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SL/\SH

embodiment, liminality, and epistemology

in relief printmaking through the linocut process

Tess Barnard

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

2018
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Tess Barnard

1st October 2018.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

with tremendous thanks

To my supervisors Gordon Brennan, Ruth Pelzer, and Maria Fusco. I am indebted to you for your constant support and encouragement professionally as well as personally. Your patient, open-minded, honest, critical and considered engagement and feedback throughout this project has been invaluable. There is no doubt I would not be where I am without you.

To Elaine Dickson and her team, who work so tirelessly for all of us Postgraduate Research students at ECA; including Sophie Ramette who, to the end, has never failed to answer my abundance of questions with the utmost clarity and efficiency.

To Sophia Lycouris who was there as my helping hand at a time of great difficulty and decision.

To my wonderful family in Australia who, despite the geographical distance, were my constant companions in spirit. Mum, Dad, Freya, Jonathan, Alice, Cleo, and Heidi, your voices at the end of the line were an anchor across oceans.

To my friends and colleagues at ECA, Lore Said, Katie Forrester, Matluba Khan, Eleni-ira Panourgia, Sorour Fattahi, Francsica Lima Domingues, Larissa Pschetz, Susan Fallouh, Janet Morales, and Maria Stoian.
To the Edinburgh College of Art Printmaking Workshop and its wonderful technicians; especially Brian Park for the countless hours of discussion about print process, and for your wealth of technical knowledge – making what should have been impossible possible!

To Anneleen Lindsay at Anneleen Lindsay Photography, for your passion, professionalism, and speed in so beautifully and honestly visually capturing what are a difficult set of objects at a time when, weary, I could no longer see them for myself.

To my colleagues at Curiouser – Ian, Laura, and Benny, Alice, Fiona, Margot, Victoria, Anneleen and Ania, who have each been a buoyant source of love, support, and staunch encouragement.

To my dear friend Christina Graham, whose well-wishing postcards tile my refrigerator!

And finally, to Rachel and Molly, for all the tea and sympathy I could have asked.
For Lore.
ABSTRACT

It is the aim of this practice-led PhD to explore the processes that attend to the production of a linocut relief print through a framework whose key concepts are liminality and embodiment. In this pursuit the thesis investigates the subjects of skin and surface as well as cuts and cutting through themes and issues of touch and time that include connection and continuity, ‘direct’ creative touch, artist-tool/technology relations, memory, repetition and rhythmicity, transmissions of time, translation, tracking, chronology and equivalence. These subjects and themes’ liminal qualities and characteristics are mirrored by a methodology devised and employed throughout the research. This methodology employs the interpenetrative, interconnected, reflexive and autoethnographic methods of a durational, physically challenging repeat printmaking project, longhand letter writing, and the multiple-register writing of this thesis. It does so in a purposely oblique and ‘wayfaring’ (Tim Ingold, 2011) approach. Binaries and boundaries are thus explored without risking their further enforcement, allowing diverse aspects and subjects to flow into and between one another with the freedom to contrast, contradict, and manifest inconsistently whilst ultimately moving towards a more comprehensive understanding of the thesis’ subjects. This liminal methodology contributes a set of research tools and framework propositions to the existing field of research in and of creative practice, including printmaking, and its embodiment.
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Appendix four: BLOCK AND PRINT LIFE-SCALE FACSIMILES (see accompanying portfolio box).

The following appendices are included on the CD provided in the back pocket of this thesis:

Appendix two: THE LETTERS

Appendix three: PRODUCTION PHOTOS

Appendix five: BLOCK & PRINT DETAIL SHOTS
FIGURE ONE: Tess Barnard, *Block one*, 2014-2015. VanSon rubber-based ink on cut linoleum, 63.5 x 127.5 cm.

FIGURE TWO: Tess Barnard, *Print (one) /*, 2015. VanSon rubber-based ink bleed print on Somerset Satin 300gsm paper, 63 x 125.5 cm.
FIGURE THREE: Tess Barnard, *Block two*, 2015-2016. VanSon rubber-based ink on cut linoleum, 63.5 x 127.5 cm.

FIGURE FOUR: Tess Barnard, *Print (two) \|*, 2016. VanSon rubber-based ink bleed print on Somerset Satin 300gsm paper, 63 x 125.5 cm.
This PhD like so many before it has had many beginnings and endings; false starts, stops, dead ends, and trails that peter out or veer off well beyond the reaches of the realms I set out to explore and that, like sirens, still call to me to follow. Such is the nature of knowledge and its production. The particular project that you now see before you, that which came to so thoroughly envelop this period of my life, found its beginning – branching out from the tangle of the rest – in the subject of an artist’s embodiment within the art process; specifically, my own in the linocutting process that has defined my printmaking practice for a decade.

It was through a chance encounter with James Elkins’ (1999) somewhat visceral and at times enthralling *What Painting Is: how to think about oil painting through the language of alchemy*, that the focus of the research began to shift from the conceptual content of the visual work towards the process of making in its own right. Further encounters with the anthropological essays of Tim Ingold (2011) solidified this position; not to mention a curiosity and frustration at the relative shortage of literature within the printmaking field exploring alternative narratives of process such as embodiment. I set out to explore, document, and examine my personal phenomenological experiences and understandings of *what it is to make a print*, with the aim of contributing to the development of this area from the perspective of embodiment through printmaking.
The journey into the print practice element of this research project, which was in the end to accumulate a total of thirty-two months of intensive labour, began in a state of what Rachel Jones (2013) terms ‘not knowing’, a common aspect of art practice research. As you will see in the sequential outline of events to follow, initially, the extent of my knowledge of the practice project was limited to the fact that the subject was the printmaking process and that I would perform it. Whatever ‘it’ was.

Like mist rolling through a mountain pass, the practice project’s shape and flow drove forwards, pushing ahead of or trailing behind some invisible but undeniable force; at turns shrouding the landscape of the subject in the curling opacity of mystery, while at others offering glimpses to a new perspective. Elaborating on this predicament Jones regards, “When we speak of not knowing, we often mean not being able to recognise or identify something, not having access to the facts, or being unable to predict what will happen [...]. But in the absence of knowing what something is or where we are going, we draw on many other kinds of knowledge to open paths forward [...]” (2013:27).

During the first phase of the project, from July 2013 to October 2014, a variety of media and techniques were explored. Afterwards, reflecting upon these methods and objects collectively, it was established that my focus and direction for ongoing research lay within the subject of process. The decision to focus on the medium of printmaking (specifically linocutting) and its processes was made, acknowledging my

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1 For the sake of flow in this introduction, I have chosen to abbreviate the outline of events. However, an extended version which greater captures the finer details and nuances of these occurrences is available for your benefit in Appendix one: TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT at the end of this thesis.
existing experience and accumulated knowledge within the field as a rich resource.

Following this, from October 2014 to November 2015, with the intention of directing attention away from image content (specifically the distraction of human narrative) and instead towards the work’s modes of production, the decision to depict only patterns and textures on a block was made. These were sourced from a combination of online stock and personal photographs. I then transferred the images and drew up the block. Upon completing this task I suspended the act of cutting the block and briefly investigated other ways of making copies from it beyond a print. I then began the process of cutting the block.

Progressing further into the process I began regularly documenting it through the method of longhand letter writing, alongside photographs to record the material progress through the block (see CD in the back pocket of this thesis for Appendix three: PRODUCTION PHOTOS). This began in May 2015 and continued until the practice project’s completion in February 2016, by which time the letter writing had become a significant method, and indeed a practice in its own right.

Having finished cutting the block it was ready for printing. However, due to its large scale it required great organisation to access the special facilities, equipment and assistance during this phase. Wishing to test inks appropriate to the level of detail and intricacy on the block in a more convenient way, in August 2015 I decided to produce a small swatch or sample lino block comprising of a selection of patterns and textures from the original. Reproducing elements from the original block onto another smaller one proved an intriguing experience and spurred me on to look deeper into the process of copying by copying that process again. I decided to
recreate the original block from scratch using the same parameters (scale, imagery, tools, materials and techniques etc.) whilst continuing to document through letter writing and photography. The emphasis was on the copying of the process of producing the block, rather than its image.

For the final phase of the project, between August 2015 and January 2016, the second block is produced following the process of the first. During this time, the letter writing became a more prevalent form of documentation in comparison to the photography of the block. Once the drawing and cutting stages were completed, the second block was printed using arrangements as faithful to the first as possible; though the results were dramatically different. Only one clear print is pulled from the second block in contrast to the nine that were pulled from its predecessor. From this point I then progress towards the thesis and its development.

The intuitive sequences of occurrences that became this printmaking practice project, detailed above, also brought forth an entirely unexpected series of objects and methodological tools and outcomes in the emergent and parallel process of letter writing. The practice of letter writing within the art or academic community is not in itself new, the correspondences of Vincent Van Gogh (V. van Gogh, J. van Gogh-Bonger; V. W. van Gogh: 1927) (ed. L. Jansen, H. Luijten, N. Bakker: 2009) and Sigmund Freud (ed. W. McGuire: 1974) (ed. E. L. Freud: 1970), for example, come readily to mind. As does, in some ways, the often explicit, confessional, anecdotal, psychoanalytical diary writing of Louise Bourgeois (ed. P. Larratt-Smith: 2012). But
unlike these practitioners and their chirographic peers, my own process of letter writing and its shifting roles within this project refuse clean categorisation as either correspondence, autobiography, manual, or manifesto to which the historical tendency frequently relegates artists’ letters. Most importantly, it must be understood, the letters were never sent. That was not the intention. Instead, the premise of the letter – its function of addressing a specific person or set of people – acted as a device directing and adapting the tone, subjects, and approaches to content and subject dependent upon the imagined recipient. In this way the letters influenced and enabled the issues that came into focus and the ideas extending from them. Having an addressee or audience (real or imagined) at which to direct, describe, question, and propose arguments and ideas is a natural human thinking method and technique; particularly for artists, one might argue. I began materially transferring this technique to letter writing during my Master’s program as a way of recording, accessing, and extending processes of thinking and making, and their challenges, questions, and outcomes. Moving through this practice project, I readily slipped back into the method as a means to record and reflect upon processes that, already so very familiar, were offered a new frame of understanding and sensitivity of perception when directed towards persons (generally) outwith the print community and its knowledge. But, perhaps, the letters were also a means to ward off the sense of isolation I experienced from long solitary studio hours in a country that, though now my home, also held me halfway across the world from people I know and love – my other home. So, it seems that whilst I was writing the letters as a means to better know the intricacies of relief (printmaking), I was also, in some
ways, simultaneously seeking another kind of relief.

As is arguably the case for most artistic practice research, especially within the PhD field, there is a strong element of retrospective clarity and understanding pertaining to the direction, decisions, and overall methodologies and subjects that were initially embarked upon without necessarily having a formal theoretical justification or outline. My approach was no exception to this rule. From early on, I was aware of the potentially autoethnographic category that was implicated in the letter writing, but it was not until the writing of the thesis that its meaning and role were fully activated. As a documentation method, as they were first intended, the letters are indeed reflective in quality; but to position them simply as ‘reflections’ is perhaps to underestimate the complexity of their function and character as part of the project whole. If left isolated within their appendix it would be far easier to confine them simply to reflective writing and dismiss their productive character and potential. However, being part of the larger machine of this research, as a component equal to the print practice and thesis, they become a far more complex tool; one that not only reflects its subjects but is used – alongside, through and within other registers of writing – to interrogate them.

The letters provided a path into the past events and thoughts of the practice project, but also a means to progress into and through the thesis, with a selection of them (and often specific quotes therein) performing as platforms or triggers from which to begin examining the subjects they highlighted, questioned or described. With the overarching subject of the print process in mind I re-read the archive of letters in its entirety, making a list of their key themes and ideas from which to draw
and explore. The terms ‘skin’ and ‘cut’, which identify the two parts of this thesis and its subjects and concerns, were selected not only for their relevance to the print process (especially the seemingly identical blocks, prints and repeated processes of production), but for the multiplicity of meaning and function each word possesses – their noun and verb being identically manifest (i.e. a skin/to skin; a cut/to cut). Already intent on pursuing a more nuanced, oblique narrative of these subjects in relation to my embodiment of the printmaking process, their etymologies and cognates became vital devices for their interpretation, translation and investigation. An approach that rapidly identified not just the limits, contradictions and potentials of language, but also those of the subjects they described, directed and/or navigated.

The liminal framework that defines the methodology, detailed following this Introduction in L / M / N / \ L a methodology, is at the crux of this research and the output of this document; including its structure which is centred on the symbol, concept, and device of the slash that is its main title, and is used within each of its parts and chapter titles. The use of this term and symbol in the project emerged some time before the writing of the thesis (it is formally mentioned for the first time in my letter to Vera, 17th August 2015, excerpt below) at the time of the idea development for the second block which was to replicate the process of the first rather than merely its object;

It even loops back into my continuing idea for the whole project which connects to the word and grammatical mark SLASH /. I like it because it speaks to my cutting process; violence; liminal spaces (which constitutes ritual – a transitional space); a way of marking versus and alternatives i.e. - light/dark - either/or
which also speaks to the idea of having 2 same prints with an equivalence but also a conflict perhaps - the mark separates > is it mediator or barrier?

As you can see I am still mulling it over, but it’s become a bit of a private working title of late.

The notions of repetition, equivalence and difference that were already circulating my head during this period, along with the unique triangular shape of the blocks (and eventually their prints) echoed in the slanting symbol (‘/’ and ‘\’, which combined ‘/\’ describe the overall geometry of the practice work), initially gave the use of the slash its appeal and potential as a structural device and method of enquiry. During the repeated printmaking practice element of the project the slash performed much like Jacques Derrida’s (1993) theories describing “the mobile slash between and/or, and/and, or/and, or/or, [as] a singular border, simultaneously conjunctive, disjunctive, and undecidable” (23, text added), whereby the two blocks and their processes of production stimulated a constant stream of discourse that neither qualified or disqualified one or the other, or one from the other. Derrida goes on to say:

A plural logic of the aporia thus takes shape. It appears to be paradoxical enough so that the partitioning [partage] among multiple figures of aporia does not oppose figures to each other, but instead installs the haunting of the one in the other. (1993:20. Emphasis added.)

Similarly, in S/Z An Essay (1974), examining the rule of the slash, Roland Barthes begs the question, “of these two codes, simultaneously referred to in the same words (the same signifier), is one more important than the other? Or, more precisely [...] must we decide on one code or the other?” (77). Arguing that such hierarchies are
indeed ‘impermanent’ Barthes states that “to miss the plurality of codes is to censor the work of the discourse […]” (77).

This plurality that the slash demands extended beyond the repeated printmaking practice I have described, also drawing it into relation and contrast with the practice of writing. This multiplicity then went on to inform the variety and interaction of writing registers employed across the thesis (discursive, poetic, anecdotal, metaphorical, analogical, etymological, critical, reflexive, dialogical etc.) as well as the profusion of interpretations and translations of its terms and concepts. In *Byzantium/Modernism* (2015) Roland Betancourt, referring to Barthes, regards this “[...] mutual violence and generativity that the slash enables within language, while it – the slash – itself operates as if outside of language and its very logic” (179).

Like Betancourt (2015), in my research this provocative and oblique device promotes a wide scale of possibilities through connecting ‘terms’ from different areas ‘and the non-normative, disparate understandings that emerge in their various planes of encounter’ (180). In line with this model and the liminality of my subject matter, the theorists selected and employed in this thesis possess *implicit* rather than explicit applications and associations with fine art, printmaking, and phenomenological fields. As individuals, collectively, or inter-connectively, they possess insightful understandings and offer productive and challenging premises and concepts on the specific issues, ideas, identities etc. relating to the themes of ‘skin’ and ‘cut’ that had directly emerged from the documented experiences, attitudes, and arguments as evident in the referenced letters of each chapter. The information they provide on the two themes arguably help to fill in or bridge the gaps in the
printmaking field’s knowledge, and speak directly to and challenge my own embodied experiences and processes. This (somewhat typical) multimodal and multidisciplinary approach to art practice research thereby offered extended, complex and nuanced readings through these junctions and overlaps that, I would assert, need not necessarily exclude concept or application based on a difference of origin or discipline. In doing so new paths are opened up on which to travel around, through, towards, and away from one’s subject; widening the scope beyond the limits and expectations its traditional field may otherwise impose.

Beyond the shared themes of ‘skin’ and ‘cut’ that drew my attention, the sourcing of these theorists and their arguments occurred in a fashion approximate to travelling through a maze made up of a rapidly developing plant root system. One text would frequently branch off and lead me to another, and not necessarily by direct reference. More often than not I would be struck by a particular idea mentioned by a theorist and its potential within the framework of enquiry. This would spur me on to further investigate that aspect or possibility within that other branch of research. This is a process that is arguably evident in the implicit intuition demonstrated throughout the practice project; as well as the overall structure of writing (in both the letters and thesis), where the reader is led along these accumulative and topological rather than progressive and linear thought pathways whose allowances encourage broader comprehension of their subject without dismissing, denying, or simplifying its vital and often contradictory shifts and becomings.

The device of the slash or of liminality as research methodology, foster in their
subjects what Betancourt (2015) – himself an employer of the method – describes as “the rich condition of possibility” (180). The result of its unique logic leads us to and through alternative, productive scapes of knowing and knowledge that refuse clean resolution and conclusion. After all, the slash has, as Barthes (1974) puts it, “[...] a panic function: it is the slash of censure, the surface of the mirror, the wall of hallucination, the verge of antithesis, the abstraction of limit, the obliquity of the signifier, the index of the paradigm, hence of meaning” (107).

Following the methodology, as referred to above, this thesis and its structure consists of two main thematically driven parts, S K I N / S K I N and C U T / C U T, each of which are divided into two chapters. These two chapters use their overarching themes as vehicles to explore different facets as they relate to embodiment in printmaking practice (mainly linocutting) via a liminal thread running through that theme. In Part I: S K I N / S K I N this thread constitutes touch; whilst in Part II: C U T / C U T the liminal threads are time and translation, respectively. Applying this liminal framework to the physical, conceptual, and narrative structure of the thesis allows the arguments and subjects within a greater flexibility, creativity and freedom to perform their liminal status; providing a sense of academic order without having to compromise its productive but unorthodox trajectories. As a result, each chapter and its discourse are propositional, having little to no design on any definitive outcome or finite conclusion, but rather performing as generative sites for further discourse, development, and application.

Part I: S K I N / S K I N explores the subject of skins and surfaces via themes and notions of touch as they present and occur through the embodied process of
linocutting. Using the premise of ‘living skin’ Chapter one C U T I S \ / E R A seeks to examine and reframe printmaking practice and methodology as a morphology through the concepts of flow, nomadism (Trubridge, 2013), and wayfaring (Ingold, 2011). James Gibson’s (1986) theories on the interconnectivity of the categories of substance, medium, and surface also provide a framework with which to delimit the medium and its material processes.

Chapter two P E / / I S continues on the theme of surface and the touch that defines it through the conceptual vehicle of the dead or ‘flayed skin’ that its title refers to. Stemming from perceptions of ‘direct touch’ as they are presented and defined within fine art practice I seek to reconsider the binary dividing human touch and technological touch. Using my own experiences of printing with the cumbersome complex technology of the printing press in comparison to Yves Klein’s human model presses in his *Anthropométries* I re-examine and reveal our understandings of and prejudices on touch and its alternative forms.

Part II: C U T / C U T is informed by the themes of cuts and cutting, as objects and processes that occur within linocutting practice. Chapter three V U L / \ / U S, meaning ‘wound’, explores narratives surrounding time – both the maintaining and lapsing of it. Firstly, the structuring and disruptive natures and forms of rhythm (Leroi-Gourhan, 1993) are examined in regards to the accumulative process of linocutting. I then turn my attention to repetition as memory, and the role of cuts and cutting as a form of extraction and hold (Perec, 1997; Goldin, 1984); as well as trauma and return (Adams, 1998; Huyssen, 2000); before examining the transmissive material structures and processes that contribute to the recall of memory through

Chapter four V A C \ / \ / S observes the theme of cuts and cutting through that of the void; a place of excess and forgetting (Golding 1997; Nietzsche 1987), a phenomenon I link to processes of translation. With this as a foundation I reflect upon the challenging experience of the process of tracing and transferring the design of Block one onto Block two; negotiations of replication which are reviewed and dissected using ideas around interpretation, and equivalence and difference (Eco, 2001). Before exploring the influence and impacts of temporality, chronology and their trace upon the process and its objects through comparison to the tracking and tracing of cowboys (Bronski, 2011).

Included within this thesis (Appendix one), on the accompanying CD located in the back pocket of this thesis (Appendices two, three, and five), and within the accompanying portfolio box (Appendix four), are five appendices that stand as records of the project’s process, objects and its unfolding. As explained above, the chosen means to document the project took the dual form of the practice of longhand letter writing on the process and its objects throughout the period of production (Appendix two: THE LETTERS); as well as photographs of the lino blocks’ changing surfaces, paper preparation, and printing (Appendix three: PRODUCTION PHOTOS).

Appendix two: THE LETTERS (see CD) provides an extensive narrative of the project and its development through its dated letters (chronologically ordered in their entirety within the document). Written regularly across a ten month period
(May 2015 – February 2016) a number of letters have been selected and extracted for inclusion in this thesis – performing as critical tools from which an idea or subject is explored or examined – however, in offering the letters in their full collection this appendix aims to provide them their wider context as a more holistic body of documentation and meta archive from which to draw further reflection on the project as a whole. Despite occasional difficulties with legibility I felt it vital to present the letters both within Appendix two and (for the most part) in the thesis, as accurate and honest to their original state and character as possible without correction or redaction, capturing the essence of their content, materiality and my phenomenological trace by reproducing them as scanned copies. But it must be acknowledged that the letters, as a practice that emerged later in the period, do not cover the initial seven months of the project from October 2014 – April 2015, instead during this time the primary form of documentation was photographic; a practice that continued for the duration of the project, the contents of which are available, chronologically within dated sections according to each block, in Appendix three: PRODUCTION PHOTOS.

Appendix three (also located on the CD in the back pocket of this thesis), like Appendix two, is equally something of a meta-archive consisting of a large collection of photographs taken during the blocks’ prints’, and the ink test swatch’s production. However, unlike the letters, though a form of documentation, the aim of these images was never intended as a key to developing the thesis, but instead to evidence the labour and material progress of the works as insurance against some potential misfortune or other to them. As their quantity and frequency suggest in this
appendix, the photos of Block one describe a protracted duration of production of what is literally a tentative day-by-day visual account of what occurred upon its surface. Records of Block two, however, demonstrate a far more rapid pace of completion. It also becomes evident here that methodologically the tables are turning, as greater preference towards the letter-writing documentation over the photographic is insinuated with fewer photos taken over the period, marking the completion of each design rather than its daily progress as with Block one. As a result, the photographs of Appendix three have evolved into more of an optional visual companion to the letters of Appendix two.

In addition to this, and in light of the necessary remoteness of the thesis from the physical reality and location of the print objects it addresses and circulates, I have also included two more appendices to assist the reader in their broader understanding of the project – its objects and processes. Appendix four: BLOCK & PRINT LIFE-SCALE FACSIMILES located in the portfolio box accompanying this thesis, contains four facsimile images consisting one of each completed, inked block and of their corresponding prints produced to life scale (See Figures 1 - 4, reproduced much smaller for the reader’s convenience). These are in no way intended to replace the objects they depict, but to provide a more accurate reference than can be achieved within the size of this document.

Finally, Appendix five: BLOCK & PRINT DETAIL SHOTS (available on the CD in the back pocket of this thesis) follows this same intention but to a finer degree, photographically capturing a number of views of the completed blocks and their prints at closer range (each set given its own section of the document), providing the
reader with a greater sense of the scope of the texture and detail as they occur on the objects.
L / M / N / \ L

a methodology
Knowing things requires one first of all to place oneself between them. Not only in front in order to see them, but in the midst of their mixture, on the paths that unite them.

(Serres, M. 2008: 80).
To Orphena,

I fear today will not be a good writing day, as yesterday also proved. Having printed on Monday, it would seem that the work is not yet done with me. I long to keep writing, there is no question of it or command. I am only writing. Still, swallowed in quicksilver, it makes me angry to be here with you and this page with guidelines like the heart of a delicate prism, and whose spaces of light and air in between I seem intent on filling in spite of myself.

Documentally, though I know it to be vitiated, in a bundle, I have done some writing prior to this correspondence which now hang about my desk like cloudy banknotes. There emerge thoughts, notabilities, memories and daydreams, whose meanings have yet to fully and formally announce themselves; instead it expectant like some theatrical audience ready for me to play out a story that only they will witness — my eyes unable to trace any story but the blank consecutive of their tentative rows and bobbing heads. A moment of darkness.

But to have a narrative, however chaotic and rambling, is to have order — a plot. So tell me, how do I begin to arrange the past two weeks?

Common logic, if privilege to our exchange, would likely dictate a sequential report moving through days or processes in their "correct" linear order of action, from beginning to end. To be fair to logic, this is a realistic and in many ways efficient proposition. It is one I had initially considered until I realised that such a system was unsympathetic to the natural shape of the information the process involved and represented for me.

And where that argument shifted the route was around chronology — pandering to the as-it-happened action, rather than the actual structuring and sequencing of my thoughts within and around my process and perception of actions, which brings me to my point:

Writing is absurd.

We start on the left and suddenly and suddenly our way along, when upon reaching the end edge of the paper we suspend our inked trail, dragging it all the way back along the line it was then confuse with words. Imagine all those invisible sentences written by the softly curled flesh of palms, who, unlike pens, are in almost constant communion with the page. The flesh that is heavy with thoughts that the ink...
NOTE: Throughout the chapters of this thesis I have chosen to include one or two full facsimiles of my letters (as above) to provide the reader with a fuller understanding, scope, and experience of the character and qualities of the project and this documentation form; whilst also acting as the primary platform from which their chapter’s discourse extends from and engages with. These have been interspersed with additional smaller typed excerpts from other letters (and on some occasions performing as cross-reference in the text) presented in abbreviated form to allow the discourse to flow with less disruption. All excerpts are available to read in their full versions as Appendix two: THE LETTERS in the accompanying CD in the back pocket of this thesis.
'Threshold', the etymological (Latin) root, *limen, limin*, to ‘liminal’ (2016) – that placeless place marked by intermediacy and transition; that supposed boundary between two states; that moment our Greek mythological hero Orpheus – in looking towards a future with his wife, Eurydice, in the sun – turns back to face the darkness that lies behind, which swallows her. This same term also extends from a psychological application of its root, ‘relating to the point beyond which a sensation becomes too faint to be experienced.’ The point that Orpheus ceased to feel, to sense, to *trust* the presence of Eurydice on their journey from the underworld to the earth’s surface.

Liminality lies at the heart of this research; in its subjects, but also, and perhaps more significantly, as their methodology. To begin, directing my attention towards embodiment, like Orpheus groping in the darkness for a sense of Eurydice, I will examine the role and value that the artist researcher’s body as research-tool can contribute in the becoming of knowledge. In the context of this project this is namely through material and or tacit knowledge, as well as a reservoir of a much broader accumulation of life experiences which underpin my autoethnographic approach. Additionally, concerning the challenges brought about by the repetition of the laborious print project, I explore the idea of resistance and complexity as a mode of enquiry.

Secondly, on the subject of corresponding, I address the form and nature of my chosen documentation method of longhand letter writing. By drawing it into close proximity to artistic (creative) practice through the embodiment of its actions and processes, the boundaries between writing and printmaking blur. This intersection
comes to form the crux of my liminal methodology.

Finally, moving further into the subject, I attend to the neither/either binaries, contradictions, gaps and commonalities that tend to define the relationship between visual art and writing, as well as notions of practice and theory; all of whose equivalences and differences can be repositioned to play out as productive and constructive modes of knowing.
In handling the liminal one must find other ways of seeing, of reflecting on a subject intolerant to the direct gaze. The methodology must mirror its object, which does not so much define limits but demands seemingly anti-structures of inquiry that, rather than attempt to contain, instead endorse inconstancy, contradiction, and correspondence – the calling cards of liminality. It is a sidelong, or peripheral approach and mode of encounter.

Similarly, the term ‘oblique’ (a relation of liminality) etymologically stems from the Latin limulus, meaning ‘somewhat askance; askew’; whose own origins are believed to lie in the Latin limus – mud, or slime. The particular significance of this last etymon rests in the material and cultural natures of what it describes. The materiality and associations of mud or slime are subject to what Dietmar Rübel (2015) defines as plasticity, formlessness and instability (97). Being neither solid nor liquid, the viscosity of such substances refuse clean categorisation, positioning them within a material liminality. In Purity and Danger Mary Douglas (2002) similarly describes treacle for its anomalousness and “ambiguous sense-impression” (47). Expanding on Sartre’s essay on ‘stickiness’ – which, like mud and slime, is equally problematic to classification, Douglas (2002) observes:

The viscous is a state half-way between solid and liquid. It is like a cross-section in a process of change. It is unstable, but it does not flow. It is soft, yielding and compressible. There is no gliding on its surface. Its stickiness is a trap, it clings like a leech; it attacks the boundary between myself and it. Long columns falling off my fingers suggest my own substance flowing into the pool of stickiness. Plunging into water gives a different
impression. I remain solid, but to touch stickiness is to risk diluting myself into viscosity (47).

Liminality’s threat to the definition and fortification of boundaries applies not only to its interaction with other substances and things but also the self, as Douglas (2002) describes above. In terms of the researcher and their methodology, this can relate to the contentious role of subjectivity in knowledge production – a key aspect of my own reflexive and Reflective Practice (Griffiths, 2011) which subscribes to autoethnography in the form of letter writing on the field of printmaking, in which I have been involved for over a decade within academic institutive contexts spanning Australia and Scotland. Reflective Practice is a form of inquiry that, according to Morwenna Griffiths (2011), “uses a range of means of symbolizing personal and inexplicit understandings, attitudes and reactions” (184). As part of this, autoethnography is defined as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal and the cultural” (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:739). But as a mode of research, what places autoethnography at a remove from general autobiography and journaling is its “self-consciousness about value positions, positionality and personal relationships – while all the time acknowledging the inevitable incompleteness of the attempt.” (2011:185). Acknowledging my practice background and history it is fair to say then that I am not researching my subject as a disinterested party. I am situated within its contexts as a direct and invested participant with an accumulated history and experience pertaining especially to the practice and processes of linocutting (and a more general knowledge and experience of other intaglio and relief printmaking
processes); but rather than hindrance and burden these can drive the research forward productively.

“[…] artistic research”, argues Henk Borgdorff (2011):

[…] the artist’s tacit understandings and her accumulated experience, expertise and sensitivity in exploring uncharted territory are more crucial in identifying challenges and solutions than an ability to delimit the study and put research questions into words at an early stage” (56).

The heart of this liminal methodology rests on the philosophy and practice of the ‘becoming’ of knowledge; and within the realm of art practice this knowledge is situated in, and drawn from, the artist’s body – itself an object of becoming.

Tacit knowledge, in its way, is an ultimate form of subjectivity (embodiment) in visual arts practice research. Unspeakable and almost impossible to transfer to others, tacit knowledge, or what Donald Schön (1995) refers to as “knowing-in-action” (29) is:

[…] implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowledge is in our action. […] includ[ing] not only the exercise of physical skills but of recognition and judgment” (29).

As Griffiths (2011) notes, “[…] when the researcher is part of the context, or a focus of the research […] he or she is the only one with access to some of the knowledge required”; giving practitioners an intellectual edge “to provide new understandings and creative insights” (181-182). Citing artist David Hockney’s research into Ingres’ drawing of Madam Godinet, Barbara Bolt (2007) is quick to
acknowledge how his own personal, technical experience and understanding of drawing gave Hockney a greater insight into this image, and the anomaly of its combination of skill and speed. This in turn led to his “idiosyncratic” practice enquiry (26-29). Bolt (2007) identifies this as ‘material thinking’ (from Paul Carter, 2004); which she also situates within Heidegger’s (Being and Time) interpretation of the knowledge that manifests from the handling of materials and processes. But unlike Carter, Bolt (2007) repositions material thinking away from the authority and objective of ‘talk’; “[...] it is in the joining of hand, eye and mind that material thinking occurs [...]” she argues (30); words are something of an after-thought – a means of expressing what occurred during the material handling.

Borgdorff (2011) proposes another possibility for the premising of practice in artistic research methodologies, noting that the object of enquiry tends to “elude direct access”, which calls for an “experimental component” that defies linguistic expression (47). From the standpoint of her own research as a painter, Bolt (2007) professes to the significance of material interaction as a mode of enquiry, ‘Handling revealed the limits of conceptual thinking. It took the work elsewhere’ (32-33).

Borgdorff (2011) refers to this as “contingency” – the addressing of undefinable, non-conceptual content in artistic research that grounds itself in materiality whilst concurrently transcending those bonds to an immateriality (60). Referring back to Rübel’s (2015) description of a metamorphic, self-willed mud (keeping in mind that not all materials conform to ideas of plasticity and liminality in a literal sense as substances); the recognition of the agency and uncanny natures of the materials and materiality of art by the practitioner who handles them facilitates
between them an unspeakable dialogue around, “a materiality per se – which operates beyond meaning or function as well. Hermeneutically, it is very hard to conceive of plasticity” – or in the case of my own research, of liminality (98). This mode of reflection in art, Borgdorff (2011) explains, occurs as a “multidimensional unfolding” that includes “creating and performing” which asserts the role of the researcher’s body (60).

When considering the role of the art researcher’s body operating through a liminal framework we must acknowledge that body’s own experience (and its metaphor) as a performed series of interactions defined by its physical and mental capabilities, processes, stamina, strategies and so forth (which may also increase or decrease in extent through the application of tools, materials, techniques), of which resistances and limits are part and parcel. Contrary to its reputation, resistance need not always be a road block, as with any liminal tool it can provide (or force us to consider) new paths of access, propelling the work in a new, often unexpected (but not necessarily less productive) direction.

Over the years I have been increasingly drawn to physical and psychological elements of difficulty in my linocutting practice, in a similar vein to the performance practice of Marina Abramović2. I tend to produce large-scale finely detailed, technically demanding blocks over intensive, extended and often punishing durations that push the limits of my stamina, endurance, self-control, and patience. In many ways, this project does not deviate from that fashion of practice. However, by

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2 In Marina Abramović 512 Hours (2014) Julia Peyton-Jones and Hans Ulrich Obrist reflect on this distinctive creative mode of difficulty, “She uses her own body as subject and object, pushing her physical and mental limits through long-durational performance works” (5).
consciously making the decision to repeat this already gruelling process a second time in the reproduction of the process of the first block the resistance doubles, arguably reflexively as a tool.

In ‘The Craftsman’ (2008) Richard Sennett explains the constructive role that resistance, a form of complexity, can play through research, stating; ‘[…] simplicity represents a goal in craftwork – it’s part of the measure of what David Pye calls “soundness” in a practice. But to make difficulties where none need be is a way to think about the nature of soundness. “It’s too easy” is a test of “there’s more here than meets the eye”’ (2008:225). By duplicating the first block and extending the process of production through its own repetition, I was afforded a longer period of time, and twice the opportunity in which to engage with, consider, and acknowledge the actions, materials, tools, processes etc. that I embodied. The first block acted as a kind of control for the second, where issues, ideas and questions that emerged during the initial process of production had the opportunity to manifest, emerge, and alter again in the latter. Likewise, for the mirrored documentation process of longhand letter writing. Thus, the repetition of both of these practices invited and facilitated the investigative tool and analytical device of comparison. By using resistance, difficulty, and complexity as modes of enquiry certain aspects of this printmaking process and its objects, as well as the writing itself, were intensified and

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3 An example of this can be seen in the seemingly convoluted methods of copying and tracing the blocks. As expressed in my letter to Lore, 29th October 2015, ‘an exact copy of the image was never my intention in this branch of the project (a copy of the process being the aim and examination)’. Therefore, the decisions that led to my approach were shaped by the necessity to adhere closely to the parameters of the first block’s production within that of the second. The degree of difficulty and the longer amount of time required to do so being an unavoidable outcome of this circumstance. Had I simply wanted to copy the first block as a design and artefact, much simpler and more rapid methods of transferral would have been available and applied.
magnified that might otherwise have remained invisible, congealed amongst the process as a whole, unable to be scrutinised⁴.

⁴ Much of the resistance, difficulty and complexity encountered and experienced through the practice project can be framed as physical (my bodily limits), technical (with regards to the process, tools, materials etc.), and or emotional (my mental states). These are evidenced individually, but more often collectively interwoven within the majority of letters written; which include, but are not limited to, the following examples: Christina, 15 June 2015; Vera 25th August 2015; Lore, Wednesday 4th October 2015; Brian, Monday 30th November 2015 OR, “The Untold Joy of Physical Pain”; Ruth, December 1st 2015; Gordon, January 7th 2016; Brian, Monday 11th January 2016; Dad, Monday 25th January 2016. (All listed are available in Appendix two: THE LETTERS under these references).
As we have begun to establish, in visual arts practice research it is important to formally recognise the role of the body as another research tool or technology whose motor-sensory processes, emotions, feelings and intuitions contribute to our capacity for understanding and knowing. Griffiths (2011) concurs, “Embodiment is crucial. The world is understood through the body [...]” (169). But art practice does not always hold a monopoly on the body as a tacit tool and mode of knowing in art practice research, additionally I would argue on behalf of my own methodology that writing may also be included – and not simply as a form of creative practice, but also discursive – as the thesis itself. For all that I have much sympathy with Bolt’s (2007) concept of “material knowledge”, her positioning of writing in relation to it leaves me uneasy with regards to my own. I cannot say that I entirely disagree with her propositions whereby verbal language becomes the means by which we express our revelations through material thinking (2007:30); however, I would argue that in my own case when material thinking extends to include writing-as-practice the roles, values, and meanings of the visual and verbal become inextricably intertwined and inter-reflective.

