by social and personal roles).

For women, birth is just the beginning of the messiness and vulnerability of being bodily, in a body which has been perceived as 'not normal' (the male body being the 'golden standard' of bodiliness) since time immemorial. To sterilise the gospel accounts of Christ's humanity because of the messiness of human living is the temptation for theology to abandon flesh, and 'judge carnal desires as the root of sin and mortality' and women as the bearer. This temptation has not gone away[618]. While flesh is fragile for Tertullian, it is not corrupt, but *subject* to corruption, and to be rejoiced in. 'What is at stake is nothing less than the possibility of love. Christ loved the person, and "along with the man he loved also his nativity"'[619] (author's italics). Although Rivera contrasts the message of Tertullian and the Gospel of John with the Pauline literature - one of love of 'flesh' against 'flesh' as sin, Rivera notes that 'flesh is ambivalent… Flesh is not simply

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[616] Gandolfo, "A Truly Human Nativity", 2014: 384
[617] Jantzen, "*Becoming Divine",* 1999: 269.
[618] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 153.
[619] Tertullian, 1972 in Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 45.

good in any of these texts'[620]. She notes when Tertullian's carnal theology 'slips' into the thought forms of the day, feminizing flesh, equating flesh with sin, or both, the dominant narrative of Tertullian's writing is one of 'sexual control', occluding the affirmative theology[621]. If flesh becomes equated with women only, the link between the incarnation, the 'undeniability' of Christ's nativity and his fleshly origins as necessary for all of birthed humanity breaks down and women are excluded[622].

Emily Holmes affirms Rivera's use of Tertullian to underline the porosity of Jesus' human flesh 'intermingled with his mother's in utero and while breastfeeding', sharing meals with others, touching people, and healing others 'through the intimacy of his own spit'[623]. Limiting Jesus as flesh and word becomes a 'scandal' only when 'applying dualistic and essentialist thinking' in terms of 'opposition and identity' because reason then finds the incarnation 'paradoxical and absurd', a 'category mistake when applied to divinity, which is characterised by self-giving love rather than being'[624]. The tendency to distance the complexity and existential address of the incarnation, of the flesh/word intermingling, in terms which emphasize rationality and linguistic explanation still remains. While not irrational, the poetic words of John's prologue, and the Chalcedonian definitions that followed in an attempt to clarify incarnation, do not 'attempt to explain how these two (divinity, humanity) are conjoined in Christ – merely that they must be'[625].

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[620] Rivera, M, "*Poetics of the Flesh*", 2015: 53.
[621] Rivera, M, "*Poetics of the Flesh*", 2015: 44.
[622] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh*", 2105: 52.
[623] Holmes, "*Flesh made word: Medieval women mystics*", 2013: 30.
[624] Holmes, "*Flesh made word: Medieval women mystics*", 2013: 30,31.
[625] Holmes, "*Flesh made word: Medieval women mystics*", 31.

If enfleshment is real, and if this is what Christians believe 'the incarnation' is all about, then enfleshment entails real, contingent experiences, never the same from one minute to the next, unpredictable, often painful, repetitive, vulnerable, passionate, a lot of effort (if I truly engage with other bodies), with lots of blood and other bodily fluids in the mix, and most of all, must include my experiences as a woman, despite Jesus' gender. The quality of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, if really and truly 'in the flesh', will also have the same character of open-endedness, of 'carrying on', of iteration, instability, and flux, relationality and affect, regardless of the specific social content, which I find in my everyday. Jesus 'took flesh' to become a human being because God loves and values what Godself has made and is making, so that my human enfleshment in all its incoherence, variability and difference is valuable. To deny carnality or to classify flesh as sin 'leads to the projection and its despised traits onto others' – women, sexual minorities, racialized peoples, those living with disabilities' - a 'flesh of abjection'. 'A construct of sinful flesh replaces vital corporeality; this construct is used to control the malleability of bodies… to entrap them as bodies of sin, sex, race or abnormality… turning its malleability into its liability'[626].

'Fleshy' words

In the images associated with flesh in John's Gospel ('word', 'glory', 'light'), Rivera finds 'images of life' which intertwine with everyday concrete elements ('water', 'wine', 'bread', 'fish', 'blood')[627]. The text becomes material, especially in the stories of Jesus'

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[626] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 154.
[627] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 21.

ministry, intertwined with the metaphysical. As Rivera notes, 'The most metaphysical of statements rely on the most concrete material dimensions of corporeality, which often escape the boundaries of individual subjects. Its poetics often escape the boundaries of this theological text'[628]. Rivera finds that this gospel only uses '*sarx*' (flesh), before the crucifixion, using '*soma*' (body) after Jesus' death, a word which has connotations of a dead human body.[629] Water, bread, and wine are intertwined with images of flesh and blood in John's gospel: there is water turned into wine, bread shared with multiple people, wine and bread at the Last Supper as symbols of Jesus' sacrificial blood shed and body broken, and water and blood flow from his side once he has died. In John's account, 'flesh is unstable and complex'[630], united in the narrative with spirit and bread, shared in the feeding of the five thousand, 'becoming part of many bodies, transformed into the very flesh of the bodies which partake of it'[631]. 'The gospel conveys the intertwining of the material and the spiritual[632]… flesh interlaces the body and the world'[633], echoing Merleau-Ponty's usage of the term 'intertwining'. As Rivera notes, the rich density of images surrounding 'flesh' in the gospel resists a division into 'manageable categories' of material and spirit. Quoting Stephen Moore, she identifies the 'confluence of images that cannot be easily reduced to simple equivalences or literal dichotomies'. These images of water, blood, bread and wine are not '"simply material and literal… nor fully

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[628] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 27.
[629] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 21.
[630] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 21.
[631] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 23.
[632] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 27.
[633] Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 74.

spiritual and figurative"'[634]. Yet she acknowledges the limits of words and representation in this enterprise of embracing my own fleshiness and the inexplicability of its character.

> 'A turn to corporeal materiality would turn flesh to dust if it fully dispelled ineffability, the irreducible otherness in all bodies, the indeterminacy of becoming flesh…. Writing flesh requires language attuned to silences, disruptions, opacity and to the complex qualities of sensation'[635].

It is to the writing of sensation and particularly that of touch to which I now turn.

Skin, tangibility and the senses in action

Although skin only speaks of one aspect of bodies directly, it is the most visible aspect of bodies in motion. The place of skin and other 'visible body traits' as a site of wounding and abjection in inter-corporeal relationships is a subject area in its own right and is amply explored elsewhere (e.g. Ahmed, Alcoff, Weiss[636]). MacKendrick is another feminist and theologian fascinated by skin as both surface and in the action of touch, and the linkage of words with skin, theologically and philosophically. MacKendrick would like to reinstate the complexity of surfaces, particularly that of skin, as being more than 'skin-deep' or 'shallow'. 'Words call to the flesh, but the flesh … at least calls for speaking as well … as much for speaking words, as for contact of skin with skin'[637]. She highlights the distinction between 'touching' and 'grasping', both materially and etymologically.

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[634] Moore, 1994 in Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 26.
[635] Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 154, 156, 158.
[636] Ahmed, *"Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others",* 2006. Alcoff, "Toward a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment" in Bernasconi *"Race: Blackwell Readings in Continental Philosophy"*, 2001. Weiss, *"Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality",* 1998
[637] MacKendrick, *"Word Made Skin",* 2004: 8.

'Grasping' signifies efforts towards 'mastery'[638]: 'touching … intersects, it fragments, it opens possibilities'[639]. In the incarnation,

> '[T]his Word which is implicitly both God and God's speaking, both being and creative power, is John's first take on the Trinity's second person… Touch functions in John as an image of the experientially powerful, which is neither lasting nor graspable'[640].

Christ's touch exudes power but not the power of mastery or domination. But Christ needs his disciples, beginning with Mary, to recognise the limits of touching and holding post-resurrection.

As Rivera has identified multiple material images which weave together many layers of meaning (bread, water, wine, blood), so MacKendrick notes the use of 'polysensuous' – aural and luminous senses as well as tactile - imagery for the person of Christ in John's gospel. The very condition of 'Flesh's recognizability will be 'Light and Word'. MacKendrick's insights are worth quoting in full:

> '[f]lesh makes possible the shining of light, the sounding of the word, in the world. … These three, then are interleaved infolded, neither distinct nor identical. The Word will be incarnate as flesh; without incarnation, it remains inaudible, spoken to no one. The light becomes flesh, too; without this becoming it remains invisible, its shining indistinguishable from darkness. Flesh is not simply that which blocks the light but that which makes possible the very fact of illumination, as both medium and object of luminosity. Flesh… is also the medium of *touch…* And so this spiritual son, who is also God, is given to the material world through a polysensuous presentation: sound, sight, surface'[641].

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[638] MacKendrick, "*Word Made Skin",* 2004: 5.
[639] MacKendrick, "*Word Made Skin",* 2004: 7.
[640] MacKendrick, "*Word Made Skin"*, 2004: 26, 27.
[641] MacKendrick, "*Word Made Skin",* 2004: 27.

Multiple senses in operation have already been referred to above, appearing in Jesus' miracles and in the events after Christ's resurrection, seeing, speaking, touching, smelling and tasting are all necessary for belief - sight is not the privileged sense. MacKendrick associates this polysensuality with faith and believing while it complexifies Jesus' bodiliness post-resurrection. Peter and John see the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene hears him speaking, the disciples see him eating fish, Thomas touches his side, and Peter smells the fish cooking on the beach in the early dawn, and hears Jesus' forgiveness[642]. Christ's resurrection does not diminish his enfleshment, but rather appears to intensify it, with Christ's 'increasing materiality'. 'It is an intensification of the most material of traces, the marks of the intersection of matter (spear, nail) with matter (flesh)'[643]. Faith for the disciples is not a matter of comprehension, of grasping; rather it is intuitive knowledge which is touched and satisfied. Playing on the word 'comprehension' which implies a completeness of grasping (prehension), MacKendrick notes how the disciple's faith after the resurrection was sustained by a more intuitive knowledge.

> 'No one *com-prehends* Christ... each has exactly enough to sustain faith... In John, the desire to know is at once satisfied and sustained... our senses tell us what our language cannot comprehend... each of those touched by it in this gospel feels the strength of faith... the memory of contact rather than the grasp of vision. It is an eternity in time of blessed transformation—as if it were a touch that could last without grasping'[644].

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[642] MacKendrick, "*Word Made Skin*", 2004: 32.
[643] MacKendrick, "*Word Made Skin*", 2004: 35.
[644] MacKendrick, "*Word Made Skin*", 2004:41, 42, 43, 47.

The 'absolute responsivity' of Christ, the Word, is seen in his touching. '*Word* is the

difference between body and flesh, between will-less corpse and the responsivity of

flesh in motion. Flesh is body that hears and reads the call to touch... paradoxically, it is

touch, the most transient of senses, that stays'[645](author's italics).

The 'doubleness' of touch, that 'tangibility' that Merleau-Ponty described in the

possibility of touching and being touched simultaneously by my two hands, paradoxically

'makes' another, dissolves the difference between my own body and another's but does

not completely 'heal the gap'. MacKendrick's 'polysensual' account manages to balance

Christ's human integrity with Christ's divinity, incorporating nontemporal aspects, such

that the sensory touching becomes emotionally touching and the written record of it

touches the reader centuries later. This linkage of sense with affect and vision is called

'hapticity' and I shall return in the discussion of touch and tangibility in the work of

Richard Kearney below.

The 'touch of God'

But before I engage with Kearney, an intriguing engagement by Judith Butler with the

impact of the writing of a seventeenth-century theologian, Nicholas Malebranche

(1638– 1715) on Merleau-Ponty in his exposition of touch and God in his lectures of

1947-8, in which she acknowledges the pre-eminence of tactility for Merleau-Ponty, not

least in the 'touch of God'. Butler iterates Merleau-Ponty's description of flesh as 'not

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[645] Mackendrick, *"Word Made Skin"*, 2004: 46.

something one has, but, rather, the web in which one lives''[646]. The possibility of touch precedes sentience, self-awareness, and agency and depends on an Other to be performed. It means I am formed as a person even as I am formed by another's touch (or its absence), the prelude and possibility of agency formation, cognition, and self-knowledge (whether or not this is expressed in language). Butler uses Merleau-Ponty's concept of intertwining and notes, 'We see that acting on and acting are already intertwined in the very formation of the subject'[647].

Touch is of itself for Malebranche evidence of the '"grace of God"… indicating that order [by which we are created]… by virtue of its own enigmatic and partial character"'[648]. Butler goes further to suggest that Malebranche is indicating that there is 'no sensuous manifestation that is not derivable from God' but that 'sentience itself maintains a referential connection to a spiritual order defined by the incessant activity of self-incarnation'[649]. Malebranche believes sentience is a human but also divine characteristic of living experience. What Butler means precisely by 'self-incarnation' (not Malebranche's term) is not clear, but she is clearer about Merleau-Ponty's connection with theological thinking. For Malebranche and for Merleau-Ponty 'the order of intelligibility, or '"the divine Word" 'intersects' with the polysensuality of lived experience in a manner which is 'ethically consequential'[650] such that there could be no knowing oneself without knowing others. '"I borrow myself from others"'[651]. Knowing

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[646] Butler in Carman and Hansen, eds, 2006: 183
[647] Butler in Carman and Hansen, eds, 2006: 184, 185, 189
[648] Malebranche in Butler in Carman and Hansen, eds, 2006:
[649] Butler in Carmen and Hansen, eds, 2006:
[650] Butler in Carmen and Hansen, eds, 2006: 182
[651] Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 159 in Butler in Carmen and Hansen, eds, 2006:

God, knowing oneself (sensorially and phenomenologically) and knowing *about* oneself are all intertwined. The touch of the 'grace of God' is experienced as an "interruption", and in that touching, self-knowledge is formed, as well as knowledge of others… So we see that grace, understood as the moment of being touched by God and as the rupture that such a touch performs, reveals to us the divine life, where that life is understood'[652]. The 'touch of God' is sensed through others and through everyday human lived experience as a form of 'grace', because it signals by its interruption that there is an Other, mediated through the touch of others. As touching occurs from the earliest hours of one's life, then the possibility of a touch of the 'grace of God' 'intersecting' with multiple sensations must be an aspect of the earliest relationships and a part of the interruptions and formations of the home and daily life.

In all of these feminist accounts, there is an urge to make a personal, phenomenological address, with a stress on polysensuality, to make words mean something more than a dissociated concept, in their fleshing-out of lived experience with biblical accounts from John's Gospel and writings of the early church fathers. I will discuss Merleau-Ponty's concept of intersubjectivity in the work of Rivera, Soskice, and Walton's complementary cautionary response to theopoetics, but first, the exploration of touch, and the touch of God in hospitality to the Stranger, is continued below in the work of Richard Kearney.

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[652] Butler in Carmen and Hansen, eds, 2006: 192

Richard Kearney's 'Anatheism', 'hospitality to the Stranger' and 'carnal hermeneutics'

Another 'theopoetical' theoretician who also uses phenomenological methodology is Richard Kearney, his prodigious writing and peace work marked by growing up during 'The Troubles' in Ireland in the sixties and seventies, and a scholarship which took him to study in Canada with Charles Taylor (*Sources of the Self* (1989)), doctoral studies with Paul Ricoeur at the University of Paris, and significant encounters with Continental philosophers before making his home in Boston, all life experiences that taught him the value of collaboration with others and a wider horizon of thinking and dialogue across disciplines[653]. There are three major themes from Kearney's wide range of writings which I find have a bearing on my mediation on the preconscious activities in the home as an avenue of divine revelation: i) the concept of Anatheism from '*Ana*'-'again'; the return to God after the 'death of God' and what that could mean for metaphysical or positivistic theology, both in the naming of God and the relationship with human phenomenology: ii) the centrality of hospitality in the development of what Kearney calls 'phenomenologies of the Stranger – the wager 'at the heart of every religion'[654] of welcoming the Stranger, who could be Other or Foreigner, both human and divine. And iii) Kearney's notion of 'Carnal hermeneutics': the actual active embodied practice of hospitality – the performative rather than the declarative of enfleshment (although Kearney does not deny the need for 'confessional', 'linguistic' and 'narrative' modes of hospitality[655]) of which hapticity, the perception of both touch and proprioception linked

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[653] Kearney, "*Poetics of Imagining*" 1998. "*The God Who May Be*",2001:2." *Anatheism: Returning to God after God",* 2010: xi-xv.
[654] Kearney, "*Anatheism: Returning to God after God* ", 2010: 7.
[655] Kearney and Fitzpatrick," *Radical Hospitality*", 2021.

with affect, is the most significant.[656] The risk of putting palm to palm, skin to skin, as in

proffering a hand to be shaken on meeting a stranger, is one example.

For Kearney, the 'anatheistic moment', or *'anagnorisis',* is the return to God after

> '[e]xperiences of deep disorientation, doubt or dread when we are no longer
> exactly sure of who we are or where we are going…. experienced in our bones –
> moods, affects, senses, emotions – before they are theoretically interrogated by
> our minds… as familiar to believers as unbelievers… The moment of not-knowing
> that initiates the anatheistic turn is not just epistemological… nor is it a
> prerogative of elite intellectuals'[657].

The 'returning' is not a Hegelian dialectical synthesis of atheism and theism: nor can be

a smooth or straight trajectory in the 'returning' of the life of faith, reflected in the

complexity of working out through everyday life in all its changes the horizons of one's

perceptions of God, faith, and living with others in a faithful way. 'Anatheism is a theism

that has made itself vulnerable to atheism, where doubt is not the opposite of faith but

composite with it… a wiser theism purged of its innocence, a second naiveté

(Ricoeur)'[658]. 'The disorientation, doubt and deep dread' does not end faith, but enables

a taking-stock of one's horizons, a deeper commitment and an awareness of human

indeterminacy.

The 'anatheistic wager' at the core of the 'encounter with a radical Stranger' for Kearney

is the risk taken in a decision to open oneself and/or one's home to the Stranger (always

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[656] Kearney and Treanor, *"Carnal Hermeneutics"*, 2015:99-124.
[657] Kearney, R, *"Anatheism: Returning to God after God",* 2010: 5.
[658] Caputo, "Where is Richard Kearney Coming From?", 2021: 555.

capitalised), whether the stranger is another person or even God. The home may be one's interiority or a physical place called 'home'.[659] Kearney's close friend and colleague John Caputo, a process theologian noted for his theology of a 'weak God', critiques Kearney for 'hedging his bets' by proposing a wager which always has a '"get-out-of-jail-free card"': the fact that, in the 'return to God', Kearney still comes down on the side of the theistic in the "wager" of anatheism – 'the dice is loaded in favour of God'[660]. If the wager held real risk, there needs to be 'genuine undecidability' - an 'excess of love' to the point of madness, which is seldom found in other than saints'[661]. For Caputo, Kearney's anatheism and hospitality to 'the Stranger' is not radical enough.

The phenomenology of 'the flesh', the radical hospitality Kearney is describing, calls for a triple hermeneutic of *aesthesis*, *poiesis,* and *phronesis,*[662] linking hospitality to incarnation as 'existing in the middle space between the no-place of the absolute Other… and the immanent place of Husserl's idealist Ego' transcending 'the either/or alternatives of conditional and unconditional, interior and exterior, visible and invisible.'.[663] I quote Kearney in full:

> 'To be incarnate in space and time, flesh and blood, is to exist in a world of hostile as well as hospitable relations… It is with these fragile conditions in mind that a phenomenology of the flesh calls for a triple hermeneutic of *aesthesis, poiesis, and phronesis*… Phenomenology lives in the house of being with doors and windows ajar… We inhabit (Merleau-Ponty), we dwell (Heidegger) as guests as much as hosts in the house of being… Fully acknowledging the fecund paradox of

[659] Kearney, *"Anatheism: Returning to God after God",* 2010: 7.
[660] Caputo, "Where is Richard Kearney Coming From?", 2021: 552.
[661] Caputo, "Where is Richard Kearney Coming From?", 2021: 567.
[662] Oxford English Dictionary. Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God",* 2010: 131-186.
[663] Kearney and Semonovitch, *Phenomenologies of the Stranger",* 2011: 17, 18, 19.

incarnation, Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty offer a phenomenology of carnal and metaphorical beings, of hosts and strangers in all their linguistic and corporeal richness… … "a poetics of the Stranger"… that takes "poetics" "in the broad sense of a productive act beholden to something beyond itself"… Welcoming the Stranger involves more than discourse: it also entails embodied comportment toward the other… Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the "between" (*l'entredeux)* points to the chiasmatic excess that is our status as flesh… This has deep significance for a new understanding of the Stranger.'[664]