The particular method of writing letters without the intention of sending them carried out during the practice project, brings to mind Jacques Derrida’s (1987) postcards, whose translator Alan Bass describes as, “[…] a performance and analysis of the irreducible twists in any sending system, and of the effects of these twists on what is supposedly most private within such a system – e.g. a love letter’ (xii). The
subject of correspondence tends to allude to (mutual) communication and response. However, by subverting and disrupting the expected relays of receipt and intercourse that the identities and function of letters or postcards popularly assume, the possibility of and potentiality for response or transmission is not necessarily negated but altered. As Derrida (1987) suggests, speaking to his reader, ‘[...] I await only one response and it falls to you’ (5). Rather than creating a dialogue with their addressees, this project’s letters instead undertake for myself and the reader an intricate, nuanced correspondence with the practice element, thesis, and at a deeper level, with the many other registers of writing that are performed and applied across them. All inhabit this research as multi-modes of practice, and all three come together to form the theory that they have negotiated towards.

It is safe to say that my history of working as a printmaker, specialising in the linocutting process for its majority, had meant that much of it had become second nature to me. A fact that was to prove both help and hindrance; opening up, like Hockney, opportunities to recognise certain nuances less experienced eyes would fail to see, but also carrying with it the threat of complacency through a familiarity which can just as easily overlook. To succeed in mindfully delving into my process experientially then, I needed to re-sensitise myself to it. But how?

The answer therein, came from the means I chose to see, or re-see, my practice; namely longhand letter writing. The lens and filter I chose to place between me and it; the separation that would potentially draw us closer, or into mutual exile, or a million things besides. Writing therefore, may not seem the obvious choice of
device and medium for channelling my subject; not least for its relation to words as opposed to pictures – as we commonly know and expect them to manifest – which one might regard as the more logical means of record due to the visual nature of art and its processes. Printmaking can act as its own visual documenter; being one of the few collections of methods that manages to keep individual material records of the matrix’s various stages of development, in the same or highly similar materiality to its final output, by way of its proof print process. My practice however, has never operated according to this model, all printing occurring upon completion of the carving of the block. In any case, I would argue that without the accompaniment of words such material records as the print, whichever stage it might describe, cannot withstand the pressure of documenting the embodiment that occurred by the practitioner who made it; although material traces may prompt or suggest such.

With this option closed to me, the prospect of explicitly visually re-describing something already so familiar through the other popular ‘process’ documentation methods of photography or film journaling seemed, in comparison to the writing that prevailed, as circular and unproductive as the proof print. Still, I did indeed take photographs recording each day’s evidence of cutting on the surface of the block (see Appendix three: PRODUCTION PHOTOS on the CD in the back pocket of this thesis), but the presence of my physical body remains absent in them. This particular detail, or rather, this omission, sublimates my intention for these images to operate as an insurance policy for the process undertaken and its material objects; with no objective to present them beyond this potential circumstance. Even so, in their way,
their availability as a dual reference alongside or in conjunction with the letters opens them up to another modality and reading.

Unlike myself in this project, a number of printmakers are increasingly turning to filming as a new way to present their work through process. These generally take the form of rapid time-lapses framing close onto the working hands, for example, or the entire matrix and body of the artist as the latter moves about the former; capturing the evolving surface from its manifestations as drawing, carving, inking, printing, and finally the resulting print itself. Other approaches to film can be more documentary in style, functioning similarly to an artist’s profile. Rather than demonstrate the printmaking process in its entirety in a linear narrative, these films seem to aim to provide a broader visual and verbal (narrated) overview of a printmaker’s practice (including conceptual motivations) rather than specifically capturing the ins and outs of a process performed. In addition, the relationship between print and film has been stretched further to explore intermedial approaches to printmaking and print media; though there seems yet to be a wider movement and rigorous study among printmakers in general integrating print and film.

As artists are becoming more tech and PR savvy, online films are an increasing phenomenon through popular sites such as Youtube and Vimeo. Yet, speaking from  

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5 For example, ‘Linocut Boy’ Nick Morley’s non-verbal online film ‘Deep Sea Diver’ (Vimeo: 31/12/2012, edited by Hazeleigh Prebble).


7 Mark Graves and Veronique Chance’s co-curated exhibition and event Re:Print/Re:Present at the Anglia Ruskin Gallery, Cambridge School of Art, UK in 2015 is one such example of this. On his website, Graves reflects, “[the] project locates itself at the point where these approaches meet and cross, in the nexus of the editionable act/event/encounter of pulling a print, screening a film or video, recording a sound or documenting a performance and its Re:Presentation through its relationship to memory, time and place” (no date).
my own position, while I must agree that the overall trend of film does have a place in the discussion on the documentation and representation of print process and is deserving of deeper enquiry that place does not extend to this project. For my own purposes, alone, there is a limit to film’s ability to capture certain aspects of the experience not immediately materially available to the camera that I wish to make evident or explore in my research. Even though the films capture the body of the printmaker at work, they ultimately fail to capture their embodiment. Whilst these films do often present a more whole (and more entertaining) version of a printmaking project in action, they arguably frequently remain as extensions of the sequential photographs one already encounters in technical print manuals. This may be the case due to the common use of more straight-forward documentary methods of film making, as opposed to other possible artistic modes of production which may otherwise permit the rendering of a sense of embodiment through the audio-visual medium.

The practice of letter writing, therefore, may seem a curious answer towards achieving this; especially in light of my emphatic comments on it (see “Writing is absurd”) in the letter that introduces this chapter, where I openly attack its failure to draw in and hold one’s entire flow of thoughts, feelings and ideas; as well as my struggle to rationalise its structure, which impedes this possibility. The act of writing did of course also remove me and my body from the act of printmaking. One cannot be in two places at the same time. Or can one? Just as Betancourt’s (2015) slash (see / N T R O D U C T / O N) “instantiates the space where the encounter between (its
subjects) is possible and legible” (179-180), the intersection of writing and printmaking primarily constitutes this liminal methodology.

When I was drawing, or cutting, or inking, or printing I was, technically, no longer writing, and vice versa. These divisions, from an embodied perspective for both practices, proved inadequate – with each process finding ways to address and penetrate the other, as Part I, Chapter one: ‘C U T I S \ E R A’ can attest. Thus, writing served as a way back into the print process; if only at times on account of the very frustrations and navigations of the action of performing and engaging with it parallel to, and temporally consecutive with, printmaking. To put it shortly, the things I didn’t know I knew about printmaking and its process came from writing. Not just from writing about printmaking. But the very action and practice and work of writing.

“[…][W]riting about art is, in comparison to making the stuff, such a sedate occupation” states Clive Cazeaux (2006:43). I am inclined to disagree. For a start, Cazeaux (2006) has made the great mistake of generalising the nature and forms of both practices, of which there are a great many categories and sub-categories of infinite variation. The romanticised image of the artist in their studio flinging their body forth as they vigorously drive a work from its material is, while not altogether fictional, rather theatrical. Seen from the narrow lens of relief printmaking, though the demands on one’s body increase – and thus the spectacle – during the printing stage, within the period of drawing up and cutting the block one’s body and its movement can become cloistered; especially in the instance of my own practice research where these stages, in all their quiet intensity, were drawn out over many months:
In a way I can associate the situation of the sickbed with my own process, even when I am not sick. There is a kind of fitfulness, stagnation, desperation and force that carries the work into being. My block becomes my sickbed in a way. I am tied to it—physically & emotionally. It limits my movements. Unlike a painter or sculptor moving about I am tied to a desk and chair, the only parts of my body moving with any regularity are from the waist up, and those are not large or wild & expressive in their gesturing—though they take great power and precision and strength—it is an act of endurance like the long distance runner. And it has the same solitude.

(Excerpt from letter to Gordon, January 7th 2016).

In light of this, it is not at all surprising then that I should draw into relation the physicality of my writing practices (letter writing and thesis) to that of my art (relief printmaking). That the act of writing should be so far removed (even conceptually) from the active body, as Cazeaux (2006) insinuates, is astonishing. I am not removed from my body in writing, for the act of writing requires a body whether writing by hand, typing on a computer or typewriter, or the composition of moveable type in letterpress, for example.

This discord between perceptions of the labours of writing and those of art practice are possibly connected to our understanding of where those labours lie, and how they manifest—or fail to—in a material sense. Cazeaux (2006) explains:

[...] the form of prose itself conceals the activity of writing; a linear flow of sentences and paragraphs, arguments and conclusions, cannot reflect or display the mental effect and torment which wrought them into being” (43).

At a material level of action, however, depending on the technology used by the writer to produce text, this statement can be contested.
A computer writing system contains symbols and sets of fonts whose letters remain relatively consistent in their visual forms as they are produced on screen and then via printing, alterations can be made with regards to scale, or to create emphasis such as the application of ‘bold’ or ‘italic’ settings, for example. The keyboard of the machine itself contains individual keys or buttons, each with a corresponding letter of the alphabet, but beyond the differences between those letter labels and their physical location on the board there is no distinction between them. I do not form an ‘A’ any differently to a ‘B’ or any other letter or symbol, they each require the same tapping motion with my finger to manifest. During the process of writing (typing) the computer system facilitates a visually traceless editing process. I do not need to score out my typing and have it remain present in the body of continuing text, instead I am able to use the delete function (no different in its action to typing letters) and erase any text in the document on screen as if it had never existed. I may also insert text within an existing paragraph, stretching it seamlessly out from the inside, conveying a peculiar elasticity on its overall form.

Handwriting is, of course, an altogether different writing technology. Letters, numbers, punctuation and so on are all articulated into their particular shape by hand using a writing implement – most commonly a pen or pencil – whose contact with the page or sheet leave a trace. To some extent there is still an overall gesture across these technologies of raising and dropping the tool to produce marks, words (as with the fingers in typing on the computer). Although here the scale of this movement is less distinct and often occurs less rapidly or frequently – especially with longhand cursive styles that connect the individual letters of a word together. The letters and
Symbols are, to a point, recognisable as those that they represent from the alphabet and grammar systems adhered to by the writer; but beyond this they are highly individual as a result of the continually changing moods, styles, speeds, angles, strengths, and movements of the body that inform them. Editing is an aspect that also tends to be explicit, even the rubbing out of pencil marks welcome a degree of trace.

Both of these modes of writing implicate the body in the process of their material realisation, however the degree to which that body is recognised or traced in their materiality is a sliding scale dependent on the complexity of those technologies. As more and more complex technologies materially overtake the writing process, evidence of the writer’s active body retreats from the page; which, unlike an idiosyncratic handwritten manuscript, becomes a relatively homogenous document concealing the physical effects of the mental frustration and “torment” of their making that Cazeaux (2006) describes. Though he directs this observation more in connection to the deceptively streamlined structures and linear constraints writing enforces on thoughts, it is important to recognise that these conceptual structures have evolved in direct response to the allowances of the materials, tools and technologies of the action of writing – shaping their forms and trajectories; a narrative explored in Walter Ong’s (1982) theories on the subject in his seminal text Orality and literacy: the technologizing of the word.

Print’s tendency towards concealment is not exclusive to verbal languages, as I discovered, but also visual. Working in relief printmaking as a visual artist, I have become only too aware of its equally curious limitations as to the material expression
and transmission of my own emotion and experience of making. Speaking of one of my lino block’s cut surfaces and the resulting print I reflect:

_For all the control people see when they look at my work and its process, I wonder how they cannot see the restlessness. Does it show up, anywhere? A painter’s brush and a sculptor’s chisel tell us something about force, about flow and gesture, about restraint. But my cuts all read the same in a way [...] they are all so alike in form from an immediate perspective._

(Excerpt from letter to Lore December 15th 2015).

These commentaries on the absent trace of the frustrations, joys and turmoil I inhabited and enacted during the process of making the blocks and prints reads much the same as a writer operating a complex technology such as a computer, both of whose preoccupations frequently focus on (like Cazeaux, 2006) the incomplete transmission and translation of information through the selective filters of technology⁸.

In the case of my own methodology the conversion of these boundaries into the trajectories of the research begins with a conception and application of ‘practice’ that extends beyond the bounds of its typical ‘artistic’ connotations (that would otherwise limit the term to the printmaking element of this research) to include both modes of writing that I have undertaken (longhand letter writing and this thesis). So, whilst I navigated my embodiment in the printmaking process and attempted to find

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⁸ As I explore in Part I Chapter two, our unobtainable expectations of and demands on the ‘other’ bodies of technology in equally expressing the specificities of ours (human) are, for the most part, unrealistic and unproductive. However, their mutual junctures, overlaps, and bifurcations can become, rather than stubbornly butting binary and boundary lines requiring constant hopping from one side to the other; the path and trajectory of the research itself.
my place within it, a parallel struck up in the finding and placing of myself in the writing process also.
By locating writing as action within the frame of the body, in this context, I draw it into relation (but, critically, not total equivalence) with that of my artistic (creative) practice as a mode of research. ‘Practice’ is a term frequently used to conceive of the working of visual art. In this regard, it attends to the pursuit, engagement or dedication of one to skill, occupation, or art(forms). Like visual art, writing – creative, academic or otherwise – is not excluded from this context of profession or endeavour. At a more elemental level, ‘practice’ refers to actions and deeds. Its language circulates that of performance, activity, operation and execution. Although, in the same breath, it purports to be in contrast and opposition to ‘theory’ (a practice in its own right that always contains its own subject or object), ‘practice’ also asserts its role through action towards the realisation of theory.

Within the context of conventional academic research, theory (knowledge) has tended to manifest as writing, which has somewhat confused the nature of this practice and the reality of its modes in relation to others such as art, especially in art practice research where the two collide. The OED cites ‘theory’ as ‘the conceptual basis of a subject or area of study’. Its knowledge and ideas are framed as abstract or speculative ‘as opposed to practical experience or activity’. In order to perform this function, theory positions itself outside of the immediate action; its focus may be directed upon a particular object, but it remains at a distant viewpoint rather than as a participant in the fray like practice. These understandings and expectations of theory are what Cazeaux (2006) calls the “dry leaf perspective”; non-vital, brittle,
limited in scope and estranged, endangering and engendering power imbalances between practice and theory which contribute to their binary (41).

This detachment is a modern conception of theory, states Nicholas Davey (2006), putting forward instead the alternative ancient Greek ‘theoria’ alongside the language ontology of philosophical hermeneutics whose aim is not to address “how [...] theory and practice relate to each other but how each relate differently to a shared subject matter” (20-21. Emphasis added). Theoria’s concern concentrates on the act of witness, according to Davey (2006), ‘which contributes toward the emergence of the event participated in’ (20), demanding both active presence and critical observation from the role of the researcher, arguably in much the same way as action research. This in turn refers back to the earlier definition of practice as the activity and action moving towards theory – as a mode of its production.

But for Cazeaux (2006), applying Sartre’s existential philosophy (Being and Nothingness, 1989), the experience or activity as a source or subject is not enough, its disruption is what pushes the move toward its location as a form of knowledge (2006:41). Meaning occurs in the activity at the fault lines between or interference in experiences. Davey (2006), referencing Gadamer (Truth and Method, 1989), is not so dissimilar. In this case, meanings are “subject fields” – “spaces in which things are related”; the principle of which is that by gaining access to one we gain access to others (2006: 23). Thus ‘theoria’ (or practice) becomes the mediator and “go-between” (24) in the service of meaning making. These mediations are complicated by language – the languages of experience (action) and languages of their interpretation; or what Cazeaux (2006), via Sartre’s Nausea (1963), would call the gap.
between the particular and the universal, their distinctions being neither polemic nor antithetical, but the crux of knowledge (2006: 45, 49).

The structure of experience is such that a nothingness always insinuates itself between past and present, between concept and action, between description and experience, keeping the two apart. This structure [...] is particularly evident in writing: the descriptive sentence creates a specificity which cannot possibly be identical with experience (2006:49).

Yet he cautions us not to be fearful of resistance and deformation; natural products of the appearing-disappearing continuum of experience and impression through reflection, whose “resculpting” of it is what bestows language “its active, salience-creating capacity” in both practical and theoretical terms (with regards to Sartre, 1989) (2006: 45-46). The mutual and reflexive codification of art practice and verbal language in research is not necessarily a controlling or reductionist gesture by either party. What it can lead to, Cazeaux (2006) avers, is a stripping down or highlighting which grants us access to particular aspects of focus and dialogue as a result of “the cognitive relationship between the subject and the object” (46-49).

In his essay Derrida’s ‘two paintings in painting’: a note on art, discourse and the trace, Jeff Collins (2006) takes an alternative, but equally valuable, approach to that of Cazeaux (2006). Rather than explore the gaps between visual and verbal languages as a space in and through which meaning is constructed, he delves into the Derridean philosophy (Of Grammatology, 1998) of their shared ancestry, wherein traces of mutual meaning disrupt modal conflict. Like the philosopher, Collins (2006) criticises and problematises the anxious (Western) relation between visual and verbal language in the “determination of the artwork” (2006: 214), explaining:
The traditional problematic of art, the great philosophical legacy, arises in a subjugation of all the arts to a particular model of language and meaning, the heritage of an old or belated language which speaks in, and of, the word in its privilege (2006: 216).

In his argument, this privileging appears to circulate beyond the word-as-sign, operating it also as interpretative model (2006:216). While acknowledging this dichotomy where verbal language either dominates or is met with resistance by the artwork (‘the-thing-itself’) it seeks to account for (as in Derrida’s The Truth in Painting, 1987); Derrida (1998) also turns to the notion of the presence of the artwork, and trace (or the “decomposition of the word”) as a means of re-locating all systems of signification to a “common root” (2006: 214, 219).

Mark Johnson (2011) also argues for this subversion of the established binary in his essay Embodied Knowing Through Art. Referring to cognitive neuroscientist Don Tucker, he overturns the myth that has separated perceived ‘higher’ forms of cognition such as conceiving and knowing (theory) from those lower – perceiving and doing (practice). Both, he reflects, are based on and bound to sensory and motor processing (2011:148). Johnson considers these shared, underpinning principles of cognitive processing, stating:

[…] there is a great deal of evidence from the cognitive sciences that structures of meaning-making and understanding in art are the same ones that underlie our use and understanding of language and other forms of symbolic interaction. Our thinking is visceral and incarnate, whether that thinking is primarily artistic or primarily linguistic (2011: 149).
This manner of readdressing the binaries between (a) theory and practice, and (b) the visual and verbal languages, in no way intends to disqualify them, quite the contrary; as Davey (2006) observes, “Art cannot remain art if it becomes a purely theoretical contemplation of ideas for it would lose its relation to the sensuous whereby it becomes art (poiesis), art in the first place” (24). Equivalence and difference have their own economy here; simultaneously introducing a common ground whereupon contradiction, conflict, disparity and resemblance are then played out as modes of knowing.

Aptly, in the final letter written at the end of the printmaking project I reflect on this complex subject, questioning the nature of transmission, transference and translation through a comparison between the evolving identities of the blocks and their prints throughout their processes of becoming and a children’s playground game that calls into question the mutual, liminal mechanism of meaning through talking and listening:
Dear Katie,

I’ve collected my block and parts from the workshop this morning – all touch dry, but they’ll need to cure for another 2-3 weeks. It sounds like meat, like I’m bearing some pig carcass up in the studio. They are all wrapped up in newspaper (again, I am thinking of butcher’s branding steers and butchers in that all too familiar park), and plastic, cartoned and on ice so I can make them for now. I will have to specially make a triangular block for them, to carry and store, but they will have to come later – I have so much to do already.

I was warned again last night, about the second block and its print. I cannot believe my nagging insecurity around it. I’m not even sure if it’s really insecurity. I woke up in the dark feeling so vulnerable and strange about it, but also completely by it. When I left after printing the other day, at home, I wondered which print from which block I would ever hang on a wall of mine, and so quickly.

I felt it would be from the second block – purely because it is the one that intrigues me and becomes me and in some way, paints me. And by putting it in my space, I would have to confront it and myself. I also wonder now if I could hang print from the first and second blocks together in my own space – and of course for the presentation of my research. I have not yet laid out the prints from each on a desk and looked at them together. I am holding back. I can’t do it yet. I wonder how I will feel when I finish them (tear them down and sign them) and send them off to the frames? I wonder what will feel like when we are complete and back in a room with each other again. There have been so many meetings in all of this, so many introductions to one another, and this one, I speak of, with great之间的, will be our last in a way. In Marcus Boon’s book on copying, he speaks of the impossibility of an exact copy because it would involve 2 things happening in the exact same space, at the exact same time & in the exact same way, which is physically impossible. But
I will say, that in this project there is a thread running through, stretching and rolling out time and place and process. It is like that people who say that they have felt the presence of a loved one who has died. And these encounters, in supermarket frozen food aisles, under apple trees, brushing their teeth, reading a book - all of these places and times that bleed into the vastness of places and times, of all places and times now and before and after - until these encounters contain copies, flashes of copies. The people who experience them cannot always explain or justify or make evident how they know and recognize that 'something' that read as a person they loved. All they know is they know it. And what makes us so seeped in these people and their encounters is that they recognized a something that they had once known inside of a body, and now that body containing that something is a supermarket frozen food aisle, an apple tree, a moment of your toothbrush brushing about your mouth, a page in a book.

My two blocks have been made of the same grey flesh, same but different, but they have also been made up of CD's and 15 color pencils and photo copy paper and ink, and graphite and ball point pen and black felt tip pen and rust paint and Sunset stain, white Sojourn paper and one sided card and Vernon black ink and magnesium and soon also foam core, mount, wax, glass, wood and wall. Have I ever recognized them?

Has there ever been a moment on held my pen, my pencil, my Speedball letter, my ink roller, when I saw a connection between all these bodies, their limits that attach and reattach themselves? Perhaps.

But this morning, as I collected all the area of prints from the workshop that the second block had given me, I was taken aback by them, by all these new faces. By the psychedelic doubling that Unironed on one, and the ghosting on another. Not all were entirely unfamiliar, but
enough from what the surface of the book was saying that they contained a renewal, a difference.

It's like that game, Chinese whisper, that I played as a little girl - whispering into the ear beside you as the words scrambled from mouth to mouth, rebrilled, reshaped, reworded, remade - but always in the belief that they are the same words that entered your ear - as if they were a marble dropped into your ear canal only to roll down a tunnel and out along your tongue into the ear of another. All the moment that you believed you heard made a copy, that what came out of you was true to what had been put in, and that sensation of joy, surprise and wonder when the final mouth in the chain opened and what came out - that final copy, slurred into the truth of the first words. And though you always looked at the last words on a joke, they also bore the same kind of truth as the first in a way, for they had cut open the skin of those first words and slip, slippery and amorphous sound, through all of those bodies only to grow a new skin to fit the new words they became in the end - a more honest mirror of those first words than anything else - for they see all that they were, are and can be. The final words teach us not to trust the skin of words, nor to take it for granted.
This letter plays to the heart of my liminal methodological approach and its foundations – that of the shapeshifting spheres of language and its structures along with, and in comparison to, the evolving manifestation of the relief print process of linocutting and its objects. It is rich with shifts and becomings, arguably the primary sites of my research, both physically and conceptually. These inconstancies and inconsistencies echoing in my repeated printmaking project, the collection of letters, and the thesis are features born not only out of their uniqueness of experience, and varieties of individual content, but through my selection and application of them as something of a meta-archive, capable of endless curations and framings than time will allow me. However poetically seductive or provocative some of the writings in the letters may be, my specific selection and their inclusion in this thesis rests with the particular premises, concepts and questions they express with regards to the embodied methods chosen to be explored, examined and presented. These primarily included the cutting of the block, tracing and copying, as well as the relation between printmaker and press during printing. As Appendix two: THE LETTERS makes evident, the content of the complete collection of letters covers a much broader range and scope of methods (such as paper preparation) and ideas or documentation pertaining to them than exists in the following chapters. Though I have chosen not to include them in the scope of the project at this time, each facet remains open to re-visitation and investigation in the future continuation of this research.

More like a galaxy than an unravelling stream, through my liminal methodology each component is shaped by others as well as itself. For each chapter, each quotation from a letter and so forth are but a fragment or fraction of a whole,
within a whole, within a whole. As such there can be no true resolution – though this was and has never been my intention. Just as I describe in my letter to Orpheus that opens this chapter, my research for this project will, like writing, always struggle to be whole and complete. There will always be ‘whole passages that flee through white passageways’ unseen and unknown by any other than the softly curled flesh of my palm; but such presences and absences are accounted for by the sympathies and leniencies of my methodology which uses them to beat out its own path towards knowing. It is a walking along the boundary lines – the act of which, rather than solely enforcing those existing, challenges their use and meaning beyond limit to a way forward – not through, but along them.
INTRODUCTION

The night sky is such a shapeless thing. It is a chaos: it has no pictures; it does not represent any earthly forms. It has no border, no picture frame, no outlines, no up or down, no beginning or end.


Surface, in its truest sense, is endless. As Steven Connor (2004) says, “Skin connects and, connects with everything” (34). Like James Elkins’ (1997) night sky its reach and wholeness to our eyes and minds is extraordinarily excessive, and yet, skin continues to conjure an image of and association with external qualities and outer limits. The key word here being limit.

Operating as both noun (skin) and verb (to skin) the term’s etymology speaks considerably more to the latter, and has, as such, arguably influenced the connotations of the former. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) records ‘skin’ as having been borrowed from early Scandinavian; evidenced in Old Icelandic, Old Norwegian, Old Swedish, Old Danish – all of which refer to the term as a skin, hide, or fur. This etymology also extends to the base of Middle Dutch, Old Saxon, Middle Low German, and Old High German whose meanings all correspond to the actions of skinning, flaying and peeling. Furthermore, ‘skin’ can be connected to the Breton, Welsh, Dutch, Cornish and Middle Low German words for scales, flakes, dandruff and scabs.

Whilst the verb ‘to skin’ remains relatively unchanged and continues to refer to much rubbing, scraping, grazing and removing of skins (animal, vegetable and
human); subsequent developments in the definition of ‘skin’ in the OED have a tendency to pool around nouns pertaining to a (predominantly) external or outer layer, surface, covering, container, or substance; nonetheless this definition can also extend to internal linings of the body. What each of these cognates, their definitions, and the succeeding elaborations indicate is a particular relationship and experience of skin that can at best be described as oversimplified or reductive.

Often framed as an outer casing our apprehension and comprehension of skin has had a tendency to confine itself to the surface of surface; a history that underestimated its agency and complexity. Cognates in the OED relentlessly equate the term to the materiality of surface, as organic and artificial coverings or physically manifested reactions of actions on or through those surfaces. Victoria Kelley (2013) states that:

Surface is the topmost or outermost layer of an object or substance. It is the part of an object that is most accessible to our senses, often the only part that can be directly seen, or touched, at least at first encounter (13).

The validity of Kelley’s statement and the definitions listed under the term ‘skin’ in the OED are equally irrefutable, however they share a tendency to objectify surface, and in the process ignore its own mysterious interiority. But Kelley does put forward a most important aspect of surface that dictionary definitions remain scandalously oblivious to; and that is the subject of the senses. Skin is most essentially sensual – it has an agency; it cannot touch without being touched.
The subject of skin and surface is central to the practice and theory of print’s processes and objects. All of its methods require the manipulation and reproduction of surface in the form of an image or design. As the materials, tools and techniques that inhabit the field expand and develop, so too does the meaning of that term and its manifests. The history of surface has been heavily weighted towards recognising it as material object, entity and boundary; and although new philosophies have contributed to its expansion, with regards to surface as immaterial sensation by the likes of Michel Serres (2008) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994), its identity is yet to be resolved, and perhaps never will be – such is its shifting nature.

From a visual material standpoint, skins and surfaces can perform wonderfully as categorical boundary, marking the end of one thing and the beginning of another. However, this designation and expectation of limit can be easily interrupted, particularly in the form of touch – the theme which informs the propositions and narratives in Chapters one and two of this Part.

Using the analogical premises of living skin (cutis vera) and dead flayed skin (pellis), and their corresponding qualities, forms and functions, I will re-examine the materials, tools, and techniques of relief printmaking through linocut processes as embodied art practice. In Chapter one, this will constitute the application and expansion of Sam Trubridge’s (2013) philosophies on nomadism, Tim Ingold’s (2011) theories on flow in process and the practice of wayfaring, as well as James Gibson’s (1986) interrelated, reciprocal categories for substance, medium and surface as a means of reframing and delimiting print practice methodology. I take up a new narrative for process in the form of a morphology where surface is not a static
abstract space of occupation, but a matter of occurrence, implicated in the mutual
interface and mutual transformation of those bodies and actions that move through
and across it.

Further expanding on this subject of interface, Chapter two questions the
binary relations and hierarchies between human and technological touch with
particular reference to a printer and their press during printing. Due to the wide
technical and material variation across its processes, as well as its involvement with
complex technology, printmaking and its practitioners are often disqualified from
discourse pertaining to direct touch and creative flow. Questioning this attitude and
idea, I examine the notion of direct touch through its supposed manifestations,
whose sliding scale is less a matter of distance-as-space, but distance-of-species.
Moving between a comparative narrative of my own printing process and that of Yves
Klein’s *Anthropométries* I examine, question and relocate our associations and
expectations of the relays between touch, feeling, and their trace beyond the
human/technology binary into taught relation as self-extension through the shared
language of pressure.
Chapter one

CUTIS\/ERA
The child will ask, “What’s this?” pointing to a pencil. You reply, “A pencil.” The child is not satisfied and says, “No, this,” pointing to the shaft of the pencil and making clear that she means the shaft. So you say, “Oh, that’s the shaft of the pencil.” Then the child moves her finger one quarter inch and says, “What’s this?” and you say, “The shaft.” This process is repeated and you say, “That’s still the shaft; and this is the shaft, and this is the shaft. It’s all the shaft of the pencil. This is the shaft, this is the point, and this is the eraser, and this is the little tin thing that holds the eraser on.” Then she may point to the eraser, and you discover that she is still trying to find out where the dividing lines are. She manages to worm out the fact that the eraser has a top and sides but no more. She also learns that there is no way to tell the difference between one side and the next and that no labels are pinned on parts of the point, even though distinctions are made between the lead and the rest of the pencil. She may glean from this that materials make a difference some of the time and some of the time they do not. Areas where things begin and end are apt to be important, while the points in between are often ignored.

To Quoyle,

Laying in bed tonight I got to thinking about the jet again. Now that they are finished and set up, the dream invades my mind. And I dream of them often in my thoughts.

When I first bought them in I was still adjusting to them – their images were somehow new to me and strange. I had made them often. And it is difficult to look at my work directly after I paint it. For some reason I maintain a little distance for a time.

Dreaming it was important. It was the first time I’ve made in years that I’ve dreamed – and in that way I feel good. I felt like truly acknowledged the image, the work. I know just what I wanted to do with it – a black and white frame, off white mount and spacer, and the image placed mounted on foam core.

The picture showed probably my most recent work, but most I enjoyed having it now. Sometimes I go over my work just to see it. It has made me want to pursue another work so I can have more time with it. I have shown them behind glass rather than just framed. I like to feel they are protected.

But looking at this tonight I suddenly remembered when I was dreaming them up and cutting them. I would have dreams. It didn’t feel as if to remember exactly what they were about but I do know it involved architecture – not sure (I don’t tend to have dreams like that) but the photographs and visual elements and my dreaming had permeated my subconscious – or unconscious, is it?

I’m not having dreams about the work I’m cutting now – but I am not sleeping well at all. As I lie in bed now my head hurts and my eyes get bloodshot and weird pain concentrating all day. This is normal for this work, but it used to be the head and total lack of air in the studio. It made me feel sick. But we said that’s not been well either, and have had issues in the past too. It showed me down a bit which is annoying.

Today was a slow day. I’m working on the computer which I hadn’t realized would be today. It is taking hours and hours and hours to do even on area the size of my path and I have small issues. Let me remind you, it is making me realize just how big an undertaking this really is. I begin feeling a bit easier and better after getting the tree bird done and decided to go out – but that was so easy.

I was feeling myself that the project would be complete well before the end of summer. Today, I realized how unlikely that will be.
As I've been cutting I've been a little worried about the end point
I've spent so long with the drawing & needed so much time to feel
content to cut that I worry if it will be what I want. I worry
about the decision I make in the cutting, is the way I read &
translate the black lines into a printng surface.
Maybe that's why I need time to accustom myself to the
finished print. Having spent months on weeks cutting a block without
proofing or between there is no real familiarity beyond the cutting,
All that cutting. So much cutting.
Today was extremely boring — my desire shoots a little downhill
for now. I don't even carry the hope it will be finished by
tomorrow. And even when I do, I will simply have to start on another
area of the design.
Fortunately both Janet and Katie needed feedback today on
their work / ideas. So that was quite nice disruption to the toil.
First Katie and I had a longer lunch than usual that was quite
depth and meaningful. Artists are often vulnerable people.
Later on when we all read our pieces on the Star-nell
and Katie read on her conference paper on Creativity:
Method of Modern. Something struck me. She was talking
about the subject in an unexpected way. When I see the
conference title I think of all the literature & discourse on
the madmen and creative genius of artists — subject of
which focus on their mental states, their medical histories,
psychological conditions, trauma and general biographical
information. But Katie was talking about the actual
methods that go into making an image — the mechanics.
She was explaining how although it seems unstructured
and haphazard, creativity is actual a very structured
and ordered process when framed in its own logic.
The contrast in my original conception of the conference
subject in comparison to her interpretation & resulting
paper shed some light on my interest in process and
the unspeakable. And walking home this evening, specifically
the moment I reached the steps outside the museum on
Chambers St. (on the grade / Court side of the road)
I found myself staring at the the sculpture on the top of
The building and feeling very self-conscious about all these scribblings during my practice work — I am very emotional in some of them, I talked about things, in a way I wouldn’t want to. I am not sure if this allows them to be more free and oneself consciously passionate or dramatic but they are in so many ways biographical even when I am talking about technical actions or materials. I do not write with an emotional distance, I have no indication to — but in this day and age knowledge has come to seem like this. We trust objectivity more than subjectivity — but this makes no sense in art when both artist and audience follow their guts, their deepest instincts and feelings which are not always identifiable or measurable.

How do I convert these scribblings into a language and framework that has no sympathy or truck with them? And why should I? I do not suppose artists or artists' readers will ever really make their mark or reclaim their territory from the theorists until we fight for a sense, structure and language that truly supports neither them nor our work as objects, processes, experiences, inhuman, knowledge.

I am growing tired and my head hurts and I want to be productive tomorrow. I must try and clear this week-old head of mine.

But I have yet to work out where I stand — biography or process — they are both to me. Making these prints, these blocks may open up the channel for working around others, private things. My work, my method of making carries its own joys and anxieties — but I think they have become symbolic extensions of another anatomy outside of myself — but I am not so sure of this — I feel like that may indeed translate that is eating his own tail, where it begins and the end. But perhaps one should not look at him and focus on head or tail, but how, from a distance, they have no bearing. From a distance they are a perfect loop, a perfect whole. Then again, that distance is just as whole laying out on a line. We only care about which...
end is the head because that's where the feet are. One end of a snake is as much a snake as the other. And being a solid, 3-dimensional thing an end is not even really correct terminology. This is not a clean line on a flat surface. This is a surface that wraps around a line entirely — the end is as much a beginning. What am I doing? See, this is where if we were in an actual verbal conversation, you would have interrupted me by now and asked where the hell I was going with that. And rightly so.

And I suppose it comes back to my practice and the technical process and the writing and the biographical context and emotion — they are not a timeline, a beginning and an end. They are a snake skin — they are a whole surface that has been stretched over a line of bone. A 3D surface. Is it not? And surfaces do not begin and end; they are whole and closed. All these protective skins hiding bones, hiding bodies, keeping the world out, keeping us together.

So it's funny then isn’t it, that I spend all my time cutting, removing, slicing, peeling, pricking, tearing and opening up these membranes. 
In the Lexicon of Orthopaedic Etymology (1999) the Latin term ‘cutis’, its Greek form σκῦτος refers to the ‘skin’ of humans, the ‘hide’ of animals, and the ‘rind’ of plants. Its root ‘scu-’, ‘cu-', means to cover. In this regard it is a general term; but when we enter into Latin specificities for the sub-categorisation of skin, divisions and differences in form, quality and function begin to emerge. *Cutis vera* – ‘true skin’ – the title of this chapter, describes the skin that remains attached to its body, alive; it is the direct opposition to *pellis*, shed or flayed dead skin (the title and theme of which I explore in Chapter two). What makes *cutis vera* a ‘true skin’ is its relationship to the body it covers and serves. Despite the fact that a *pellis* – a hide or textile skin – can equally cover a body and serve it as protection and warmth, it does not do so as a whole *living* form. What separates *cutis vera* from *pellis* in this instance is that the ‘true’ element relates to it as a living, biologically incorporated external surface attached to and supported by an internal structure – the musculoskeletal system, arteries, veins, and nerves (or other internal systems pertaining to plant and animal life). Although this skin can be removed – as the result of natural and artificial exfoliations such as desquamation, cosmetic skin scrubs, and most extremely, flaying (converting it to a *pellis*) – the *cutis vera* is typically considered as a permanent attachment to and part of the body. It is the skin we live in. Steven Connor (2004) argues that as a result of this we have come to see the skin as *meaning* the body, when it is in fact nothing of the sort:
The very wholeness that the skin possesses and preserves, its capacity to resume and summarize the whole body, means that it is always in excess of, out in front of the body, but as another body. The skin is thus always in part immaterial, ideal, ecstatic, a skin that walks (29. Emphasis in original).

Terms and categories like *cutis vera* allow us to separate out and systemically hierarchise the seemingly irreconcilable aspects and experiences of skin’s identity and image that, if permitted to remain as a whole, would arguably consign this entity (and those who wear it) to the chaos, disorder and contradiction that Connor (2004) describes. Edward Hall’s (1973) scenario of the child attempting to navigate and consolidate an understanding of the form of a pencil by naming and locating its boundaries exemplifies this whilst simultaneously highlighting the absurdity of such signifiers delineating where one thing supposedly becomes another, and not necessarily on the predication of a differing materiality.