Of all the zones of the skin, Kearney focuses on hands as the site of tactility and hapticity and the intersubjective projection of affect. Touch is enigmatic, elusive and 'ranges freely throughout the body', enabling empathy: '*em-pathein:* feeling oneself as one with another' and is healing[665]. Although touch is judged commonly and philosophically to be the 'lowest' sense with 'optics' the 'primary sense', Kearney notes that 'Touch is the most *intelligent* sense, Aristotle says, because it is the most *sensitive'[666]* (author's italics). As the medium of touch as well as the oldest sense developmentally (from which all other senses develop in utero), skin is enigmatic in its function: containing and excreting, receiving and expressing, and moving between background and foreground in consciousness. Our flesh 'is full of holes'; being enfleshed involves 'negotiating tactility and hapticity… From the beginning, contact involves a *tact* for negotiating surprise'[667]. Touch is a 'carnal hermeneutic' because there is a process of 'translation' and interpretation occurring subliminally in human relationships, a constant movement

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[664] Kearney and Semonovitch, *Phenomenologies of the Stranger"*, 2011; 17,18,19.
[665] Kearney, "Philosophies of Touch", 2020: 304, 305, 307,308, 313
[666] Kearney, "Philosophies of Touch", 2020: 303.
[667] Kearney, "Philosophies of Touch", 2020: 304.

which keeps 'us susceptible to the world as it commutes, like Hermes, between inside and outside, self and other, human and non-human'.[668] Kearney links the sense of touch and tactility with reading and legibility: it is 'our most refined means of transition and translation… reading and being read by other's skins… to be tangible is to be readable'.[669] In Merleau-Ponty's writing, to which Kearney is heavily indebted, there is no priority of touch over vision or vice versa - 'reversibility and doubling of sensation are characteristic of all five sensory modalities'.[670]

Elsewhere, Kearney notes the apparent contradiction in Christ's forbidding Mary to touch him after his resurrection, as not a warning against 'touching', but rather a warning against 'grasping' with its implication of 'possessing' as I have noted already in MacKendrick's work on skin:

> 'The Risen Christ's *noli me tangere* to Mary is as carnally hermeneutic as his bidding to Thomas to put his finger in his side… Jesus' final meeting with Mary Magdalene was not an absence of touch… but rather a warning not to 'grasp' or 'possess'… to allow him to be other, a passing stranger (*hospes),* so that she could, in turn, be liberated into the extended love of the disciples'[671].

Like Rivera and MacKendrick, bodies, hands and touching have taken on a new significance in Kearney's 'carnal hermeneutics', bringing together Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and his own experiences of peace-making in Ireland and South Africa. Offering a 'hand of peace to the enemy' in a handshake is evidence of 'radical hospitality', bearing in mind significant historic examples of handshakes symbolising the movement

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[668] Kearney, "Philosophies of Touch", 2020: 305.
[669] Kearney, "Philosophies of Touch", 2020: 308.
[670] Moran in Kearney, "What is Carnal Hermeneutics", 2015: 214, 215.
[671] Kearney, "Double Hospitality: Between Word and Touch", 2019: 86.

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to peace in the handshakes between Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk in South Africa, and the late Queen Elizabeth and Sinn Féin politician Martin McGuiness. Of the meeting in South Africa between Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (then researching the legacy of trauma in apartheid crimes) and the imprisoned 'brutal apartheid executioner' Eugene de Kock, in which Pumla touches his 'trigger hand', Kearney writes:

> 'I think what most struck me about Pumla's account [of instinctively offering her hand to de Kock at their first meeting] was the witness to a kind of practical wisdom that operates at the level of the body, a discerning sensibility that functions at the level of skin and flesh, nerve endings and sinews, complexion and touch'[672].

Kearney entertains the possibility of his 'carnal hermeneutics' as pre-linguistic – 'carnal knowledge prior to reflective knowing, a form of tact with contact, of savvy as *savoir* in the original sense of tasting and testing (from *savourer-sapere-sapientia)*' [673]. Kearney develops his principles of 'carnal hermeneutics' more fully:

> 'The principles I propose to develop from previous hermeneutic projects are the following basic principles:
>
> (1) human existence requires an art of understanding as well as a science of explanation,
>
> (2) our understanding involves a finite, spatiotemporal being-in-the-world,
>
> (3) our finite experience calls for a phenomenological appreciation of meaning as a projection of possibility and reception of reality,
>
> (4) this meaning involves "sense" mediations in a wide arc of signifying ranging from the proto-linguistic domain of corporeal sensation and orientation to the most advanced forms of linguistic articulation,

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[672] Kearney, "Double Hospitality: Between Word and Touch", 2019: 83.
[673] Kearney, "Double Hospitality: Between Word and Touch", 2018: 58.

(5) this extended hermeneutic arc transcends the traditional dualism between rational understanding and embodied sensibility, and reverses the prejudicial hierarchy of the senses where sight and hearing trump taste and touch,

(6) this reversal—or more accurately redistribution—of our bodily senses enables us to see how the most carnal of our sensations are already interpretations: a question of tact and tang (from the same root, *tangere-tactum*); and,

finally, (7) this equiprimordial redistribution of the senses invites hermeneutics to go "all the way down," abandoning residual tendencies to oppose language to sensibility, word to flesh, text to body'[674].

This notion of 'carnal hermeneutics' tallies with my own sense derived from Merleau-Ponty, my autoethnography and studies of the everyday, of habits being a sensibility of 'flesh' operating 'prior to reflective knowing', sustained and augmented by movement, expressed wholistically in Merleau-Ponty's use of the word 'comportment'. Touch itself is never isolated but enabled by the whole body, 'from head to feet', but also enabled by the senses of proprioception and kinesthesis (often forgotten when 'the five senses' are mentioned), affect and intention moving together in a singular, eccentric and particular comportment, revelatory of (unconscious) bodily inscriptions from the past. For Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, touch cannot be understood outside of proprioception and kinesthesis entangled with affect and relationality: all are integral to primary sensations of touch for survival, from the first movement of the baby's head as she senses her mother's breast to feed, to the movements of the carer to care, love and console, as I have already noted in Chapter 1[675].

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[674] Kearney, and Treanor, *"Carnal Hermeneutics?",* 2015: 2.
[675] Sheets-Johnstone, *"Primacy of Movement"*, 2011: 428.

The '"practical wisdom that works through testimonies and examples"'[676], which is the commonly understood definition of *phronesis,* becomes "dialogic hermeneutics" in Kearney's model because hermeneutics is 'all the way down', a hermeneutics in which touch, language and the imagination interplay in the stories that are told about oneself and others. In the "continuity" between language and touch, 'language has to further elaborate something which is proto-conceived by touch'[677]. For Kearney, the 'dialogic hermeneutics' of 'reading another's body' come into play in discerning whether the Stranger is an ally or enemy, while recognising that the other is 'within myself *and* an other beyond myself' in a process of discernment[678]. The *making-welcome* or *poesis* offered to the stranger is 'inaugurated in the imagination' such that 'what is given to me by the other remains foreign to me in its very givenness'[679] as I express in my attention and comportment towards the Stranger. 'To respond to the Other is always to have chosen, to have interpreted, even if we are not cognitively aware of doing so'[680]. Kearney calls this wisdom of discernment

> 'a diacritical hermeneutics of endless translation' which always leaves 'something to be translated', as the Stranger can never be exhaustively or completely known or 'contained' and remains 'untranslatable… The love of the host for the guest always precedes and exceeds knowledge', without control, mastery, or containment of the 'Other'[681].

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[676] Kearney in Marcelo, "Narrative and Recognition in the Flesh", 2017: 780.
[677] Kearney in Marcelo, "Narrative and Recognition in the Flesh", 2017: 782.
[678] Kearney, *"Anatheism: Returning to God after God"*, 2010: 44.
[679] Kearney, "*Anatheism: Returning to God after God"*, 2010; 42.
[680] Kearney, "*Anatheism: Returning to God after God",* 2010: 46.
[681] Kearney, "*Anatheism: Returning to God after God",* 2010: 48.

As far as Kearney's exegesis of 'diacritical' or 'dialogic' hermeneutics goes in defining *phronesis,* (and there is no doubt that Kearney actualises what he writes about in his peace efforts in Ireland and South Africa), for me '*phronesis*' and '*praxis*' extend into the '*poiesis*' of the materiality of the hospitality offered. The 'praxis' element of *'phronesis'* may be expressed in language and narrative, in the transformation of long-held prejudices and feelings about others through dialogue and spending time with others, and in extending the hand of friendship and hospitality, but the 'practical wisdom' of '*phronesis*' is also expressed in the making and sharing of food and the maintaining of domestic spaces so this can happen. Kearney may assume this happens as the invisible background for hospitality to occur, but for me, there is Martha in the story, as well as Mary.

Flesh and a 'labyrinth of relations'

The intersubjectivity which Merleau-Ponty believed was integral to human flourishing in from the very beginning of life, is never lived as an 'individual', nor to be understood in isolation from relationships with other human beings. I shall develop this further below in the section on 'dwelling' which overlaps with the same sense of intersubjectivity. As Rivera says, 'Flesh is a constitutive relation to the world – a condition for corporeal survival as well as the source of its vulnerability'[682]. This was expressed scripturally in Jesus' sense of always being situated in relationship: 'I and the Father are one'(John 10: 30, John 17: 21) and 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (John 14: 10-12). In

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[682] Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 154.

including the flesh of lived becoming of God with humankind in the irrevocability of human community, social norms 'are always *materializing*[683]', and the world is 'a labyrinth of incarnations'… "My capacity for empathy toward another human being echoes my own incarnation… These are capacities on which others depend for their ongoing incarnations"'[684]. Rivera sums up her theology by identifying the loving creation, 're-creation' and 'becoming flesh' of God's 'embrace' of human carnality.

> 'Rather than abandon flesh to live in the body, we need to re-evaluate the rejected traits of carnality, its links to the material elements, its susceptibility and frailty… unless I embrace my own flesh, and its beginnings in the flesh of another, I cannot love other fleshly beings – nor can I understand the incarnation… In Christian texts, God is the initiator and model for such an embrace of flesh. Infusing earth with love, God creates. Becoming flesh, in birth and suffering, God re-creates'[685].

Elsewhere, Soskice echoes Rivera's sentiments on intersubjectivity and relationality, writing on flesh and incarnation from the angle of the visions of a medieval mystic, Julian of Norwich, using the old etymology of the word 'kind' as in 'kinship':

> 'Christ is our kind, a human being like us, and by extension 'our kin'. Clothed in human flesh in the Virgin's womb, he will in turn clothe us in God's love… The Word incarnate in embracing embodied life blesses its contingent and frail nature' [686].

Julian's insight is that God's 'kindness' is reflected in his readiness to make human beings God's 'kinsfolk'. The making of humankind as 'folk' is the act of creation of humankind;

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[683] Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh*", 2015: 135.
[684] Merleau-Ponty in Rivera, "*Poetics of the Flesh*", 2015:146.
[685] Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 154, 156.
[686] Soskice, "The Kindness of God", 2008: 148.

the second is the recreating, the clothing with Christ, of the new birth. Quoting Julian, Soskice finds this 'kinship' in Christ as our 'mother':

> '"The Second Person of the Trinity is our mother twice over, at our first creating when the world was made ('the world came into being through him' (John 1: 10)) and by our 'second birth' through the Word Incarnate"' [687].

Because human beings have this double 'kinship' with God, Soskice believes that 'The human being is glorious, not lowly, because Christ is glorious, and something similar seems to be true of the human body'. Soskice echoes Jantzen's emphasis on natality and Kearney's on God's love as the motive for, and expression of, God's valuing of human beings in her statement that the 'Incarnation cannot be simply a rescue operation once things have gone wrong. God has loved humankind since "before the foundation of the world"'[688].

Contrasting the Augustinian view of human nature and the body with that of Julian's, Soskice reflects on the 'clothing of God in human flesh in the womb of Mary' as evidence of the 'triumphant unfolding of God's plan of love'. She continues,

> 'The impatient otherworldliness of Augustinianism, for which the flesh is a drag and a distraction on the soul's journey to the uncreated, is brought firmly down to earth. Why should we desire to flee our physical nature if God has chosen to become our kind?... It is this 'kindness' of God that renders not just motherhood but all kinship metaphors so appropriate when speaking of God'[689].

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[687] Julian of Norwich in Soskice, "The Kindness of God", 2008: 148.
[688] Soskice, "The Kindness of God", 2008: 148.
[689] Soskice, "The Kindness of God", 2008: 149.

Reflecting on 'all kinship metaphors' opens up the automatic intersubjectivity and the web of relationships which all human beings are 'thrown into', if they are to live and flourish.

'A Theopoetics in Ruins': Heather Walton

Theopoetics opens up vistas for the imagination and breaks down concrete barriers between word and flesh, but may also fall foul of the temptation to transmute the negativities of human flesh into beautiful images (Keller's 'bouquets of flowers') which dissociate the painful rawness of the experience from the words themselves, always present in any representation. I have shown how Rivera does not shirk from the challenge of 'carnality' and vulnerability in her reading of 'flesh'. Another theologian who actively faces the temptation to dissociate from the edginess and negativities of 'real life' while still writing of transformation is Heather Walton. Walton's most recent piece achingly articulates the inadequacies of human flesh and words to approach the hope and illumination of the incarnation. Meditating on the passage in John's gospel where Jesus is talking about the temple and how he will raise it up in three days, Walton draws out the Gospel writer's enigmatic response of Jesus to his critics: 'they did not know he was talking about the temple of his body' (John 2:19). Identifying all the 'elisions, relations and transformation this small narrative contains', Walton finds

> 'The sacred building in ruins; the body damaged, wounded and destroyed. Stone and flesh in derelict communion. That which is solid and insensible bleeding into

what is warm, fleshly, mortal and vulnerable. A body in ruins. Broken stone-flesh faith'[690] .

Using words that are 'playful, serious and deeply compelling' here while referring to another author she admires, Toril Moi[691], Walton charts the ambiguities and fleshly realities of living with human flesh and divine incarnation. As the *bricoleur*[692] *par excellence,* Walton pieces together, like parts of a ruin, 'stone-flesh words' which are not a 'poetic device' but rather an 'attempt to express deep relationality and encounter in language' [693]. In her ruminations on Bruno Latour's challenge to contemporary theology of its failure to '"seize.. differently"'[694] the reality of the contemporary world, as 'vibrant and alive, full of intimations of enchantment and lively presencings of the divine', (against the 'disenchantment' of Weberian theory of modernity), Walton uses Henri Lefebvre's phrase -'"a veritable profoundness shines through"[695] everyday existence'[696]. How to express this 'profoundness' of the divine in the everyday, to construct something whole out of pieces of waste without resorting to words removed from 'real living', to live fully in the present while believing in the eschaton? Walton also notes 'the tragic also irrupts into our experience unsettling and utterly reshaping it'[697] with the political theorist William Connolly's reminder that '"a sense of the sweetness of life must be shot through with a tragic sensibility if we are to truly engage with the political, social, spiritual and ecological challenges that confront us"'[698]. It is a difficult balance of hope

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[690] Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins ", 2020: 159.

[691] Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins", 2011: 124.

[692] Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins", 2020: 161.

[693] Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins", 2020: 161.

[694] Latour, 2013:174 in Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins", 2020: 160.

[695] Lefebvre, 2020:65, in Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins", 2020: 160.

[696] Walton, H, "A Theopoetics in Ruins", 2020: 160.

[697] Walton, H, "A Theopoetics in Ruins", 2020: 160.

[698] Connolly, 2012 in Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins', 2020: 160.

and transformation, against a tendency to escapism, apathy or despairing nihilism. The 'ruins' of contemporary life, 'the abuse of power' and 'profound neglect' of 'human suffering' that theological certainties are 'complicit' in, are the rubble with which to build 'broken, stone-flesh faith'[699], in the context of the stark realities of the contemporary world, bearing in mind Jantzen's creed: 'The new things we can begin are begun out of our bodily and material existence, not *ex nihilo*' [700].

The theopoetic ruins 'mediate loss', 'make space between life and death' and 'are sites of transformation'[701]. Using texts as diverse as Rose Macaulay's *The World My Wilderness* (1983), Rebecca Solnit's *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (2017) and Julia Leigh's *Avalanche* (2016), Walton writes that theology has to change its language because people no longer believe the old stories – they are 'people whose shrines are broken and whose language is no longer spoken… perhaps we also learn to speak a language that connects the brokenness of our domestic altars with deeper silence'[702]. For Walton, theopoetics is true to itself if it does not try to escape 'the brokenness of religious speech but dwells among its ruins and seeks what can be discerned there'[703]. But Walton does not leave the reader 'among the ruins'. Her answer is found elsewhere in the 'wildness of creativity', the mode in which she herself operates.

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[699] Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins", 2020: 160.
[700] Jantzen, "Sources of Religious Knowledge", 1999: 145.
[701] Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins', 2020: 162,164,166.
[702] Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins", 2020: 162, 163, 164.
[703] Walton, "A Theopoetics in Ruins ", 2020: 161.

Walton charts the 'extreme' 'wildness and chaos of creativity at the edge'[704] in other texts and writers (Elizabeth Smart, Luce Irigaray,[705]and Siri Hustvedt[706]). In describing a conversation between Kearney and Keller, Walton notes how 'deeply ambivalent' creativity might be, found in the first instance in how the Creator God is perceived and in humans as reflecting this characteristic of the Creator God[707]. Kearney 'resolutely affirms that any possible God we place faith in must be entirely beneficent' – "all that God is able to be is love"', while Keller asks here and elsewhere if Kearney's '"rising-sun God precludes all future resistance to its own goodness'[708]. Keller's reply to Kearney's 'beneficent' God is a God who faces up to the impossible 'unknowables' of human and cosmic chaos: a '"God who must be somehow responsible for the terms of the universe, in which a vast indeterminacy of complexity at the edge of chaos is encouraged"', inciting '"a certain erotic risk to creation"'[709]. Walton's discussion of Siri Hustvedt's novel *The Blazing World* (2014) pursues the 'birth of creativity in processes of abjection, pollution, rage and violence', which may be 'easier to avoid when projected into cosmic forces or tehomic depths [as seen in Keller's exegesis of creation], than when encountered in the flesh' in the 'challenging and ambiguous creative experience of everyday life'[710]. Walton quotes Hustvedt:

> 'Ambiguity' (Julia Kristeva's theory) is dangerous… because "the aesthetic task'"
> entails encountering chaos beyond the regulating safety of the symbolic order…

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704 Walton, H, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 336.
705 Walton, H, "Extreme Faith", 2002: 40-50.
706 Walton, H, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos",336-356.
707 Kearney, 2016 in Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019:338.
708 Keller, "Kearney's Endless Morning", 2006: 360.
709 Keller in Kearney and Zimmermann, eds "*Reimagining the Sacred: Richard Kearney Debates God*"
2016: 49 in Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 338.
710 Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 351.

ambiguity is dangerous for the creative artist, and particularly so when the artist is a woman, because she may be less able to access mechanisms of separation from the maternal'[711].

Hustvedt seems to be implying that the maternal and the artistic are mutually exclusive: the requirement for women (or mothers) to access or 'regulate' the 'safety of the symbolic order' (presumably the domestic space) means abstaining from the 'birth of creativity'[712]. The artist and sculptor Louise Bourgeoise is the prime example for Hustvedt of the 'boiling anger' of feminine creativity, with her (Louise's) ambivalence towards her own parents and her experience of motherhood, expressed

in the 'scarred, wounded and threatening forms she produced… which transgressed sexual boundaries…with their intermingled male and female genitalia', revealing the 'power of art to mediate between what exists and what is lost or destroyed'[713].

It is at this point that Hustvedt reaches for religious language: '"I am alone staring into something alien and incomprehensible… I am alone with God"'[714]. Walton sees no 'happy ending' in Hustvedt's work, finding it 'complements' Keller's 'ethical ambiguity' while acknowledging that theopoetics in the work of Mayra Rivera witnesses 'to the capability of poetics to embody intense suffering and trauma – and this has included looking into the depths from which human pain is born'[715]. For Walton, Kearney's view that

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[711] Hustvedt, 2012: 73 in Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 343.
[712] Hustvedt in Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 351.
[713] Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 345, 346, 350.
[714] Hustvedt, 2014: 360, 361 in Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 350.
[715] Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 351.

' theopoetics manifests the sacred activity of making… in one great game of holy imagination played with bodies and soul, with hand, tongues, ears and eyes… creators make creatures that remake their creators… Art as divine-human interplay, again and again'[716]

does not contain the 'painful contradictions and agonizing ambiguities… stubborn awkwardness' and 'dark humour' 'beyond the symbolic order' that Walton feels is a more human, truer picture of 'writing ambiguity' or indeed, of living it[717].

Much as I appreciate the extremity, wildness, and brute creativity of Bourgeois' art, when I consider creativity in the domestic space, I wonder if the extremeness of a similar narrative of 'boiling' emotions, dark humour and depths does indeed manifest itself in an equivalent 'ambiguity' in the humblest form of maintenance activities. In my experience, domestic activities may provide an outlet for the 'volcano' of emotions – floors and bathrooms have never been so clean, and bread responds to much pounding! Unlike Hustvedt, I don't make the same distinction between 'art' and 'motherhood', despite the lack of a product or object. While not denying that 'boiling emotions' may arise doing domestic activities, I find these activities have a kind of 'symbolic order' of their own, revelatory of the 'divine-human interplay' for which Kearney yearns.