Form is dependent on boundary for definition, and for all that we have ascribed skin a language of limits, it operates in excess and ignorance of them preferring to confer and conform to a kind of chaos by way of interface, touch. Whilst touch can provide surface with a sense of limit, in the way Connor (2004) describes the masochist’s delight in being slapped, tickled and therefore bounded (35), and Yi-Fu Tuan (1998) relates the impact of the natural elements against our bodies as an anchoring force reaffirming reality (22); touch also brings about an extending and dissolving of skin in what Elizabeth Grosz (1994) has called “osmotic” (79) and Serres (2008) “mixture”.

“[I]nasmuch as the world is presented to us primarily as actual or implied surface, we experience that world as a single, intermittent skin, which mirrors and gives rise to our own single, but intermittent skins” (Connor, 2004: 35). As Connor’s (2004) statement asserts, the implications of this reciprocity of surface through touch quite literally shapes (reshapes) our world into our own individual forms. Whilst it must be agreed there is a certain geometric limit to our form and its surface area as a physical whole (despite natural fluctuations in our life’s duration), its interaction with itself and the world’s surface can re-describe and recreate that mutual plane to infinite variation. Serres (2008) designates this intervention of skin as contingency or “mixture” which mitigates, rather than the term “medium”, which he considers to separate. “The skin is a variety of contingency: in it, through it, with it, the world and my body touch each other, the feeling and the felt, it defines their common edge” (2008: 80). What Serres (2008) provides us with through his philosophy is a means of addressing a deep surface; a skin “without measurement”, introducing topology over geometry in order to accommodate its tactile nature (80-81).

Connor’s (2004) and Serres’ (2008) descriptions of reciprocal surface open up an agency and depth to skin as experience over object due to its continual procession of shared interactions; with that in mind it is somewhat surprising that we have managed to maintain such persistent notions of surface as objectified boundary and material enclosure. Part of this oscillation between containment and contingency may be down to our ability to accumulate, incorporate and dismiss other surfaces and objects as self-same, self-extension, alien or abject. Referring to the observations and models of Sir Henry Head and Paul Schilder, Grosz (1994) explains how objects in
prolonged contact with the body’s surface are indeed accommodated by it, even altering one’s “gait, posture, position etc. […]” (80). A similar phenomenon can also be claimed in cases of the loss of mobile limbs as studies of the ‘phantom limb’ show, which, despite having been removed from the body, continue to produce sensations where they once existed. Grosz’s (1994) reasoning behind this rests with what she calls the ‘imaginary anatomy’ or ‘body schema’ (41). In much the way Connor (2004) described earlier about the skin being always in ecstatic, immaterial excess of the body “as another body”, the phantom limb “is a libidinally invested part of the body phantom, the image or Doppelgänger of the body the subject must develop if it is to be able to conceive of itself as an object and a body […]” (Grosz, 1994: 41-42. Emphasis added).

The effect of phantoms and shadows that linger and shift outwith their material structures – their skins – also belongs to the visual field of perception. A photographer can achieve this effect in their images by reducing shutter speed, thereby blurring the moving subject(s) of the shot, visually stretching and disintegrating the boundaries of their physical material form. One could argue that the sensation of touch can achieve a similar effect on and through skin.

The infinite haunts us through surface in the lingerings of caress. A space of intersecting margins where fingertips reach out toward or shrink back from just beyond the skin, which in turn, as if half-waking half-sleeping, reaches back. Skin is given over to pure sensation, held momentarily within a present past, the memory of touch. Using the analogy of a gymnast training their soul, Serres (2008) explicates
surface’s ability to inhabit spaces beyond itself through touch; observing that, “they gently curl their bodies around the place where it [the soul] projects itself forward” (21. Text added). Grosz (1994) offers a more technical, albeit less poetic, explanation, “The body image is always slightly temporally out of step with the current state of the subject’s body. [...] there seems to be a time lag in the perception and registration of real changes in the body image” (1994: 84). So, like the camera’s slow shutter speed capturing its faster moving subject, surface and touch operate at slightly differing temporalities which arguably cause that shimmering mirage of sensation that so thoroughly re-describes its form and blurs its boundaries.

In printmaking, bleed-printing is a technique whereby the surface of the matrix (block, plate, stone or screen) exceeds that of the paper or ground it is printed on. The inked impression covers the entire ground surface space without any empty area bounding it, in contrast to the tradition which makes accommodations for such margins. The latter informs its viewers of two limits operating on that surface; the edge of the matrix via its impression, and the edge of the paper beyond it. A bleed-print, as in the case of my linocut prints ‘/’ and ‘\’, arguably redefines those limits when positioned within the conceptual framework of a peripheral tactility, such as the caress. Materially the paper’s own limit and edge becomes the limit and edge of the impression as well as the matrix that informed it. Metaphysically, however, the paper’s edge is consumed and acquired by another, invisible, boundary – or at least, in the quest for it, that of the absent matrix. In exceeding the surface of the paper, the matrix forces us to search for it outside of the print’s edge just beyond the reaches of their mutual touch, which becomes a perpetually receding horizon line,
slurring and blurring real and imagined boundaries. The surface of a bleed-print is charged with an energy that is always reaching outwards, expanding into a skin that the matrix cannot ever hope to inscribe by physical means, but does so with the touch of the mind.

This brings us to the subject of the materiality and immateriality of touch and surface. During interface the surface informs us of limit as our hand hits the outermost part of the object or mass, and sometimes, depending on its substance, moves through to its interior. But that same gesture is embodied by touch whose sensation extends that surface from abstract visual material plane to a volume which is shared with my hand. The immaterial in this instance can be described by the sensation of touch, yes?

It is true that I do not see touch, instead if I look I see my hand pressed against a surface. The sensation I feel is corresponded to the image of my hand and what it is in contact with – it is conceptually grounded in materiality, in substance. But it is grounded in more ways than one. Touch has a tendency to flit about and occupy at a speed, distance and time that, through our experience as and of matter, defies our ability to reconcile it as anything but immaterial. It moves through the body like spirit, even able to operate simultaneously at locations remote from one another. But this sense, like all senses, belongs to the material body – or more specifically to the parts of the body that operate and participate with them, which is in this case specifically known as the somatosensory system. Consisting of a microscopic physical framework of sensory receptors and sensory neurons that pass electrical and chemical signals through the body and to the brain for processing, this system inhabits the skin,
muscle, organs, as well as deep within the central nervous system. Hidden beneath the skin and too miniscule for the human eye to detect unaided these sensory neurons and receptors are, to an extent, invisible but not immaterial. So, what then do we make of the signals they synapse? Passed from neuron to neuron like a parcel, or a baton in a relay, these signals are handled like objects of matter through the channels of the body. But chemical and electrical signals are far harder to define as matter, even if they are treated as such. I imagine electrical current as matter by the way that it was explained and evidenced to me as moving through things; channelled within my power cables like water flowing in a pipe, or jumping out into space as a bright spark. But I cannot think of it in its own right as an object with a surface – the way matter is described to me through touch. Yet, having seen many a lightning storm in my youth, I am in no doubt of the threat of electricity’s touch – a ‘bolt’ of lightning may be named as much for its power and physical approximation to the bolt of an arrow, as for its rapid movement. And it is from here that we might begin to navigate the nature and language of surface and touch, not as matter that is acted upon or through, but matter as action.

In his article Terra Nullius: the nomad and the empty space Sam Trubridge (2013) applies European colonial and nomadic philosophies and frameworks of space to performance practice – specifically, the stage. A place of decoration, disguise, immersion, action, and transience the stage is perhaps one of the ultimate metaphors of, and actual, surface. During a performance, it physically (as a set) and psychologically transports and transforms its performers and audience through place and time within the same location, the theatre. Actors move through the space and
transform it – a stage does not have to contain a set or model forest for me to read its surface as one, so long as that surface is performed. But in doing so surface is no longer a matter of occupation but occurrence. Although matter has a role in the performance, it is implicated in action whereby any claim it has on surface as territory is in the present; trace or memory being its sole signal of past occupation.

The way we interpret these ‘empty’ surfaces demonstrate our preconceptions of its qualities, forms and functions. Highlighting this dilemma, Trubridge (2013) refers to Peter Brook who claimed:

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged (146).

Within this declaration Brook manages to straddle both the occupation of, and occurrence as, surface. The surface, the stage, is labelled – and as a result bounded, becoming a static object. The man and the action he performs within that space confirm our existing expectations of both the space and his actions by what it is labelled, activating it for the duration he exists within it. What happens when the man no longer occupies that space is what concerns Trubridge (2013) who recognises a tendency for performance space to “[become] monumental, maintaining fixed patterns of operation and preserving the architecture as a piece of history, turning theatres into museums.” (148). So, whilst the theatre and its stage is considered a space of transience, like the temporary performances themselves which begin and end and sometimes travel to different locations; we have responded to this constant movement and frequent passage by creating a rigid callous upon its surface that lays
claim to what has occurred. Surface becomes trapped in a pocket of time as tradition, estranged from itself.

The nomad, on the other hand, operates space as “eternal passage [...] inhabiting the ‘terra nullius’ inside the compass markings, away from any of the destination points or coordinates found on the perimeter”, asserts Trubridge (2013: 149). Belonging to cultures of fixed settlement one can mistake permanence for purpose and rigour, relegating nomadism to an aimless meandering. But the stasis that arises from the occupation of surface, Trubridge (2013) argues, can actually separate and anaesthetise our relationship to it (152). The nomad does not claim the surfaces they inhabit because they do not acknowledge it as object but perpetual event or procession, of which they too are fleeting participants. Rivers run, eating away the gullies and plains they follow, as seasons change they fill and flood or dry up. Rocks push through the earth, break apart or grind down to grit and sand. Trees seed and grow, their branches and roots spread, their leaves bud, unfurl and die; their shape bends in the wind and burns in the fires. Cities burst forth in the landscape from opportunity, growing or dwindling with the inconstant tides of fortune and favour. The practice of nomadism operates in constant awareness and acknowledgment of, engagement with, and adaptation to fluctuating surroundings and circumstances. Surface is not an abstract concept or series of coordinates but a lived experience, and as such is connected to self. A self that is born, grows and dies. A self that travels through place and time. Whilst the theatre and its stage stake their architectural claim long after the audience and actors have departed, when the wayfaring nomad moves onwards their ability to physically occupy surface moves
with them in the form of their body; their memories and mythology the only markers
in a shifting landscape, invisible but to the bodies that made them.
To dear Care,

You’re not in the studio today so I guess things went well on the weekend and you’re just taking an extra day to catch from work.

I started a little late today so I had to cancel a parcel at the post office when it opened this morning, but thankfully it did not set me too far back. Though I am still avoiding the section of bush I quit the night before, I did manage to complete the first and get started in the crumpled plastic treasury. The pressure of having done so has left a cylindrical dent on the top of my thumb where my pen rested, such was the force with which I pushed it into the paper whose surface is now thoroughly contorted. Thankfully this is not in vain, the graphic paper has left a good mark on the inside from which to colour in and hatch with my first tip pen tomorrow.

Speaking of pen and landscape, we are still on a mission to flatten my paper…

which I gave reality! I’d forgotten about it! I’m today due to the print workshop and left not in the studio — but not new to end it for 20 minutes has now led to probably much closer to 2hrs. Thanks to my forgetfulness! I get so absorbed in the treasury, and drawing, everything else can fall away.

Today has been much better than yesterday, but still, it still difficult. When I come to the trees today I fretted not again — worrying about getting it wrong and how to get it right, losing the ability to just draw as I normally would is throwing one from loop right now. This is not usually a part of the process that phase me in that extent. I believe that because I usually move the direction & have the control & the freedom of choice — but now I only followed not and not think too much, and it is a hat that does not fit the well or too comfortably within the drawing up is leaving done. Yet as soon as I put made this feeling of fear and anxiety over carrying the image before me and just decided to try not capture a kind of essence of the series of marks made above total geography I could
Flows more readily - not entirely as I would normally, but much more approximately than a day previous.

Oh, and yesterday, on my walk home I began thinking about these writings and my drawing up again and it struck me that writing as I am now is the opposite to my drawing up process the second time around. When I write these letters there is no real editing, controlling or conscious and deliberate restructuring (at least not lately). I am simply trying to get a message down. It is loose and scruffy and off the cuff, intuitive etc.

In fact, thinking of Walter Benjamin, these letters are definitely more verbal than written. I dread having to copy them out exactly as they are (words and image intermixing) when they are done - not editing them will prove difficult. There is much repetition and redundancy in the language and structure - the flow ensures that - and this makes them far more akin to orally in its primary form where that was a way of maintaining structure - it allowed people to hold onto their point as they made the next one, like a chain - fragments of the same think connecting the message together. See - copies, repetition and meaning - meaning and rhythm - they are so bound up in each other.

As I was thinking about the copying one of these letters (as drawings) and not letters - hopes that diversifies from the desire to exist a canvas, I feel completely enhanced of their structure! I also thought about the difference between the talking and thinking of these ideas and feelings and the writing of them - and it led me that to make a mark is to make it public. Even though I am wrapped up in the process - so private and unseen, the truth is its positive is open to witness, to view.
To fix a mark, and idea a notion, in space is to have it seen — maybe not now, but one day. A thing cannot be a thing and remain unseen, unencountered, forever.

I knew it hate that. But then again, I look at my line

Wishes and think, there is a wealth of wishes. And they say some things. They say something about what nothing is.

Because though I feel exposed by these workings, they do not say everything — in fact, contradicting to what I just said, they are contended and narrated by words own smallness.

I move through these letters with shuddering steps and start to see something, with a silly flow or a self-conscious hardening on paralysis.

I am making my block again and again — cutting channels in the white paper with my pencil hand as surely as I carve indescribable glints on the side where sentences reach all their answers fell behind me in forgetfulness — as the next thought demands to be born. Each channel filled with a thousand seeds growing and fighting for light and air, eventually blending into a smooth flat surface of green and nothingness. A field so empty and smooth it allows for other thoughts to float over it to the horizon. A space to meditate over. A surface that is filled with itself. Nothing is forgotten through —

We only know the sea by the colors it steals from the sky. By what hangs off it — by the surface where they touch, or seem to.

I feel sorry for the sky — it almost likes its trying to find a way back in, making itself in another image. Reflecting itself. But the ocean is too deep and so the sky echoes on the surface, peering in and only ever seeing itself reflected again and again —

whatever the weather.
In this letter (1st September 2015) I use the metaphor of a field and its evolving surface as a means of describing my experience of art practice. This imagery and that which it illustrates is a morphological approach to mapping diverse and multiple actions, materials, and tools whose conflicting temporalities would, for practical purposes, otherwise render them segregated as is commonly the case when setting out to chronicle art practice. In his essay on skilled process *Walking the Plank* Tim Ingold (2011) reflects on the problematic issue of its sharp demarcation into stages; noting that although there are indeed “recognisable phases” to process it is instead a matter of “ever-changing environmental conditions” and intensities (53, 61). Whilst still chronologically processional, Ingold’s (2011) approach sees a move away from the typical framework of process as bracketed and stepped activity towards a more sympathetic and nuanced interpretative device where rhythm plays a central part in perceptions and misconceptions of continuity.

Maintaining a certain degree of division between activities and their location in a temporal hierarchy permits a process to be duplicated, just as a recipe may stand as a guide to those wishing to make a particular dish, but that is because its objective is to direct its user in accomplishing the same (or similar) end result. However, when it comes to framing the methodologies of art practice the application of a play-by-play instruction manual oversimplifies and underestimates its nature, form and qualities. A set of instructions may, to all intents and purposes, describe action and movement, but they render those processes static. It is in this stillness that art practice is subject to occupation, bounded and confined.
Materiality is not irrelevant to practice, on the contrary, it is the dialogical partner to process, having great influence on the course and development of a work; however, when we use that as our point of reference a split occurs between material and process. Like Brook’s empty space that is labelled a stage, the medium can become a static site that one enters and leaves, informing the actions that occur within it. The man walks across the stage and in doing so performs an act of theatre. But when he continues onwards out of that field of reference (if we follow the implications of Brook’s statement), although his action will not have physically altered, its location has, rapidly changing both the man’s and our conception of that process from acting to walking. Like Ingold’s (2011) theory of bounded place-making, this framework operates on the premise that “[...] the pathways or trails along which movement proceeds are perceived as limits within which it is contained” (148. Emphasis in original). Similar to Trubridge’s (2013) nomadism, Ingold (2011) offers an alternative which transforms lines from boundary to trajectory in the form of “wayfaring” that arguably provides another, more sympathetic, way of mapping art practice as experience.

Wayfaring, Ingold (2011) proposes, is the “embodied experience of [...] perambulatory movement” (148). It is a lineal “alongly” approach to surface and thus frames the wayfarer not only within the process of continual movement, but as movement (Ingold, 2011: 150, 154). Using the analogy of a line, Ingold (2011) explains the practice of wayfaring:

It is a line that advances from the tip as he presses on, in an ongoing process of growth and development, or self-renewal. [...] Indeed the
yet a line itself is not movement, it is the trace of it. The movement must come first. By describing the subject as movement one might think that Ingold (2011) would be better using the analogy of a ‘you-are-here’ pinpoint, the likes of which can be found in applications such as Google maps or satellite navigation systems. However, Ingold’s (2011) wayfarer uses movement as their way of knowing, and so the line that marks their progress actually refers to the accumulation of experience in the body that continues at its tip. The line that extends behind as trace also becomes the force that pushes its tip forward as past and present, surface and self fuse (2011:154). Trubridge (2013) uses the Aboriginal “dreaming” (mythology) as an example of this ‘flow’ that happens between site and performance, and one’s personal space and the environment when we inhabit spaces and scapes as nomads (or wayfarers) (152). As with Ingold (2011), surface is an unfolding event, but one that is embedded in memory and mythology which provides the practice of wayfaring/nomadism with an axis of reference, a mobile structuring system.

“I am making my block again and again [...]” I say in my letter (1st September 2015), referring to the acts of lino cutting, writing, and reflecting; further corroborating the symmetries between the aspects of nomadism and art-practice-as-experience. Just as the repetitive stride of the walking nomad creates a consistency in the changing landscape or surface, as I move through the various media required for these creative processes, I too am recognising a comparative, shared rhythm or stride. But what separates art practice from nomadism lies in the fact that although
attached to the body (that of the artist), art practice is not in fact a body like the nomad, but many within one. As previously mentioned, the physical body of the nomad is admittedly subject to transformation during its lifetime, in the natural progression from birth to death, and through events which shape it before, during and after these markers. In spite of this, the body itself remains a relative constant in form and quality; it does not become a bird or a stone, for instance. The body of art practice on the other hand, with its changing equations of materials, tools, techniques and temporalities behaves much like the mythical ‘Baldanders’ Jorge Luis Borges (2002) describes in *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, and is something of a ‘successive monster’ (27). The metamorphological creature, whose name translates “At-any-moment-something-else” transforms in one account from a man, to an oak tree, to a sow and so forth; capturing the dilemma and delight of fathoming and framing an inconstant body across an inconstant surface (Borges, 2002: 26).

The concept of surface as occurrence is still relevant in this analogy of the experience of art practice, but it must be doubled. The surface and the body whose touch locates it as a present event is simultaneously the subject of its own unfolding event. Here, Ingold’s (2011) line becomes topological – morphological – in much the same way Connor (2004) describes the shape of skin which is “not a sculptured mass of planes, lines and masses, but a morphology as of smoke” (37). A column or tendril of smoke curls, folds, and unfolds itself upwards, outwards and inwards without ever revealing anything other than its surface, confusing interiority and exteriority “help[ing] us see it feelingly” (Connor, 2004: 39). Touch becomes the axis or point of
reference for our understanding of a surface whose inconstancy is less a chaos than a constant state of becoming.

Within the art practice analogy of the cultivating field I move through the processes of lino cutting and writing in the guise of ploughing the soil. The thoughts I have during these processes are likened to the planting of seeds in the furrows left in my wake during cutting/writing. As these thoughts come to rest within and around the spaces of my making, germinating like seeds, they develop into larger systems of thought – philosophies, narratives, concepts, arguments. Growing from the surfaces of cutting and writing, the amassed plants that these thoughts become soon create a surface of their own in form and quality above that from which they have come. This new surface, “A field so empty and smooth it allows for other thoughts to float over it to the horizon. A space to meditate over. A surface that is filled with itself”, changes the form and locomotion of my process’ ‘body’ from muscled plough, and dextrous hand or automatic machine distributing seeds in and through the soil, to a weightless airborne spirit or gaze. Herein lies a reciprocity, as surface and body redesign and renegotiate one another within the continually evolving event of their interface that informs and reforms their forms, qualities and functions.

James Gibson’s (1986) classificatory system of medium, substance, and surface provides us with a strategy for opening up the ways we conceive of art practice, embodied or otherwise. Despite coming from an ecological perspective, Gibson’s (1986) definitions of these conditions, their individual dynamics and inter-relationships, can be applied as a new key particularly when mapping art practice beyond the constraints of the art medium, and stepped or chronological instructions
and methodology. Gibson (1986) pointedly and frequently remarks on the influence of the body and its touching of medium, substance, and/or surface as a key factor to marking out their qualities, form and category – and their interchangeability as a result. The flexibility and dialogical aspects to this system of thought, if applied to embodied art practice, affords the tools, materials, techniques, and process-as-a-whole a means of more accurately describing and interpreting its morphology.

According to Gibson (1986), an (environmental) medium is primarily the ground and surface that supports bodies and their perceptions, behaviour, and movement. But depending on the body within that medium it can easily become substance or surface. Water can be described as the medium of the fish, however it is substance (and surface) for a human, whose body may move through it but not sustainably or without some difficulty as a result of our biological design (17). In order for a medium to be defined as such it must maintain a level of homogeneity without boundaries and sharp changes, and thus has no particular axis of reference. Yet despite this it is not an abstract space dictated by the laws of equivalence as in geometry. Made up of points and lines like the latter, they indicate instead positions of observation and trajectories and traces of movement. Like nomadism, medium is subjective experience, each location and angle is entirely unique (17).

Substance, which we have already briefly mentioned above, is something of a sliding scale from solid to liquid to gas (Gibson, 1986: 19). Like the fish and human in water these qualities allow it to be medium or substance depending on what is moving through it. Nonetheless, a substance does not tend to be homogenous in the
way of a medium, this is because it has (one or more) surface(s), and subjects us to ‘right-side-up’ orientation (21-22).

The existence and persistence of surface is dependent on substance, observes Gibson (1986), and substance is separated from medium by surface which can provide a varying scale of support or barrier to bodies (24). Gibson (1986) treats surface as a site of action, saying:

[it] is where light is reflected or absorbed, not the interior of the substance. The surface is what touches the animal, not the interior. The surface is where chemical reaction mostly takes place. The surface is where vaporization or diffusion of substances into the medium occurs. And the surface is where vibrations of the substances are transmitted into the medium (1986:22-23).

In his description above, the surface Gibson (1986) illustrates performs rather like a medium – the bodies that travel through it being light, sound, and so forth. So again, the categories and their bodies blur, and superimpose upon one another.
The interchangeability of Gibson’s (1986) medium/substance/surface framework operates parallel to Trubridge (2013) and Ingold’s (2011) respective nomadism and wayfaring whereby the body moving through/across the surface activate one another in the moment-by-moment of their interface, action becoming their mutual surface. That plane is thereby not a passive scape or subject of an agent acting upon it – both are simultaneously active and reactive parties, combined by their mutual occurrence. Beyond its status as an object, when we examine the relief block as such an occurrence (or series of continual interconnected occurrences) the extent to which it transforms, converts and plays with the meaning of surface, limit and category soon becomes apparent.

Even though it is often perceived as being rather straightforward, relief printmaking has a curious and complex relationship to the subject of surface. Like Gibson’s (1986) previous articulations, the relief block, its printing, print and even its press are all understood and categorised by their interactions with that outermost limit. The term ‘relief’ within the context of art practice in particular is defined as a design which ‘stands out from a plane surface’ (OED). This is achieved through a process of building onto or, cutting away or into areas of that topmost surface thereby creating positive and negative spaces within a block or plate to achieve a visual design or effect. This process is at the root of all printmaking – relief and intaglio, the latter which stands for a design incised or engraved into a material – yet what divides these categories comes down to where the ink is applied to the matrix.
in order to produce an image from it. Intaglio printmaking forces ink within the
grooves and dimples of its matrix whilst relief applies it to the surface above those
incisions and indentations.

Although treated as different surfaces, one above and one below, relief and
intaglio matrices in fact only consist of one surface whose design creates folds
(material and geometric variations of depth) within that skin. Sitting deeper, the
indentations may be continuations of the overall surface, but it is the higher plateaus
and peaks above them that lay claim to the title of surface due to their more
immediate accessibility for contact.

With their parallel constructions of positive/negative surface but oppositional
placements of ink, identifying what constitutes surface for intaglio and relief matrices
is perhaps only possible through the lens of surface as action or occurrence. Gilles
Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988) address this dilemma of categorising surface in
their theory of the smooth and striated, acknowledging, “the two spaces in fact exist
only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, traversed into a striated
space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space” (474).

All work in relief print practice is essentially a matter of resurface rather than
surface. For a single block design, the vast majority of the action occurs within that
one material location. By examining the linoleum block as occurrence through the
evolution of my process of tracing, drawing, cutting, inking, and cleaning off, one can
begin to navigate its multiplicity and morphology of surface.

The act of tracing complicates the role and nature of surface for the block as
relays between it and those of the design-transfers continually re-establish interiority
and exteriority through touch and its trace. For blocks ‘/’ and ‘\’ my method of tracing consisted of black and white printouts of images, on whose blank reverse side I applied a strong layer of graphite. As I fill in the area with the graphite stick that interior underside of the printout becomes a new exterior; the graphite itself becoming further still the outermost layer to the white paper beneath. But in order to transfer the design, that graphite surface must be relegated to an interior once more – sandwiched between the printout surface and the block beneath it. Following the image’s designs with the pointed tip of my pen, applying pressure as I do so, the ‘action’ is evidently occurring at this outermost layer. But beneath, that touch and action is also manifest, as my pressure is designed to penetrate beneath that initial surface; causing the graphite to transfer onto the block where my pen pushes the graphite into close proximity to it.

Here there are rather quizzically three surfaces simultaneously active (the linoleum, the graphite layer, and the printout being traced) – all party to touch – that element which supposedly helps us to designate a surface. One could argue that, like Gibson’s (1986) medium, the graphite becomes the ground of the design’s transmission during the act of tracing; but this is complicated by the fact that it is not just transferring the information at its outer paper surface, the graphite is also its own substance with its own surface which is then layered atop the block once that paper is removed. Thus, the paper – between the layers of printed ink and graphite – becomes the true medium in the moment of this process.

The felt tip pen ink drawing that follows from this elaborates on and fixes the graphite design into place; both absorbing into the linoleum to an extent, but
continuing to rest ever so slightly on top of the block. With this being the case one might consider the drafted design as constituting a ‘relief’ itself, but these marks are not detectable to the touch, only by tone to the eye. The topological margin between the surface of the block and the new surfaces of the graphite or ink is too minimal to create the separation necessary for relief printing – which requires a greater distance between the lower negative and raised positive surfaces in order to identify an image or design. However, my eyes and cutting tools continue to recognise these darkly drawn filaments as limit, edge, and boundary in themselves in much the same way our pen recognises the lines and margins on a piece of paper when writing. Hence the earlier comparison and communion between my cutting a block and writing my letters in the cultivating field analogy.

Like the prepared lined paper that awaits us when we set out to write by hand, my relief design is fully resolved as a drawing across the entire block before I begin to cut into it. So, when I do work with my blades they have a relatively predetermined material pathway to interpret and follow. My blade works within the passageways and cul-de-sacs of the design through the areas without pen ink, negotiating with both its own and the linoleum’s physical capabilities and tolerances. These inked lines become my points of reference, funnelling and bounding my movements as well as shaping my thoughts and moods:

This week I began a tricky section of the block [...] I am currently in a tangle of branches, making my way through them so slowly I feel as if I am not moving at all. In that way they are real to me, as if I am trying to drag myself up through some dense thicket which snaps and snags against me and I am weary for it.

(Excerpt from letter to Quillan, 11 June 2015).
Particularly in blocks ‘/’ and ‘\’ these lines are, more often than not, short and hatched at a myriad of angles (as the above excerpt suggests by its ‘dense thicket’) which should disqualify any comparison between this process of cutting and that of writing, whose lines and margins are much longer, and trajectories are consistently straighter – in proportion to the width of the page they cover. But writing (in the western method and style) is also a curiously disruptively structured flow. Writing from left to right, then stopping, raising one’s pen and moving back to the left but down a line to once more continue with that train of thought back towards where it paused above you on the right-hand side becomes something of a macrocosm to what is occurring in the intricate cutting of my blocks.

And as my blade and pen follow these blank corridors they each produce a stream of thought and reflection that equates one to the other. The boundaries of their material categories and individual processes dissolve through the structural equivalence of their actions. In a letter on June 2nd, 2015 comparing the same dual processes of letter writing and lino cutting, I say, “my cutting is a kind of chirography, a kind of excavational calligraphy because of the way my thoughts move, just as they do in writing this letter.” Despite the very different materiality of the surfaces of linoleum and the lined paper page, they had become a continuous surface and practice of thinking through thoughts and ideas. But this unity was only activated by these surfaces as action – through their individual manifestations of cutting and writing – processes which too proved to possess a mutual continuity.

But unlike writing whose thoughts come to fill in those blank paper corridors as matter, as pen or pencil markings which constitute words, the material traces of
cutting result in a doubling of that blank channel. A series of grooves which over time and by accumulation will – through printing – create the negative for a series of markings on another blank surface, in my case, paper. Yet these marks will not and cannot be read as a verbal language, instead they inform the visual language of the design. The immaterial words, thoughts, and feelings that occupied those spaces during cutting are invisible, then, spilling from the crevices of lino across the threshold of my letters and its laws of material language they transform. Where my lino shavings and chips from cutting dissipate and disintegrate, “[falling] behind me in forgetfulness”; the words and sentences written in my letters construct a physical chain whose content becomes another threshold and (psychic) surface to enter and travel through the occurrence of the surfaces it describes.

This extension of the block’s surface also occurs at a basic material level. Its edges form a horizontal boundary. To progress, however, its vertical axis only recognises the hessian backing as limit, lest the block disintegrate from over-cutting. As cuts are made, more of the linoleum’s substance is exposed creating new volumes of surface disguised by its inward turning pleating and pocking, which allow for growth without expanding the geometrical edges of the block. The top outermost material surface of the linoleum is of course what will ultimately be read and recognised through the print process and the print object; yet to successfully cut or carve a relief block a printmaker must recognise it as more than a surface, but an interconnected trinity of interface that includes substance and medium.

Generally, in order to carve a block into its design the material of that block must possess a degree of homogeneity and a low enough viscosity to maintain the
integrity of the design under the pressures and forces of cutting and printing. As an artist who tends to work with linoleum I am very aware of its even consistency which contributes to the stability and ease of my cutting. The blades have been designed with this substance in mind, and so a sharp lino cutter is able to move through the substance as medium. Relief wood-cutting is not so dissimilar in its requirements. But here the grain of the wood is a considered aspect of the print’s aesthetic – one must work in its direction to avoid the breakdown of cuts made – too many knots, whorls and varying densities in the substance can impede and constrain a tool’s progress and abilities.

On the completion of cutting the block’s surface is once more transformed, “[...] it is no longer a cutting block, but a printing one” (10/8/2015, Emphasis added). Whilst the nomad occupies surface in the form of their movement along it, their trajectory (Ingold’s line, 2011) is far different from the printer who must continually reoccupy the same set geometry of the block with its limited horizons. Due to this the surface of the block, even as action, is mainly governed by a vertical axis of movement and history. In order to progress, every form of contact and its trace alters or destroys that which came before it, creating a great palimpsest.

Now as I’m handling the block, curling it up towards me to throw its marks in high relief in the evening light, all I can think of is ink. It fills my mind, it covers the surface of this block as my hands and eyes sweep over it. I can hear it bristling like brittle velvet or tender velcro. Raspy like a cat’s tongue. But it also threatens to ooze and bleed and fill in the spaces I worked so hard to clear.

(Excerpt from letter to Gordon, 10th August 2015).
Like the block and the roller that interact with it, ink consists of a substance, but unlike the former it is without surface because it is *all* surface. Being a material mass somewhere between a solid and a liquid it does have boundaries and edges unlike a gas, but its fluctuating form and homogenous consistency means that those peripheries are always being formed and reformed like Connor’s smoke analogy. It is during the portioning out and mixing up of the ink with other materials which tend to share a similar homogeneity (such as magnesium powder and oils) that the printer engages with it as a substance. It is pushed, kneaded and folded with palette knives which stretch it out, testing its viscosity by the way it holds on to the surface of the knife blade or the glass inking slab. Then, with the palette knife, taking a small amount of ink from its reservoir I press the flat top edge of its blade against the slab and drag it across, creating a smooth even line of ink. Away from its mounded amorphous mass, evenly streaked across another plane, the substance begins to take on the identity of a surface in the way we have been accustomed to recognising the concept – a manageable exterior veil.

When the roller hits this channel of ink it bristles and prickles forming peaks of resistance, still negotiating its status between mobile substance and relatively stable surface. For even ink distribution the printer must ensure the barrel of the roller is constantly turning, even when out of contact with the ink as it makes its passes across the slab. This prevents the same part of the barrel hitting the same areas of ink on the slab and causing a build-up or patchiness. The texture, density and finish of the ink’s surface here are also controlled and negotiated by those of the glass slab and the smooth roller that it is in contact with.
When the inked roller meets the block it does so on a similar condition. Initially, the clean linoleum and inked roller surfaces collide with one another. As the ink continues to be applied to the block’s surface the interface at play becomes one between the inked block and the inked roller. Where they meet a wall of sound crackles forth as the syrupy substance on one object merges with its counterpart on the other only to be ripped apart by the turning roller. Although it maintains contact with the block during each pass the roller alternates its collective but varied face of ink with the equally collective and varied face of the inky block. These exchanges between the two surfaces of a single substance slowly shape them into mirrored reciprocal planes. When the roller returns to the slab it carries the faint embossing in its ink surface of the relief design from the block, which are then replenished to an even layer by the surface of the slab mediating beneath.

The mutual smooth hard surfaces of the block and roller are not a coincidence; these relatively mirrored surfaces are what prevent the negative indentations from being filled in – allowing the design to remain clear. Were the block to be inked up by a soft sponge or plush painting roller for example, the relief effect would not be properly achieved. For all that a layer of ink would no doubt have been applied, the soft roller’s failure to recognise the positive as surface over the negative highlights one of the core laws of relief practice – resistance, the counter to force, the marriage of which informs all surface and limit.

Following printing the block is generally cleaned of its ink. As the substance is moved across and off the smooth upper surface of the relief, it is also incidentally absorbed by the more porous flesh of the open cuts beneath; the effect of which
renders the block almost unrecognisable to its former images. The chemicals and methods of cleaning frequently remove not only the printing ink, but the initial graphite and pen ink designs – all the residues of which render the block alien, especially in view of the crisp print that has been pulled from its surface not long before. It is as if its skin, its face with those identifying marks and features, has been flayed and what is left now struggles to hold on to itself as both matter and meaning:

[...] once you wash it, any resemblance to itself as the block you cut and the print vanishes. [...] They become a bleak stained grey landscape – the cyphers raised up on the surface no different to the murky ditches beneath them. Like a moonscape – but one of those dead moons, the kind they talk about along with black holes, red dwarves. The kind of planet that consumes itself in flame or simply grow dark and dies, breaking apart. That’s what happens to my surfaces on the block – they break apart – over time they crumble and break off; but before then, when they are cleared of ink, they are cleared of some of their meaning too. All those lines connecting to each other, connecting to me, weaken – they grow dull. I can always ink up the block again to remind myself what it is, was? But after that first inking and cleansing it is never the same again.

(Excerpt from letter to Gordon, December 7th 2015).

The relief block’s surface is a vehicle of reproduction in the form of the print it creates, but as an object itself it is always reborn, redressed by every encounter, always at odds with its own image, its own skin. And the print which proceeds before it into the world is forever circling back to that body from whence it came, to the mutual surface of memory and touch, that volume without volume.
Chapter two

P E / / I S
Painters sell their skin, models hire out their skin, the world gives its skins. I have not saved mine, here it is. Flayed, printed, dripping with meaning, often a shroud, sometimes happy.

(Serres, M. 2008: 38).
Christine,

I was feeling a bit jangled today - I think it was just the treadmill talking. So when I got to college, I submitted my paper for the conf session and then threw myself headlong into cutting, rather than face my field reflection report. Odd enough, a couple of hours in I was feeling well enough despite the pain that still took my toll. Oh, I just can not hide today!!!
The cutting went for a few hours & then I fell asleep but then pulled an evening.

I still haven't been sleeping well so I took myself off to Naples to find something to help me through these personal issues. I can only describe it as feeling like my body is a machine - by pushing it through those stages of cutting, it actually becomes a machine and cannot switch itself off from that mode. Of course, there are probably more factors to it than that - summer, its weather & the longer days; getting out of the flat; being in the third year of my PhD, I am learning to be kind to myself; these days, I never used to be. Any sign of weakness, I would hear into consumption - I would force my body and more to do things when they were already at breaking point. I suppose that's how I got through in the 3rd year of my undergrad. So when I knew that I could not in one night forgo of missed to write that report, I allowed myself to cut instead.

Can you imagine what I would have written in that state?! Funny how I'm in the same place in my head with the cutting, but how you can't see it - there is no way because it is not a verbal, verbal based language. But it is a visual language, which shares a place with that sort - being calligraphic and graphical, you can sense the feeling and physical move which made those marks.

Today I was working on the script - it was a good space to write in -- into the recurring section. I look forward to seeing it in print. I always do with the for I believe it is one of my favorite textures to use realised. Even whilst writing this, I began imagining a project where I could put a
large animal skin design — though perhaps that would not be so soothing even such a long period unlike the fragment I’m working on now. Either way, I shall have to make sure you do it sometime.

I think this section will probably take me another 2 days — which will have to be interrupted by this report. I cannot help finishing it back. That kind of analytical writing does not get so well during the phase of making — which is why I have any been writing casually in these letters.

I feel like I am losing my focus and direction lately — not in the work, but in the documentation. I worry that I’ll write too.

I worry about what I give away and what I conceal. I worry that at times my letters are so emotional and passionate — but these episodes, these passages, are necessary. Writing lets you do that. It keeps you away from prying eyes, it lets you expose yourself utterly and then holds a copy of that moment like a photograph which it presents to the world, your audience. You point to it and identify the frame in it all you. But you can never really, ever if it is deep down, you can. It looks directly on you do. But it is frozen in there, from one angle, fixed. You know nothing about what is happening outside of that frame.

You do not know how you even moved into that frame. In fact, realistically, when that photo was taken you were not in a frame at all — you were in a world of mundane boundary lines reality. The camera helps make those worlds real.

It’s like taking one note from a song sheet and saying, well, this is “Singin’ in the Rain.” Are that one note just sits there. It could be anywhere, really.

Do you think we are drifting apart? I can write that in a letter, but I can’t say it to you — besides we’re both just busy. I am so busy I am in a world of nowadays and the fact you are the absolute farthest away from Section you can be doesn’t help.

I feel that happening more and more these days. I worry about it with my family too. Did you know that they get a
but funny around me those days where affection is involved.

See, Cleo - who lives away too, but still accessible in
Australia. When my Mum and Dad see her and they
hug her. You watch how tight they hold her. And for
how long. And how often.

Mum and Dad tend to pull away from me pretty
quickly these days. Dad doesn’t tend to hug me much at
all when I see him. And Mum, well — last time it
was a year since I’d seen her and when I did I
leapt up and hugged her so hard — as soon as she
could feel how much that meant to me, she pulled
away. It’s like all these things that have passed through
our separate lives unseen by each other make it harder
to allow all those feelings inside that little space of a
hug. And I feel ashamed for embracing them like I do
at the end of August when I see them in London it
will have been 2 years. I wonder how it will be
That funny little space between two people. It makes
me think of pretty flowers, which is odd really.
To press a flower is to crush the life out of it. But
then again it is also an act of preservation
when I press my books I do neither. Two bodies push
together against a flat white space. At first I thought
that only one body made its mark there - the book. But
then again perhaps it really is just the imprint of the press
but it passes through that landscape and leaves nothing.
In a print there are two surfaces - it’s just that only
one of them is printed.

What would happen, I wonder, if you inked the
press barrell and not the block - what would the press
tell us then? In this case we’d probably just have
a long rectangular patch of ink, with a heavier section over
the triangular block. But nobody wants that. So, the
story, do they?
The woman sat up, frightened, she pulled out of herself, too quickly, too violently, so that her face was left in her two hands. I could see it lying there: its hollow form. It cost me an indescribable effort to stay with those two hands, not to look at what had been torn out of them. I shuddered to see a face from the inside, but I was much more afraid of that bare flayed head waiting there, faceless.

(Rilke, R. M. 1989: The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge (1910) 'Faces').

_Pellis_, whose etymology is so abundantly attired in undergarments and overgarments, swathed in pelts and furs, and draped with skins and hides; all but fails to hide, with its rituals of dressing, its own ultimate history of unsheathing. _Pellis_, the skin that was torn from its body. Monstrous, not simply for the exposed visceral reality that awaits our gaze (as Rilke describes in his encounter), but also for the fact that we are no longer faced with an oppositional ‘inside’ at all.

A flayed skin is abstracted; as a flattened, flaccid fabric whose interior structural form has been evacuated it now presents an outside and an _outside_ – creating a new order, or disorder, of surface. In her study of representations of animal skins on Greek vases, Daniella Louise Widdows (2006) describes this transformation of form, role and status from the living skin (_cutis_) as a vessel and receptacle, to the dead skin (_pellis_) becoming the embodiment of the animal’s associated characteristics “[...] and something else indeed” (156). As Widdows’ (2006) comment indicates this transformation from living to dead skin places the _pellis_ in a position of ambiguity, de-categorising it. Steven Connor (2004) characterises the skinned skin, now at a remove from its body, as “deader than a corpse, a corpse’s remnant” (11), however he also acknowledges that, in the first place:
The [living] skin cannot easily be thought of as a part of the body because, despite the fact that it has its obvious specialized functions, its principal function is to manifest the complex, cooperative, partitive complexion of the body (2004: 29).

In other words, even when skin is an attached, living part of the body it is not entirely integrated into the body due to its position as medium and mediator which, by their nature of transmission and interface, carry with them a tendency for separateness.

The flayed skin is a surface whose image is intrinsically implicated with death. Having once been part of a living anatomy it is now quite literally cut off from its vital supplies and sustaining systems which facilitated its renewal and repair. Like the dead body it was taken from, if unprocessed, the skinned skin is equally susceptible to decomposition. But unlike a body which cannot survive without its skin the pellis can far outlive its body once processed and thence preserved, albeit by surviving it as an object.

The living skin (cutis) is shored up as inner and/or outer limit by physical, psychical and symbolic forces which (mistakenly) reaffirm it as boundary. However, as explored in Chapter one of this Part, bounding the living skin is highly problematic where touch is concerned due to its propensity to extend and accumulate surface. The pellis, though of a different order to cutis – as a skin that can exist independently of a body – likewise shares a propensity to extend and accumulate. In the process of being flayed it has acquired an additional outside in exchange for an inside – it has become doubled, even a double within a single material form. This double, like all doubles, I would suggest initiates a dialogue of otherness and as we shall see, all that that entails. The pellis refers simultaneously to the (now) invisible body it was taken
from, and the invisible body of (what I shall refer to as) its shadow, along with all the potential bodies and structures it may yet come into relation with through transport, for example. A cow hide, for instance, may be processed in such a way as to retain a furred surface on one side and a smooth suede, scraped, cured surface on the other. Even should the furred side be scraped smooth it will still hold traces which will refer back to that fur in the form of pores and scars – a lived surface. Although a flat and empty hide, the furred/pored surface often invites our imagination to reform it into the familiar shape of the animal from whence it came – a warm sensual skin that rises and falls, twitches and bristles, around which an entire environment also grows. The smooth, scraped surface however is not so easy to fill. Its contents are not alien to us – they furnish our slaughterhouses, our butcher shops, our dog’s jaws and dinner plates. But in this form they are abstracted, dead. In our mind’s eye this smooth, formerly interior surface of the hide falls into shadow, like a black hole in the galaxy it consumes matter, information, in a way that annihilates form and we are left in the wake of that vacuum. This duality between the surfaces of the pellis keenly reflects our knowledge of, and more importantly, our anxieties surrounding living/lived surfaces and their ‘other’ counterpart. “The skinned body is less a body than even a skeleton, which we find easier to re-clothe in flesh [...]” Connor (2004) explains, “The skin always takes the body with it” (29).

Reflecting in my letter to Christina (June 2015) I describe a similar opposition evident in the printed surface with regards to the touches of both the block’s and the press’ barrel against the paper, and their material evidence, or lack of it, respectively:
Two bodies push together against a flat white space. At first I thought that only one body made its mark there – the block, but then again perhaps it really is just the barrel of the press – but it passes through that landscape and leaves nothing. In a print there are two surfaces – it’s just that only one of them is printed.

What remains so striking about this scenario are not the surfaces themselves, but a perception of the type of touch that has informed and inscribed those surfaces physically and symbolically.

Technology is synonymous with all art, from the pigment-filled mouths that stencilled hands onto cave walls, to the pencils, brushes, chisels, hammers and the like that have since come to populate the hands of countless artists and artisans. But following the Industrial Revolution, technology and its associations have come to mean something rather different for these aforementioned artefacts. The relentless pace of assembly lines and often terrifying scale and power of machines made infamous on Victorian factory floors eclipsed our image of these simpler technologies and the humans that used them.

The intimacy and agency these smaller tools afford the body, its skills, and movement, in comparison to their colossal cousins allows them to be absorbed more imperceptibly, and perhaps more effortlessly, conceived or constructed as extensions of ourselves. In contrast, Margaret Mead (1953) and Tim Ingold (2011) position the human body almost as accessory to the large machines of industry, whose bulk and tempo make them impossible to accumulate into our own. “It has its own existence, its own rhythm, to which man must submit”, Mead explains (257). Likewise, Ingold
(2011) frames the labour of the machine operative as one “[...] whose activity is constrained by the parameters of a determining system” (59).

The degree to which a person is recognised as operating a technology or is said to be operated by it (as is so strongly asserted by Mead (1953) and Ingold (2011) in the above instance) opens up a discourse of distance which informs the relations, qualities and identities of each of those bodies (human and technological), and the convergence and conflicts that arise through contact with one another. The distance I am addressing here is not simply a matter of the degree of physical separation between entities, though by no means do I intend to disregard it. Instead, as in my letter to Christina, I also wish to consider distance as nuance, “It’s like all the things that have passed through our separate lives unseen by each other make it harder to allow all those feelings inside that little space of a hug. [...] That funny little space between two people” (2015). Rather than frame the subject of distance through abstractions of space in geometry and geography, I refer back to my letter and the language of touch which so thoroughly informs it. The implication of touch within the subject of distance extends it beyond spatial proximity into the realm of difference, as a measure of affinity and form.

Difference as distance carries certain implications when framing artist-tool touch relations in art practice, particularly in that of printmaking. The scale and complexity of technologies used are subject to considerable variation across not only the medium as a whole (encompassing a panoply of intaglio, relief and three-dimensional practices), but also those used during the breadth of each process. As a
result, printmaking continues to deny and defy our desire to holistically categorise
and qualify its forms and its touches.

In their phenomenological study of flow in artistic practice Janet Banfield and
Mark Burgess (2013) segregate medium by dimensionality (two or three), as well as
notions of a practitioner’s “direct engagement with materials of creation” (66-67, 69).
Essentially framing the materials and tools of practice within the problematic
category of primacy and directness of touch by the artist, Banfield and Burgess (2013)
include painting, embroidery, glass, ceramics, and wood-turning in their study; but
exclude the art forms of photography and printmaking, which, in their opinion, “[…]
lack an identifiable primary medium” (69). According to the parameters of their
study, printmaking lacks both primacy – for the scale of, and degree to which
technology is understood to mediate the artist’s hand (and body) – but also falls
under the classification of indirectness due to the material and technical differences
which demarcate its process into stages.

The terminology ‘direct touch’ (or what Banfield and Burgess (2013) phrase as
“direct engagement”) places an emphasis, priority, power and elevated rank to
human touch, or more broadly, a living touch above that of other agents, matter and
material whose qualities and forms of interface fail to qualify to the same standard.
The Sistine Chapel’s fresco The Creation of Adam doubly delivers us this standard and
standing of human touch which is here equated with the Divine; not just for the hand
of God which reaches out to touch his creation, man; but also in the hand of
Michelangelo, who reached out with brush in hand and painted them. The ‘Creation’
is doubled, but is divided in turn; for the hand of God originates, whilst the hand of the artist arguably replicates and duplicates.

Acts of creation are complicated dependent on our conceptions of the human hand in relation to the tool, in other words, mediation. André Leroi-Gourhan (1993) uses the subject of gesture to navigate this value and attribution of power that oscillates between hands and tools:

The borderline between the primate and the first toolmaker is not a matter of technical possibilities: The great apes can grasp, touch, pick, knead, peel, and handle; they tear their food apart using fingers and teeth, crush with their molars, cut with their incisors, hammer with their fists, scratch and dig with their nails (1993: 239).

What Leroi-Gourhan (1993) is emphasising is that whilst the gestures themselves have not altered, they have been transferred from our body to our tools, and as such, now operate at a degree of remove. The hand is no longer the tool, but the “driving force” behind a tool (242). Yet over time and through mutual exposure a tool can be reincorporated into, and reclaimed by the body – if not physically – then psychologically and symbolically. In his socio-historical critique of the technologizing of Western language Walter Ong (1982) argues that in order to internalise a technology we must make it second nature, an innate part of ourselves and our behaviour. We must convert that which is perceived as artificial other into ‘natural’ self. Thus, as second skins they must be practiced with, moulded and mastered by us until both they and their application become instinctive to us (Ong, 1982: 82-83). This historical development in human/tool relations inverts Leroi-Gourhan’s (1993) hand-behind-tool model and arguably proposes an embodiment of tools, whereby they
become extensions of the body – the success of which, as Leroi-Gourhan (1993) reminds us, has much to do with the proximity of the tool’s gesture to that of the human body’s. But it is not a proximity of space, it is a proximity of kind.

The relays between human skins and those of technology, as the following example from Freud (1961) illustrates, allow our bodies to physically, intellectually, emotionally and psychologically fold and unfold themselves to astonishing degrees. We have increased our fields of touch, if only at times by the eye and mind. But Freud (1961) marks out a distinction between wearing/operating a skin and living one:

> With every tool [man] is perfecting his own organs, whether motor or sensory, or is removing the limits to their functioning. Motor power places gigantic forces at his disposal, which, like his muscles, he can employ in any direction; thanks to ship and aircraft neither water nor air can hinder his movements; by means of spectacles he corrects defects in the lens of his own eye; by means of the telescope he sees into the far distance; and by means of the microscope he overcomes the limits of visibility set by the structure of his retina. [...] With the help of the telephone he can hear at distances which would be regarded as unattainable even in a fairy tale. [...] Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but these organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times. (1961: 90-92. Emphasis added).

Both Freud (1961) and Ong’s (1982) arguments position technology and its relation to our bodies within a narrative of conflict, as an object or process which we must master, or, failing that, be mastered by. Technologies are divided by scale and degree into tool and machine, according to Margaret Mead (1953) who, like Freud (1961), recognises the internalised tool’s role of complementing and amplifying our body without replacing it. Their standpoint appears to emerge from the degree to which technology can be familiarised and incorporated (controlled, measured, adjusted) by
our bodies. These narratives, though understandable, are strikingly problematic, perpetuating outmoded mythologies of touch, as we shall see.


The chosen tools of painter Brice Marden [Figure five] include, “[...] brushes, some twenty-seven inches long and some thirty-three and a half inches long” (Richardson, 1992: 67), and sticks of various length, specifically for his ink drawing. These implements, and the physical distance they enforce between Marden and the canvas and paper grounds he works on, is significant in regards to the type of gesture that directly result from this telescopic distension of his hands, arms, shoulders, and invariably one could argue, by default, his entire body. In a literal sense, these long tools further remove the painter from the location of the material which he
manipulates, they physically widen the space between artist and work. But this growing space does not preclude ‘direct touch’. In fact, as Marden’s calligraphic gesture proves, he may exercise a distance of space, but not a distance of touch. The art of Eastern calligraphy requires a dynamic of balance and flow between one’s body and the tool, the brush, it interacts with. Leroi-Gourhan’s (1993) “driving force” (242) now becomes a dialogue where power is exchanged between body and tool. What makes calligraphy so evocative is not only its compounding of chirographic language and visual image, but the way it implicates the body – traces its movement – thereby closing the gap between the bodies of the work and the artist with an imagined choreography. As a type of touch, a residue of it, the calligraphic mark is inherently human; it speaks of the body, by the body.

In printmaking, instances of physical distance between artist and artefact are part and parcel of practice. Many processes involve tools, techniques and materials which require the absence of the artist’s body; etching plates biting in acid baths, or developing the photosensitive emulsion of a silk screen in the confines of an exposure unit, for example. As a relief printmaker, however, I am almost always in contact with my block. My tools are fine, small and intimate, palm-sized; allowing for the greater dexterity and force necessary for the intricacies and efforts of a mark making which consists of cutting and gouging dense, solid materials.

Printing, by great contrast, is a stage that entails a segregation between myself and the block by way of a much larger tool, the printing press. Due to its size and the nature of its machinations one is forced to perform around it. Like Mead’s (1953) and Ingold’s (2011) machinists I am subject to the foreign bulk and rhythms of
this body that, unlike Marden’s brush, does not recognise my own (still bearing in mind that the press is designed by and for human bodies and human use). But where the narrative of my process diverges from Ingold’s (2011) is in his description of that journey, which “[...] is more like a series of interconnected terminals than a walk” (59). He explains that, for the machinist “The intimate coupling between movement and perception that governs the work of the craftsman is broken” (2011: 59).

It is impossible to deny that the printing press does not have its own protocols and dictates. Many of these are in place to ensure safety; some to increase productivity; others exist, like any other tool, due to the limits of the machine’s (and its operator’s) capabilities. For all its gears, handles and turnings a manual press is a static thing. Despite being an object capable of great force, as its name implies, in its own right it cannot perform without the force of another body interacting with it. I make up for the limitations of the machine and it makes up for mine, my body stretches and proceeds across the space of the workshop in its stead. Pressures are set and released, inked blocks, papers and blankets are laid, smoothed, peeled back and removed. The motion of my body fuels that of the machine as I stand and turn the wheel that rolls the barrel across the block. Although my view of the event on the bed is obfuscated by the layers of paper, rubber and the barrel’s own belly, I see it as the press does, feelingly (Connor, 2004: 39). I may not directly touch the “materials of creation” (Banfield and Burgess, 2013: 66-67) as I operate the press, and the gestures of my body as I turn its wheeled gear most certainly will not correspond to the marks transferred onto the paper of the print; but I do engage in a dialogue with this machine of touch. We share a language, you see, the language of pressure.
To touch is to exert pressure, as Claudia Castañeda (2001) explains:

In its neurophysiological guise, touch is divided into three main components: pain, temperature and pressure. According to this system, touch is reducible to pressure, for example, in the form of a single unit that varies in intensity but not in kind. The resulting variation in pressure is one critical aspect of the sensation neurophysiologists call touch (2001: 231-232).

As this definition suggests, pressure and its intensities are core to touch, its implications and interpretations. The OED definitions of the verb ‘to press’ likewise correspond, suggesting that applications of pressure, or actions of pressing, are divided and described in conjunction with the sliding scale of the pressures themselves. The dictionary infers that the higher the pressure, the greater the force, and the more violence or passion attributed to the process of pressing; such as torture (as one translation testifies). Similarly, it suggests that actions of low pressure are attributed to weakness, or delicacy and gentle touch; engendered with illness, carefulness or affection. But the term can also refer to a more ambiguous standard of steady, even and consistent pressure used to smooth, flatten, crush, preserve, stamp, impress, and imprint.

Pressing can be used to greet, urge, threaten, constrain, to demonstrate love, longing, fear, loathing and so many other things besides; yet most of all it communicates and reinforces presence. Pressure makes an impression, whether it be a physical trace or mark, an ephemeral sensation, image, or an emotional and intellectual understanding. “[B]odies push together” toward a mutual surface where the reader and the read converge and exchange, where mutual touch becomes (in some cases, but not all) mutual feeling. The terms by which we tend to understand
and organise touch today are frequently directed by philosophies of embodiment and agency; as explored in Chapter one, touching goes ‘hand in hand’ with feeling, experiencing and interpreting that contact. Technology, however, can disrupt our associations and expectations of the relays between touch and feeling through skin.

As I described earlier, the printing press is not capable of feeling, sensing and gauging the pressures it imparts. Designed to facilitate mechanical reproduction – printing – this machine’s demonstrations of pressure are in themselves objective. Its touch is not applied out of curiosity, nor is it exploratory; it does not apply and adjust its pressure against the surfaces it contacts to communicate its intensions or emotions – for it has none. Yet most printmakers working with a press cannot deny the idiosyncrasies that render each machine entirely unique. Their age, particular construction, and reactions to the effects of temperature variation, air pressure, humidity and so forth shape their own dialogue with the printer and materials. And so, the press cannot be entirely disqualified from these qualities of feeling. Designed with the human body who operates it in mind the tasks of touching and sensing are divided into separate roles and bodies during the printing process. The press applies the pressure whilst the printer sets, reads, adjusts and enables the application of that pressure.

The printer, as it were, literally becomes a physical manifestation of the press’ sensation of touch (feeling). Just as the nerves of our dermis transmit information, the printer’s sensitive and mobile skin becomes that of the press; flitting around and through the body and processes of the machine motivating, informing and reforming
its actions. In turn, the printer’s own fluctuating movements and pressures are re-mediated, remedied, by the equally individual weight and gesture of the press.

A printing press creates a mark that a human cannot, just as a human creates a mark that a press barrel cannot. Our human bodies dictate the marks we make and the way we make them in accordance with our limits. Connor (2004) states:

As I touch objects in the world, they seem to rise to their own surfaces, to meet me in the shape that I present to them: a brick wall offers me a patch of roughness exactly coincident with the back of my hand (35).

In short, everything we touch is reshaped by our skin into planes and pockets which take their form and measure from our bodies. The impressions created by Yves Klein’s widely known *Anthropométries of the Blue Epoch* (1960), directly demonstrate Connor’s (2004) observation about the human body’s “intermittent touch” (35). For this performance, Klein applied a blue pigment emulsion to three models’ bodies whom he then instructed to press themselves against canvas attached to the wall of the Galerie Internationale d’Art Contemporain, Paris (Weitemeier, 1995: 54). Klein went on to create over one hundred and fifty more *Anthropométries (ANT)* on paper, and approximately thirty on silk ‘Shrouds’ using both relief (mentioned above) and stencil techniques (where spray paint was used to silhouette the model’s body) (Weitemeier, 1995: 55).
What appears to have so captivated Klein about these impressions was their ability to capture and symbolise human energy and life force [Figure six] (Weitemeier, 1995: 53). Hannah Weitemeier (1995) notes, “The morphology of the image depended on the anatomy, temperament, and emotional state of the model involved. Based on the position and character of the imprint, the *Anthropométries* can be categorized as static or dynamic, positive or negative” (55). Both Klein’s and Weitemeier’s (1995) reflections on these ‘impressions’ open up their definition to more than just an imprint – a mark produced by pressure on a surface (OED). Rather, Klein’s pressed marks become part of a larger discourse of the term ‘impression’ and its manifestations; a discourse that can be extended to the printmaking process and its product.
To Vera,

I have been thinking about the final body of this project, and though the handwriting is still somewhat uncertain to me, I feel myself being forced towards particular decisions without knowing exactly why, or simply letting events happen that they are the answer without being able to extract why. But this is not unusual to me, or how I conduct my precision; it is only in having to convert that precense to the language of research (by which I mean the suppository tyranny of theoretical exigency) that I struggle with these feelings, it is only in the case, how I doubt and question them, and it is in this way I have been thinking of these letters that I wrote quite often — which relief things bring me, but also some anxiety. My plan is to continue writing them, but then to go back and rewrite them — and now they have been rewritten as I have like them. I shall perhaps edit one more and use that piece of writing on a line out, and perhaps so I make those broader, I shall write more letters on the subject and make my way through them.

It is as strange thing to move through these spaces of cutting and writing, of drafting and revising. The fineness of the cut block, and the plasticity of the written page, and also of itself, and the other gestures in form. But the thing with the chance and the power is that I can have the same thoughts as in these letters, but they stay there embedded — their essence and records must be searched for and even then they are not guaranteed to be present. The moment in time and its thoughts are imprinted in that gate, and though the chances are that the essence & experience would not return, when I see them. I am taken to that place — and again it is a space of potential — I am confronted with feelings that are familiar and emotional snapshots of that time. I am filled with the things that shape the art here in the first place. Like a scent that suddenly turns you into a memory, my prints a like portals, their imply flow black lines that draw me in, and whose pressure pushes me to dust and leave me with nothing but thoughts, feelings & instincts. When I see them they are strange reminders of I and myself somewhat awkwardly self conscious, I am aware of these things happening inside of
It was as if something had been left out by a novelist. I maintain a level of distance for a time - as if in my recognizing something shared by this thing, this creative, and I, it may too recognize me.

I remember when I found my collection of Esher prints and my bed, wrapped in yellow heavyweight paper, dusted over with dust, and a dead fly caught in a fold of the wrapping. When I opened them up and looked through them I had felt that tenderness and a little melancholy on them, and maybe myself, that I pressed my hands against them or if for courage. But this only lasts a short while... as I am warmed by the tenderness I feel for these objects - as if I have caught a line. They are as just prints made all to anyone who might come across them. But to see them, or touch them, or think of them is like reclaiming some treasured trinket gifted to you or left in your possession by some beloved deceased friend or relative.

But what feeling or what I remember are passages of feelings and visions of myself and others that the print encountered in its journey into the world. It is as if I am pressing my hands, not against the wood paper surface but against myself back there - as if to reassess her or comfort her or know her a little better. Perhaps it is not even her that I commiserate with, but that imagined her - and even her sometimes. More often it is that feeling that comes over me and I am filled with recognition for it - it is some strange connection whose signature is in that print, that time, that space. That is perhaps all that is not imagined about all this - the signature feeling, I always recognized it though I cannot describe it, name it or explain it. It is not like these letters which I will one day rediscover & read - who tell me what I was feeling then & how to reflect it now. It makes me think of the horror stories in Henry James - if I had unreadingly handed pieces of myself in the shape of objects that lay there dormant.

I do not know what is going into this piece now - it is not like the others - it is too drawn out, complicated, delayed and it story lacks the usual figuration & signification that populated all that came
Before all, I have lost my train of thought. I have nothing to say, though I feel I have said nothing anyway. I felt like I was actually speaking with you, I might make a better point of all this, or that you might have more of a chance to understand. As I'm speaking some kind of words by putting them into one space and move about, like words need to — like they have more of a chance of growing into what they really mean, rather than stuffed here. But that in mind, I think — I am putting too much provision in pencil and paper — perhaps, if I chose to see it that way, your place could be one where words were allowed to grow and change — but it is a hard conception to have — for these words, even if they do evolve into something more — still looking the same, but whose meanings transform; they will always be haunted and shadowed by their beginnings. Imagine if I were allowed to be these young versions of myself — all called Tom, but all different evolutions, periods of that evolution. Drafts of myself.

I do not think my line blocks really have draft. I do sketch, I trace it out or draw it out and my line drawing is the only and final one before that is cut up and printed. I cannot keep the sketches, should I ever need them, as if for security, but there is very little refuse to my work, very little rehearsal.

T.

P.S. I often feel a great desire to go home or start cutting after these letters, as if I am spent! Yesterday I was so exhausted after my letter to Christian, I had to pack up a leave right and had noon an early nap, that I cannot explain — perhaps I need more sleep?
An impression, as has just been established, can of course describe both the action and effect involved in the application of pressure of one thing upon or onto the surface of another (OED). The marks, traces, and indications produced by such action on any surface, by way of a stamp for example, can be described as a depression, indentation, seal, cast, mould or copy, imprint, impression and so forth (OED). In this way ‘impression’ describes the process and result of printing, many of whose methods of copying are governed by these actions and their physical effects; after all, ‘impression’ is also used to describe an imitation, although such a copy can be as much a representation/performance of character (essence) as appearance (OED).

Likewise, the traces of the bodies in the Anthropométries cannot solely be attributed as physical effect and material representation. Indeed, they also bear another kind of impression – that of an effect produced on the intellect, conscience, or feelings; not to mention as a notion, remembrance or belief impressed upon the mind (OED). Like the feelings that overcame me during my tactile encounter with an old edition of prints, the traces of pressure left by Klein’s models engrain their grounds with more than blue emulsion.

The rhythms, forces, sequences, actions and positions which stamped and slurried these marks upon their paper or textile grounds have an emotional as well as a physical gravity to them. As viewers, we interrogate Klein’s sketchy anatomical architectures with our own bodies; James Elkins (1999) explains, “Any motion my body makes throws me into a certain frame of mind […]” (97). He then elaborates upon this connection and transmission between the mark of the artist and the body
and attitude of the audience by describing his own reaction to the gestures of Monet’s brushwork:

You may not agree that some of Monet’s marks imply the tension I sense in them, but you cannot disagree that the marks themselves are tense: they are made with a half-controlled jitter that I experience as a mood of tension. First my hand tenses and then I feel tense, and it is almost irresistible to say that Monet must have felt something similar’ (1999: 97-98).

Pressing our bodies and theirs against vertical planes in our mind’s eye we project ourselves onto and into Klein’s flat blue vessels whose forms and gestures are neither beyond our imagination nor our touch. But Klein himself does not make the marks that we see and read in the ANT. His body and gesture, like that of the printer, are absent from the work. Weitemeier (1995) notes:

Common to all of this imagery is its character of an immediate, physical document, lacking all trace of the artist’s hand, but created according to his precise verbal instructions in the course of a public or private ritual (1995: 55).

Klein’s body is mediated and visually disqualified by that of another – his model’s thinking, living body – which, able to act independently of him, he need only dictate verbal instructions to initiate his method of printing [Figure seven]⁹. A printer’s body and trace movement are similarly absorbed by the press, but the machine’s dependence on that living body for both instruction and facilitation of its motion means that the printer must intellectually and physically participate in the process of its printing. If we use the artist’s bodily movement and its material trace in the work as marker of primacy, then both Klein and the printer’s processes of production should equally disappoint. Klein’s creative touch, carried within his ephemeral voice, is converted into the energy and action of his reacting model ‘presses’, just as the printer’s physical and intellectual exertions are converted into the downward force of their machine. The presence and participation of both may be paramount to their processes, but their material absence is equally enforced as a result of their tools, whose direct touch with the ‘materials of creation’ stand in as the bodies of the artists that direct and operate them. By framing the tool within the parameters of the artist’s body, as the artist’s body by extension, any form or trace of its touch that lies outside of that lived and living human experience is immediately estranged and set within the confines of a rigid, unforgiving dichotomy.

The blue and white fractures which make up Klein’s visual equations of trace and void in the two-dimensional impressions allow us to read the Anthropométries

⁹ It should be mentioned here Klein’s (at the time, arguably revolutionary) creative process and framework which positions the female model as labour and labourer (a technology or machine) of the male artist; of which we are conflicted from our feminist perspective today. The relation between the master printer and artist is also of interest, in a similar regard, meriting further investigation. However, for the purposes of this research my focus remains with the artist printer.
as the three-dimensional bodies from whence they came. The artist’s painted models can only ever superimpose their image onto the grounds they touch, being both matrix and pressure tool. The narrative of the printing press is only marginally different; it too can only enforce pressure in the shape of its body, the barrel. But unlike Klein’s models, matrix and tool are separate. The barrel never touches the ink and so the impression it creates of itself is shared with the interchangeable inked blocks it prints. Whilst constant in its form as an object, the barrel of the press takes on and sheds a great many skins (of matrices and prints) and with them identities – including those of the printmakers that operate them.

Anonymous and abstracted, attributes shared by the iconographic Anthropométries, a barrel’s imprint does not avail it that same status. Like the centuries-old reliefs and stencilled silhouettes imprinted on cave walls the ANT are simultaneously someone, no one, and every-woman. The original bodies that created these marks remain beyond our sight; even should we see them in the flesh, we could not necessarily identify the bodies that made them – but we do strongly identify with these marks because the bodies they describe are living ones and, in species, our own. The anonymity of the press is far more extreme. Its body remains unknown to us; not simply as a result of its changing faces against different inked matrices, but also because its body – as impression – cannot be read as a body at all.

Both Klein’s models’ bodies and the barrel of the press are three-dimensional forms designed for the purpose of applying pressure to a surface in order to create an impression. But unlike Klein’s models the smooth, even, cylindrical rolling barrel of the press does not afford an “intermittent touch” (Connor, 2004: 35). Its
impressions are absolute, creating a solid stamp of contact with the surface of the
block, paper, or press bed that it passes over. The barrel of the press is creaseless,
fold-less, limbless and appendage-less. It is a form whose trace is formlessness, “[..] it passes through that landscape and leaves nothing”, at least, nothing that we would easily identify as a body, or indeed as touch in our current historical experience and understanding of the sense. It is nothing short of a foreign body. Yet it is not only the shape and trace of its body that render the barrel foreign to the pressings of our human bodies; the degree of force that it can consistently apply once its pressure is set is equally astonishing and alienating. The fervour and power of this pressure, whose latent measure is taken from the prints themselves in the process of viewing, is so suggestive of life, strength and ‘the health that brings us into being’, as Klein said of his imprints (1995: 53); that we are equally taken aback by the contradiction of its consistent heaviness, the lack of fluctuation in intensity which simultaneously renders it dead weight.

For viewers of the resulting print (reading its gesture as Elkin’s (1997) read Monet’s), this pressure’s totality, which so adequately captures the designs of the bodies (matrices) that pass through it, all but annihilates the knowledge of the bodies who facilitate that pressure – of the printmaker and the press itself. What the press - its processes and forces – attests is that although the action of pressing itself is not strange to the human body (being a means by which we come to know our own form and environment) the intensity, speed and mediator with which that pressure is enacted can be read as such when placed within a hierarchy where human touch problematically equates to ‘true’ touch. Klein’s fascination with this brand of human
touch and his belief in the vitality of its visual residues, which he explored through the *Anthropométries*, both plays out the ‘true’ touch hierarchy and subverts it. For that living, feeling touch is complicated by Klein’s *automation* of it through his models’ *human* bodies. In short, his (process of) ‘touch’ is not human, but his models are. Comparatively, through the printing process, the printmaker and press perform a hybrid, dialogical touch where each entity’s capabilities are contracted by the other’s in order to facilitate the specific tasks, thus creating a mutual identity rather than a top-down approach where human-touch acts upon, as opposed to *interacting with*.

Considering the diverse, inconstant, shifting, amorphous unfixity that describes what we recognise as touch it is surprising that we are so quick to designate any one version as more truthful than another. A possible answer may lie in the way we understand touch to be embodied – invested in and by a body that *feels*. A productive vehicle for exploring this subject can be found in the ways we attempt to transfer and translate this sensory organ, its skill and qualities onto and into the machines we call Artificial Intelligence (AI). In her essay on the development of AI skin technologies, *Robotic Skin – The Future of Touch*, Castañeda (2001) examines Hans Moravec’s hypothetical ‘robot bush’ and MIT’s (since retired) robot Cog. Anything but human in a material sense, the robotic skins of these cyborgs make manifest some of the meanings and functions humans ascribe to this organ. Whilst robot bush applies and re-interprets contact through its sensor fingers as visual medium, for example, by “watch[ing] a movie by walking its fingers along the film as it is screened at high speed”; Cog’s sensor skin pads operate as a series of hyper-sensitive alarm systems
designed to teach the robot to protect itself and adapt through encounters with its environment (227, 231). These new constructions, Castañeda (2001) argues, open up and explore “[...] a notion of the other-than-human, and the possibility of touch imagined in different terms” (235). But she also counters this citing Sara Ahmed’s (1999) assessment that “the cyborg’s hybridity [...] can also recuperate the human as an origin and truth against which the robot’s value is always measured” (2001: 234-235).

Castañeda raises valid points and concerns on the subject. Looking closer at robot bush’s sci-fi-worthy, movie-watching fingers one could draw parallels between its touch as a mode of information processing in comparison to the needle of the earlier concept of a record player, for instance; whereby its touch reads and releases the music it ‘feels’. Yet these constructions of touch are not exclusive to machines, another related example can be found in the specially educated fingers of a human hand sweeping over the raised signs of braille on a surface that unlocks a world of information where ocular vision and processing isn’t an authority. When we draw all three of these instances of touch and it’s knowing together, the identities and modes of robotic/machine touch and human touch arguably struggle to disentangle. Though robotic touch can sometimes be recognised or imagined as the means of obtaining information and experiences accessible only through systems and mechanisms we don’t naturally possess, it can also act as a significant reminder of the complexities, nuances, and capabilities of the different forms of human touch (and indeed other senses) that we do not always recognise, apply, acknowledge or activate, unless pressed or inspired to.
In Thomas Riedelsheimer’s documentary *Touch the Sound: a sound journey with Evelyn Glennie* (2004) percussionist Glennie (herself profoundly deaf) addresses the difficult question and even more evasive answer of the meaning of hearing to both deaf and ‘hearing’ people. She explains her own process of interpreting sound by feeling and watching the vibration of surfaces, which are generally sustained longer than an audible sound by ear; questioning what it actually is to ‘hear’.

Reflecting on the senses and the ways we embody them, Glennie (2004) notes:

[…] touch is just something that, a little bit like hearing, it’s just so vast, you know. We need all our senses for the others to function, we just do; and, you know, to take away the eye, it’s not a big deal. To take away the ear, it’s not a big deal. All the other senses will become that particular sense that you’ve lost [...]. This is what the mysterious sixth sense is about. You know, it creates a type of sense that [...] we never knew existed until one or the other disappears.

Instead of being a cause of disengagement from our bodies\(^{10}\), technology can also be the means by which we re-discover and re-invent our bodies and their senses, allowing us to challenge their actual and perceived limits and the homogenous, stereotypical physical expectations we arguably tend to impose upon them.

What this complex way of looking at and approaching the human/technology, technology/human relation sets up is a means to get around some assumed oppositions and patterns of thinking about these two subjects, individually and collectively. As humans, it is near impossible to escape from human touch because

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\(^{10}\) Observing the increasing volume today of glazed expressions, of eyes glued to screens whilst fingers tap buttons and keys, bodies holding fast in almost motionless, sedentary positions hour upon hour (primarily noticeable within computer-user culture), I am reminded of Donna Haraway’s comment “Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert” (*A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, 2016:11).
that is how we embody the sense. But as this multifaceted perspective shows, we also have opportunities to embody other entities (such as technology) and their forms of touch by extension; allowing us to reallocate human touch (and its own many forms and functions, as Glennie demonstrates\textsuperscript{11}) as a reference within a diverse spectrum of touch, rather than as the benchmark or ultimatum.

\textsuperscript{11} The neurological condition \textit{synaesthesia} should also be noted for its remarkable dialogue between the different senses and the alternative manifestations of information produced and perceived through them. Whilst its exact definition still seems to evade us, Jamie Ward explains some aspects of the condition; “One attribute of a stimulus (e.g., its sound, shape, or meaning) may inevitably lend to the conscious experience of an additional attribute. For example, the word “Phillip” may taste of sour oranges, the letter A may be luminous red, and a c # note on the violin may be a brown fuzzy line extending from left to right in the lower left part of space” (2013).
It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

(Shelley, M. 1999: 45).