In drawing together these threads from my discussion above of God's 'hospitality' and the motives for hospitality towards 'the Stranger'; the 'touch of God' in 'grace'; God's 'kindness, and 'kinship'; the 'wildness of creativity in everyday life'; and the necessity

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[716] Kearney, 2018: 1 in Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 350.
[717] Walton, "Creativity at the Edge of Chaos", 2019: 352.

of intersubjectivity – the sense that 'no one is an island' phenomenologically in their experience of the incarnation, I finish with some reflections on 'dwelling'.

'Dwelling' in community

Although Hustvedt and Walton leave me in a place where unconscious emotions bubbling up through roles as mother and woman take centre stage on the domestic scene in an intense way, practically that is not all that *could* or *should* be said about domestic practices. Without sanitising or distancing disturbed emotion and affect from daily living, I want to affirm Kearney's 'sacred activity of making' in the home, which may also mean facing the darkness of abuse and violence as well as creating light. My home is my horizon of perception and interaction, as it is for those who live there, especially children if there are any there. Earlier, in chapter 4, I explored Iris Marion Young's discussion of home as a critical value in developing and preserving identity, for adults and children, in her challenge to the theory of Irigaray and de Beauvoir depicting home as the site of gender repression and invisibility for women. Although not explicitly theological, I would like to reiterate Young's use of the term 'dwelling' to signify how the domestic space, its contents, inhabitation and choreography contributing to the 'materialization of identity' of those who lived there, and with the development of routines and habitual practices, highlighting maintenance and preservation as significant practices. 'Dwelling' includes the formation of habits and practices, the creation of a 'habitus', where the hands, bodies, voices and brains of the inhabitants, of different sexualities or none, are all fully engaged in this dynamic, in a choreographed

flow of senses, movement, positionality, comportment and synchronicities of intellection and creativity, according to the needs and dissonant realities of everyday living, within fluctuating plays of power[718]. This 'dwelling' can be 'degendered' to allow the possibility of transcendence as well as immanence for both men and women, without denying Irigaray's insistence on differing between women and men, and the need for women to use their own language and have their own space to build their own identity. The home may also be the space to provide an alternative through hospitality, (in Kearney's use of the term), to those who experience what Fulkerson calls 'the obliviousness to the Other' which characterises postmodern societies in the West[719].

The word 'dwelling' that Young uses has biblical undertones, perhaps intentional for both Heidegger and Young. I have noted throughout this chapter how crucial the Gospel of John is to the discussion of flesh, enfleshment, and incarnation in the work of Keller, Rivera, Soskice, McKendrick, and Kearney. I would briefly like to augment earlier exegesis by highlighting the references to in the Gospel to 'dwelling', 'indwelling' and 'abiding' from the David Ford's exegesis of the same. 'Dwelling' is from the Greek word, '*menein'*, with a range of meanings from 'remaining', 'resting', 'living' and 'staying' to 'enduring', and 'waiting', linked with phrases in the original text which are descriptive of God or God's wisdom, meaning 'forever' or 'everlasting'[720]. The indwelling referred to is the 'mutual indwelling' by Father, Son and Holy Spirit, into which the believer is infolded, and the sense of 'ongoing presence' which is used of 'Jesus, his Father, the Holy Spirit,

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718 Irigaray, 11 in Young, "House and Home" in "*Throwing Like a Girl"*, 1995/2005: 130.
719 Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear", 2007: 266.
720 Ford, *"The Gospel of John"*, 2021: 55.

and those who love and trust them'[721], but also plays on physical places and the act of remaining in one place. The word 'dwelling' makes an early appearance in the gospel in the first words Jesus uses when he asks his disciples the significant question, 'Where are you staying/abiding/dwelling?' (John 1:38)[722], and is linked to passages associated with food, particularly Jesus' flesh and blood, as noted by Rivera above. Dwelling is also linked to 'My Father's house' which has 'many dwellings' or 'many rooms' (John 14:2), with the sense of describing the 'new community life of learning, love and prayer', 'participating in the intimacy of Jesus who is close to the Father's heart' (John 1: 18)[723] in a long-term relationship. The organic image of the vineyard which is also part of Jesus' discourse here and its connection with 'abiding' gives rise to implicit nuances of the patient, hard manual work, honed skill and vigilant oversight of the vineyard worker, while also containing the challenge of the pruning of the branches of the vines in the vineyard[724], to make sure the vines produce good wine – metaphors that flow over into notions about the actions and expertise need to 'dwell' in the home, although these more material or fleshy aspects are only implied, not directly referred to. Jesus' words to abide are words of 'longing' and 'invitation' as well as 'command'[725]. There are also resonances of 'covenant' ('a permanent living bond')[726] where the 'fundamental reality is mutual indwelling' with Father, Son and Holy Spirit[727]. As all of the covenants were initiated by God towards God's people, there is a strong sense from Ford's exegesis of the Johannine

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[721] Ford, "*The Gospel of John*", 2021: 151, 11.
[722] Ford," *The Gospel of John",* 2021: 54.
[723] Ford, *"The Gospel of John"*, 2021: 72.
[724] Ford, "*The Gospel of John*", 2021: 289,293.
[725] Ford, "*The Gospel of John*", 2021: 294.
[726] Ford, "*The Gospel of John*", 2021: 293.
[727] Ford, "*The Gospel of John*", 2021: 296.

message that the initiative for 'dwelling' flows from God to humankind, as an outworking of the incarnation.

Phronetic praxis: wise skill at home and in church

But to 'flesh out' what *phronesis* means more fully in terms of the practical wisdom of daily living as 'abiding in the Father's love', I turn to practical theology. *Phronesis* is

> '[g]ood judgement… put into play' as the practitioners – parents, teachers, carpenters, gardeners, nurses – are 'engaged, flexible, attuned, and attentive on many levels – cognitively, emotionally, relationally, morally and spiritually' with 'an intelligence of practice that fosters responsive action carried or even incarnated in their bodies – hands, facial expressions, posture, voice'[728].

Practices are intentional and relational, attitudinal and temporal. Practices and practitioners alike are 'improvisational, highly sensitive to context and irreducible to verbal expression'[729]. Into the flux and multiplicity of daily life, the practice of *phronesis*, *aesthesis,* and *poiesis* intertwined 'can never rest on certainty about what should be done and what outcomes will result: it needs to be supple, adaptive, and as variable as the people and places in which it operates'[730].

The practices of being responsive to God's grace are found in the flux and flow of daily life: daily practices in the home into which prayer, trusting, forgiveness and an openness to all that is 'Strange' and 'Other' is woven and intertwined. The 'touch' of God as the 'grace of God' is felt as a kind of proprioception or kinaesthesis, like the buoyancy of

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[728] Bass, Cahalan et al," Christian *Practical Wisdom",* 2016:1, 5.
[729] Bass, Cahalan et al, "*Christian Practical Wisdom",* 2016: 11.
[730] Bass, Cahalan et al, "*Christian Practical Wisdom".* 2016: 11.

water when swimming or 'more like gravity... the constant, enduring presence of a loving and merciful Triune God' as a given of an ongoing relationship with God, or what Bass terms 'life abundant'[731].

Earlier, Soskice reflected on Julian of Norwich's visions as a source of inspiration for the flourishing inherent in Bass' term 'life abundant'. Holmes also highlights medieval women mystics such as Hadewijch of Brabant, who, in a manner reminiscent of those who composed the Chalcedonian response, perceived the incarnation as

> '[n]ot a once for all event but an ongoing embodiment of the divine... [that] takes place in our bodies, our flesh, through our spiritual and ethical practices ... They (spiritual and ethical practices) are the means of our own divinization, of our flesh reaching for its divine word'[732].

This is *theosis* expressed again in flesh as *phronesis* in spiritual practices that are never separate from personal devotion, and ethical word, text, speech and praxis in one's community, akin to Keller's sense of 'intercarnations' – spreading out into the community around. While deeply cognizant of the dangers of the extremes of appropriating the principle of *kenosis* (the ultimate pouring-out of God in Christ for the sake of the people God had created) in the doctrine of the incarnation, or of 'valorising vulnerability' in a way that could tip into an appropriation of victimhood, especially for women [733], I find *phronesis* holds together this 'ongoing embodiment', the whole notion of the 'ambiguity' of 'creativity' expressed in my dynamics of affect, emotions, desires,

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[731] Bass and Dykstra, "For Life Abundant", 2008: 11-41.
[732] Holmes, E, "*Flesh made word: Medieval women mystics*", 2013: 33.
[733] Kilby in Thomas, "The Status of Vulnerability in a Theology of the Christian Life", 2022: 778.

comportment, making, as my actions are 'called forth' by those horizons of God and those around me within the material aspects of the flux and flow of daily living.

As a phenomenological study of these phronetic domestic practices extending into the 'ecclesial spaces' of the church, Mary McClintock Fulkerson's famous study (2007) of the Good Samaritan United Methodist church, is a good example, in which she noted that the white people of the church, unintentionally made the church gatherings a 'white space', where some whites called it 'too black'. Because of enculturated perceptions, white church members were 'oblivious' to the way their comportment made the church space 'white'. As Fulkerson noted:

> 'The wound of obliviousness for those who are white and able-bodied occurs as a continuum of experience, extending from beliefs to desire and visceral reaction to embodied others; the wounds of those victimized by obliviousness are not identical but have to do with being marked as "other."'[734]

Although 'obliviousness' to others is not malicious, Fulkerson notes that 'obliviousness is a form of not seeing that is not primarily intentional but reflexive... A kind of disregard, both experiential and geographical, it may coexist with well-meaning attitudes'[735]. Fulkerson found some characteristics of 'obliviousness' as similar to malice: a 'visceral register where fear, anxiety and disgust occur' to things and people who are 'different' based on 'cultural markings of bodies identifying them as racialized, gendered, sexualized and normal/abnormal"... these conventions also generated rationalizations

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[734] Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear", 2007: 166.
[735] Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear", 2007: 163.

that justify marginalization' which 'substitutes social stereotypes' for real intersubjectivity [736]. This 'visceral register' tallies with Rivera's discussion of the bodily inscriptions of the 'material effects that are woven into our flesh' by 'social practices' relating to perceptions of racialised, sexualised and other differences of capacity, what Merleau-Ponty called 'the flesh of the world' and Rivera 'social-material flesh'[737] - perceptual practices that 'become habitual, shaping knowledge about the self and the world'[738].