Hybridity, interface, couplings and their outcomes between ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ bodies in Gothic literature, such as Mary Shelley’s (1999) *Frankenstein*, offer us a landscape and framework through which to explore the human-technology touch binary; particularly in narratives and instances of *creative* touch, amplified in the above excerpt from the novel.

The young scientist Frankenstein describes his machines and apparatus as ‘instruments of life’, somehow infusing them with the essence they must conduct and transfer, whilst, in almost the same breath, he frames the amalgam of human parts that constitutes the body and future subject of that power as a ‘lifeless thing’; a dead object. Having once been alive, the human body parts have crossed over into the category of the dead. The “instruments” (45), on the other hand, cannot be cleanly situated within either category. In spite of the fact that they are not alive, nor having ever been from a biological standpoint, they therefore cannot be defined as dead. Technology is not the opposite of life, as death dictates for biological living forms; instead it is ‘other’ to both, and therefore problematises its relations and contact with the two categories.
The catalyst and conduit of life’s very ‘spark’ in Frankenstein, and also a charge and channel for emotional and intellectual energy in mediated art practices such as printmaking, complex technology, like that in Shelley’s novel, foregrounds themes of transference and contagion between the living (human) and the undead (machine). In her essay on human-machine relations Dorinne Kondo (2005) cites Matthews Hamabata’s unpublished field notes on a Japanese brewery where, contrary to Freud (1961) and Ong’s (1982) narratives and framework, the workers’ connection to their equipment is not premised on their technical mastery and power over them. Instead, these machines become sacred vessels which their operators channel themselves in and through, subverting popular polarities:

... all three managers felt that there was a special spiritual presence in all of their machines; and they stressed over and over again that their major concern was the maintenance of their machines... But it wasn’t a love of machinery as machinery, but of machinery as some kind of spiritual extension of themselves: kikai o migakeba, kokoro mo migakimasu (if you polish the machines, you’re also polishing your heart) ... For them, machines were extensions of themselves as spiritual beings, as creators of things... (2005: 410. Emphasis in original).

This almost mimetic transference with machines experienced by the brewers is a particular fascination within popular serial killer culture, according to Mark Seltzer (1998). However, unlike the former Japanese example, the latter instance of “transference onto the machine intimates a nonhumanity experienced in persons, a nonhumanity experienced within the body as such” (73. Emphasis added). So, whilst Hamabata’s brewers’ machines represent and act as ‘extensions of themselves as spiritual beings, as creators of things’ (2005:410), Seltzer (1998) suggests an unnerving alternative that revolves less around the extension of identity through a
machine and more as identification with the machine itself by an individual lacking a sense of personhood (in the Western sense of the concept). He elaborates with the example of American serial killer Leonard Lake who obsessively recorded and reproduced in scrapbooks, photographs and home videos the crimes he committed, allowing him to return to these specific scenes as well as the (primal) missing scene of his own origin (identity). Lake was fascinated by these reproductive technologies like photography, which served him as, what Seltzer (1998) terms “identity-machines” (222):

What this transference involves are the calculations of aliveness and the fascinations of a reproduction without gender: the calculations and fascinations that flow from an intimacy with new reproductive technologies. [...] transferences between the animate and the inanimate and between bodies and machines – the transfer of what is inside us onto the machine [...] such that identities are inseparable from these new technologies of reproduction (1998: 73).

Seltzer (1998) frames this ‘machine culture’ within serial killing as the architect of a shifting order and dialogue between the animate and inanimate, and between “leaky” bodies and the seamless skins of technology; whose result is not a dichotomy, but rather an “intimacy” between the two as a means of self-generation and self-reproduction that results in self-evacuation (71-73, 214, 242). Not unlike Frankenstein, the brewers and Lake’s self-image become inextricable from the technologies they operate, infusing and/or confusing them with life and self. These fictional and non-fictional male-dominated narratives chronicle and document a longstanding trend in situating the creative/generative/reproductive touch of
Marcus Boon (2010) raises the subject of “copying as reproduction envy”, locating mechanical reproduction as the domain of men:

The word “copying” evokes images of gadgets, technologies of mechanical reproduction, or the masterly hand of the artist who is particularly skilled at producing reproductions. It is a stereotypically masculine activity (2010: 84-85).

Boon (2010) continues his inquiry by pitching the differences between male and female forms and rhythms of mimesis, which approximate male copying with a machine’s – as an “attempt to imitate, appropriate, fix and control [...]” (85). The female experience on the other hand, which he relates directly to the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and the birth and nurture of a child, is reserved the organic status of a process “of becoming and transformation” (2010:85). In the mythologies of technology, it would appear, reproduction still equates with sexual reproduction, bringing with it the weight of gender roles and stereotypes.

What Boon fails to acknowledge or make considerations for here in his argument are the nuances of these identities and experiences, which Donna Haraway addresses in A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century (2016):

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12 Mark O’Connell, through his existential meanderings into the transhumanist universe in To Be a Machine: Adventures Among Cyborgs, Utopians, Hackers, and the Futurists Solving the Modest Problem of Death (2017), notes early in, having attended what he terms “a kind of transhumanist salon” that “there was no ignoring the fact that we were an overwhelmingly male group” (10). For more references on male domination and direction of technological narratives and identities see Sadie Plant’s Zeros + Ones: Digital Woman + the new Technoculture (1998), and Sherry Turkle’s Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet (1997).

13 According to Haraway, “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as creative fiction” (2016:5).
There is nothing about being “female” that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as “being” female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual and scientific discourses and other social practices (2016:16).

These traditional (sexual) reproductive identities and narratives that Boon describes are not invalid, however they lack the scope of possibilities and nuances to which Haraway’s Manifesto subscribes; with consideration for the effect of technology’s influence, “intervention” and “visualization” of these bodies, especially in the realm of medicine, for example (2016:43). “Sexual reproduction is one kind of reproductive strategy among many,” Haraway argues, “with costs and benefits as a function of the system environment. Ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families” (2016:30).

Polarising manifestations of reproductive process, like Boon’s revision of conventional roles and identities, as either fixed/controlled (‘masculine’) or as ‘becomings’ (‘feminine’) is misleading to reproductive technological narratives and discourse. As we have already seen in the instance of the manual printing press, technology is designed by humans with us in mind and whether it manifests as system, interface or object, that technology by its own nature and that which it has inherited from ourselves is highly likely to move morphologically between these so defined organic and inorganic approaches and processes.

One cannot escape the subject of sex in discourses of creation and reproduction, but in the biologically sexless universe of machines to use it as the springboard from which to discuss reproductive technologies leads to unproductive
and circular arguments that exclude both women and, surprisingly, technology itself.

Binding maleness to mimetic machines as Shelley (1999), Seltzer (1998), Hamabata (Kondo, 2005), and even to an extent Klein with his *Anthropométires* process, have done absorbs the identity and touch of these machines into a political discourse of living human men’s reproductive biology and psychology – faculties a technology cannot (yet?!) own.

In this vein, Haraway proposes a way forward, “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. [...] It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories” (2016:67) noting “Cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment” (2016:66). Part of this lies in addressing, confronting and potentially adapting the “phallocentric origin stories” which Haraway explains have been “built into the literal technologies [...] that write the world” (2016:55-56).

In *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + the New Technoculture* (1998) Sadie Plant looks to the implicit and explicit symbolism of machine code, or binary, the zeros and ones that computers translate into:

Man and woman, male and female, masculine and feminine: one and zero looked just right, made for each other: 1, the definite, upright line; and 0, the diagram of nothing at all: penis and vagina, thing and hole ... hand in glove. A perfect match.

It takes two to make a binary, but all these pairs are two of a kind, and the kind is always kind of one. 1 and 0 make another 1. Male and female add up to man. There is no female equivalent. No universal woman at his side. The male is one, one is everything, and the female has “nothing you can see” (1998:34-35).
This gendered symbolism is also evident in printmaking’s language and categorisation of the *matrix*, the ground on which the printmaker’s design is inscribed; and it is from this matrix that the multiples (prints) are then taken from or produced. The traditional sexual reproductive symbolism and progression that this process already implies at face value is also rooted much deeper in the etymology of the term ‘matrix’ itself. Hailing from the classical Latin *mātrīc*-,*mātrīx*, which denoted a ‘female animal kept for breeding’; the term went on to describe, in post classical Latin (Third century onwards), ‘source, origin, or womb’ (OED).

Haraway importantly reminds us that, for the cyborg (in my case, I would argue, being my identity as a printmaker14) the machine is “an aspect of our embodiment” and in that way we can now claim a responsibility, power, and identity for them rather than be dominated by them (2016:65). “[...] ([O]nce upon a time),” she states, “female embodiment seemed to be given, organic, necessary; and female embodiment seemed to mean skill in mothering and its metaphoric extensions” (2016:65). Yet increasingly, the lack of distinction and clarity of “who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine” (2016:60) arguably liberates us all from the unforgiving and inflexible confines of the associations that result from “the reproductive matrix and most birthing” providing instead the option of “regeneration” (2016:67).

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14 A rich subject within this debate and discourse that I am unable to delve into more thoroughly at this particular time but have every ambition of doing so in future research and would encourage others to likewise consider.
As a woman artist operating a press and producing prints I cannot help but be aware of the historically male-dominated industry, as well as male-dominated art history, of the medium; but this (as we have now generally acknowledged) is a reflection on social and cultural movements rather than a comment on the requirements of printing. A press, or any other printmaking tool for that matter, does not require, dictate or exclude its use by the gender or sex of its operator. Nor are their outcomes influenced by these markers. You would not know the difference between my having pulled a print through a press (as a woman) to that of a man from their resulting print. Like I have said before, the press and its barrel convert our energy and touch into its own. Although a number of the elements and outcomes of printmaking rely on fixity it is also an agent and subject of becoming.

Printmaking is a process whose purpose typically necessitates a certain or relative fixity when viewed through the lens of its product, the print. As a vehicle of reproduction the design on the complete matrix is generally expected to be fixed, so that, come the process of printing, the design maintains an identifiable integrity that aligns it as a copy of its matrix. The process of printing multiples re-enforces this fixity by the consistent ‘mark’ of the prints whose relative replication of the matrix and self-similarity suspends them from typical trajectories of transformation. The transition and transference of the design from matrix to print in the printing process treats them as a closed circuit. But as Boon (2010) reminds us:

Transformation is constantly taking place as we shift in time and place. Everything is continually moving. The labels that we place on these movements are conventional and produce the appearance of solid things [...]. Underneath these names, the slow chaotic work of becoming and transformation is constantly taking place (2010: 78).
He addresses the material history of things – the paper that was once a tree, for instance, which themselves have been subject to “processes of transport and transformation” (2010: 79).

Printmaking is a particularly rich and spectacular setting for witnessing and activating material transformation and conversion. During the alchemy of the matrix’s design production in etching, lithography, and screen printing, for example, acids, resisting gums, resins, waxes, oils, plastics, metals, stones and photosensitive substances and fabrics merge, spar and metamorphose under the guidance or surprise of their artist, who, though sometimes at a safe physical distance from this volatility, are their means of catalysis nonetheless.

Yet working in this medium is not just a matter of initiating, watching and monitoring the transformation of creative materials; in my relief practice I am the force behind my tool making the cuts which change the block’s surface. However, in using a particular tool and method for a prolonged period the human body also begins to alter, rhythmically and physically, as muscles targeted by repetitive actions tense, strengthen and grow; and blisters, calluses and cuts insinuate themselves between one’s skin and tools.

_I dont know what to do._
_I am literally turning into lino, my body is breaking apart with the cutting._
_It started with my left index finger and is now on my middle finger beside it. It must be the pressure and motion of that hand, of those fingers trying to control the blade as they do._

(Excerpt from letter to Christina, December 10th 2015).
Towards the end of my time cutting the second block my finger pads began splitting open between the delicate ridge lines of my fingerprints. It was a mysterious and excruciating reckoning, more so at first because it was unclassifiable, unpreventable, unfixable. For a time, I was unable to connect the symptom of these deep fissures to any particular cause. But as I alternated between yet unscathed fingers and watched their transformation I became aware that as I cut the block along its design it was cutting me along mine. By way of our intense mutual interaction and exposure to the cutting tool the qualities and responses of my hands had come to mirror and merge with that of the block. I had caught its surface.

Here, technology becomes the mediator, negotiator, and translator between the block and myself; seizing upon our material similarities – our fleshiness – as the vehicle and location of a mutual dialogue and intimate mimesis that subverts the hierarchy of our relationship, the worker and the worked.

The creation of the print matrix is entrenched in becoming and transformation, sometimes reciprocally as we have just discovered – whereby both artist and material are transformed by their tools through an extended relationship that gives the human body and its slower pace of development time to manifest change. Speed and complexity, therefore, seems to play a large part in our definitions, dichotomies, and identification of different manifestations of change. ‘Transformation’ and ‘becoming’ operate at a biological rate and through organic morphologies that include periods of gestation and emergence whether that be a foetus in its mother’s womb or a caterpillar in its chrysalis. Whereas the fixed, controlled change described by Boon,
moves at a much faster velocity, and whose immediate manifestation declares only its arrival and secrets its journey; it is suddenly ‘become’ rather than ‘becoming’.

So how then, do we position the reproductive technology of the press and the process of printing in such a framework? As aforementioned, printing the matrix is a closed, fixed process by nature and necessity. The brevity of contact between the inked and paper surfaces rapidly sublimates, as the technology’s design dictates. Yet, from the standpoint of the printer outside of but operating the press, there is little doubt that we are witness, participant and subject of a becoming.

Once the initial pressures are set and tested using the clean relief block, it is then removed to a workstation for inking, after which it is re-placed and positioned on the press bed. The prepared paper is then gently laid on top of the block’s inked surface, over which rubber blankets are then placed down, creating a cocoon over the matrix. The object of the block is now concealed from view, ready to be transferred and transformed into its new form. The barrel of the press is moved over these strata, during which one’s body and senses move outwith themselves to become an extension of the machine; at whose end we consecutively peel back the layers of the blanket, and then the paper which brings with it a layer of the ink from the block, that now constitutes the print.

When undertaking the printing process of the second block with technician Brian Park this narrative of ‘becoming’ was also marked by substantial technical difficulty. This required extensive patience and problem solving of a nature perhaps best described as what Sherry Turkle coins ‘soft mastery’ in *Life on Screen: Identity in the Age of the*
Internet (1997). Soft mastery, a style rather than a stage in a process, involves ‘bricolage’ (a means of organising the world) and a desire to work “close to the object” (1997:59). Expanding, Turkle explains that it “goes along with seeing negotiation, relationship, and attachment as cognitive virtues”, centring on compromise and give-and-take (1997:56). Turkle also makes the point that such an approach (despite the feminine associations ‘soft’ can instinctively imply) is “not a style unique to either men or women” (1997:56). Though it does fly in the face of what are generally considered desirable male behaviours (“decisiveness and the imposition of will”, 1997:56) which define hard mastery.

In the cases of the bricoleurs employing soft mastery tactics that Turkle studies, it becomes apparent that abstraction was not their domain, but rather “contextual, situated reasoning” (1997:58); “they were all tinkerers who preferred to stay close to their materials as they arranged and rearranged them” (1997:58. Emphasis added). In a letter to my Dad, Monday 25\textsuperscript{th} January 2016 I also speak of Brian’s ‘tinkering’ with the press and my own ‘tinkering’ with the ink consistency as we grapple with the many components of the printing process that refuse to converge smoothly to produce a clear, even-toned print. “It was like banging our heads against a brick wall all day”, I say, “nothing was working, and we tried so many things! I mean SO MANY THINGS!!!” around which the two of us spent “much time thinking and theorising and hypothesising over the block” (Monday 25\textsuperscript{th} January 2016). What this letter also reveals is a duality of pressures that the second block and its printing were under at the time. Firstly, the physical pressure of the press which either bled the ink or failed to transfer it, and stretched the paper or caused it to skip
over the block resulting in a doubling of the image in areas. Secondly, came an awareness of a more symbolic pressure that was being placed steadily on that second block:

_We struggled to handle this new block as separate, as different, an individual in its own right. It is made of the same material, it has the same design, I am using the same type of paper, ink, even the same press and the same technician. But none of these are actually the same, obviously. But the principle remains, and so does the first block as a result._ (Monday 25th January 2016).

By the end of that first day of printing the second block I have “reached the outer limits of my knowledge”, knowing that “[t]omorrow I will go in with no idea how to make this work. [...] There is no exact science here. I have no reason to understand what happened, and WHAT DIDN’T HAPPEN! [...]” (Monday 25th January 2016). In order to achieve a result, or concede that what has occurred, however disappointing, is a result, I had to remain open to and allow this process and block its own unique becoming.

Referencing Barbara McClintock (from the biography by Evelyn Fox Keller, 1983) Turkle identifies the features of soft mastery in the Nobel-prize winning geneticist’s nuanced approach to materials, which McClintock describes as being in dialogue with (1997:59). First and foremost, this conversation requires a sense or feeling for the subject in question; as well as patience for taking the time to observe and listen to what the materials tell you, and an openness to receiving that information (1997:59). Turkle also makes note of a similar practice by a computer
science graduate called Lorraine, whose problem solving included “thinking about what the program feels like inside to break through difficult problems” (1997:59).

This particular suite and style of skills that McClintock and Lorraine describe make an appearance (albeit under a different name) in my letter to Lore, Wednesday 4th October 2015, where the arduous experience of printing is detailed:

I was surrounded by, what I can only describe as grace, and it is something so particular to this process. I call it grace, here, because that is the closest word to describe what happens. The best printmakers must always have it. The ability to bend beyond your belief in your ability to do so. Your ability to suffer through and not lose sight of the goal or get overwhelmed or give up. It is dogged and humble. It is the constant failure after failure unto which you respond with another answer. It is the art of listening to every part of that process’s body – tapping, prodding, poking gently asking where does it hurt? how does it feel? What can we do? And I must tell you that in all its exhausting mumbled fury it is a most beautiful thing. And within it I feel that I come to know my block wholly as itself. (Wednesday 4th October 2015, Emphasis added).

Unlike McClintock, whose practice relies on an ability to “forget herself” (Keller, 1983:198) in her dialogue with a subject or materials, I cannot testify to the same experience. Instead, I would argue, the closest I come to forgetting my self is by ceasing to identify as or exist within a hierarchy where I am at the top – the homo deus, as it were – over and around the materials, tools, and systems I engage with. Like one of Haraway’s cyborgs, my style of practice does not “produce total theory, but there is an intimate experience of boundaries, their construction and deconstruction” (2016:66). Edges on all sides blur, shift and perpetually reorganise themselves as interacting objects and subjects become mutual action and event, creating their own new, often unified anatomy (as described by my listening to the
‘process’s body’ in the excerpt above). But this ‘body’, though a union of human and machine, does not quite equate to those of Haraway, Plant, and Turkle, whose pairings involve an emphasis of the digital kind and its equally unique specificities.

Haptic technology and haptic feedback (i.e. vibration) can be said to be on the rise in their use and role in everyday life and culture. Our tablets, mobile phones, smart watches, or fitness trackers, for example, are now pushing so close to the material and psychological boundaries of our bodies and minds that they possess ‘predictive’ modes (for text, and searches) – guessing what we want or need before we do as our fingertips tap and slide across their glossy screens; they are equipped with the ability to read fingerprints as a means of identifying their user; they can also monitor and count the fall of our feet and very heartbeat15. Yet again, these digital, artificially intelligent technological narratives centre on a touch that is felt and responded to by and through the machine; and though their sensations and reactions are not necessarily entirely human in their manifestation, that they occur at all as a result of being touched echoes that style, identity and hierarchy which is so undeniably human with regards to that sense. For all the hype of haptic technology as something relatively new, progressive, and most pervasively connected to computers – as belonging to contemporary digital culture, like all the devices

15 Alongside these aforementioned haptic technologies there has also more recently been an increased availability of voice command devices and voice user interfaces (themselves another nod to Klein’s dictated commands and direction of his models in the Anthropométries process) which eliminate the requirement of touch through buttons, keys, switches, dials, etc. as seen with the Amazon Echo, Google Home, and Apple’s Siri – a device whose influence and interaction with a human has been reflected on in Judith Newman’s To Siri With Love: A mother, her autistic son, and the kindness of machines (2017).
previously mentioned – I cannot help but wonder at the position of my own narrative of embodiment, as a human practitioner operating a print technology such as the press, within this history and discourse of technology and touch. As printmakers our embodiment of technologies and they of us (which this chapter has only begun to describe through my embodiment of an analogue printing press), are equally deserving of an amended ‘manifesto’ or independent voice with which to explore, analyse, contribute, provoke, participate, and provide another layer of nuance, possibility, and complexity to the historical, contemporary and future-gazing discourses on technology, its identities and manifestations of touch.

We seem to spend so much time looking at the outer reaches of technology’s touch; the places it can go in our stead at the end of microscopes and across the surfaces of inhospitable moons. Where technology goes and how it gets there has somehow become less of a mystery to us, coming down to the sum of its parts; its nuts and bolts, bits and bytes. Yet something that has not yet ceased to excite and antagonise us is that altogether too familiar and seemingly accessible frontier – which technology continues to range through – ourselves. When we embody technology, we must concede that (for it to succeed) it is a mutual affair; to touch is to be touched.

Alternative to humans, but not their opposite, technology is the pellis we wear stripped from the knowledge of our own flesh, as well as those we imagine. It is the skin that has not so much lost its body but arrived at an anatomy outside of the limits that we know to identify such things. Not a surface, but all surface. Not one body, but many embodied.
PART II

CUT/CUT
INTRODUCTION

In workshops with students I ask them just to open the door and close the door, as slowly as possible. You don’t go in and you don’t go out, you just do this for one hour, for two hours or for five hours. Then the door stops being the door and becomes something else.

(Abramović, M. 2013: 94).

A threshold is, in the simplest of terms, an entrance. It marks a border, a limit, a line to be crossed (OED). It is not only the separation of one thing from another, but the means to connect them. A door and its lintel are common references to this notion; yet as Abramović (2013) demonstrates in her workshop, their passing through is not only a matter of crossing spaces but of duration, of times. As Augustine (2013) said, ‘[...] if nothing passes away there is no past time, and if nothing arrives there is no future time, and if nothing existed there would be no present time’ (51). Threshold is constant exchange, be it a material marker or ephemeral process and action – the trading of some place for another; some moment for another, and so forth. It is the splice that edits the reel, structures its rhythms and directions. It fractures and refracts possibility.

As a relief printmaker I spend all my time moving on, in, and through thresholds – be they the material limits of my matrices and materials, or the temporal durations that mark out another altogether less visible structure to the work. Yet, in addition to these manifestations, there can also be added a third; for a threshold also refers to phenomenological limits and their reactions (OED). Being such a strong site of reproduction, replication, and duplication, printmaking – its copies, multiples, and...
facsimiles – frequently pose questions around the tolerances of equivalence and difference, blurring or reinforcing the boundaries between its artefacts.

This subject of threshold as a vehicle of interruption and transmission is explored within Part II’s theme of cuts and cutting, through the analogies of the wound (vulnus) and the void (vacuus). Using their respective constructs, interactions, and interventions I question and examine the subject of the thresholds of time and translation, respectively, with regards to my own linocutting processes of cutting and tracing.

Chapter three explores the subject of keeping time through narratives and discourse pertaining to rhythm and memory, their continuity and disruption. I question the frames of repetition and replication and their structuring of duration and flow through the examination my own highly mechanical, physical process of linocutting in comparison to the fluctuating, accumulative action of walking, using André Leroi-Gourhan’s (1993) dichotomy of human versus technical rhythms.

Extending from this subject of variation and form, Gilles Deleuze’s (1994) theory on the syntheses of time, and Emmanuel Alloa’s (2014) propositions on plastic surgery’s subversions of the body’s becoming act as the ground of enquiry into disruptions of the ‘copy’ status of a block and its print post-production through their materially divergent temporal trajectories.

Memory, its maintenance (repetition) and lapsing, are then considered with regards to the act and object of the cut; whereby the action or object may proceed as the process or product of preservation – as in the narratives of Georges Perec (1997), and the art practice of Nan Goldin (1984); or equally find themselves informed
by the discourse circulating around themes of the scar and wound (physical or emotional) through notions of trauma and return (Parveen Adams, 1998) (Andreas Huyssen, 2000). Challenging these premises, I apply Henri Bergson’s (2004) theory on the phenomenon of ‘resemblance’ and ‘generality’ to my own experiences of recall through the transmissive material structures and processes of the blocks and their cuts.

Continuing along this course of conveyance and exchange, in Chapter four I apply propositions and concepts of the void as a domain of excess, forgetting, and a space of (mis)understanding, through the field and practice of literary translation, onto my own surprisingly unstraightforward printmaking process of tracing and transferring an image from one block to its near-identical counterpart.

Referring to Martin Arnold’s Passage à l’Acte (1993), Glenn Brown’s (1991) reproductions of Frank Auerbach’s (1981) oil paintings, and Peter Bronski’s (2011) observations on hunting and tracking techniques with reference to my own methods of tracing, I examine and question the subjects and negotiations of replication; the role of interpretation, temporality, chronology and their trace; as well as the complex interrelations of equivalence and difference, and their unexpected outcomes and manifestations in this part of the print project.
Chapter three

V U L / \ / U S
I would like there to exist places that are stable, unmoving, intangible, untouched and almost untouchable, unchanging, deep-rooted; places that might be points of reference, of departure, of origin [...]

Such places don’t exist, and it’s because they don’t exist that space becomes a question, ceases to be self-evident, ceases to be incorporated, ceases to be appropriated. Space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. It’s never mine, never given to me, I have to conquer it.

My spaces are fragile: time is going to wear them away, to destroy them. Nothing will any longer resemble what was, my memories will betray me, oblivion will infiltrate my memory [...]

Space melts like sand running through one’s fingers. Time bears it away and leaves me only shapeless shreds:

To write: to try meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive; to wrest a few precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs.

Dearest Love,

After my suspicions about the table today, after completing the here and starting back on the branches,
I crawled beneath it and began to investigate how to expand it.
After a little thinking I managed to join it out and recall the extra segment which has made me feel so much more comfortable - great like the one at my parents' house that I took over. Even when I was at Girvan I had to have a large table to work upon - I have such a tendency to sprawl
and use the whole thing.

Once the table was set up and my block back on it and ready I faced myself stalled.
Running my hands over the block I'm not yet ready to cut the thickest. I just want to be with the block a bit longer, without a tool, but without it being over. At first it was as if my hands were nervous. They couldn't read anything from it. And then after a while I could see it - a little better through them. It started on the charred wood - the hollowed and corrugated.

And then under the tapestry where I could feel the smallest amount pull with and against the grain of the cut.
It reminded me of being in the sea as a girl again. That wonderful feeling of the push and pull of letting the ocean do that to you. The soft waves and heavy rolls. The dragging down.
I think it's the table. I'm thinking of a wave again.
The long table and the block. Though it is another long table and another large block. And instead of feeling simple comfort and nostalgia I am a little - I don't know. Afraid?

Freya said I would never leave home, I would never go far away. I didn't think I wanted to. Not in
The sense of leaving, entirely.

But I here, and I am here. Again. There, again.

I don't know if I am sad because I can be both here and there, or, if I'm not.

I need to go outside.

I am going.
My father has always loved the sea. He built the yacht we sailed about in, along with the memories of our maritime excursions together dotted across navigation charts of bays, inlets, weekends and holidays. And when I turn to thinking of those many times, I am met by a small sequence of images unfolding into motion. A flickering, curious reel that draws the memory closer; winding it tight in my chest, turning it over in my mind. It is the bow of our yacht as we are sailing. That bone-pale sharp sliver slicing into the waves, which, upon splitting open, would froth and shiver and foam. Onwards we would press, and those little gashes would widen in our wake, stretching and thinning into gleaming white streamers that would in turn, in time, sink back into the darkness from which they were once severed. Wave upon wave upon wave that cold unaltering surgical-blade-of-a-boat would try to cut apart sweeping pieces of the sea to feast upon. But the sea is forgetful. Alone, it cannot hold such a stake in time.

It was Friedriche Nietzsche who declared, “If something is to stay in the memory, it must be turned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory” (1967:61. Emphasis in original). Perhaps what so captivated me then, and now, about that wondrously unwoundable sea of my childhood, was the seeming lawlessness of it. Now, as a relief printmaker who carves linoleum I am well aware of the law of my substance, whereby to make a cut is to keep a cut.

The act of making a cut, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is, put deceptively simply, “to penetrate with an edged instrument which severs the
continuity of the substance’ (OED). Yet due to its interdependence with the substance(s) it interacts with, and its tendency to supply the voluminous appetites of metaphor, the action of cutting has no total, overarching, absolute definition or precise description. ‘To cut’ is also to wound; to incise, gash and slash; to divide; to open, break up, reduce, excavate and dissolve; to pass through or across; to shorten or omit; to reproach; to dilute, adulterate; to strike, lash, shape and form (OED). And so it follows that its noun, ‘a cut’, bears the explanation of being the product of that aforesaid action – most generally, ‘an opening in a surface made by a sharp-edged instrument, an incision; a wound made by cutting, a gash’ (OED). A cut, however, is not simply the cavity that is here described, it may also include that which once inhabited the void – the piece or share now removed (OED). A cut, therefore, performs the wavering relays between absence and presence, immaterial and material. It will always speak in the languages of haunting; of time and its many times.

Vulnus, the title of this part, can be translated from the Latin as ‘wound’. Just as it sounds, its etymology harks from ‘vulnerable’, that quality which draws into itself all manner of violence and tenderness. As a form of wound and wounding a cut is one such violence and one such tenderness. When we think of a cut, the thought that primarily arrives is most arguably one of separation, of disconnection. Of severing. Whether it manifests as a tonal or chromatic alteration; an insertion of another substance or texture; a sculptural interval building upon, or slicing through, or gouging out – a cut is a disruption of surface, of the “seamless continuity of things” (Connor, 2004: 73-74). It is an opening. A breaking. A gaping. Aghast. But the wound may not remain so, for its prerogative is oft in closing. Closing, but never closure. In
the realm of surface grafting, binding, threading (in tool and technique) are crafts also riddled with perforation whereby ‘the desire to tear the skin is inseparable from the need to darn it, or make it whole’ (Connor, 2004: 69, 53). The first break in the flesh is now marked by another. Aghast becomes a ghost. A trace of passing presents and presencing pasts – the meeting of edges in the form of a scar.

Much like my girlhood ocean, my body, though not in the slightest ‘unwoundable’, does not tend to keep its cuts as cuts. The two most striking marks that once bore that name maintained upon my form are to be found on my legs as scars. The lesser of the two is a slight pale silvery line several inches long on the inner side of my left knee. The other more obvious mark can be found on the front of my right leg, halfway up my shin, in the shape of a bold gleaming ‘V’. Like the memories of my ocean, these two marks were also collected and impressed upon me within that same period of youth.

But as their new title suggests these gaping cuts did not remain so, and for good reason. The body is an extremely clever nurse, it knows that an unauthorised opening is a dangerous thing; it risks invasion from the outside (harmful bacteria and life-threatening infections) or expulsions from the inside (blood, tissue and organs). A cut must be closely guarded, and guard them we do. With lashings of disinfectants and antibacterial healing creams, with scabs and band-aids, stitches and bandages, or the patience of knitting skin. We bathe them and flush them out with alcohol or saline solutions before tenderly pressing them dry. As the saying goes, we ‘dress’ our wounds. But this is not the same as we might dress the other pre-existent orifices and
openings of our bodies (such as noses, ears, eyes, mouths, anuses, vaginas) which, holding the skin ajar as does a wound, have been grown from the flesh rather than applied to it.

These orifices are the natural and necessary formations of the body, facilitating its life processes. Mouths and noses allow us to breath, for example; for a fish these openings extend to include gills to filter oxygen from the water. If they were to weave themselves back together, as is desired and encouraged of wounds, we would most certainly die. But they do not gradually or spontaneously seal over. They do not because unlike a wound in the flesh they have not been severed. Their tissue, nerves and vessels remain intact, united and sealed beneath the skin. They are both open and closed, rather than exposed. A wound, however, is the wrenching apart and into view of these surfaces and hidden volumes; and under the body’s regimen for healing will – if it allows – devote themselves to their reconnection and concealment back beneath the safety of the skin. In contrast to the orifice, the healing and sealing of the wound is imperative to one’s good health and continued existence.

A scar, despite being formed of skin, is of a different quality to that which escaped the infraction around it. As they develop and heal the wound they change in density, texture and colour, but also sensation – leading to heightened sensitivity (for variable periods) and for some, eventually, as is the case now with my own scar tissue, a perceived reduction of it (Anon. 2014).

It is arguably due to these alternative existences and functions within the flesh that the orifice, wound, and scar – as we shall see anon – are each subject to their
own peculiar constructions, interventions and disruptions of time; whose measure and manipulation is facilitated by the opening and closing of these spaces (physically or symbolically), and their trade in the emergence, disappearance, and transformation of that which passes through them from one realm to another.

In his paper *Band(ag)ing the Body* Emmanuel Alloa (2014) locates humanity, rather than by wholeness, “in every place where there is an opening” (207); a sentiment which echoes those examined in Part I: Chapter two *Pe/Is* on the association between the concept of direct ‘human’ touch with intermittent, inconstant pressure and contact of surfaces. By acknowledging a biological connection between the orifice and life (its processes whereby it is both sustained and evidenced) we hierarchise, privilege and premise these particular sites of the body. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) explains how the body’s orifices perform as places of trade in information, and – individually or collectively – come to inform the “landscape” of the skin by designating potentially erotically significant “regions” and “zones” whose cartography measures differences in intensity and investment (36). This mapping and paraphrasing of the body’s powers is then doubled by the orifice’s visual elaboration and decoration, Steven Connor (2004) notes; citing Michel Serres’ observations of Pierre Bonnard’s paintings of women at their toilette – who, in retracing those parts of herself with cosmetics and pinpointing them with jewellery, is simultaneously sketching a guide map of her personal and shared places “of sensory receptivity, highlighting ears, lips and eyes” (27).

The anthropological studies of Alphonso Lingis (1984) too support and extend upon this pronouncement, with regards to the practices of body modification in what
he refers to as “Primitive” societies. But beyond their erotocentricity, these physical openings applied to the body also open up their subjects as explicit identities within a social hierarchy; socially mapping the bodies they mark, publicly coding the wearer’s “social, sexual, familial, marital, or economic position or identity […]” (Grosz, 1994: 140).

Counter to this, Lingis’ (1984) propositions on the so-called ‘civilised’ practice of tattooing position these markings in the body’s surface as enigma; operating instead as secret signs inferring the mysterious, subjective interior states of their wearer that a viewer must attempt to decode beyond a shared cypher system in a similar vein to Perec’s (1997) description of the door and its role in the partitioning and privatising of space:

> On one side, me and my place, the private, the domestic [...] on the other side, other people, the world, the public, politics. You can’t simply let yourself slide from one into the other, can’t pass from one to the other, neither in one direction nor in the other. You have to have the password, have to cross the threshold, have to show your credentials, have to communicate, just as the prisoner communicates with the world outside (1997: 37).

The cuts in Lingis’ (1984) bodies, it could therefore be argued, are thresholds where access to the subject (physically or psychologically) may be granted or denied. As such, the transmission, transfer and exchange of information, as Lingis (1984), Grosz (1994), and Perec (1997) touch upon above, occur most readily, naturally and often at the openings in and disruptions of a surface.

Like a red rash that appears as if a dermal tide, the orifice rests in the surface as a mark or interruption; yet having grown with it and remained as such it belongs
instead to the same kind of persistent temporal continuity as the skin it lies within. So, when we come to examine its marking of time the focus duly shifts from the opening to its rhythmic transactions between interior and exterior. The orifice, in this way, becomes a pacemaker of life and of living. Of time, and timing.

One of the earliest memories of my high school biology science class involves the question of how one might come to categorise an organism as living. The terms ‘consumption’ and ‘excretion’ among its answers; describing functions, not like an inanimate rock that passively absorbs moisture which then evaporates out from it; but those active actions of eating, breathing, defecating, or eliminating waste and so on.

These processes of course require the machinations and operation of an entire network of organs and systems within and through the body as a whole, rather than just the hole in the body where they visually manifest and are evidenced. But due to the fact that for most organisms the skin is not transparent, these processes remain secret from them beyond sensation for the process’ duration until they appear, or disappear through these openings.

The orifice’s role in the mapping and meaning making of the body is highlighted in this context, especially within narratives of the development of anatomy studies in medicine, or popular serial killer culture whereby bodies are torn open in order to unravel its mystery and better see how one works (Seltzer, 1998: 72, 85, 191). These entrances and exits from the body, (visual) presences divided by (invisible) absences, create patterns in much the same way as notes and pauses or rests do on a musical score. The body’s form is doubled – it is first a physical form,
and then through the repetition of these sequences of consumption and excretion, entrance and exit, a second form is created by its rhythms; timing the body, embodying time.

Yet, if we observe the dictionary definitions of ‘time’ and their translation it rapidly becomes clear that there really can be no such singular thing as this monolithic term appears to imply. Rather, as it stands, ‘time’ appears to represent a great plurality of temporalities, but whose recurring theme and nature rest on a somewhat limited premise of ‘extent’. This quantification of time sees to its segregation into periods, events, actions, states, occurrences, occupations, histories, lives, decades, years, months, days, hours, minutes, seconds, and the like. Moments cleaved from one another by the peculiar and pervasive linear methods of past, present and future; which, despite their successivity, “compartmental[ize] time” into three distinct phases (Cuevas-Hewitt, 2013: 178).

In the most basic sense, the past pertains to that category of elapsed time whose existence transpired before the current (present) time (OED). At the other end of the scale, the future is the vague realm of potentiality and expectation; the that ‘that is to be’ (OED). Both phases are commonly represented as hinging off either side of the period that is considered to both separate and feed them, the present – ‘the period of time now occurring’ (OED).

The occurrence of time, then, requires concatenations of, as Deleuze (1994) argues in his book of the same name, repetition and difference – rhythm. Leroi-Gourhan (1993) is in agreement, positioning rhythms (for the individual) as the originators of space and time, ‘Space and time do not enter lived experience until
they are materialized within a rhythmic frame. Rhythms are also the creators of forms’ (309).

The structuring of time, or timing as it were, and through that the constitution of form, is arguably a common theme shared by these movings in and out of surface, body or no. The horizon, for example, performs much like an orifice in the earth’s cycle of days and nights, as the sun and moon alternately emerge and sink beneath its visual limit. It is through these happenings and their duration that we have come to measure and categorise certain modes, forms or structures of time as it relates to the natural world from lunar calendars to seasons. In this regard, it could be argued that time is measured by the traffic from and between these openings and closings of surface; the pace and rhythm of which may fluctuate depending on its source, altering our perception, experience and measures of time; allowing them to perform a variety or plurality of temporalities, even simultaneously.

The medium of printmaking often involves concepts of repetition, for example, through the recurrent mechanical process of printing, and the print itself which has been classified as a replicant image of its matrix. The process of three dimensionally inscribing a relief matrix in lino cutting, as per my own experience and practice, tends to be rather singular in its modes – or mode – specifically, and often solely, that of cutting; which, due to the relative limit of the duration of its ‘strokes’ in and out of the surface, and their quantity, takes on a consistency of pace that is repetitive to the point of monotony or conducive to a meditative state.

Repetition however, we must understand, is not solely about the reiteration of a series of self-same entities. Just as the laws of physics enforce the position that
in order to exist beings must differentiate themselves from one another, Deleuze proposes that difference occupies repetition (1994:76). It is his philosophy that, for all that each occurrence of repetition is independent in this regard, the connection that is drawn between it and another instance is at the heart of repeating or serialisation. Without that connection one thing simply follows the other – remaining separate. Williams (2011) comments, “So repetition must take place for – or thanks to – something outside the repeated things” (23). Repetition, therefore, relies not on what is regarded ‘same’, but on the repetition of the difference (which unlike what is ‘same’, remains beyond representation) that inserts itself within their intervals (2011: 22-23, 40), creating “caesura” (a cut in time; Deleuze, 1994:89) resulting in an ordering exercise. This ordering, whilst involving the consideration of “before and after”, is not done so within a calendric, sequential temporal linearity; but rather “through reference to the before and after of each cut” (2011: 15).
Dear Gordon,

Today I have finished drawing up the second block. It is a relief more than anything. I am not happy with a number of parts on it - all I can hope is that they will not be too obvious in the final print.

The goat horn turned out to be much easier to produce (reproduce?) than expected. It is clearly not the same in any respect, but the gist is there.

It was nice doing the layer of drawing - all the loose squiggly lines whose motion demanded a lightening for my pressure & grip on the pen. It was a good end.

Now that the block is complete I do not know what I think, only what I must do next? A far cry from the first block and the months of experiments to come into it. I can see how that would be. Even now as I write this, with my hand oxidizing my notebook so on not too push against the block and scratch it or something, I can see a streak of vainglorious demonstration in all my behaviours & intentions. This morning I even made sure to photograph the finished drawing and photograph it, just so I had the first block for the 15 project. Somehow getting that photograph is a comfort and reassurance.

I wasn't ready to start cutting straight away, even now the prospect is not particularly seductive - in fact it makes me a little sad. So instead I spent my afternoon beginning to prepare the paper for this block. I was glad to have an excuse - not necessarily to be away from the block, but to preserve it in its clarke for a little while longer. Both the drawing and I need to settle. I still don't know if I like the drawings. In its essentials it admits me - spending more time with it may make it more familiar, just in the same way seeing a fine monument times does - but its personality, its real domain that little clutters from me. This is not a way to follow. Meaning, at least narrative meaning, symbolic meaning, etc.
aborted. My relationship to this block is premised on the
memory of its other's process, as well as its own.
But Gordon, I cannot help but feel so emptiness. There is
meaning here, I know it. It led me to make this second block
with a bloody single mindedness that still fuels me. That
has always fueled me. I cannot help but feel the meaning
comes from an ALWAYS PLACE. I don't know exactly
what that is or exactly as I write to you. Hell, I
don't know what I'm saying.
On a more articulate subject, the paper prep went well.
I used a tearing bar this time. Brian got me to use
one when tearing the last sheets into the final triangle
shape before printing. It is brutal but marvelous. It
is frustrating, however, to be confronted with challenge
after challenge in this project - it is a logistical nightmare.
This afternoon a workman in the building came and put
up a sign up noting that the space in front of the electrical
how doors remain clear. Of course this is the only
space in ECA I have been allowed to safely do my paper
prep - until now. I've slid the boards a far distance
away so the doors can be opened, but I would really
love some space. This institution makes practice finding
hard work. I can never just make something, I have to
negotiate around the most ridiculous settings, amateur equipment
and intangible stuff, most of the time. Thankfully I now have you,
Ruth and Brian - but I swear, what I had to go through to get
do you all makes this degree a cruel experience, but a valuable
one.
I think doing that paper prep this afternoon was also in a
way a physical and psychological preparation for the cutting
ahead. I needed the time to breathe and psyche myself up
for tomorrow. You can't just pick up a tool and start cutting.
If it's not in your best, I need one more night, and then, my tool blade, I am all yours.
I am already worried over my tool - what blades need breaking in, what blades are becoming blunt and may damage the blade.
This whole second block hangs suspended as if in a dream to me. I do not know that it will ever be quite real to me (beyond what it does to my body - but even that fades away with time). I think something in me forgot - blade as soon as it is done (or relatively soon). It drying up, it's cutting, it printing all fall away from me. And although I return to each of these tasks again and again they are wholly a thing of the present. Once I make a cut I am no longer interested in that section, my eyes and hands constantly move forward.
There is not too much acknowledgement of what has been done (beyond documentation). I am constantly tunneling, and the more I think of that analogy the more it suits, though when I think of the animals who do it I realise how different our tunneling is. When they dig, they cut away the earth before them and dig through to "another side." They use this tool, this medium for access; they make more, they intersect them. They create an underground labyrinth. But when I tunnel I do not go back into the tunnel I have made behind me. I do not intersect them in any way, etcetera, what would the point be - why would I want to go back when I had been.
An ironic statement I realise considering the fact that I am making a line blade twice over. But believe me when I tell you that I am not sure I am repeating myself. I admit, a line tunnel I am communally digging - the act is repetitive, not the geometry. Is this how serial killers feel? Each murder is different even though it is the same?
The subject of repetition and difference can be said to operate within my cutting practice via the repetitive rhythms and forms that the process generates. In the previous letter to Gordon, Monday 16\textsuperscript{th} November 2015, in much the same way as Deleuze (1994), I imply an ongoing, cumulative framing of repetition, rather than one of deferral or regression.

Cutting in this way performs much like the rhythmic succession of the movement of walking. When I walk, I swing one leg out from the hip in front of the other, placing its foot on the ground before proceeding to perform the same action with my other leg and foot, and so on and so forth for as long as is required for me to reach my destination or goal. These movements repeat one another rather than replicate, falling into a rhythm of similitude rather than exactitude which is what gives each person their own individual gait (also dependent on their form, ability, and the ground they interact with). So, despite there being a general consensus as to the movement recognised as human walking, it is one of great variation.

Leroi-Gourhan (1993) describes such activities as music and dance for this humanised rhythmicity, which he proposes belong to the imagination, as opposed to the predetermination of technical rhythm (310). Although the highly routinic process of cutting as a technique in printmaking may suggest a predisposition to being informed by the latter this is not in fact the case. My process of cutting, though repetitive and often a tedious labour, does not belong to the temporal structures of mechanised mass production whose durations and limits tend to be controlled and ordered by the time of clocks. When an automaton on a factory floor performs a series of movements and tasks it may do so from a digital program of zeros and ones.
that equally measure each distance and time with relatively high precision; so that each movement comes to replicate the last within these same minute parameters. Its rhythm therefore, if it can be called that, is not susceptible to the alterations and variations that comprise what we as humans understand as flow.

Just like the factory automatons at task, or the process of walking, when I go to cut the block I do so with an objective, a purpose in mind – a distance to cover, a destination to reach, an effect to be achieved on my body or mind, or perhaps a named duration reached. However, in spite of these external frameworks, the movements I make are not confined but variable – open to fluctuation within certain limits of physical scale and duration. Each cut I make, just as each step I take, cannot help but fail to be identical to the last, or any other such mark or movement.

Being human I do not move my body within a rigorous limit of an automaton that requires every step to reach out to the same distance as the last, or every knee to peak as high as its former did whilst the leg extends out before me. The same applies to cutting as I push my blade in and out of the linoleum again and again. Due to its function and the result required from it, the action of cutting is, for the most part, the same in nature. I align the tip of the ‘V’ of the blade at the point at which I wish to start my cut, and then, depending on the length and width of the space I am required or am able to cover within the design I apply the related pressure accordingly for the duration that I can sustainably control, or must cease within. Yet, in order to end the cut I must be conscious of that final limit well before I reach it, in order to bring the blade up to the surface of the block once more in a gradual fashion that prevents the tearing that can occur should I finish the length of my cut deep
within the substance and abruptly attempt to remove the blade. This of course suggests a sense of predefinition, but it is one of intuition which opens itself up to spontaneity and reflex, it is not automatic.

As an accumulative process, cutting demands great levels of concentration and consciousness for navigating and manoeuvring between action and ground. The block’s surface is continually altering with each cut, so whilst I must be aware of the consequences of my actions, which therefore carries with it a degree of premeditation and predetermination, I do not know the future, only ever the present of each cut which secretly carries the future and unfolding of the next within it. It is a surface that is continually cut from itself, from its material narratives, as pencil turns to pen, turns to blade, turns to ink and roller, turns to paper print. It is a surface of halted presents, whose pasts and futures move outwith itself; fragmented, multiplied. A firework of trajectories and shifting aliases. A haunted medium whose objects and processes facilitate persistent re-visitations.

Within this discourse of bodies marking time and being marked (transformed) by time, Emmanuel Alloa (2014) considers the effects of plastic surgery where the surgeon’s cut penetrates not only the skin, but through it, the subject’s past, present, and future. The early modern form of this medical practice emerged to meet a demand for reconstructive surgery created by the horrific injuries and disfigurements soldiers sustained and suffered from as a result of the First World War. These initial interventions were markedly less discreet than much of today’s plastic surgery where scars and grafts are frequently minimised, disguised, and tucked away behind more tolerated folds in the body. The physical traumas embedded in the skin (and psyches)
of these survivors were altered but not banished by the likes of Sir Harold Gillies (the founding father of the practice) and his colleagues (Shrast-Hurst, 2012: 179-187). Their dermal histories more amended or appended to by the surgery than rewritten, leaving palimpsestic portals through which to travel time. A far cry from the almost annihilate anonymity of the contemporary glamorised, plasticised body – naturalised, but no longer natural. Like the seamless and streamlined skins Seltzer (1998) describes as shielding the machines they envelope in our domestic spaces, making a secret of their interior states (242), these “impassively perfect” surgically altered human forms seem to exist encapsulated and preserved within a personal “hermetic seal” that denies all which attempts to access them, including time (204), notes Alloa (2014):

This plasticity – and the branch of medicine that goes by the same name – evokes the dream of an infinitely malleable body, shielded from age and illness, from fatigue and accident: mutant bodies safeguarded from further mutations, since any change will be the result of prior planning. There is no question that they change, but what is certain is that they no longer become. Can we indeed still call them bodies – these smooth, overexposed, omnipresent surfaces whose texture tells us so little about what flesh actually is? (2014: 204).

What remains fascinating about Alloa’s (2014) reflections here is their unease and suspicion around this mode of cutting for its power to reduce the presence, or evidence, of time within the flesh to near invisibility. The irony being that time itself, as Derrida (1992) has remarked, is invisible:

Time [...] gives nothing to see. It is at the very least the element of invisibility itself. It withdraws whatever could give itself to be seen. It itself withdraws from visibility. One can only be blind to time, to the essential disappearance of time even as, nevertheless, in a certain manner nothing

The plastic surgeon and their knife take on the spectral powers of time in its own right, seemingly transferring them into their patient’s flesh, who then go on to mark the world while resisting (by appointment) its replying aesthetic overtures to their body. Bodies whose own lives are cut short, becoming taut spectres to the lives they have lived and continue to haunt; temporally un-syncopated.

This subject of difference, with regards to becoming, arguably underpins Deleuze’s (1994) philosophy of time as a multiplicity. It is fair to say that each and all of us are individuals (be we animal, vegetable, mineral), and however interdependent and interconnected we seem we pass along different trajectories, each with their own particular rates, rhythms, and extents. So, rather than being a process, processes; or what Deleuze refers to as ‘syntheses’ (1994:70) in fact create times – none of which are reducible to the other by priority or scientific relativity (Williams, 2011: 3). In this way, the traditionally independent schemes, statuses of and relations between past, present, and future are abandoned in lieu of non-linear morphologous forms by which the three phases continually alternate their orders of containment. A process whereby each one handles the other(s) as dimensions of themselves; those dimensions then coming to stand as an ensuing process (1994). To quote James Williams (2011) on the theory, “We must therefore speak of many presents with their own ways of taking the past and the future as dimensions” (4).

With both consideration for Deleuze’s (1994) proposition of times and Alloa’s (2014) reflections on the curious timelessness of “plasticised bodies” the (indivi)dual
becomings of a block and its print could well be said to endow process and object with an infinitely more nuanced mutual relation. The turn of phrase ‘A chip off the old block’ gains a new meaning within the bounds of the lino cutting and printing process precisely for the fact that this substance’s vulnerable material quality is what contributes to its more pronounced inconstancy as one half of the mirrored pairing.

In my letter to Gordon (7/12/15) I reflect:

[...] They are a tough skin to break into, but with this curious dense but brittle flesh underneath. When I push my blade into it it’s so robust and I can see and feel it give and stretch and break away from itself. But it is also so fragile – its only skeleton is a fairly unassuming and sparsely woven hessian backing.

Beth Grabowski and Bill Fick (2009) echo this sentiment in their Relief chapter of Printmaking: A complete guide to materials and processes, where they list the disadvantages of this carving material, whose overall weaknesses entail its demanding more care in handling and preparation to circumvent denting and chipping, and being generally far less durable than other relief carving grounds, with a tendency to disintegrate at a faster rate by crumbling as a result of its pebbly texture, or becoming “dry and flaky with age” (77). As a result of this the progression of the block’s surface and material state from manufacture to post-printing is one of continual (and relatively rapid) decomposition, a becoming I have previously described in a letter akin to the passing of a “dead moon” (Gordon 7/12/15) in Part I Chapter one.

In spite of a trend to present the print matrix as the finished art piece it is not generally a standard exhibition practice to display the block together with its print, if
at all\textsuperscript{16}. By maintaining a physical and visual separation between these entities the print arguably facilitates an illusion of mutual stasis by its own power to hold. A power that has increased along with the market of acid-free archival grade papers and light-fast fade proof inks. Like the hermetically sealed bodies Alloa (2014) describes, the print is becoming more resistant to becoming\textsuperscript{17}. But unlike those bodies whose aging flesh remains (for the most part) on the body to instead be morphed and stretched into its new form, the smooth un-pocked surface of the print is removed from the block which (for a time at least) simultaneously \textit{but separately} lives on.

The relative stasis of the print does not speak to the aging of the block or the possibility of its aging. It is indifferent and holds it almost in a timeless youth. Every viewing of the print further reduces its status as a ‘copy’ of the information of the block’s current surface which is deteriorating and altering at a far swifter rate. Chipping, breaking, scratching, wearing down and away in such a way as would require a new impression taken from it continuously to maintain its likeness in print. The print we look upon today – although connected to the block – is no longer a present of its process, but a past dimension; just as the block is relegated to the past of the print’s present. The print, it must be said, is of course an image of the block’s

\textsuperscript{16} Historically, there are examples where it was the case that the block or plate was destroyed; a number of artists however, display the matrix as the finished artwork in its own right. Examples of this can be found in the etched steel plates of Marjan Eggermont, the wood blocks of Cecilia Bakker, and the silk screens of Jim Gislason (all as referenced in Noyce, 2006). The more unusual combined presentation of matrix and print(s) has been seen in the early work (from approximately 1987 to 1997) of Friedhard Kiekeben and more recently, for example, in Lucy Skær’s ‘Zero Table’ (2008) (Tate, 2018); as well as Imi Maufe’s artist books and unprinted woodblocks from ‘Translating Travels’ at Edinburgh Printmakers (2018). As regards the presentation decisions for this practice project please see the EXHIBITION section at the close of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{17} For more on the subject and anxieties of preservation in regards to my own prints, particularly in relation to their placement under glass, see the letter to Christina, 14\textsuperscript{th} December 2015.
surface design, but only during the instance of their transfer, the moment paper kissed ink-covered block; which is just that, an instant. An instant that we understand to be a mark in and of time and its many becomings; an illusion of its capture, as all marks are, or the means and machine by which we might travel its depths and breadths.
The marking of the body, as Connor (2004) has previously affirmed, is the industry of time, and one that has come to be closely associated with the mythologies of the origins of writing wherein flawless complexions are ravaged by the ghosts of mishap, misadventure, age and death. But as we have already addressed, those same bodies marked by time also mark time in return (Connor, 2004: 73-74). Just as writing de-limits itself from the confines of time and place through its faculty for re-visitation and return (Connor, 2004: 90), the markings upon one’s skin permit past and present to converse between themselves in relay (Connor, 2004: 85) as old marks live on in an ever-renewing ground. “Marks in the body are foldings of time, bookmarks that look forward to the future that will loop back to them, the body made pluperfect” says Connor (2004: 85). Yet the nature of the skin has its own plasticity with regards to time, and as the physical inscriptions busy themselves with the maintenance of memory, the skin around and beneath slides towards the lapsing of it.

FIGURE EIGHT: Nan Goldin, Nan Goldin one month after being battered, 1984. Colour photograph, Cibachrome print on paper mounted onto board, 695 x 1015mm. Tate Collection.
In *Nan Goldin one month after being battered* (1984) [Figure eight] Goldin uses the medium and matter of photography to not simply document the injuries she has received during an altercation with her partner at the breakdown of their relationship, but also to adhere them more permanently to a surface that could be argued as an extension of the artist – of her body and identity – that of the photographic film and print. As the image shows us, Goldin’s injuries, however shocking they appear at the time of their recording, are already well on their way to fading from her body over time. Connor (2004) describes this disruptive quality of skin by referring to it as “more like a sea than a screen, more like a mobile sky of shifting cloud and sun than the punctual night sky” (93). There is no doubt that the skin remembers (to a degree), but the way it remembers is not as static or indelible as we like to imagine. By creating this photograph Goldin seems to subvert this amnesic process, freezing and transferring the signs of damage on her body to another ground – whose process of developing marks is indeed also sea-like and shifting, but that, once emerged, may be firmly fixed upon the surface for the duration of its existence. It will, most likely, also go on to materially outlive the existence of Goldin herself.

Rather than solely being a means of documenting her wound, the medium of photography exceeds this subject by also performing and mirroring the narratives of wounding and wounds through the qualities and nature of its processes. Tom Gunning (2013) expresses a similar sentiment on the underlying character of Spirit Photography, “In these images, we no longer see *through* the photograph but become aware of the uncanny nature of the process of capturing an image itself”
Oliver Wendell Holmes (1859) as cited by Seltzer (1998) made the leap in comparison between the technology and practice of photography and game hunting or skinning, saying, “Form is henceforth divorced from matter... Men will hunt all curious, beautiful, grand objects, as they hunt cattle in South America, for their skins and leave the carcasses as of little worth” (98, 271). This notion of photography as a form of skinning was also held by the novelist Honoré de Balzac who held the belief that “physical bodies are made up entirely of [...] an infinite number of leaflike skins laid one on top of the other” (Nadar, 1995:8); and so, to be photographed was not simply to expose this multiplicity of layers, but, according to an account by nineteenth century French photographer Nadar, was (for Balzac) to remove them one by one, photograph by photograph until nothing remained (Nadar, 1995:8). Unlike Balzac who views these cuttings from the body as a mode of its depletion and extinction, Goldin arguably operates photography as a mode of its preservation – one that manifests outside of and in spite of her mortal body.

Materially echoing the qualities of a scar in the flesh, the smooth, silken, shiny surface of the photograph appears to cut the artist from her place and time, suspending her perpetually within this particular happening. Event becomes image, becomes object, becomes more readily and steadily accessible. I may leave my home

18 An artist of interest here is Christiane Baumgartner. Like Gunning’s (and Goldin’s) use of a medium whose nature opens up a dialogue with its subject matter, Baumgartner, whose specific interest is in the passage of time, employs the media of film, computer manipulation and woodcut printmaking to represent mobile technological objects such as cars or aeroplanes; provoking rich dialogues on time’s construction and deconstruction. Speaking of her work 1 Sekunde (2004) Jeanette Stoscheck (2005) observes, “Here, the artist breaks down one second of video into a total of twenty-five separate images, each becoming a single work, a woodcut” (24). Thus, Jonathan Watkins (2005) reflects, “She [...] slows down split seconds captured by current technology into days, sometimes weeks, of hand-on activity” (4), arguably weaving it through the work as a fluctuating medium in its own right, altering our perception of the passing of time by making it a visible object (Stoscheck, 2005:24).
and travel to see the evidence of this violence, long after it has occurred, in a gallery or museum without coming into contact with the actual body of the artist that it belongs to; or, equally, go online and search for it on the internet where it will then bloom abruptly upon the surface of my screen. A mobile wound wrenched from its initial ground to drift across a never-ending surface of new contexts; no longer just Goldin’s wound (of and on her body) but everyone’s as they participate in its viewing and reopening. A flimsy, filmy bridge elapsing times and places; one shot perpetually spliced into the streams of others, interrupting and corrupting each other’s narratives.

But this is not to say that Goldin’s photographic wound is not prone to its own fluctuations during its time travelling; it is not a stage set that one passes through without mutual effect. On the subject of time travel, with regards to Gilles Deleuze’s ‘syntheses’ philosophy (1994), Williams (2011) argues, “There is no going back because the initial conditions have been changed by the process” (4, 8). According to this theory the present is constantly and “instantaneously” changing “all the past and all the future” (Williams, 2011: 8-9). This reading of time has profound impact on the way we understand memory and history – means and modes by which we experience or attempt to presence (re-present) the past, particularly during a time becoming increasingly laden by the collecting and collections of their artefacts, exemplified by the cultures and institutions of the archive and museum in both our public and private spheres, during which diagnoses and scientific research into degenerative neurological conditions such as Alzheimer’s are also on the rise.
The role of memory and our fear of its disintegration, John Scanlan (2013) explains, has much to do with its providing us with a sense of place and belonging in the constant “temporal flow” of our existence (8); going on, much like Perec’s (1997) account of the memory work of writing that introduces this chapter, to say “We avoid forgetting by seeking the familiar, by developing a habitat – a home – that might overcome the sense of separation from the past” (Scanlan, 2013: 15). Yet whilst Perec’s (1997) practice (and Goldin’s) “[tries] meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive” (90-91), as if writing were a capsule or vessel in which the past could be held fast like an object or relic through the procession of history, the process and material of my cutting practice operate (in spite of their cavernous and furrowed formations), not as forms of container and containment for memory, but as vehicles for the unexpected channelling and transmission of these alternate times within and without my present, as demonstrated in this chapter’s introductory letter to Lore (Wednesday 13\textsuperscript{th} January, 2016).

One might be inclined to categorise this particular experience as one of memory, of remembering, and this, according to its definition, would not be entirely inaccurate. ‘To remember’ is an act of recollection, reflection, a thinking about past things (OED). But this explanation fails to illuminate or grasp the complexity and nuance of the processes of memory – of the intricate weaving work of shifting connections between time and space that continually structure our sense of self, and its contexts. To re-member, on the other hand, is a putting together again, a re-assembling, a reversal of the dismembering that has occurred – providing a new part or component to a body (OED); or in this case a new context, ground or connection
between images, thoughts, ideas, experiences, and sensations – reconfiguring information via their juxtaposition, superimposition and dialogue.

Quoting Nietzsche (1967) at the beginning of the part, the subject of memory and its capacity to remain with us and be remembered is said to rely on a lingering melancholy, on its continuing ability to ‘hurt’ its subject, therefore binding memory to, or as, trauma. The term ‘re-memory,’ in its own right, may seem to resonate this negativity in its reference to the dismemberment of limbs from bodies or thoughts from their original, birthed context. But that would be to mistakenly place all emphasis on separation, excluding the possibility of the binding together of these elements that re-membering too implies. Likewise, Andreas Huyssen (2000) encourages us to consider an alternative narrative, arguing against the collapse of memory into trauma solely on the recognition of their shared qualities of “instability, transitoriness, and structures of repetition” (24). “The danger,” Huyssen (2000) warns us, “in marking all remembering with the affective registers of melancholia is that we may come to understand memory as working solely on the basis of repetition and negativity, rather than on its progressive (future) productivity” (24). Like Huyssen’s (2000) use of the term “progressive”, the movement of memory in my case is not one of continually and successively moving or climbing towards a particular end point, but rather a spontaneous aggregation or amassing. His suggested alternative narrative for the direction of the repetition of memory opens it out to continuous potentiality rather than the limitations of looping that are proposed by Parveen Adams (1998), who says that though the wound may heal, the scar lives on physically and symbolically in its place, and “[...] opens you up continuously to the previous time
of the open wound, a continuous reopening of the wound” (63). This is not to say that Adams’ (1998) theory is invalid, as I have previously addressed, both Goldin’s photograph and encounters with a collection of my own prints in Part I Chapter two: P E / / I S (in excerpt from letter to Vera, 16th June 2015) certainly evidence a degree of this concept of return. However, it is important to acknowledge the multiplicity embedded within this term and how that might alternately relate to both scars and other ‘keeping of cuts’. Despite Adams (1998) statement projecting an almost regressively repetitious form of remembrance through the site of the scar for its subject, it is notable that she positions these marks as locations of transmission.

As both Connor (2004) and Grosz (1994) argue in their detailed studies of skins and bodies, their marking, wounding and inscription carry a vast array of meanings and translations according to the contexts in which they are applied, as well as the institutions, individuals, or bodies that apply them. But what unites these modes is their peculiarity, for as Connor (2004) says, the making of a mark is much the same as the utterance of sound which comes forth within a certain time and place (90). So, it stands to reason that the permanent evidence of that interaction with the body, in the form of a wound or scar, follows Adams’ (1998) looping temporality of recall.

When I look upon the pale ‘V’ of skin on my shin I am immediately transported to the sunny day that, as a child, I slid from the height of my father’s bicycle saddle in the concrete grounds of the local high school, forcing the metal toothed cassette into my descending flesh. The long, fine line that stretches out beside my knee is no different in its powers, summoning the damp earth squeezing out through the sparse
blades of grass beneath my feet as, following my best friend Nicole towards the swing set in the depths of her garden from the back door of the house, I ran too close to the pond, catching the needle-sharp tip of a branch that whipped and ripped me open so tidily.

But when it comes to the cut markings of my block there is no such specificity of context in which to locate let alone transmit the memory of their individual production upon the surface. Whilst the two scars I illustrate prior exist in and on my body – alive to all its senses, the cuts made in the linoleum blocks, so removed from my form and biology, are only made by my body rather than received by it; whilst their controlled scale and vast quantity speaks to a much longer and more replicant (less varied) process of obtainment or application.

In my practice, the process of those cuts being applied to the block proceeds within a limited repertoire of mark making known as cutting (or carving) whereby an equally limited and similar array of tools perform the act or technique in question. The considerable consistency of my studio set up, apparatus, substances, and techniques creates a generalised context which can lead to paramnesic episodes, identified in the following; “I think it’s the table. I’m thinking of home again. The long table and the block. Though it is another long table and another block”. Despite their temporal and geographical distances, one having taken place in Australia a decade previous, the other a contemporary experience in Scotland, the two instances that this excerpt (from letter to Lore, Wednesday 13th January 2016) is recounting demonstrates the superimposition that can occur within highly repetitive practices through the accumulation of experience and its re-emergence via memory. Here it is
not only the repetitive action of cutting, but the physical components of my studio that trigger associations between different projects. Like a DNA test these two temporal bodies become streams of sequences that belong to and identify each as individual, yet within these patterns are also points of alignment that, when overlaid, establish their relation. And every new match speaks of some likeness, some difference that passed between those vessels of code, those experiences captured and released on a shifting morphologous genealogical ground. But such connections are not always restricted in scope to the obviousness of the block, its processes and substances, for these too evoke strange bedfellows.

In *Matter and Memory* philosopher Henri Bergson (2004) refers to this phenomenon as “resemblance” and “generality”; by which the individuality of things (a pairing or group) is exchanged for a ‘common quality’ which is then attributed to an unlimited number of like objects that performs a kind of “ricochet” between nominalism and conceptualism (202, 204). For Bergson (2004), and myself, the call and response action originates in the “sensori-motor elements of present action” that appeal themselves to memory’s reply (197):

> It started on the charred wood – the hollows and the corrugations. And then within the tapestry where I could feel the simultaneous pulls with and against the grain of the cuts. It reminded me of being in the sea as a girl again. That wonderful feeling of the push and pull. Of letting the ocean do that to you. The soft slaps and heavy rolls. The dragging down. [...] And I am here. Again. There, Again.

The cuts in the surface of my block whose collective density, directionality, width and depth compound through the movement of my hands within and upon them to transform this object into a rhythm whose flux and flow is recognised by my body as
that of the ocean and its currents. In spite of their temporally, spatially, geographically, and materially different sites these events and experiences come to reverberate within one another.

Memory, through Bergson’s (2004) framework, is kaleidoscopic and refractive – altering and renewing the patterns and forms of that which is held within its lenses and mirrors, thereby denying us the opportunity to truly objectify it; to hold it in place, to fix and still its images. Bergson (2004) notes:

[…] the general idea [common quality] escapes us as soon as we try to fix it at either of the two extremities. It consists in the double current which goes from one to the other – always ready to crystallize into uttered words or to evaporate into memories (2004: 211. Text added).

Whilst Goldin and Perec (1997) cut their memories from their grounds in order to keep them, it would seem that I cut a ground whose low viscosity allows it to keep its form (barring the becoming of age); and it is through those cuts, those openings and highways which I create, that memory finds passage to travel through between places, times, and states. As I said in the opening of this part, in my practice to make a cut is to keep a cut, but that which journeys through them cannot be held, instead, shifting, morphing memories and thoughts flutter, flee and escape me. Like the old, crumbling tenement I live within, the openings of my blocks know many inhabitants all passing, inconstant between its walls, consumed by and excreted from the bellies of its rooms through which they emerge and disappear and become and transform into themselves and others. I must confess that for me space, though fragile, is not a doubt. For my spaces hold longer and faster than I do, flushing and flurrying through
them. If anything, space should doubt me – for I am its memories, the ghosts that haunt its halls.

And I am here. Again. There, again.

(Excerpt from letter to Lore, Wednesday 13th January 2016).
FIGURE NINE: S L / \ S H exhibition (December 2017) at the Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom. Pictured: on tables, left to right: Block one (2014-2015) and Block two (2015-2016). Framed on wall, left to right: Print (one) \ (2015) and Print (two) / (2016).

In total, the volume of works on display in the exhibition S L / \ S H was limited to Blocks One and Two, and a corresponding print from each of their editions, being ‘/’ and ‘\’ [Figure nine]. The decision to place the prints on the wall one beside the other, and the blocks (set up on matching tables) in the same fashion, parallel to and beneath their corresponding block, served to further express ‘their mundaneness’, giving them a ‘weight, strength and an element of ridiculousness when you realise the investment that went into their production’ (Christina, 25\textsuperscript{th} August 2015).
intention for this presentation was to position the work in a deceptively simple and understated way so its viewers could not be distracted from or escape the fact of the works’ repetition and the process that brought these objects into being. The unwavering matter-of-factness of this arrangement – the liminality and duality caused by the doubling of block and print, block and block, and print and print – was to serve as a physical and visual introduction to the very complex (and ongoing) dialogue that they provoke as objects, but also looping back through their documentation and discussion in the letters that describe them and their process.

With regards to the related subject of alternative exhibition options and curations of the project’s material, please see CONC/USION.
Chapter four

V A C \\
S
The void speaks in each sentence, between the words. It’s worth it to keep looking with words. A sentence can save you. A certain expression can free what a hundred others were imprisoning. But it’s also worth it to look with the void too. Its exits are hallways, we’ve got to move to a new place all the time, we wonder there, we make friends with questions. All of a sudden, we’ve got a lot of friends.

An actor who smiles. The man who impersonates the actor and who also smiles. And when the actor leaves, and once outside he notices that he forgot something, we see him return without noticing him, as if it was not him returning but the guy who just said goodbye.

The void speaks in each moment, in the spaces when people don’t speak. We can localize it but it’s always so far away, like in these dreams where we just can’t get there and which have endings that never end. We imagine it populated with ghosts and we find an image. That’s what is good and also terrible, terribly human, ambitions, at a certain point, we have to lower our ambitions. We don’t build a table on which we can eat with our friends, our family, write our name or personal messages, we don’t build this table with water, we can keep water in a plastic bottle, but inside this bottle the water still escapes us. We don’t write on water.

(Michniak, A. 2009: 367).
Dear love,

I dont very much feel like writing today, or doing anything with at all. Perhaps it is because of the weather, which hangs about me soft and grey and wet. The Studio is empty, and even when it is not the silence pushes around me as if I were shafted inside a giant pillow.

I’m having three sleeping again – when I lay down I can feel the tension in my upper back, neck and shoulders. I can even feel a knot of buzzing in my head, like a guitar thing that’s been string too tight and then been plucked by a finger and left weighing out. The days have been relatively calm though, I just turn up and get on with it.

On Monday I was at home in the morning to scan in all our letters as Kate has been urging me to do, but something disastrous happen and they got lost, stolen, digitized etc. Iastrategically hurried set up my laptop and connected to scanner I was then addressed by a little box on my desktop declaring that I could not scan on the software in the printer was no longer compatible now that my Mac had been updated. The world is out of control love. We have invented and glorified these tools – hailing them for their ability to open up the world of communication and yet they seem to rapidly be completely incapable of communicating with each other – and so, these objects are relegated to a forced usefulness. They are silenced.

I digress. So in the end I photographed the letters – at least then the words would be legible should I need to print them again should an accident befall them. Insurance.

Yesterday I threw myself into completing the 2nd corner of the 2nd block. My back and shoulders continued to complain as I plodded on through the confusion of traced marks growing ever fatter off the grey line. But every so often I would find one shape correlating to the photocopy of the original block drawing.
and like a key, those slumber around it were unlocked as if a
Code had been broken - telling me what to do.
But it has been hard going - deciphering sense in the hangings
of this second block has been a curious experience. For hours
and hours I stare at the block, I stare at the photographe sheet
of the corresponding design, I stare at the block again and
remark the block with my black ink pens, elaborating - filling in,
expanding on. But most of the time - well, almost everywhere,
the act of looking up - the moments I move between such
design (blocks, photographe, block...) I lose my place, lose
my understanding of things, directions, ideas, intentions. To understand
one I must understand the other and in that inbetween time, that
passageway, I seem to forget which door I came
from or which I want to open, like a hotel corridor with
no numbers on the doors, no reference point to tell you
whether you need to turn left or right once you are on
your door and no way to tell you which one to get
back into. So I end up opening other peoples doors and
pushing my way back home through any number of internal
doors between rooms. And after a while, even the corridor
looses its significance, because every space around the door,
be it a room or staircase or corridor becomes the same thing
- a space to cross to get there. And after a while, how can
you even be sure where 'there' is - hotel seems all look
rather the same. And so it is as I move through the spacious
mass section of my drawing up.

But I will say this, for all the reasons that I've encountered
in a number of these designs, where each new line is pregnant
with a sense of design, there is also an increasingly
inherent difference between black and two, as design
warp and shift, curving the same space in different ways.
I stayed up after 7 last night. I was so in the zone I couldn’t bear to leave without completing that small corner with the kaleidoscope design.

It also been harder to leave my work at night. I’m finding I feel almost more at peace my desk even when I bundle up in my scarf, jacket, and cuddled by numerous legs. It’s hard to let go at the end of the day—whether that is in reference to the object or the process—or perhaps both, I cannot say.

But today I cannot bear it. My hands need some distance, even if only for a few hours. So I shall prepare paper instead I think. A lesser evil, though perhaps capture any more interest from me today.

I just want to climb or build anything that moves and go away from here. This work requires such stillness from me—of body and mind. By the end of this I hope to god I’ll probably end up like those Japanese soldiers they found on those remote islands still living out the war which had ended years before—and even when they were told, through you’re free, it’s done, let go—they were still there in that war and on that island. When do I get outside of this process, when does it release me. I’m not sure it does. I think I’ve found my forever home, already.
I hope we can say that the void is not always characterized by incertitude, if by incertitude you mean something like the unknowable. But maybe it would be more accurate to say that whether there is incertitude or not depends on what void we’re talking about. Until we understand that Roussel depended on a rule, we suppose the origin of his prose to be a void, because there is no other place it can come from. That’s a way to think about voids, that they’re a default way of explaining something, or dealing with something that we don’t understand.

(Fisher, M. 2009: 262).

‘Without a thing’ William Young’s *A new Latin-English dictionary* (1793) so defines the term *vacuus*, void. ‘Without a thing’ it states, not *nothing*. Therein lies the paradox of this noun, this *thing* that is so wholly understood as its opposite, a ‘not’, a *no-thing*. Yet despite, or perhaps, in spite of, its very conception of absence the void appears anything but desolate of definitions. Encumbered as it is by vast swathes of emptiness, and vacancy; unoccupied, untenanted, deserted and unfilled; but also unfulfilled, they say – it’s unproductive and uncultivated. Unsatisfied. It is cavernously lacking, wanting, powerless, unable; deprived, free from, vacuous and blank. It is a vacuum for some, this *vacuus*. Cleared, cleaned, evacuated, withdrawn, removed, quit, left, departed, dismissed, and *avoided* (OED). But much like the popular household appliance that shares, in part, its name (the vacuum cleaner), *vacuus* (in light of these synonyms) could also be said to possess a tendency for drawing things into itself, or at the very least, for interfering with its surroundings. Especially in consideration of the fact that as a ‘no-thing’ one has ever such a hard time of locating where this *thing-that-isn’t* doesn’t begin and doesn’t end. As ‘a space
entirely empty of matter’ (OED) it makes a matter of entirely empty space. For as Perec (1997) so aptly put it:

Our gaze travels through space and gives us the illusion of relief and distance. That is how we construct space, with an up and a down, a left and a right, an in front and a behind, a near and a far.