It was the 'face-to-face "homemaking practices" of 'sharing cooking and eating, cleaning the church and meeting as United Methodist Women' which made those who had been 'othered' and invisible except as a category 'visible':

> '[c]reated spaces for developing empathy among members… what seemed to best address these inherited bodily proprieties were activities where people worked together, made decisions together, and did so in situations of shared power.… For the whites these practices created possibilities to recognize the agency of the blacks, for blacks the possibility to humanize whites, and for Africans to humanize African Americans and vice versa'[739].

Not so successful were the 'possibilities' church members created for 'group home members' including' music, face-to-face greeting and naming, and a great variety of kinesthetic movements' with 'body movements, gestures, facial expressions and touching'[740]. In her conclusions, Fulkerson suggests that the 'transformation of

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[736] Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear", 2007: 166.
[737] Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh"*, 2015: 133, 134, 136.
[738] Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh"*, 2015:139.
[739] Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear", 2007: 169.
[740] Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear", 2007: 170.

obliviousness and its social harms that go with our everyday lives, whether in or out of church, requires the creation of its opposite: "a shared space of appearance"'[741]. The activities which create a 'shared space of appearance' for people who hover at the fringes of church groups and society are so often very 'ordinary' domestic activities of hospitality and making of all different kinds.

Summary of Chapter 5

There is just the beginning of what could be said theologically about the incarnation and Merleau-Ponty's thought, the 'flesh' of the incarnation, human 'flesh' and 'flesh of the world' as expressed in the discussion of his work as theopoetics by Keller, Rivera, McKendrick, and Kearney, with contributions to these themes from Soskice, Jantzen, Holmes, Walton, Ford, Young and McClintock Fulkerson. I recognize I have dwelt lightly on the dark side of human experience in the home, which deserves its own analysis. Each of the senses and their interplay with movement and affect could have led to a chapter of their own, including the interplay of each with time, in the rhythms and flow of skill. I have merely skimmed the surface of what could be said of sensing (*aestheis),* 'making '(*poiesis*) and making sense, of wisdom (*phronesis)* expressed in sacramental ways in my home in a context of love, dwelling and 'indwelling'. And then there is the whole world of the study of metaphors and matter, with God and carnal bodies…

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[741] Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear", 2007: 170.

Conclusions

Summarising my journey through my everyday

In this study, I have endeavoured to understand the autoethnography of my everyday lived experience as a housewife by approaching it from within several methodologies: phenomenology, theories of the everyday, feminism and theology. My autoethnography created words that needed to be situated, and their embedment within a material context of my particular bodiliness, place and social context opened up within the stream of phenomenological theory. I structured my approach on the theory of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, using several of his concepts to make sense of my writing, primarily his notion of 'flesh': "that which makes the invisible (of living) visible", 'intertwining' with 'the world'.[742]

My autoethnography described life in the home I made overseas, my daily living supported by people who worked for us, with memories of my natal home seeping through my habits in a faraway place. Daily living and self-care activities are the repetitive, unregarded activities and skills with familiar objects and within familiar spaces which human being engage in everyday: intentional but usually unregarded, earthy, sexual, self-care and domestic activities, in which my senses, movement and perception of the world interacts with comportment and skill. By choosing to use an inductive, emergent analysis of my autoethnography such as the Constructivist

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[742] Merleau-Ponty in Carman, "Merleau-Ponty on body, flesh and visibility" in Crowell, "*The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism",* 2012:278, 280.

Grounded Theory of Kathy Charmaz, I hoped that some of the more 'will-o-the-wisp' elements of the everyday would emerge with which to 'feather my nest' as I reflected theologically.

Flesh and words: confronting the impossible task of representation

A large part of my study has operated within the context of my being aware, right from the beginning, that it is very difficult to describe 'what is going on' when I try to record my 'daily living'. My perception of my living cannot be divorced from my bodily lived experience, which is personal to me, although it invariably involves others. I can identify common points of human experience but that serves only to reduce the singularity of what is going on. Language reflects presuppositions; language creates a trajectory. Language allows dissociation from experience; language creates an entry into another's living. From this point of view, to speak of 'the body' in an individual yet generalising fashion 'tidies' things up', makes speaking about 'the body'

> 'more concrete, and potentially more scientific. But 'flesh', linked not least through Christianity to word, can be poetic, relational, transient, and mutual' [743].

'Flesh' does not replace 'body' : flesh and body constitute one another. 'I do not encounter flesh without a body'[744]. To speak in a manner which is true to what is being experienced is to recognise 'the many layered vagaries of living'. My entry into the world is an entry into a network of 'possibilities' and relationships,

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[743] McKendrick, K, "Review of Mayra Rivera's 'Poetics of The Flesh'", 2017: 98, 99.
[744] Rivera, M, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 7.

'in which the shifting standpoint of the body constantly remakes the perceived world… the business of absorbing and responding to the field in which I am located and which is acting *in* me as much as *on* me, feeling my way, where speech and gesture are concerned, doing so by means of signals… of learning not to bump into things… in the many layered vagaries of living '[745].

This is *leib,* to be distinguished from *korper:* either lifeless, material composition or dissociated, third-person abstraction. The theory of the everyday helped me uncover some characteristics which seem to true of the human everyday - fluid, porous, variable, multiple, characterised by 'drift' - with the humans engaging in the making (*poiesis)* of everyday needing to flexible, adaptable, urgent, skilful, kinaesthetically and affectively sensitive and aware, inevitably engaged with the intrapersonal and the interpersonal.

How to 'mind the gap' between the flesh of living and words? Especially when 'language behaves as if it is always 'in the wake of meaning rather than owning or controlling it' implying a 'hinterland' of meaning that is imperfectly accessible to finite speakers/ thinkers'[746]. Flesh lives and 'carries on' through temporality and materiality; to live bodily is to struggle, as all of the theorists I have discussed have done, in order to 'unsettle' the 'reifications' that language so quickly creates, forgetting its roots.[747] Noting Merleau-Ponty's 'intertwining' of word and flesh, flesh and the world, so that the supposed duality merges yet neither loses force, I take Williams' caution that … 'there is no such

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[745] Williams, "*The Edge of Words",* 2014: 112, 98.
[746] Williams, "*The Edge of Words",* 2014: 173.
[747] Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh",* 2015: 155.

thing as a fixed relationship between language and fact'[748]. Indeterminacy is part of the

weft and warp of human being: it is

> 'part of the incompleteness of any linguistic project. It is implicit in the
> acknowledgement of our bodiliness, the fact that we do not speak from a safe
> distance above and beyond the flesh but in the whole of our physical presence,
> whether we are 'literally' speaking or not'[749].

Intersubjectivity: integral to my (domestic) flourishing

The intersubjectivity of bodily flourishing in Merleau-Ponty's theory is found in the

gritty, fluid, nontemporal rhythm of the everyday theorised by Lefebvre and de Certeau,

expressed by students of dance in such terms as 'flow'[750] and 'choreography', indicating

something of the concentrated intentionality, attention, spontaneity and repetitive

doing in close proximity to others that makes the ground of skill and dexterity, freely felt

and expressed loving relationships sensed in the comportment of one 'calling forth' the

sensorimotor-affective, intentional response in the other. Language takes its place as

just one part of the repertoire of 'response', intertwined with its sensory and motor

expressions.

> 'it has roots in simply articulating and testing mutual recognition, inviting
> response of an ever more differentiated kind… Seeing something and speaking
> about something are practices in which I take a particular place in a flow of
> activity that embraces myself and my neighbour'[751].

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[748] Williams, *"The Edge of Words",* 2014: 109.
[749] Williams, "*The Edge of Words",* 2014: 155.
[750] Csikszentmihalyi, *"Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience",* 1990.
[751] Williams, "*The Edge of Words",* 2014: 99.

Feminism gave me a deeper insight into male/female relationships, key in understanding my historical social baggage, but failing to give credence to valuing the material world of home and the activities which are constructed within it. Iris Marion Young was one of the few feminists who challenged the negative stereotypes of home and the domestic[752] None of the feminist accounts were as potent as Luce Giard's analysis from the seventies of working-class women in the moment and movement of 'getting a meal on the table every night', bringing to life the fierce intensity around cooking and providing food for a family. Her metaphor of women juggling sense, sound, taste, her own culinary history, her budget, her family's likes and dislike, her time and her tools, like 'a many-armed Shiva goddess', resonated deeply with my own experience.[753]

Theological responses to flesh and words and 'the Word made flesh'

In consciously examining the theology of my experience inhabiting home with domesticity within the frame of the incarnation, and deconstructing traditional theology in conversation with feminist theologians, my study shifted the focus from Christ's death and resurrection, what Grace Jantzen labels 'necrophilia',[754], to the 'between-ness' of 'heaven and earth' [755] with the 'both/and-ness' of Christ's bodily living, beginning with his nativity.[756] To do so means valuing my (messy) experience as a girl/woman and as a mother and allowing my bodily daily living to no longer be excluded because of

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[752] Young, "House and Home" in "*Throwing Like a Girl* ", 1995/2000.
[753] Giard in de Certeau et al, "*The Practice of Everyday Life: Vol 2*", 1998.
[754] Jantzen, "*Becoming Divine*", 1999.
[755] Orsi, "*Between heaven and earth: The religious worlds people make and the scholars who study them*", 2004.
[756] Gandolfo," Truly Human Nativity: Recovering a Place for Nativity in Contemporary Christology", 2014.

misogynistic claims of Jesus' masculinity as the sole avenue of grace, but included in the possibility of the divination of human living or *theosis* [757] linking earth to heaven and the cosmos in all their changeability. I noted historical 'somatophobia'[758] in the theological response to the phenomenological texture of living: a distaste for the lived reality of child-bearing and fertility, extending into how the senses and movement are viewed as elements of the more 'animalistic', unstable, passionate modes of being associated with being a woman. 'Troubling the waters' of traditional Christian models will also mean the inclusion of those who are excluded traditionally because of visible differences in their bodies: on racial, ageist and ableist grounds, 'differencing' I have only mentioned briefly.

The theology which spoke best to the nature of humans inhabiting their everydays used notions of 'vulnerability', 'fragility', 'porous', 'possibility', 'multiplicity', 'variability', 'polysensuality', 'non-temporality', and 'resistance to language'. The Johannine Gospel provided the grounding and backdrop for most of the theologians whose work I turned to, exegeting the risk of hospitality towards 'The Stranger', which allowed the Stranger to remain strange – mysterious, not completely knowable or expressible – even as they touched skin to skin (MacKendrick, Rivera, and Kearney), or responding to the 'touch of the grace of God' (Butler on Malebranche's influence on Merleau-Ponty). Home is the most common arena for the creating of this hospitality to stranger and Stranger. Visible differencing in people discriminated on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class and age shaped the life experience of several of the theorists on which I based my discussion.