When nothing arrests our gaze, it carries a very long way. But if it meets with nothing, it sees nothing, it sees only what it meets. Space is what arrests our gaze […] (1997:81).

Referring to Hegel, Sue Golding (1997) is quick to remind us that the ‘immediate presence of a thing’ must always be mediated by both what ‘is’ and that which is counter to it, its “other”, stating, “[…] there can be no identity, and therewith no meaning, without a (relational) separation, a distinction between the ‘this’ and its negation […]” (13). So, does this then presuppose that the void’s ‘other’ must automatically comply as a thing or things in a game of empty versus full, something versus nothing? I would suggest not. For a no-thing such as the void, as previously stated, is not a nothing. Whilst the emptiness implied by the void can invite notions of duality, division, and conflict with our world of matter into its discourse this should not necessarily, or always, preclude its representation as a pure, alienating opposition – an ultimate-absence-of-all, if you will.

On this note, in an interview with Mathieu Copeland (2009), artist Ben Vautier describes the particular project of a scientist friend engaged in creating the perfect vacuum, a box empty of all things including oxygen; yet Vautier is quick to intercede to account for his perception of its failing, saying “[…] but there’s still light in it” before Copeland adds, “And there’s the box itself” (255). Through this lens the void, like
water inside a bottle, can only but continue to escape us if we choose to frame it within such limits, as Michniak (2009) proposes at the opening of this chapter. This somewhat grand and primordial interpretation of the great mystical abyss of ‘the void’ is of course a valid (and popular, romantic) one, it is not what I wish to channel here on in.

Alternatively, Dean Rickles’ (2009) commentary on the development of our understanding and interpretation of the void throughout history, particularly within scientific narratives, fairly states that the void is capable of being both subject and object – as “a property of an object or an object itself, one that has properties of its own. [...] signifying an emptiness of something, but [...] can also signify the emptiness itself”; bringing to bear the potentiality of the void as what can be both empty and emptied (216-217). By opening up this frame and suggesting the possibilities of the void and its questions of occupancy, Rickles (2009) invites the notion that its definition encompasses its own antithesis, “[...] it has modal force,’ he remarks, ‘implying the potential or capacity to be full” (216-217).

This becomes something of a touchstone in light of Morgan Fisher’s (2009) conception of voids as “a default way of explaining something, or dealing with something that we don’t understand” (262), alongside Michniak’s (2009) “wondering” – “questioning” – “speaking” (between the words) - void (367). In both instances, it could be argued, the void is positioned as a conceptual device within practices of knowing, of knowledge and its expression, but whose process does not operate according to achieving a finite objective or fixed conclusion, rather one of
flux in much the same way as Jorge Luis Borges’ (2001) “volume of innumerable pages” (95) in *The Book of Sand*:

He suggested I try to find the first page.
I took the cover in my left hand and opened the book, my thumb and forefinger almost touching. It was impossible: several pages always lay between the cover and my hand. It was as though they grew from the very book.
“Now try to find the end.”
I failed there as well.


Unlike Perec’s (1997) previously mentioned ‘space’, the void does not seem to invite a close acquaintance with edges and in this way continually problematises identification. One suspects that such is the ungraspable nature of its concept that were we to fix upon it, the void would be lost to us that very moment. Whether emptied or emptiness, the void is an evasive domain of excess.

Golding (1997) goes further, framing it “as an indeterminacy which exceeds the very notion of eternal infinity; for it no longer adheres to a concept of homogenous time nor one of empty space” (17). Accordingly, her “story of negation” (17) relates more to a peculiar aimless meandering, “a straying on some other path neither inside nor outside the oppositional binaries of a positivity and its Other” (17). Or as Nietzsche described, “forgetting” (1983), a phenomenon which finds itself in the “un-dead’ sphere of the ever-dissolving access of the present that ‘both sidesteps and absorbs a past and future tense, and at the same time, makes that past or future [...] ‘possible’” (1997: 18).
The void that is ‘forgetting’ can be defined as a failure of recall or remembrance, as well as omission (whether deliberate or inadvertent is another argument). It is a leaving behind. Etymologically its roots can be traced back to the Old German *getan whose translation is ‘to hold, grasp’. Combined with its prefix the term is thence ‘to miss or lose one’s hold’ (OED). This slippage is necessary, according to Nietzsche (1983), who argues that were it not for forgetting one would be imprisoned as a witness of becoming. Caught in a constant flow of seamless connection, one would lose their sense of individual self within it (60-61); a kind of self-annihilating soup of absolute association. These cavities of knowledge, or instances of disconnection yielded by forgetting, it could then be argued, provide for us the margins and separations with which we have the opportunity and duty to re-negotiate the boundaries and connections between things (as well as that of their excess or no-things).

In the following excerpt from my letter to Lore (Wednesday 11th November 2015) I relate my own process of forgetting during the act of attempting to transfer, by tracing and cross referencing, the surface design information recorded from my initial block (‘/’) to its counterpart (‘\’):

[…] almost every time, the act of looking up – the moments I move between each object (block, photocopy, block…) I lose my place, lose my understanding of things, directions, ideas, intentions. To understand one I must consult the other and in that inbetween time, that passageway, I seem to forget which door I came from and which I want to open.
That I lose my ‘place’ – or as it stands, my hold on ‘my understanding of things, directions, ideas, intentions’ whilst moving between the two objects – speaks to the disorientation and disconnection of forgetting. However, it is in fact the phrase ‘inbetween time’ used in reference to this phenomenon that I wish to draw further attention to within the subject of voids; most particularly in relation to its inference of being located during what might best be described here as a process of translation – “to understand one I must consult the other”.

For the purpose of definition, the act of translation can be loosely explained as ‘to bear, convey, or remove from one person, place, condition to another’, closely sharing its meaning (and etymology) with transfer and transport (OED); albeit mistakenly due to a misinterpretation by Leonardo Bruni in relation to the term *traducere* – ‘to lead beyond’ in the context of a phrasing where a Greek term was described as being ‘transported or transplanted into Latin’ (Eco, 2001: 74). Through its root *translatio* the term ‘translation’ initially manifested as ‘change’ according to Umberto Eco (2001), who notes that its meaning as the ‘turning from one language into another’ only made itself apparent in Seneca (74). It is this aspect of the term that has perhaps become one of its more commonly recognised contexts and usages – in its practice within or as conduit between different mediums or languages, particularly recognised in the domain of literature –lending to the term notions of interpretation, explanation, expression, alteration, adaptation, version, transmutation and transformation.

Translation’s association with ‘change’ is a complex one that shares its bed with notions and conditions of faithfulness and fidelity. Historically in the West,
according to Kirsten Malmkjær and Kevin Windle (2011), the translation of religious doctrine into Latin by Church father Jerome (in AD405) has fostered something of a debt to the equivalence principle in translation practice of *sensus senso* (sense for sense) rather than *verbum verbo* (word for word), however allowances were made by the father for the latter in regards to the Scriptures “where even the order of the words is God’s doing” (8). By the late twentieth century however, a number of paradigm shifts had and were continuing to occur around equivalence, purpose, historical and cultural relativism, indeterminacy, and localisation, shaping the practice and orientation of translation and its objectives pertaining to the source and target texts it worked between (2011: 15-16). This struggle of where to locate meaning within a text remains a persistent one, as Nicholas G. Round (1996) reflects, “It’s a matter of common observation that translation can mean tangibly different things to its different practitioners and users” (3). In other words, it is a matter of interpretation.

Interpretation is an important and inevitable component of any translation process, but it is necessary to note that it is not translation itself. As a way of explaining, rendering explicit, elucidating, and bringing out meaning, interpretation arguably helps facilitate the transfer of information between different media and languages that translation requires, by establishing the sense of the source text through discovering and applying similarity in meaning. But this is not to say that it practices equivalence. For that, Leonard Forster (1958) reminds us (from the standpoint of literature translation, but this can of course in principle be extended to other fields), there would have to be something of an ‘interchangeability’ in
operation for terms and concepts, allowing for their transference of meaning. Since neither of those entities remain identical in connotation from one person to the next such a proposition is impossible.

Thus, the paradox of translation is engaged, which, according to John Cayley (2009), pivots on the notion that all utterances, irrespective of language, are automatically singular; any translation of the former is equally a new distinct utterance in what may be another form or language. A proposition that is always assured by both language’s and our “embodiment [...] in space and time” (2009: 25).

Yet despite this we still speak to each other, and in doing so we exchange tools of a similar or approximate type – this can occur because we too are similar or approximate to one another, including the form or culture of the lives we lead. Referring to Walter Benjamin’s notion that all ‘evolved language’ can be attributed to the translation of every other, Cayley (2009) recommends that translation, despite its many hurdles, can in fact be possible according to the stipulation that people continue to hold faith in this resemblance with others, particularly as “creatures of language” (24-25).

Equally, Forster (1958) urges us to contemplate the process of translation as more of a “conversion of symbols rather than a transference of meaning”, but he is quick to remind us that this is not a simple matter of transfiguration, for “[s]ymbols do not stand alone” (1-2). So, language, one might say, is embedded, it is always and only ever amidst. In fact, it could be argued that what makes language possible to learn, as well as easier to understand and interpret is arguably its situation within a larger (and generally expanding) context. But this also makes it a rather cumbersome
prospect to move about; which is why translation is not so much a matter of transfer but exchange. Exchange, not in the sense of swapping one location for another, but rather a trading, a trafficking, a brokering, or as Eco (2001) opines, a betting on the components of a text’s sense (16-17) fostering an economy of meaning that relies on its exchange. Translation demands its pound of flesh – to save one aspect of a text is, more often than not, to consent to the loss of another, or in some circumstances even to gain something new entirely (Eco, 2001: 42, 47). But perhaps above all, translation is an exchange of dialogue. It is a discussion, a “negotiation” (Eco, 2001: 45), a mediation between parties:

Translations do not concern a shift from a language A to a language B (as happens with phrase books for tourists, which tell us that home can be translated as maison, casa, Haus, and so on). Translations are not about linguistic types but rather about linguistic tokens. Translations do not concern a comparison between two languages but the interpretation of two texts in two different languages (Eco, 2001: 13-14).

Rather than a battle for the same territory, it is a seeking of common ground – but being neither the domain of one text nor the other. Conceptual in nature, translation is the opening up of a third space whose volume continually spills outwards into the two (or more) and beyond, ‘that inbetween time, that passageway [...]’ that both disrupts and connects.
I seem to forget which door I came from and which I want to open. Like a hotel corridor with no numbers on the doors, no reference point to tell you whether you need to turn left or right once you are out your door and no way to tell you which one to get back into. So I end up opening other people’s doors and pushing my way back home through any number of internal doors between rooms. And after a while, even the corridor loses its significance, because every space around the door, be it a room, or staircase or corridor becomes the same thing – a space to cross to get there. And after a while, how can you even be sure where ‘there’ is – hotel rooms all look rather the same. And so it is as I move through the Spanish moss section of my drawing up.

(Wednesday 11th November 2015).

The process that the excerpt of this letter refers to (above and at length prior to the introduction of this chapter) involves the transference of the surface design information from the first block onto the second via tracing; as well as the decoding and formalising of that information on block two in ink, drawing it into closer approximation as a type of replicant of block one – each made of the same substance (grey linoleum), of the same shape (isosceles triangle), and to the same scale and dimensions. With these material conditions in place along with a complete to-scale photocopy taken from block one of its surface design, serving as the matrix from which the information is to be traced onto block two, it is not inconceivable for one to assume the procedure to be anything other than a straightforward ‘transfer’. But as the above statement from my letter evidences, these factors did not circumvent repeated occurrences of disorientation within and between both objects (the photocopy and block two). Unlike an interlinguistic translation (a text translated from one language into another. Eco, 2001: 67) both the source and target ‘texts’ at stake
here are essentially – visually – of the same order, the aim being to simply re-produce one object’s design onto another of the same description creating something of a facsimile. On these grounds their compatibility for translation, therefore, should be irrefutable. And yet they are not.

Faced with the prospect of interpreting and filling in the traced information on block two with reference to the photocopy of block one, it rapidly becomes apparent that the distance that exists and must be traversed between these objects is a complex interweaving of spatial and temporal factors, which in turn influence both the technical and conceptual aspects of this process.

The physical distance, or space, between the two existed as something of an oscillating arc as the photocopy, always hinged with tape (and at times my left hand) to the block at various points, was peeled back or superimposed upon the surface depending on the task being performed. During tracing, the image was lowered onto or close to the block. Whilst drawing details and elaborating upon the traced marks on the block it was either raised entirely (resulting in only the blank or graphite coated underside of the copy showing), or by degrees in certain areas to facilitate briefer intervals between reading the photocopy and applying the necessary information.

With the photocopy existing as an essentially complete representation of the design; and the block beneath it containing (at various stages of its development) a combination of traced pockets of information in soft blooming graphite, sections – more advanced in their progress – resolved with dense networks of fine black ink
lines, along with areas that lay blank in comparison; a convoluted dialogue struck up betwixt the two.

Like an examination at the optometrist where the eyes bore ahead towards the chart of numbers and letters they must fix on and identify whilst the consultant flicks the different lenses over them back and forth, ‘One or two? ... One, or two?’; the parameters (or place coordinates) of the information I see and trace remains relatively unchanged from photocopy to block and back again (within the scheme of each object) – much like that of the figures on an eye chart. However, unlike an optometric examination with one chart by which multiple lenses alter one’s perception of it, this tracing process multiplies that ‘chart’ in the form of the photocopy and the block – one and two ... one, and two.

As I have stated, due to the nature of my tracing method of superimposition, cartographically the coordinates of the sections I am working on and within remain comparatively approximate to one another on each individual object as well as mutually during their time in direct proximity; but as soon as the two are drawn apart in order for me to reference and fill in the design, their physical separation and spatial individuation causes a kind of conceptual and visual stuttering as neither image can entirely locate itself in or without the other. The more frequently this occurs the more rapid the intervals between the referencing of each surface, until the images and their matrices cease to be a pair of objects, becoming more of a motion, one-and-two... one-and-two ...one-and-two; a motion-picture. This credential of animation, however, is perhaps owing more to the sway of the perpetual switch and splice than
the gradual creeping evolution of the imagery’s content which too plays a part, rather like Austrian artist Martin Arnold’s short film *Passage à l’Acte* (1993).

Consisting of a family breakfast scene shot from the 1962 film adaptation of Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), Arnold manipulates the sequence from what was originally a matter of seconds to more than ten minutes long via the reproduction of frames through optical printing. Arnold then “plays them backward and forward in tiny increments [...] creat[ing] a continuous rocking motion on and off the screen [...]” (Herbert, 2006: 93). An effect made possible by the structural nature of photographic film.

Arnold’s ability to expand and contract this event comes down to its existence, or rather the record of it, in the form of a reel, a ribbon, a strip consisting of individual frames in a sequence one after the other – essentially, in a line. Regardless of filmic devices such as montage or non-linear narrative that a motion picture may contain, as an object photographic film cannot escape its own linearity. Digital media of course overwrites this to a degree due to its fourth dimensional existence as bits, bytes and pixels; yet despite this the linearity of photographic film persists within the computer editing software and suites which still operate according to a successional order of frames. Each frame locates itself within space (cyber or otherwise); it has a place, it submits to an order in relation to other frames in other places before and after it. An order that Arnold disrupts via their duplication. That my own visual experience of duplicating imagery should align with the palsied effect of *Passage a l’Acte* cannot, however, be put down to any symmetry of the two
processes. After all, working from a drawing by drawing I do not have the benefit of a film reel’s accessible chronology.

Each mark executed in the design evident on the photocopy of block one’s surface is, in its way, an individual frame in the sequence of the event of the block’s drawing up; their numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Due to their manifestation as dense textural networks, or meshes of visual information; all of which were made in pens which, though varied in point size, share an ink colour, these often minute gestures become virtually if not totally impossible to isolate and extract from their contexts in an accurate and meaningful chronological order.
Dear Ruth,

I just realised this morning that I’ve 11 days until I leave for China! The next few weeks at work are going to become rather busy, I’ll be away for the rest of October, and then there’s the kiddies’ term break and the family holidays we have planned. All this has got me thinking about your letter from the other day.

In my mind’s eye, the image of the 1970s London streets remains strong. I can see the black and white photographs, the greyness of the buildings, the hustle and bustle of the people. And yet, in my mind’s eye, the image of the 1970s London streets remains strong. I can see the black and white photographs, the greyness of the buildings, the hustle and bustle of the people.

I’m writing this letter on a Sunday afternoon, sitting at my desk in the library, surrounded by books and paper. The sun is shining through the window, casting long shadows across the floor. I’m feeling rather tired, and I know that I’m not going to get much done today.

I’m thinking about the project we’re working on. I’m not sure what to do next, and I’m feeling rather unsure of myself. I’m not sure if I’m doing the right thing, or if I’m making the right decisions. I’m feeling rather uncertain, and I’m not sure what to do.

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by the impossibility of reading them or the road crew I need them to be right now. It is overwhelming and time consuming. I had never thought this part of the process would be so freeing with anxiety and impatience!

Anyway, tomorrow I have to be home for the plaster and tiles so I'm packed myself up ready to go work on the kitchen table for the next couple of days. Not that a change of scene will make a difference. Getting it done on the bus unscathed worried me a little, but there is so much still to do. I cannot lose any more time.
As inferred in this letter the drawing up of block two is different from that of block one. Their starting points do not equate. The surface of block two begins from the surface of block one, as opposed to the ground zero that initiated the latter. And so the process of its (re)production increases in intensity with source imagery that immediately appears as a resolved whole, the same as it will appear drawn up on block two, in contrast to the slower development and assertion of block one’s identity within its narrative of becoming. Whilst this facilitates a closer duplication of the source imagery of block one in block two, it arguably denies the possibility of duplicating the processes that created and informed it.

Those processes, of block one, being quite differently founded on a series of individual photocopies or printouts of photographic images that were reduced or enlarged, trimmed down and arranged one at a time, or in clusters, into the desired composition on the surface of the block. As each image’s position was decided upon, location markers were applied in pencil before it was removed and the reverse side of it liberally coated in a layer or two of graphite using a solid crayon of the substance. The paper image was then returned and aligned into its marked location on the block, temporarily fastened with tape to its surface – design side up – which was then traced using a ballpoint pen. The pressure of which forced a graphite impression onto the block where it had been in contact. As each tracing was completed the paper image would be removed, and to avoid the smudging, smearing and degrading of the graphite design, a series of black ink fine liner pens were used to more permanently outline, fill in and elaborate said design using the paper image from which it was drawn as an additional reference and guide.
That the source imagery of block one was photographic holds some significance for the overall process. Unlike a relief lino block a photograph possesses the ability to capture the gradation of tone with far more subtlety than the materials and tools this type of cutting and printing allow; their having to break down the surface of a block using techniques such as hatching, parallel lines and stippling whose degrees of concentration inform the gradient of the tone. These techniques are evident in the woodcuts of Vija Celmins and Franz Gertsch, for example, whose images frequently consist of lines and small nicks; not to mention the woodcuts of Christiane Baumgartner which consist of images and stills adopted from her own digital videos and films, converted through her own raster for the purpose, “I was looking for a possibility, how to print a grayscale photograph just in two components, in black and white, and so I came to use the line grid’ (Roca, 2009).

As such, in working from this particular source material it became necessary to adapt the visual information from each photograph into more basic forms during tracing, akin to the topographical line work found on maps, or those seen in Paint By Numbers images prior to painting. These ‘graphite lassos’, as have been referred to in my letters, could then be used as prompts and frameworks from which to build and improvise detail appropriate to the medium; a stage of the process that tends to be marked by spontaneity and intuition as I respond to the source image, the graphite lassos, and the pens I am working with to translate the two.

In light of the materials, tools, and tracing/drawing processes used in this undertaking, a general equivalence can be established between the two blocks; with the second transpiring relatively similarly to its predecessor. Like the first block, it too
traced from paper photocopies using the same process, creating lassos of its own for me to decode with my black ink fine liner pens. However, this time rather than a collection of individual photographic images each being selected, trimmed, configured, and attached to the block for tracing, one large drawn paper image of the same triangular shape and size as block’s one and two was used. This comprised of variably sized (but to scale) photocopy images taken from the complete (uncut) surface drawing of block one, trimmed and pieced together along corresponding seams with tape. The underside of this document was then either covered in graphite (or in resistant areas an additional piece of graphite coated paper was introduced), and attached to block two’s surface – ensuring its positioning would closely mirror the composition of block one once traced. Although the source image (photocopy) here comprised of the whole surface area of the block, the approach to tracing block two remained comparable to that of one, in that each individual section of texture was traced using a ballpoint pen and then worked on in black ink fine liner pens to their completion before initiating the process on the next part of the design.

This obvious attempt at an employment of similar methods in the production of block two’s image to that utilised in block one is arguably a key factor in their conflict, and the establishment of a recognition of their difference as singular entities that, albeit, reference the same phenomena. Where the two blocks seem to diverge from equivalence can be identified, as I have previously suggested, at their points of initiation; that being the document of each source image – the photocopies/printouts of the photographs, and that of the drawing.
The disparities between the visual languages of a photographic image and that of a lino cut, as I have said, determine a degree of interlinguistic translation between them to establish their ‘sense’ or essence. Yet with regards to the duplication then of that (drawn) translated image from one surface to its similar other we are met with the question whether this shifting even constitutes as translation, let alone interpretation. That work, we might suppose, has surely already been done.

The photocopy of block one’s drawn surface provides a clear description of the information to be transferred, but it does so as a whole, as a single ‘frame’. The problem being that the information or ‘sense’ I in fact require to transfer this image is not so much a matter of it as an image, but as the protracted series of actions and events that led to it. I require the drawing as process, not the drawing as object. The image only offers me the residue, the trace, of this. Technically – with my photocopy and graphite and ballpoint pens – I may trace the image in question, but I cannot retrace it.

FIGURE ELEVEN: Frank Auerbach, *Head of J.Y.M. I*. 1981. Oil on board. 56 x 50.8cm.
Southampton Art Gallery
 Painter Glenn Brown delves into this matter through his appropriations of photographic reproductions of Frank Auerbach’s textured, impasto-thick, gestural paintings of heads [Figures ten and eleven]. A fascinating feature of these works is that, in a manner of speaking, Brown can replicate an Auerbach brushstroke. It is just that he does so by the application of many in the place of one, and each being flat against the canvas rather than relief. The viscosity and density of Auerbach’s paint means that a great deal of detail on how each stroke was made remains evident in the final work; but rather than making its exact duplication possible, this fact renders the work wholly and impenetrably unique. Even had Brown the very same paints and brushes the artist used to produce each work, he could not possibly arrange the placement of the hairs on the brushes grating through the impasto, and the singular streaking of pigments through each other, so as to exactly replicate each brushstroke as it appears in the photographic reproduction of Auerbach’s paintings. However, he can break down the information of each brushstroke, captured by the photograph, into elements that imply the direction of those hairs, and their position in the width, length and depth of the stroke, as well as the placement of various pigments in the composition.

Because of this, more has to be added to the work than what Auerbach had put in his own. Without the impasto, Brown must create more marks and use more colours to imply the nuanced fluctuations of surface, which are also highly dependent on the direction and refraction of light present in the specific photographic moment capturing the source painting. Following this deconstruction, Brown’s intensity and attention to detail bestows each of Auerbach’s sinewy grooves and ridges, as well as
their corresponding highlights and shadows, their own individual narrative, frame or scene within the image. All of which play out simultaneously, switching back and forth as our eyes optically reconfigure them from a fractured independence to a united density and trajectory.

Just as the Finch family staggers over their breakfasts in Passage a l’Acte (1993), where a single action is not split or broken but almost relentlessly extended within itself; Brown forces his viewer’s gaze into a similar optical and temporal lurch as they quiver through the protracted motion of the image. Brown’s appropriations almost over explain an Auerbach, interpreting and translating the artist’s gestures by splitting them apart and multiplying them into the individual temporalities of each element involved in the production of a single mark.

Speaking of the work as an object, like the photograph he refers to, Brown may compress the original height of the surface appropriated to a flat plane; but as a temporal event he expands it tenfold, creating works that are at once extraordinarily excessive and unsettlingly deficient. The works replicate the visual information of an Auerbach rather than their event or unfolding; with Brown re-producing an image of the trace of the original artist’s action, rather than an action that would result in an actual trace equivalent to those produced by Auerbach (or the camera that captured them). However, it must be said that beyond their function as duplicate image, in their own right Brown’s marks do constitute as trace – as a record of his own series of movements across the canvas – although they occur substantially differently to each of those they are intended to describe.
My own process of replication, in comparison, hosts, beyond the same artist, almost identical tools and techniques in the application of its marks on both blocks one and two resulting in their high aesthetic similarity. But this equates to little more than closely replicating the identity of an animal’s tracks in the sand; and the work of a trace and of tracing, as we shall see, is also a matter of trajectory, temporal and otherwise.

The practice or act of tracing is generally defined along the lines of the following or pursuit of its noun, a trace (or traces). Ironically, the early sense development of this term in Old French and Middle English remains unclear, according to the OED, but some connect to the meaning of ‘trace’, a ‘mark left by anything moving’; whilst the Latin root *tractus* describes movements pertaining to ‘a drawing, dragging, trailing, crawling, a train, a track, [or] course’ (OED). Tracing, then, concerns the ‘discerning’, ‘deciphering’, and ‘discovering’ of these indications or remains of occurrence. It is decidedly historical; of a kind that proceeds forwards whilst looking backwards. Having a handle on chronology, then, is of the utmost importance.

If one is to follow a set of tracks it is perhaps advisable to first note their direction, not simply as a series of marks in a line (which can of course head one way or the other), but the orientation of the feet (or other agent) producing them, which contain the key to that chronology. Feet, like many things, have a font and a back, a top and a bottom, as well as sides. Their tracks may not capture them in their dimensional entirety, but they do generally contain a combination of the essentials to suggest which way the body that carries them is facing as it moves. This being so
for the most part because things that move have a preferred physical orientation for travelling on foot forwards, in line with the direction of the body’s face (the hub of the sense organs).

Drawing, executed more commonly with the hands rather than the feet, tends to be no different in this way. When I draw I generally do so at the front of my body, my arms and head facing in a general forwards direction, for both greater comfort and efficiency. Like the feet when walking, the hands whilst drawing are limited to certain parameters around the body, namely the length of the arm and the area of the matrix being worked on. Unlike the feet which, in order to move forwards, require a step from one and then the other (or else a hopping, or jumping momentum with one or both feet to thrust the body forwards), when drawing, almost always one hand is responsible for that transit, which also need not be interrupted as with the processional, intervalled foot step; allowing for longer durations in contact with the ground. Collectively, then, these ‘prints’ made by my hand and pen can differ widely in scale (length and width), distance from one another, as well as their direction or axis on the matrix; problematising one’s ability to follow their chronology, which due to this mobility need not be linear, and can instead be scattered or densely overlaid and populated. But this does not mean that (individually) a drawn mark is without its own traces of orientation and trajectory.

Like the trace of a foot on sand, or some other impressionable ground, it too often possesses indicators or suggestions within its form of start or end points relating to the direction of movement by the tool, the variations in pressure applied, its speed, and the duration the tool was in contact with the surface its residue is to
be found on. However, unfortunately, in my own drawing up of block one a number of these traces remained ambiguous as a result of the linoleum’s absorption of ink; as well as the short duration of each mark’s production causing their traces to maintain a relatively solid, even density throughout, which was further exacerbated by the photocopy’s standardising of tone (reducing distinguishability between the physical layers of information) as well as the quantity of marks made in any one area, often overlapping and disguising such indicators if they did occur. A problem which is doubled by the process of then tracing these lines and forms to leave a graphite impression on block two. The materials and methods of this mode of re-production increases the inaccessibility of the initial marks’ order and course, as the graphite – being transferred via the photocopy rather than occurring directly as a drawing – re-produces its information with varying degrees of clarity (at times not at all) that do not necessarily correspond with the actions (their pressures, directions etc.) that produced them:

[...] The section I am currently drawing has rather brought me to my knees. I have had to compromise and surrender to it much more than I had ever imagined. I have 3cm [squared] to go, but the tracing lines are faint and few so I get lost frequently. Though I will say that I have managed to patch the image together by a kind of dot to dot approach – even the tiniest suggestions of a shape or shadow I recognise becomes an island from which it has grown into an empire, connected by all the swirling branches I must fill the grey ocean of lino that lie teasingly between. It is such a puzzle, the thinking and referencing back to the photocopied image of the first drawing is fierce. The time it takes to understand and respond to these whispers of lines is arduous, in fact it can take so long I lose my place in the thicket of lines.


In his article ‘Lost skills of the tracker: whether searching for lost cattle or hunting predators that attack the herd, cowboys make regular use of tracking. The
landscape is full of clues, so start looking and listening’ (2011) Peter Bronski describes the clues left by animals (e.g. scat, hair, broken or chewed twigs, prints etc.) as “a trail of breadcrumbs” that “provide confirmation that you’re on the right path” (2011:86) which suggests a similar ‘dot to dot approach’ as the above letter excerpt. But unlike Bronski, the object of my tracking is not an independent animal quarry, it is the past course (drawing) of my design, which does arguably involve the tracking of my own hand with itself. Although this is in some ways an inevitable aspect of attempting to re-produce the event of the block’s drawing, the fact remains that my objective alternatively lies in the ability to capture and duplicate each movement by its material trace. Therefore, like a forger, knowing how I made the drawing is a practical means to its faithful replication. But without the usual methods of production available or operable within this context I was rapidly forced to renegotiate the means of achieving the same end.

[...] I must keep going, that is the trick – each part helps tell me where the next is – however far apart. I feel like a spider making a peculiar web, where instead of making the * to start and then circle around down into that spiral (or out of it) I am instead starting on the spiral, and there are moments where I wonder how the image can hold together with nothing to hold it together. I am drawing blind. I am trusting myself in strange ways – taking leaps of faith with my ink pen – my tool of confidence, now being used whilst I am filled with bewilderment by the silvery codes I’m to follow. Under the light they reflect, these graphite trace lines and I can no longer see them – they are like living, flickering silver screen films, and the glimpses I get as they move over the surface are what I must remember and re make with my pen – it is slow going. The ink drawing of these branches seems to move like one of those time lapse film sequences where the stem grows out with the rickety fluidity of a train on a track – trembling and sliding away from itself.

(Excerpt from letter to Freya, 10th September 2015).
Referencing Barry Martin, Bronski reminds us that focussing solely on the tracks or clues themselves inevitably leads to losing the animal that made them. Instead, when approaching the art of tracking, he declares that one must recognise that first and foremost it “has nothing to do with tracks, rather an understanding of the ecology and topography of a landscape. Such information tells you where you’re most likely to find your quarry” (2011:86. Emphasis added). Martin recommends, “Start at the grand scale [...] then work your way down to more specific clues” 2011:86).

Key to this letter excerpt to Freya, 10th September 2015, which describes unscaffolded spirals and circles; along with another earlier reference in a letter to Vera, 17th August 2015 where I explain the process of producing the drawing’s details by “filling in the lassos of graphite I’d left myself to decode”, is their immediate visual, functional and conceptual proximity to topographical mapping and maps. These spirals, circles, and lassos that distinguish my processes of drawing and tracing share a commonality with the contour lines which are used to describe and indicate the changing levels of elevation of geographic forms or landscapes in a two-dimensional image or diagram.

In order to produce the finer marks and details required in the design, as Bronski (2011) and Martin (2011) argue of tracking, a stronger knowledge and understanding of the topography of my imagery’s forms was necessary. Following the minute and sparse tracks of my mark making was not enough. I needed to understand the visual structures that they moved through and therefore described – to look upon those faint trace lines on the block and attempt to see instead the empty expanses, trails, and burrows that were the “logical path” (Martin, B. quoted in Bronski,
of and for my pen to follow. But as the latter part of the letter (10th September 2015) describes, these loops and lines were not static in their presentation and manifestation; appearing and disappearing by alterations of the light their contour lines and directions more akin to mobile ripples across a liquid surface. This graphite topographical map prevented the viewing of the entirety of its subject, subverting any ability to interrogate and interpret it as a whole or establish its order and their meanings. Rather, it made its own selections, each event of presentation producing entirely unique manifestations of the glistening marks. The power shifted from my expectation to see to the block’s choice to reveal. It was at this point that I had to abandon the role and politics of author and reposition myself as the block’s medium.

In order to replicate as intended, I had to relinquish that eye that interprets the meanings of the marks it sees collectively as a subject, or its components; and simply accept those lines and marks – for the duration of their production only – as lines and marks for their own sake. Abstract now to my logic, but not theirs. Crowding toward or scattering from one another, much like the shoals of fish an ocean diver might encounter; amassing and rippling across my plane of vision, darting apart and away in sudden surges in response to signals that only they seemed able to receive and respond to.

Forced into the back seat of this operation, I was perpetually humbled in my duty to wait upon and receive these lines and marks in their own order and manner of manifestation, and pace. Though I had once been their editor (in the drawing up of the first block), they were now mine. The command over production in the initial
block’s process now a mirror opposite in its second; with block two and its drawing up coming to replicate my role and authority in its own right, turning me into the passive recipient of its design and course. Equivalent. Different. “A pilgrimage to the same image” (as I say in a letter to Freya, 18th August 2015). But which image is it we are moving towards? The block’s? Or my own?

Writing to Gordon and Ruth, Tuesday 26th Jan. 2016, I begin to grapple with the implications of this undeniable agency I now recognise in the print process and its objects, reflecting:

I feel that we have stretched and warped, dough-like, as much as the paper has, through this experience and pressure to succeed. But the success is not what I thought it would look like, and it is not in the place that I thought it would be. I don’t know what to tell you. I am still too close to it all and yet I know that this is somehow an answer. It is not “the answer” – as in the answer I thought I foresaw or believed would be the only, and correct answer. But it is an answer, and it is valid and mysterious and entirely its own self. I cannot mask it with my expectations or experience with the first block, I cannot project another narrative onto it and call it something else. This is the moment where Frankenstein’s creature awakens and they behold each other for the first time. The copy is looking back. It is looking back at me. It is not a passive object or a compliant process. It is a force to be reckoned with, to be acknowledged, to be understood as anything but itself, perhaps. I am looking at the copy.

And the copy looks back.

By considering and applying the philosophies and frameworks of translation within printmaking’s processes of repetition such as tracing, as I have done here in this chapter, its agents are provided a more democratic relationship and role where each navigates and negotiates towards and within that ‘third space’; that meeting

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place where mutual understanding, rather than equivalence, is forged through and from difference.
CONCLUSION

When I embarked upon this research project with the intention of studying embodiment through the printmaking process of linocutting, I can recall a hum and thrill of anxiety as I thought to myself, how do I know if I am recording something that means anything? How will I know what to include, what to exclude? How will I know what is information of relevance and what isn’t? And then I realised that I could never hope to achieve a truly full account and representation of this happening I was undertaking. It is then that I knew that everything counted for something if I chose. Now, in retrospect, I see the tacit knowledge I trust and expect in my printmaking practice also emerging in that of my writing.

Much of my writing is populated not only by my accounts of the print process but also my life, and what becomes rapidly clear reading the letters in this thesis, their analyses, and as an entire collection in Appendix two, is that my life is a tool that I may call upon to interpret my print process and its discourse, and vice versa. So, the notion of embodiment or embodying the print process very soon became but one facet of the much larger narrative of living that, though I could choose not to make the entire focus (as with autobiography), was nonetheless a vital part of my understanding of the former. For my body, my self, within the span of my life does not actually stop and start, though it may stop and start the processes it performs.

All of these processes and events then become constellations of experience; their gleaming filaments stringing one to the other and another again ad infinitum, in vast networks and nests of meaning and connection, until these grow so dense that I
am soon gazing upon the carpet of my existence – riddled with secret signs, codes, and symbols that I must learn to decipher. A carpet which will then take me back up beyond the clouds to look closer at those constellations a second time. The comprehension of one shining trajectory and its meaning snagging a thread, reshaping the fabric into bunched pleats; or loosening its ties to the woven mesh of others which divide and unravel, widening the gap until a hole appears that offers new horizons to peer through, or darn over.

In line with this oblique, accumulative, wayfaring approach the outcomes of Chapter one C U T I S \ / E R A offer further methodological potentialities to consider and explore through its proposition of locating surface as action, opening it up as a morphology, rather than the more rigid material limit it is so often subscribed. By relocating and adjusting this notion of periphery, its physical, material, and conceptual parameters become far more flexible, responsive, adaptable, and inclusive of alternate sites and narratives for its unfolding. This could include new possibilities and considerations for mapping diverse actions and multi-staged processes, materials, and tools, and nonlinear temporalities in the likes of printmaking that can extend the re-description and re-framing of art practices beyond static sites of occupation. A morphological frame offers alternative, accumulative, and more structurally mobile narratives of these events and happenings that the structure of the typical instruction manual does not particularly allow or encourage.

What I hope to achieve by proposing this is a greater awareness and scrutiny of the mutual occurrences, influences, negotiations and becomings of the artist’s
body and embodiment alongside and inside their practice processes; expanding the
discourse on these tacit relations, roles and evolving, interchanging forms, qualities
and functions of surfaces-as-action -via process.

In addition to this proposition of action activating surface, the application of
Gibson’s (1986) theories on substance, medium and surface expand ways to conceive
of limits in the printmaking process – whose identities alter dependent on the tools
and techniques we use to interact with them, including each individual artist’s mode
or approach to the processes and materials.

Chapter two P E / / I S also extends upon our existing knowledge of surface
through its consideration of the role, nature and status of technology and its touch
in the printing process. That printmaking’s use of complex technologies such as the
press should frequently disqualify it from inclusion in the categories and discourse of
‘direct touch’ and flow is, at face value, not altogether initially surprising. Such
cumbersome technologies do alter the body’s experience of handling materials; but
why this difference does not operate along a sliding scale instead of the unforgiving
domain and hierarchy of human touch is at the heart of the propositions within this
chapter.

Technology’s identity, and our relationship to it, is complex being both other
to the body, and absorbed into or informed by it. Exploring what can perhaps best be
described as ‘disorders of surface’ I have presented another perspective of the
printing story through my embodiment of the press; a technology that popular
opinion on art processes and touch had, until now, fooled me into thinking an
impossibility despite my undeniable tacit connection to, and interface with these machines.

Using this experience, knowledge, and a comparative study of Yves Klein’s printing process for his Anthropométries, I have re-examined some aspects of the existing discourse and anxieties that inform our perceptions and direct our technological narratives. The way we understand touch today is frequently directed by philosophies of embodiment and agency, where touch is also feeling (and intermittent trace). Technology, as my argument addresses, disrupts these relays, associations and expectations; but this does not mean that it should be excluded from the discourse, or reduced by framing it within purely human parameters. Human touch should not hold a monopoly on the identity or ‘truth’ of touch, being that it is but one version of many forms of ‘true’ touch. By examining the becoming of technology on both its terms and that of mine as one of its embodied practitioners I contribute a new perspective to this highly complex, and evolving subject.

Along these same oblique lines, and in response to the arguably valid but problematic propositions such as Boon’s, P E / / I S also acknowledges and begins to question the subject of gender with regards to reproductive technology’s identity through the traditional analogue printing press and its embodiment. Whilst Haraway (2016), Plant (1998), and Turkle (1997), whom I reference in the chapter, each engage with a feminist socio-historical, and cultural critique of technology, they do so primarily from the perspective of the digital. Even with the advent and evolution of haptic technologies in this digital field, which still endorse modes and actions of touching similar in kind or degree to those of analogue ones (i.e. pressure sensitive
touch screens), the existing digital discourse often does not adequately accommodate for or consider the unique specificities and nuances peculiar to analogue machines and their embodiment. My reflections and propositions in this chapter are but a small step towards a more comprehensive and extensive body of research in this field that I hope to pursue in the future, resulting in the addition of another position and narrative widening the current scope for surveying the myriad identities and nuances of technology.

If we are to recognise technology more fully for what it is we must think more obliquely. Likewise for narratives of repetition in Chapter three V U L / \ / U S, whose propositions on technical rhythm, as well as memory and return, seek to distance themselves from the commonly associated manifestations of a rigidly mechanical tempo and temporality, and the circular negativity of trauma, respectively.

Through this, actions that find themselves bracketed within the same seemingly relentless repetition that superficially defines the cutting of my lino blocks can be transformed by the nuance of an embodied perspective; repositioning both the site and its process within an accumulative flowing trajectory that recognises in this ‘automatic’ procedure the flow and uniqueness of gait that we come to expect from actions Leroi-Gourhan (1993) defines as more humanly creative in their form, such as walking.

These same revisions of rhythm and repetition can also be applied to the larger temporality of the lino block’s production; contributing to printmaking’s discourse on repetition to that of Deleuze’s (1994) theory of time travel. With the block being the primary, and virtually exclusive, site of activity for the process’
duration, the possibility of re-visitation and return are subverted by a ground that is continually cut from itself and its history. The becomings of the print, block and myself all independent but interconnected, our trajectories joined and severed at one time or another. A concept that perhaps suggests a reshaping of practice’s temporality that is formed by a dense, deep, interlocking topology rather than the standard linear timeline that neatly segregates.

Part of this temporal topology and the complexity of its narratives of return also rests within the subject of the trace, and its seductive and comforting illusion of capturing time with any fixity and offering the possibility of return. By examining the individual material evolutions of the block and print, any reassuring sense of stasis is eliminated. Even should a mark show greater material signs resisting age – such as Goldin’s (1984) photograph exampled in the chapter – the splicing of these objects through the times and places of their presentation continue to evolve and produce accumulative change and cultural, historical, and conceptual renewal.

This is not to say that the notion or possibility of return should be entirely dismissed, instead it is rather a matter of adjusting our understanding of its directionality that perhaps render that terminology uncomfortable and unlikely. A site, in whatever form it may be, automatically contains the potential for return. Every day that I cut my block I returned to its approximate location, however both mine and the block’s materiality and temporality would continue to alter through and outside of our mutual process of becoming. We were each in the same place, so to speak, but we were not the same, time after time.
Through analysing my own experiences of recollection directly through, or as the result of various factors in my embodied printmaking practice, it became evident that though repetition both facilitated and denied the possibility of return through memory, it was anything but straightforward (as only the retrospectivity of memory can be). Though the cuts in the block qualified as channels for the transmission of memory, the images they exhumed were never of various other cuts across the temporal divide of past projects. It would seem that although I possessed an ability to embody the process of cutting, the fact of not physically accumulating the cuts within my own body as object and event drastically altered my ability to identify them at this level of memory. The irretention was exacerbated by other hindering features of repetition, such as the cuts’ large quantity, as well as the similarity of their visual appearance and mode of production which mentally blended every cut into the one before it, reducing each to such a degree that as a group they failed to make an individual impression on my limbic system, despite doing so amply within the flesh of the block. Alternatively, through the repetition of a highly similar working studio set-up established at each project, the general equivalence of their environmental features in fact appeared here to collude, creating periods of déjà vu; temporally, geographically, and sensorially compressing experiences and impressions of my Australia- and Scottish- based practices momentarily.

Recollection can be repetitious, as the circuitous narratives of the opening and reopening of the wound tend to demonstrate throughout this chapter. But intensely repetitious processes themselves – like linocutting – do not necessarily
become sites which invite recollection of that repetition. And even as recollection does occur, its repetitions are not static but widely accumulative.

In Chapter four V A C / \ / S, this vein of potentiality and difference moves toward narratives of the void and translation, in the tracing and transferral of the imagery of block one onto block two – a process of trade, dialogue, and mediation. Both the void and the process of translation orbit realms of forgetfulness and connection as they are continually forced to renegotiate the relation between things and states.

Translation, as it first manifests in the production of block one, does so on the premise of transforming the photographic source material into the lines and marks relief printmaking surfaces require to support an image. But translation is not only a matter of language, if at all; and over the course of the production of block two the influences and implications of space and time within this process illuminate the stake of chronology.

In printmaking, we spend a great deal of time producing images through repetitive action; most commonly, and simply, through the multiple of the print via its matrix. But when one turns the tables, repeating the process of creating the initial matrix (and thereby doubling that object), the concern and focus soon shifts from reading the image as image, to image as action. When a viewer looks at an image, though they can usually pinpoint and address the individual marks within it, these remain a relatively compressed holistic collection that direct their gaze towards the overall forms the image is representing or indicating. And though they played out as a linear event, like the frames we see in a film reel, these occurrences differ in that
they layer upon one another within one frame – the image (in this case, my block). In order to reproduce the image, I must therefore deduce the order of these marks; clues that are not always materially expressed or easily identifiable.

Due to the process of tracking these traces there occurred a subtle but dramatic shift of control, as the role of editor that I had filled for the drawing up of block one was now assumed by the second block during the transferral and rendering of its design. Astonishingly, the process was demonstrating the full politic of translation. That of two individual texts’ interpretation of each other, rather than the replication of one into a new self-same form. A process demonstrated by the second block that I believed I was replicating, which evidently turned out to be replicating me and my role. Its own agency thus revealed, bearing new implications to the replication process and the meanings and permeable boundaries of equivalence and difference.

What remains fascinating about this overall experience of researching embodiment in the printmaking process is the evolution of the emphasis I had initially placed upon my own thoughts, feelings (physical and emotional), opinions, and behavioural interactions with the materials, tools, techniques, and methods. Yet upon reflection, I feel that in actual fact, in moving closer towards understanding my own embodiment within the process, I somehow came even closer to understanding the tools’, materials’ and techniques’ embodiment of the process and most of all, of me.

Perhaps it can be said that in the art of reproduction we sometimes fail to
remember that we are not the only ones duplicating, but might also, as the case may be, become duplicated in return.

Within this shifting realm that is all at once neither and either, the concept of liminality expands knowledge and its rigor. In the quest to know them better, if you move beyond the boundaries of the objects you are attempting to penetrate there is a sense of contrariness. For with liminality as a methodology you are not stepping back from the subject to enact the more empirical, objective remove and distance of the stereotypical academic researcher. Instead, you are stepping back to reposition yourself within the fray that surrounds your object of inquiry; and in doing so will spend all your time navigating every path around but that of the object itself – in constant awareness of its presence at your periphery, at your back, above your head, or somewhere there beneath your feet. And it is then that you understand the true shape of it. That the meaning of the world’s kingdoms was transformed the day we took to the skies, seas, and subterranean tunnels and caverns. That limits were, and are, a series of unexplored and untested potentials whose voyages of discovery expand and contract our seemingly finite worlds.

A liminal methodology then, is the conscious, active becoming of knowledge. Having now operated out of such a methodology myself, I can attest to its benefits (often surprising and unexpected) on research outcomes. This approach offers a means of exploring binaries and boundaries without risking their further enforcement; allowing diverse aspects and subjects to flow into and between one another with the freedom to contrast, contradict, and manifest inconsistently whilst
ultimately moving towards a more comprehensive image and understanding of that subject. In this way it arguably takes a holistic view of its subjects which in turn, in my opinion, are also considered to possess liminal qualities or characteristics themselves in order for the framework to remain productive and constructive.

In keeping with this methodology, all factors of the research (from the repeated printmaking process, the longhand letter writing, to the thesis writing) came to manifest as interpenetrative, interconnected components of the entire project which, when faced with the problem of presenting them as a cohesive navigable whole, required my solicitation of tactics and structures that hail from creative rather than strictly typical academic forms of writing.

This method consisted of the employment, and in some ways the exploration of a number of different registers of writing (including critical, reflexive, dialogical, anecdotal, analogical, metaphorical, etymological etc.). When used in concert, the quantity and unique qualities particular to each of the registers facilitated greater access into a number of ideas and issues within the research. The limit of one register often being but an invitation to another’s contribution; be that contradictory, subversive, sympathetic, or an entirely different take on a subject from an angle whose intricacies only that register can negotiate in the circumstances. Yet this multiplicity of registers does not only function as a form of baton relay, with one register handing the subject to the next for it to continue covering ground. No, their multitude also provide the opportunity to engage in dialogues and exchanges with one another; to interpret, translate or interrogate the findings or propositions of one register through the lens of the other, arguably allowing them to examine their
subject whilst tacitly evaluating the means by which that process or action is carried out.

The initial method of writing (and its consequent objects) for this project – the long-hand letters – functioned, upon reflection, as something akin to Francis Alÿs’ 1991 performance “The Collector”; whereby the artist, having constructed a small magnetic dog toy on a string, proceeded to walk the streets of Mexico City trailing it behind him. As he did so, various metallic objects attached themselves to the magnets of the toy dog (Tate, 2006). What this intervention demonstrates is a particular mode of information gathering that casts its net both wide, and simultaneously small. Wide, due to that fact that Alÿs could not possibly predict the structural type, form or function of the objects that would attach; and small, because, in spite of the former, it was the objective and therefore design of his apparatus to attract and collect items of a specifically metallic materiality. My method of letter writing operated similarly in that their purpose and design was arguably to document or capture (at the very least, aspects of) my embodiment of a process, or series of processes, experiences and events. However, like the magnetic dog, though prepared to capture a specific subject, there was no particular parameter for what or how something will manifest. Parallel to “The Collector” (1991), implicit in the letters’ content are snapshots of the trajectories of my embodied journey through the printmaking process – its unique and interconnected themes, subjects, and ideas; illuminating the subject not simply due to what attached itself, but when and where something did so (that included not just the context of my professional, but also my personal, life).
Looking deeper into this “not-knowing” (Jones, 2013) magnetism of the letters, and their interaction with the contexts, surroundings and events of the research project, the imagery via metaphor and analogy, that they captured/processed/re-presented also becomes significant to mention in passing as another frame from which to position and view the research and its outcomes.

The general body of imagery extracted from the letters employed in this thesis, and the imagery that has come from the thesis writing itself, circulates around a considerable number of biological/organic forms and processes relating to the elements of water, earth, air, and fire (in seas and oceans, earthy tunnels, fields, seeds, flowers, branches, bumblebees, skies, weather, smoke, moons, flesh and bone, and such). In addition, within this particular body of visual sources are images relating to the navigation of and through these entities and environments (as maps, walking, digging, crawling, swimming/floating, gazing etc.). As such, it would appear that reflections and expressions of my embodiment of printmaking processes are grounded in remembered or imagined experiences and interactions with the natural, biological world – its systems, processes, structures, rhythms, aesthetics, sounds, textures, sensations, and so on.

Yet, beyond this imagery is an even larger collection of metaphors and analogies that, whilst employing certain elements and aspects of the organic previously described, go further again with their subjects by adding a layer of the uncanny; echoing at times aspects of mythology, fairy tales, but most considerably, the gothic (and indeed also horror). The imagery in the letters included in the thesis (as well as those in the appendix), and those developed through the thesis itself, are
subject to eerie doublings, violence, voyeurism (of watching and being watched), physical and psychological vulnerabilities and much haunting. They are sites of heightened senses, of thresholds or places of transience and indeed liminality; populated by traces, residues, openings, closings, flesh (living and dead), bone, codes, cyphers, palimpsests, dreams, identity issues, flaying, veiling, shrouds, forgetting, remembering, portals, re-visitations, keys, maps, silence, digging, excavations, tunnelling and tunnels, murder, serial killers and killing, coffins, temporal slips, shifts, robots, machines, people-as-machines, mirroring and merging, bleeding, forgery, seeing, and unseeing. Taking in this extravagant imagery and combining it with the monochromatic palette that defined my practice project, its over/underwhelming greys, blacks and whites, arguably conjures up the gothic.

That the uncanny, or gothic, should have such a monopoly on this project’s imagery is not altogether unreasonable, nor is it entirely unexpected; being that the area (printmaking), and indeed some of the strategies, pertaining to my embodiment thereof, possesses themes and ideas that can be argued to resonate with the genre. By repeating the process (and by default, the object) of block one in the production of block two I am literally haunting, revisiting, and doubling. This also extends to the letters; in the repetition of their process through the documentation of block two following the documentation of block one, and as a site which I haunt and revisit every time I re-read and re-consume them. There is also the matter of the haunting of the sites, spaces, and processes of this project here in Scotland, which are re-inhabited, possessed, by my memories of my ‘other’ home and identity – Australia.
However, I would not surmise that the role and reasoning behind the presence of the uncanny and gothic within this project ends here. Rather, other factors – directly and indirectly – pertaining to this research process and its researcher are also likely contributors. Firstly, much of my philosophical (and visual) encounters with embodiment, particularly of technology, prior to this have been through popular culture (the genres of horror, gothic, science fiction, fantasy etc.) – its films, books, visual art and so forth, of which I have undoubtedly been influenced. Secondly, my initial proposal and research for this PhD took me down the road of examining several genres – the fairy tale, horror, and gothic (as well as some sojourns in mythology). It is indisputable that when this current research trajectory came about to follow, I was already carrying an accumulation of information and a mindset that naturally gravitated towards this kind of imagery. Thirdly, there is clearly another research project to explore following on from the gothic and its imagery as a manifestation and representation of the convergences and contradictions of biological and non-biological (i.e. technological/mechanical) entities.

In retrospect (as is so often the case with one’s comprehension and contextualisation of methodology in creative or practice research), I would contend that both the different registers of writing, as well as the different genres and styles of ‘imaging’ (such as the gothic) enabled me to intermingle with my subjects’ and themes’ complexities and attempt to seek out and recognise their forms in a wayfaring fashion that resists compulsions to rigidly map, frame and delineate. Instead my unique methodology uses the ‘elusive implicit’ as an investigative research tool (i.e. through the teasing out of meanings contained in etymologies and
cognates), and as a meaning-making tool for the reader, who is arguably provided their own space to participate in the thesis’ becoming of knowledge by inserting and superimposing their own accumulated experiences, embodiments and so forth in their interpretation and translations of the thesis and its research.

As such, it is a methodology that offers glimpses and flashes of clarity at the expense of a sustained categorical fixity and conclusion, though by no means lacking in precision. Here, I use the term along the same lines as Jan Svenungsson in his essay *Spying on Sparrows* (2012), where ‘precision’, whether visual or textual (being autonomous and/or cross-referential between the two), equates to “the tool which will bring us to [the] point of uncertainty and promise” (2012:21). Using Giorgio de Chirico’s novel *Hebdomeros* (1929) as reference, Svenungsson remarks on the author and artist’s own style of wayfaring in the text, which demands the same approach from its reader, as one argument or train of thought by De Chirico ends only to “overlap” another. This leads to a sense of inconclusiveness which elicits the reader to seek out or construct their own connections and meaning in and from the text (2012:20). That a text does not fully specify or explicitly elucidate all of its knowledge, as in *Hebdomeros*, argues Svenungsson, “does not matter, because if we don’t make this up for ourselves it will be meaningless anyway” (2012:21).19

This technique of an, almost, suspension of meaning that De Chirico (1929, as quoted by Svenungsson, 2012), and I would contend my own methodology, perform

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19 Michael Schwab’s proposal on the subject of meaning making and connectivity in artistic research is also worth bearing in mind here; “[...] artistic research [is] an activity that produces intelligible material whose initial lack of explanation within given contexts (such as ‘art’, ‘science’ etc.) is transformed through linkage procedures into identities that count as knowledge” (2012:240).
and apply is not limited to its outcomes, in this case, the thesis. Rather, it also, disputably, extends to the act of researching in and of creative practice through modes of what Marcus Steinweg (2012) refers to as “contingency” and “not-knowing” (a concept also examined by Rachel Jones, 2013). Along these same lines, Michael Schwab frames his art practice alternatively within a “proto-science” or “proto-art” approach, on account of his tendency to (with regards to descriptions of similar practices by Nigel Rolfe [ND]) “produce results and not conclusions”, thus leaving “unanswered questions” (2012:237).

A research methodology’s (as with my own liminal approach) refusal of a static or closed outcome, I would aver, does not necessarily lead to unanswered questions, as Schwab suggests. Instead, one might reframe the process through another system of response such as, answering a question with a question of sorts; that need not be circular in its dialogue but push the research further on. In light of these existing alternatives to the more stereotypical academic styles of research in and of creative practice\textsuperscript{20}, my liminal methodology contributes another set of research tools and framework propositions to the field. Its embodied perspective, durational\textsuperscript{21}, physically challenging, open-ended, accumulative, wayfaring, multi-

\textsuperscript{20} I use the term ‘creative’ practice to describe a mode of research here, whose application, like Schwab’s ‘artistic research’ aims towards “a particular way of doing and thinking that is not exclusive to ‘the arts’ and includes not only other artistic fields such as music or design, but any research where artistic considerations matter, even if such research has nothing to do with ‘art’ whatsoever” (2012:244).

\textsuperscript{21} By this I am not only referring to the considerably long passage of time of the printmaking practice project, but also the speed with which this thesis was produced, evidenced in my letter to Brian, Monday 11\textsuperscript{th} January 2016, where I note that I have not yet begun the process of writing it. The rapid duration or burst of critical and creative activity and energy that occurred did so as a kind of intellectual synapsing. The information, experiences, thoughts and ideas that had accumulated throughout the PhD prior to this were now released almost simultaneously upon beginning to write. This resulted in lightning-like connectivity, linking, and new sparks between subjects, which influenced the momentum of my writing and its structure.
register writing methods can be called on as a rigorous, generative procedure, helping other researchers to de-limit their subjects and processes to expose, elucidate, and pursue other avenues of knowledge and its production that require more flexible modes of encounter and enquiry.

The liminal methodology has contributed to my own knowledge, perhaps most significantly and impactfully, by shifting my identity and perspectives from practitioner to practice researcher\(^2^2\). The ways I approached the work, and what I identified that work to constitute changed. In one regard, this amounted to evolutions in the application and interpretation of already familiar processes. For example, the physical demands and challenges (as well as technical difficulties and considerable durations) I place upon my body, and their impacts, had never been considered beyond a tolerated symptom of a means to an end in the printmaking process. Through the repetition – and thereby durational extension – of the print project, and thus those bodily challenges and impacts, my change of focus gave me the opportunity to adjust and become aware of these aspects as a dialogue and tool with which I could gain access to and explore my subject. The methodology through its focus on embodiment seemed to activate each fibre and nuance of my practice; it arguably primed them for engagement. This outcome now provides me with a ready means to explore not only my own continued embodiment of various forms and

\(^{2^2}\) In a letter to Nicola, 7\(^{th}\) August 2015, I discuss and question the professional identity of my practice; ‘[...] I don’t really tend to exhibit my work [...] People are always saying, how can you be an artist and not show your work. But I never call myself an artist – I’m not sure that I connect with that work and its image. I confess to being an art student, or to being a creative type – but never artist. It does not sit well for me’. Never having felt particularly connected to the stereotypical expectations of an artist’s practice, it was only later on in the PhD, as the role of practice researcher and its context “clicked” with me that my previous practice history and its approaches (especially my tendency for theoretical research and creative critical writing in conjunction to it) came to make sense and more fully activate.
dimensions of practice but, conceivably, that of others; which I hope to do following the completion of this PhD.

Yet the potential value of these ‘activated’ events and occurrences, and my new awareness of them, was not only reliant on my embodiment, but also its record. The method of longhand letter writing both unearthed and preserved these and stimulated the ideas and themes that emerged through the dual embodiment of printmaking and writing (of both the letters and thesis). Positioning writing, initially via the letters, and printmaking as mutual creative research practices endorsed their dialogue and its productivity as they gelled, sparred, and navigated one another, frequently reflexively.

This slight adjustment to their relationship and interaction within the context of academic art practice research (where historically the two have often played out tensely through hierarchies and binaries) contributes to what Jonathan Miles describes as “a relationship that needs to be substantially invented” “which has little by established ground” (2012:220). One that, he goes on to say, necessitates the risking of “the formal limits” with which we prescribe theory by opening up a third space for the two to negotiate (2012:224-225). The distinctive method of writing this thesis, implementing elements of my embodiment of both practices, but equally notably for its use of multiple registers could be said to have created one such third space. One that arguably invites re-visitation.

23 It is an approach that brings to mind Michael Schwab’s statement that looks to a future of, perhaps, more nuanced dialogues between art and writing, art and theory; “If writing were to engage, question or transform art, it would offer a different practice, or perhaps more precisely, a differential practice, in which artistic practice can find itself. Writing would have to matter, which it could only do if it were affected by art. Rather than applying writing to art, writing would have to be developed from a practice.
Reaching ahead (in many ways resulting from the liminal methodology), all of the elements of the project combined with the complexity and volume of the documentation letters carry the possibility of their continued re-visitation and exploration from a wide range of angles, positions and propositions; extensively opening it up for ongoing research well into the future.

—and installed in this practice as delay, suspension or critique of an art that increasingly appears as power structure and institution” (2012:233).
Christina,

Today has grown into a wonderful, ever-expanding creative delight!

I managed to sort out the second stage of my paper prep, despite a few hurdles – which I have since readily rectified. And I met with Beth today, I’m sure I told you about her and Paul – my new supervisor since last summer. We had a spectacular Powell over the finished book. I presented him with my new idea to do a second one the same as the first and after an incredibly productive conversation and back & forth, we agreed that this is the way forward. He also brought up subjects like the end presentation of it all and the connection between each element of my research, such as these letters – which are so vital.

Thankfully these things have already been in my thoughts – such as:

- How do I want the prints displayed – opposite each other? beside one another? etc. (to which I knew after our discussion that on I want the blocks to resemble each other as much as possible. I want to put them side by side & have the audience experience a moment of mistaken identity to their identities – assuming them to be from the same block & before closer inspection. If I put them facing each other on opposite walls, they would speak to each other, they – like two people facing each other in discussion – would tell the viewer something is up – on top of their location speaking to adjoining. By having them beside each other, their simultaneity gives them the weight, strength and an element of critical awareness when you realise the investment that went into their production.

I’ve known for a while that I want the letters to be a part of this presentation – whether physically or in a book or digital form for viewing (all elements hard). To put these prints in a book would diminish them. To view them in the flesh is to understand them and their presence more fully. But the letters are the issue – how to present them, how to go about including them as an equal in this work, this process.
For a time I have considered – in fact planned – to reproduce
them on line, block after editing them a few times.
But today, in Gordon and I made our way through my
proposal it soon became apparent that I wanted to
approach the letter and their presentation on their own way.

I told Gordon I wanted to reproduce them in a way, by a
means, and space to the way they’ve been made here now.
And that is when hit us – to transcribe them all. But
not on one would image; I will copy them as drawings,
recreating the letters (misspellings, stray, scratchings out)
exact as they are here. The only other question is into
what (paper, wall?) and with what (pencil?) and
at what scale?

They will certainly form part of the thesis – which we
also discussed. On Christmas, it was such fun – I feel
alive with this project. It’s sense is on the tip of my tongue.

I feel I am coming closer to recognizing it like some
amazing puzzle through the gauzy labyrinth!

I told Gordon I wanted my thesis to speak to my practice – to
be a full part of it, to add to the richness and character
of it. So I wanted to find ways of breaking the rigid
system we are under on practice led PhD’s in an inappropriate
theoretically based world of academia. Gordon mentioned a
few different things he’d seen in art his books, like maps
with leger and paper folding, but something more up
about inter-leaving books and I just knew that it was a
perfect idea. Two books – whose pages overlap together. To be
sure it may drive my or examine every, but it speaks
to the whole project, to symbols, multiples, labour, time,
either, or etc. I am not sure how I shall order & organize it,
but my letters will be some part of it. I even suggested to
Gordon about doing some more formal intellectual & philosophical.
Style letter on part of my chapter – but we shall see. All this is bound to change in some way as I go along, but it is a start to an end for sure. Not being one to stand on ceremony I went right to the art shop after our talk and bought the time for the second block. I’ve cut it to size (obviously slightly different which is a bit annoying) and checked it against the original which appears to be fine. Though the photocop of the original block is drawing is a bit off scale, so I’ll have to bring my laptop in tomorrow and see about making that work.

I plan to have the whole second block complete by the end of December. Then it will be on to the letter their drawings and analysis for the thesis.

Yes, today has been a good day!

Have you muchly,

P.S. I’m really interested to do the letter as drawings – it will be so interesting a different way of doing them in that way as opposed to reading & transcribing them as words.

Though with all my spelling mistakes & broken turns of thought it will be an embarrassing men to encounter second time around!!! 😊
As this letter to Christina (24th August 2015) demonstrates, the individual and collective relationships and dialogues between the blocks and prints (and letters), and their possibilities for presentation were evidently an early subject for consideration. With so many components available come so many possible combinations and states of play; the breadth and depth of which could not hope to fit within one curation/exhibition. In order to display and engage with this project’s and research’s full complexity it requires multiple exhibition curations (or potentially events) and multiple contexts and viewings beyond this PhD, potentially in a Post Doctorate capacity; each based on different elements, themes and ideas generated within and through this body of work, not to mention that produced from its further, future studies.

The entire collection of objects/artefacts in their current state connected to this project at my disposal amounts to two complete inked blocks of repeated design (and equally importantly, repeated processes of production), each with their own suite of highly unique proofs and editioned prints; the printed and traced photographic computer images used to draw up the first block, as well as the photocopy of that first block’s finished drawn surface (complete with pen marks from tracing its design onto the second block); one swatch sample block (having been inked and cleaned); a suite of digital photographs documenting the progress of each of the blocks’ surfaces; and a large collection of longhand-written letters in several

24 Along with an earlier letter to Freya, 18th August 2015, in which I reflect on the second block and its inevitable presentation with the first; ‘I have my “control” project, now I need another to get the dialogue going, another project that questions, contradicts or supports it any which way. [...] Even now I cannot imagine showing or hanging one without the other. If I did not it would seem a half finished sentence – though to an observer it may appear more like I’d said the same thing twice.’
notebooks; as well as a mirror collection of those same longhand-written letters reproduced as drawings\textsuperscript{25}.

One possible option for display carries on from their first exhibition, whereby the two blocks would be shown together but in different physical states. One being cleanly inked (as shown in its December 2017 exhibition, Edinburgh College of Art; see Chapter three: V U L /\ U S for E X H / B \ T I O N section), whilst the other is presented in its disorienting stained condition, its surface wiped clean of ink – and cleared of some of its most obvious avenues of reference to its counterpart – stretching their mutual relation of equivalence, and exploring the material and symbolic natures of becoming. Another potential exhibition could be founded on the diversity of the proofs, and the contrived uniformity of the selected prints as edition; problematising the process and its engendering of repetition and difference, as well as the notions of copying and its objects or outcomes.

Further consideration might also be given to the (temporarily side-lined) digital photographs that document the evolving surface of the blocks through their sequencing and animation in order to produce a film which examines the passage of time. This proposition also opens itself out to the inclusion of the longhand-written letters, which, in conjunction with (or interspersed through) the film, create a dialogue with the multiplicity of time through the embodiment of different media and indeed their record of it, for example.

Pertaining to the longhand-written letters and their drawing doubles, a

\textsuperscript{25} These were initially to perform as a third part within the thesis, but I decided to put them to one side as it would have exceeded the scope of the project.
document or installation is most likely to be conceived. Not to mention a further period of study on their subject and its themes which would potentially look to produce another chapter, as it were, to this existing body of research. In fact, in all likelihood (time and finance dependent), I would expect each presentation of work(s) to perhaps coincide with another burst of interrogative, investigative, creative writing to initiate/stimulate, contribute to, be in dialogue with, participate in, reflect on etc. that curation. This may take the form of my own personal records (to examine at a later date); shorter publications (as in journal articles or essays); or ultimately, an artist book (or series of) whose structural design and frameworks of interaction with the reader reflect and provoke dialogues with the text’s content and propositions.

For now, however, these ideas reside like letters in bottles bobbing upon the shifting seas of ‘if’ and ‘when’, awaiting my return or, to be washed upon a shore and into another’s hands which may answer the call. No research project is an island, after all.

Every one of these subjects and ideas that I have explored within this thesis are a long way from being fully comprehended and represented, and so long as they continue to evolve, they never will be. With new frameworks of inquiry that look to liminality as a powerful research method and mode of knowledge production, creative researchers might begin to move closer to inclusive, alternate, and divergent narratives, arguments, and information that re-use the existing limits in new ways to positively open up critiques, analyses and discourse within printmaking’s ever evolving identity.
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FIGURES

[Figure one] Lindsay, A. (2017). Tess Barnard (2014-2015) Block one. VanSon rubber-based ink on cut linoleum, 63.5 x 127.5 cm.

[Figure two] Lindsay, A. (2017). Tess Barnard (2015) Print (one) /. VanSon rubber-based ink bleed print on Somerset Satin 300gsm paper, 63 x 125.5 cm.

[Figure three] Lindsay, A. (2017). Tess Barnard (2015-2016) Block two. VanSon rubber-based ink on cut linoleum, 63.5 x 127.5 cm.

[Figure four] Lindsay, A. (2017) Tess Barnard (2016) Print (two) /. VanSon rubber-based ink bleed print on Somerset Satin 300gsm paper, 63 x 125.5 cm.


[Figure six] Yves Klein (ca. 1960) ANT 57 (Monique). 115 x 96cm. Available from: yveskleinarchives.org/works/works1_us.html [Accessed 10/07/2017].


[Figure nine] Barnard, T. (2017). S L / \ S H Exhibition (December 2017) at the Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom. Pictured: Block one (2014-2015) and Block two (2015-2016) on tables; Print (one) / (2015) and Print (two) \ (2016) framed on wall.


APPENDIX FIVE

All images within this appendix are courtesy of Anneleen Lindsay (2017) of Anneleen Lindsay Photography; with thanks.


SECONDARY BIBLIOGRAPHY


EXHIBITIONS


From Death to Death and Other Small Tales: Masterpieces from the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the D. Daskalopoulos Collection. Modern One (Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art). Edinburgh. 15 December 2012 – 8 September 2013.


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PERFORMANCES


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Masoni, L. (26/10/2012) Fairytales and Positive Psychology. The Scottish and Celtic Studies Department, University of Edinburgh.


CONFERENCES


APPENDIX
ONE:

TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT
Following a period of experimental practice exploring a variety of media and techniques it comes to the attention of myself and my supervisors that in spite of their diversity each element of practice contains a recurring theme and focus on pattern and texture in imagery, actions, tools and methods. Through this realization it is established that my interest for the research project lies within making processes rather than simply the objects that result from them. This leads to a decision to narrow the wide scope of tools and materials used in order to allow me to explore a particular medium more deeply. The chosen medium takes the form of printmaking, specifically the linocut process. My long-term experience in this field and the knowledge accumulated from it is seen as a rich resource with much potential.

Having generally worked on figurative lino block designs in the past, it is decided best to distance this particular project from such a feature. Any narrative content potentially distracting the viewer from examining the block according to its modes of production as is my intention. According to this a loose brief is laid out to produce a lino block consisting of patterns and textures sourced from observations, personal photographs, books, or the internet, and so forth. Beginning, I come upon a large off-cut of lino, the last remaining from a large roll I have been working through over a period of several years. I decide not to cut it down into a more regular and traditional square of rectangle, and instead merely trim its uneven edges into a triangle to use
its entire space as my experimental block. The images sourced during this time, mainly from the internet, some from personal photographs, are converted on the computer to black and white, their contrast increased for smoother transferal and translation onto the block as drawings. These images are all printed out, more than are required. They are then arranged and selected through an accumulative process of trimming down, arranging and composing with other images. Similarities in the textures and forms depicted in the images are matched to corresponding edges of others. Each are then taped in place and slowly traced onto the block. The pencil drawings and guides are then redrawn in much detail with black felt tip pen over the top.

This whole process takes a lot longer than expected, and so upon my next meeting with my supervisors I have only managed to complete the drawing up phase of the process, without cutting the block as was initially planned. During the meeting I come to express my feelings about being disinclined to cut the block. This has not happened previously in all my years working in the medium. The drawing on its surface has come to stand as something of a complete state for me. However, the material the drawing rests on is subverted by this; particularly as my experience of linoleum has always consisted of its cutting. I am unnerved by this object and question how I can make print copies from an uncut block. This leads to an illumination of my own prejudices and expectations of the nature of copies and copying. In response to this reaction a task is set to challenge these personal opinions and ideas. The task consists of producing fifteen different replications of randomly selected areas of the drawn block using fifteen different processes and media.
Throughout I document with photographs and write reflective notes which are then drawn together in a report detailing each process and my experiences of them individually and collectively. Once this task is completed I am left feeling curiously compelled to start cutting the block.

MAY 2015 – FEBRUARY 2016

It is around this point that I begin to write letters regularly documenting the process, as well as recording its material progress through photographs (see CD in the back pocket of this thesis for Appendix three: PRODUCTION PHOTOS). Moving beyond documentation, longhand letter writing becomes as much a practice as my linocutting and printing. It seems to ricochet off, overlap and merge with the processes, experiences and materials it details. It is a place that these forms converse. As a form of documentation it takes on an altogether holistic style and approach; not limiting itself to the technical process of making, but including personal and private experiences, feelings and memories which become part of the conversation between all these elements, at times contributing to their translation. As I continue working between these two practices of writing and linocutting it is soon apparent that they are both relatively silent and solitary processes; and light begins to be thrown upon and between the two as they fall into comparison.
At the end of the first block’s cutting I make a small sample or swatch of lino comprising of textures from the original traced photocopies for ink testing before printing. The reasoning behind this being technical; having never carved or printed such fine detail I am not sure how the ink will behave. The first block is so large that even a test print, as this swatch is designed for, would have required immense organisation due to access needed to special facilities and equipment. The process of cutting a small swatch of lino to replicate elements of the first block is fascinating, peculiar, and perverse. My prints are always replications of their lino blocs, but I am not accustomed to replicating the matrix from which they come. The time and energy that goes into creating a block of this scale and detail is immense, so to make another (even as a small swatch) seems wasteful, superfluous and ridiculous.

My experience of cutting and printing this swatch causes me to suddenly feel a need to look deeper into the process of copying by copying that process again – recreating the initial triangular matrix from scratch – a process not usually reproduced due to the fact that the matrix is generally considered to provide the copies, leaving no need replicate it for what is essentially considered more of the same. The doubling of this process strikes me as ridiculous, over-the-top, pointless, and a waste of time and energy. All of these feelings, rather than dissuade me, instead increase my interest in pursuing a continuation of this project in this new and unexpected direction. I am also curious to see, at the time, in light of my interest in ritual and copying, what will come of the second procedure when following the same image, using the same tools, materials and techniques as the first block. I also decide
to continue pursuing the regular letter writing and daily photographs as my means of documentation – mirroring the production of the first block as closely as possible.

AUGUST 2015 – JANUARY 2016

The second block is quickly initiated with a piece of linoleum being sourced, and cut down to the same shape and size as its predecessor. The photocopied facsimile of Block one’s drawn surface is applied to the second block and traced out. This is then drawn over in much detail with black fine liner pens – a task that proves far more difficult a second time around due to the difficulties of transferring clear and accurate information from the photocopy. The second block is then cut at a much faster rate than the first. The attentive photographic documentation that occurred during Block one’s production is vastly reduced; occurring only once a design section has reached completion, rather than recording my daily progress through it. The letter writing at this point becomes a greater focus and emphasis of recording the events and so forth. Once the block is cut similar printing arrangements to the first are made; however, this time the printing is not a success in the traditional sense, with only one clear, acceptable impression achieved during the process. This result is extremely unnerving and frustrating, but due to financial and temporal constraints I must accept the outcome. I then progress onwards towards the thesis and its development.