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[757] Keller, "*Intercarnations*", 2017.
[758] MacKendrick," *Word Made Skin*", 2004.

I found it significant that, of those feminist theologians who placed an emphasis on bodily living, weaving the texture of their first-person accounts into the fabric of their reflections on touch, welcome, and affirmation of others, Mary McClintock Fulkerson's account stood out with its emphasis on how vital these (largely preconscious, over-learned) skills are to keeping church life alive (in the affective, social sense) by doing such things as cooking together, or welcoming and providing refreshments for church groups[759].

Future orientations and possibilities

In terms of further study, it would be useful to know how generationally mediated my domestic behaviour is. Knowing that my own daughters don't iron, sew, mend, knit, or appear to have learned many domestic skills other than that of cooking and food management skills, makes me aware that the different generations in the world may perceive my celebration of domestic materiality and domestic skills differently, although there is anecdotal evidence of a resurgence in crafting and other 'hands-on' activities since the pandemic, and a resurgence in the skills of mending with the current cost of living crisis[760].

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[759] Fulkerson, *"Changing the Subject",* 1994/2000.
[760] itvXnews, 17 January 2023.

In this study, I've worked on the assumption of returning perception of, and interaction with, the material world to a place of recognition and respect: within the function of the right brain, the original 'Master' of Iain McGilchrist's *The Master and His Emissary* (2009), in its role of first-person context-creating and sense-making, leaving the left brain (the Emissary) to return to doing what it does best: bringing detail, conceptualisation, abstraction and third-person distance to being. Both hemispheres are necessary for a whole person, and both operate together. To respect the materiality of my bodiliness and my situatedness is to balance this with my agency as a woman finding personal direction and particular skill and fulfilment in whatever work or sphere I participate in.

At first glance, the theology I have described - of the invisible, the affective, the sensual, the material, and the kinesthetic - would seem to be human 'subjectivity' on steroids, to the exclusion of the traditionally correct Christian response of keeping my sights on the eschaton. To celebrate the materiality of my bodily being and my immersion in the world does not deny the path of righteousness, nor is it to cease thinking. Thinking permeates all of my being, including my emotions: reflecting on and celebrating my own bodiliness does not mean solipsism or narcissism. Nor am I insensitive to continuing imbalances of power in the home. I am not advocating a return to traditional and conservative Christian interpretations of male/female roles (breadwinner/housewife; dominant/subservient) current (if they ever went away) in some contemporary Christian circles, as the only possible interpretation of the dynamics of power in the home,

expressed under the hashtag 'TradWife', where women return to the state of male domination within the home which I escaped from many decades ago[761].

Nor is it to come down on the side of transcendence to the exclusion of immanence. I believe in 'both/and' ness, however cognitively impossible or ethically uncomfortable that is. I'm aware that theologically there is much ground that I haven't covered that relates to bodily living and homes: for example, suffering and pain, violence and domestic abuse and mental health issues of body dysphoria and self-harming.

I have hoped to show in some small measure my central conviction that to touch others, words must carry felt experience within them in tone and content: they are not '*about'*; they need to be '*in'* and '*of*' and '*with*', patient, thoughtful, with silence framing actions that evidence attentive listening to the other in the present moment in the space between[762]. This should surely be the place where the presence of the divine is mediated and the incarnation is manifested. This applies to the mutual sense-making of gesture for the child or person who is only able to communicate non-verbally – those who are pre-speech, speak another language, distressed, traumatised, or experiencing sensory or movement loss, or adults experiencing the confusion of dementia. Recognising the foundational nature of the senses means locating foundational senses, habits, body

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[761] Freeman," Tradwife*':* the new trend for submissive women has a dark heart and history", *The Guardian, "Ask Hadley",* 27 Jan, 2020
[762] Stern, *"The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life",* 2004.

schema, and actions that have deep affective content. To reach the one who is unable to respond, I sit alongside her in a safe space, letting her become accustomed to my size, smell, speed and manner of moving, my tone of voice if I speak, sing or hum, the texture of my skin or clothes, finding where she is resonating, and in which mode she is already operating. I need to discover her habitus and learn her language of gesture, eye movement, head movement, and bodily comportment, to convey how much I value them. 'I answer by imitation, confirming that I have not only received and taken on board her gesture, but, perhaps more importantly, that it means something to me'.[763]

The whole area of the temporal, to which I have paid only partial attention in terms of flow, rhythm, pattern and choreography - in its character of an underlying *basso sostenuto* to life's apparent tonelessness - is rich with unexplored possibilities.

Ecclesiologically, I haven't carried through thinking about flesh and blood into its undergirding of the Eucharist, as O'Donnell does so well. There is much to be thought of when creating liturgy that allows space for the non-verbal or preconscious in its delivery in for all people – according to unique bodily differences, and not just because they are labelled 'other'. I have given only one example of intersubjectivity in a church context because I have limited myself to the domestic place, even though I see a natural extension of these principles in church life. Fulkerson identified the 'home-making' activities that enabled the 'appearing into visibility' of people formerly oblivious to

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[763] Caldwell, *"Delicious Conversations",* 2012: 65.

others[764]. In a non-church setting, the same principles apply. For example, for the clients with dementia in a care home, this will mean having their own private secure space, surrounded by some of their belongings, with access to facilities where they can express something of their own autonomy and self-care. This may be as simple as washing some of their own clothes or squeezing an orange juice (even if staff have to clean up after them)or preparing their own breakfast (even if they have already had one provided). Receiving bread and wine, hearing familiar liturgy and the music of familiar songs and hymns in their care homes work on similar principles of evoking inhabited words and actions, even if those attending are unable to respond verbally or respond visibly at all.

Finally, my world is a 'labyrinth of incarnations', facing multiple ways and many people, facing my own carnality, facing heaven on earth. 'To be a body is to be tied to the world, … tied to other people's bodies' through the 'hierarchies' and 'demarcations' that my 'flesh' presents, 'constituting… the possibilities of becoming for those who have been condemned by the depreciation of flesh'[765]. To go deeper into these depreciations is another thesis. Suffice to say for now, that In 'the Word became flesh', I am reminded of my 'kinship' with a 'kind' God and of the continued process of incarnating incarnation in the material of my own flesh at home and in the world, in my gesture, comportment, hospitality to the stranger and the Stranger, prayer, worship, and ethical service to others.

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[764] Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear", 2007: 159-171.
[765] Rivera, *"Poetics of the Flesh"*, 2015: 156, 157, 158.

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Appendices

Tables 1 to 6

List of Tables:

Table 1: Questions in 'Grounded Theory in Ethnography', Kathy Charmaz and Richard Mitchell.

(*Handbook of Ethnography,* **2001, (Eds) Atkinson, P, Coffey, A, Delamont, S, Lofland J and Lofland, London: Sage, 163)**

The Charmaz and Mitchell questions relating to an analysis of my use of CGT and from which Tables 2, 3, and 4 have been developed, have been slightly modified to include the following:

a) When and how is the recorded action taking place?

b) Who are the actors?

c) What is the long-term behaviour being recorded?

d) Context: place before the move – domestic, organizational, cultural

e) Context: place after the move – domestic, cultural

f) Context: staff roles, hierarchies, organization

g) Context: emotional

h) Values: presentation of the self to others

i) Values: presentation of self at school and in the village

j) Values: presentation of self: gender: the patriarchy

k) Actions: Symbols invoked: Religious symbols:

l) Actions: Symbols invoked: Domestic symbols

m) Actions: Symbols invoked: Social/public

n) Theories used by actors to explain their actions to each other.

o) Goals being sought? Standards? Deviations? Rewards?

p) What is being ignored?

Table 2: Analysis of actors and social contexts in autoethnography

(using the framework from Charmaz, K and Mitchell, R, 2001 in J Atkinson, P. Coffey, A. Delamont, J. Lofland and L. Lofland (eds) *Handbook of Ethnography,* SAGE)

Actors	Context of actions: home	Context: immediate setting/social	Context: cultural
Myself	'tied cottage': owned by employers	Able to form friendships, some very close, with people of wide range of cultural groups, as well as close relationships with staff	Gender distinctions: not much contact with royalty Cultural expectation of hospitality as a primary cultural value, sometimes gender-based, other times gender mixed with accompanying expectations of dress as being sensitive to a wide range of religious norms
My husband	Ditto	Preferred to work collaboratively; found hierarchy difficult to work within	Shallow cultural hierarchy: husband had regular events and irregular meetings with royalty
Staff where I lived, also employed by our employer	Separate accommodation nearby provided by employer; Rented accommodation elsewhere	Hierarchy of roles: my husband as the 'top' leader/'boss'; I was also treated as on the 'top' strata of the social order	Staff who served us considered to be culturally inferior to the local people because from another country/skin colour
Other professionals (expatriates from many different countries) socialised with on regular basis	Mix of rented accommodation, accommodation supplied by employers	Within the work context, mixed perceptions dependent on racial and religious background of those socialising with; still a tendency to be viewed as 'socially superior' to those of black and brown ethnicities, although this made us uncomfortable (post-colonial implications)	Other professionals, including local professionals, treated as social equals where language differences were not a barrier
Other professionals socialised with at 'events'	Ditto	Treated as social equals within social cliques we were invited to belong to	Other professionals, both local and expatriate, treated us as equals; We were expected to conform to prescribed protocols with royalty

Table 3: Analysis of values within a range of social contexts in autoethnography

(using the framework from Charmaz, K and Mitchell, R, 2001 in J Atkinson, P. Coffey, A. Delamont, J. Lofland and L. Lofland (eds), *Handbook of Ethnography,* SAGE)

Values : presentation of the self to others: childhood bodies, sexuality, menstruation, marriage	Values: presentation of the self to others in my home: yearning to be loved	Values: presentation of the self to others at work: being a 'helpmate' to my husband	Values: presentation of the self to others at 'events' : being 'a capable, decorative hostess'	Values: presentation of the self to others in voluntary work within the community
Familial role as no 3 child: 'helper', 'child carer, interested in the material aspects of family life, as perceived by my mother; 'idiot', 'bold', as perceived by my father because of 'accident-proneness/dyspraxia', poor academic performance, impulsivity, readiness to defend by younger siblings from abuse	Capable, able to clean up after messes, fix things Warm, helpful, willing Competent, in charge Comforter to other's tears, but not expressing emotions myself Accepting of range of people 'Holding up the world' Bookish 'Good with babies and kids' Good cook, hospitable	Capable, able to clean up after messes, fixing things Competent, in-charge, leader Warm, helpful, willing to take responsibility Accepting of range of people Ready to find an answer Bookish 'Good with babies and kids' Good cook, hospitable Creative (art, music, singing, drama)	Socially competent, able to converse with strangers from a variety of backgrounds Sensitive to local customs and norms Able to dress appropriately according to the occasion and people present Able to offer class appropriate hospitality	Strove to appear socially competent, able to converse with strangers from a variety of backgrounds Tried to be sensitive to local customs and norms Strove to dress appropriately according to the occasion and people present Endeavoured to offer class appropriate hospitality
Sexually chaste, celibate till marriage, bodily functions kept to self – not meant to intrude on familial functioning patriarchy: gender-based preferences, space for males only to 'emote'	Conservative values of my parents: embarrassment about bodily functions including menstruation, having to do my own self-	'Squeaky clean' 'Wholesome' 'Morally superior – blameless but forgiving of others', ready to admit imperfections	Conformed to the need to appear attractive, but not too much, appropriate Tried to be at ease, socially engaged but not	Attractive, but not too much Appropriate At ease Socially interested but not challenging Socially aware and

	reflection and exploration of bodily functions on my own	Ready to 'go the extra mile'	challenging , socially aware and knowledgeable but not politically 'difficult' Tried to not be overtly abrasive with, or reactive to, obvious gender biases	knowledgeable but not politically 'difficult' Not abrasive with, or reactive to, obvious gender biases
Marriage to a gender appropriate (according to conservative values of my parents) person of same religion		Faithful Supportive Hardworking Compassionate A good listener Socially aware, knowledgeable but not abrasive with, or reactive to, obvious gender biases	Faithful, despite the social norm amongst expatriates to 'play around' An adjunct to my husband's work	Faithful Hardworking. Knowledgeable Compassionate Socially aware but not politically abrasive or 'difficult' when confronted with obvious gender biases

Table 4: Analysis of my own symbols and motivations within a range of social contexts in autoethnography

(using the framework from Charmaz, K and Mitchell, R, 2001 in J Atkinson, P. Coffey, A. Delamont, J. Lofland and L. Lofland (eds), *Handbook of Ethnography,* SAGE)

Symbols	Goals/ justifications	Skills/Stratagems	Rewards	What is ignored
Personal: Clothes, jewellery, shoes (but not so much) books Paintings, textiles in the house Dolls from childhood Postcard collection Quotes on noticeboard	**Personal:** 'I'm a good mum' 'I'm a loving wife' Recognition, visibility 'Without me, he wouldn't have got anywhere' Being indispensable To help people find God To help people practically To help people in distress	**Personal:** 'I'm going to make you laugh/smile with my stories/jokes/anecdotes' 'I'm going to make you like me' 'I need to write lists' 'If I don't tidy up I won't find things' 'I need a tidy environment to think straight' 'I have a certain way of doing things – getting up in the morning, having breakfast, getting dressed' 'I need to build my day – thought by thought, action by action, however I feel'	**Personal/religious:** People like me, people love me Caring for others, relieving distress Giving comfort Singing with others Worshipping with others Talking about books, films, exhibitions, travel Laughter Attention to stories Making a good meal Making a creative project work	**Personal:** Believing I'm loved What I'm good at Personal success Believing I'm successful How I look Believing compliments from others Believing I'm a good person

		'I need to escape into a book, a daydream, something visual' 'I'm not going to let him down/them down' 'I'm not going to lose face by not completing this, or doing what I said I would do' Singing to myself		
Domestic: **Tool**s for cleaning up, washing up, cooking, sewing, ironing, sweeping, vacuuming, mopping up, gardening, washing, **Contents of the house**: crockery, cutlery, linen and towels, furniture, knickknacks, paintings, etchings, books, lights, electrical equipment	**Domestic:** 'I'm a good cook' I'm a good hostess – people enjoy coming to my home' To be competent, to organize people, to be followed, to be liked, to be loved, to be followed, to organize people	**Domestic:** Cooking : I need to reassure myself; I have a certain way of preparing food and storing it Ironing: I have a rhythm in doing it Cleaning: there are effective ways of cleaning up Housekeeping: room by room, day by day, week by week – planning ahead tidying up : there's a place for everything putting things away tidying the house before I go to bed planning menus planning holidays planning visits to other countries	**Domestic:** Tasty meal (smell, sight, taste) clean house, tidy kitchen, Space on surfaces Gleaming surfaces Table set for a special meal Finding things without a fuss Neatly ironed clothes (smooth surfaces) Freshly air-dried washing (smell of) Rooms ready for guests Decorations for a festival Religious rituals **Religious/non-religious:** Table set for a special meal Decorations for a festival Special rituals associated with a festival	**Domestic:** Freedom of others to experiment domestically, cook, clean up Freedom of others to have personal space to make their own
Voluntary and work-related Diary Lists Plans A tidy desk Plans completed Happy people	**Voluntary and Work-related:** I'm a good leader' To be competent, to organize people, to be followed,	**Voluntary and work-related:** plans, lists, props in place communication achieved/out there collaboration Space to improvise Humour	**Voluntary and work-related/religious and non-religious:** Successful group activities Joyful religious celebrations Memorable shared times	**Vol., work-rel.,** **Relig., non-relig** People's cultural differences Social justice issues

Successful activities bright colours Evidence of collaboration	to be liked, to be loved, to be followed, to organize people	Creative media, especially music and singing Active activities	Improved standards Better communication Happier communication Evidence of increased harmonisation of collective goals, collaboration	Masculinist power games
Social/cultural Houses, cars, clothing, holidays, travel (frequency and mode),staff (number of) Educational achievements Accents, respect of others Evidence of class status	**Social-cultural:** I'm in the paper/on social media People give me respect I'm invited I'm at the high table	**Social-cultural:** Asking 'notables' to introduce me 'Working the room' Accepting multiple invitations Making an effort- but not too obviously Not being 'too political', 'too outspoken' Acquiescing with the status quo	**Social-cultural, religious and non-religious:** Positive comments, invitations Being noticed, respected at 'events'	**Soc-cult., relig., non-relig** People's cultural differences Social justice issues Masculinist power games

Table 5: Table of emotions identified as 'positive' or 'negative'

Positive emotions	Negative emotions
Being grateful for a gift of fruit, delighting in smell, texture and taste of home-grown food, eating alone, enjoyment of sharing food 'out' with another,	Emotional volatility, pervasive tiredness, feeling cold, unexpected shaking, disturbed sleep, startling awake at night with a sense of hypervigilance, trying to quell rising panic.
Happiness at guests arriving, feeling a sense of satisfaction once a meal is served, feeling a sense of achievement when cooking has turned out well, loving the smell of cooking, making soup to feel better, and relief when cooking turns out well, planning the menus and social engagements in the month.	Feeling pain take over my consciousness when experiencing bodily pain, backache, a recurrence of joint pains, low stamina, lethargy, denial.
Enjoying creative projects – planned and unplanned	More accident-prone. Putting food on the table felt like hard labour.
Enjoying the feel of a freshly ironed tablecloth or pillowcase	Finding it hard to get out of bed or get up in the morning, overcome by a sense of unreality and the endlessness of everything,
Feeling a sense of achievement at clearing another space of clutter, or throwing things away, another room sorted so can cross it off my list, delight at making space and making surfaces clean,	Not recognizing the old women who faced me in the mirror, dread of getting older.
	Outbursts of anger, a sense of suffocation, shock, deep anxiety, grief, despair, self-pity, feeling hollowed out and empty, numb to delight, deep frustration,
Enjoying the coolness of the floor in the heat, enjoying the flow of choreography of moving around the kitchen in routine tasks, filling in gaps of time with housework, resignation at the repetitiveness of the daily rituals,	The resurgence of deep hurt from the past, feeling like I was drowning, feeling useless.
Enjoying the maid's company.	Fearing my family was falling apart.
Enjoying the sense of familiarity in daughter's house,	Assailed by doubt.
	Feeling alone, lonely.
	Buzzing brain, hypersensitive to outside noise.
	'Peopled out' by long stream of farewells.
	Wanting to be noticed, cared for, understood, heard.

Feeling pleasure at a line of washing hanging on the line, feeling pleasure at the singing washing machine, Exploring potential colours for the walls of the house we are buying, Feeling galvanized by the surveyor's report of the new house, suppressed excitement at viewing houses online, in the real, and the adrenalin high of making the final decision. recognizing how much I invest in emotionally every home we live in despite the fact they are 'tied cottages', Relief at being home after travelling, Relief when the family say they want to visit Taking extra care when mending, Feeling a sense of home-coming going to the retreat house.	Feeling guilty at having the choice to leave when I can Shame when reminded of past experiences Apologetic about mess one evening with an unexpected visitor Shame at spilling food in a posh store Shame at falling out of chair when getting up to be introduced Shame at getting cross at and losing patience with workmen Grim, fed-up, easily irritated, brusque to others I know really well Dreading another farewell, special event, 'going out' Fear at cousin's disturbed mental state when she is a guest with us: scared about what I should be doing to help her Wishing the time would go faster Anxious over the level of detail in the surveyor's report: have I understood it, what if I haven't?

Table 6: Summary of notes explaining my actions: one of Charmaz's guideline categories

Charmaz's questions highlight the difference between what is reported and how actors actually act, the most obvious discrepancy revealing itself in the explanations given or justifications for their actions. A summary of the notes made in 2020 of the justifications of my actions follow below.

> "In lots of ways, the position we moved to for work as a married couple was the culmination of my husband's career. I had decided to put aside any career aspirations I had had many years before, and subsumed my wishes to his, so it was with my encouragement that he applied, was short-listed and got the job. It was a joint decision to go. I explained my actions to myself in religious terms, as being a 'helpmate' to my husband and a recognition of his 'headship', if not the practical reality that he was the only breadwinner, as I had begun several courses of part-time study ten years before we left. We both explained our actions to each other in terms of duty to the wider community, a responsible use of our gifts and talents, and using our privileged upbringings for the greater good. Our marriage had been characterised over the years by austerity and careful money management, a sense of passing on to our children what we'd inherited, of protecting our children from the public gaze but also making sure that our public

and private morality were not dissonant. I have always struggled with a sense of not-belonging to the national religious institution (because of my non-conformist roots), and of struggling generally with publicly accepted standards of morality, of conforming to standards of behaviour according to our class and social status. These struggles continued overseas. While abroad, we explained our roles to each other as 'fathering' and 'mothering' staff and people who spontaneously came to us in need."

Autoethnographic photographs of domestic activities