LIVED SPACES OF REPRESENTATION:

THIRDSPACE AND JANETTE TURNER HOSPITAL'S POLITICAL PRAXIS OF POSTMODERNISM

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ERRATA

Page	
5	line 10, delete 'labeled', insert 'labelled'
11	line 18, delete 'indicates', insert 'indicate'
12	line 10, delete 'labeled', insert 'labelled'
12	line 19, insert 'its' before 'dependency'
12	line 20, delete '-' from 're-appraises'
16	lines 3-4, insert 'the' and 'their' to read 'the intertextuality of photographs and their implications'
18	line 18, delete 'are', insert 'is'
20	line 11, delete 'by'
31	line 20, delete 'dialogues'
32	note that first indented quotation should be double-spaced
32	line 24, delete 'and'
34	delete quotation marks around indented quotation
85	line 7, delete apostrophe to read 'its'
104	line 20, delete 'are', insert 'is'
108	line 4, delete 'While', to begin sentence as 'On the surface…'
108	line 7, insert 'However' to begin sentence as 'However, the narrator…'
126	line 16, quotation marks around 'external' not 'external silence'
138	line 22, delete 'lives and deaths', insert 'life and death'
144	line 23, delete 'dialogue', insert 'engage'
177	line 17, replace sentence beginning 'Yet, ironically…' with 'Yet, this text implicitly points to the captivating nature of modernity and its institutions, even for those individuals and communities who seek to evade them.'
180	line 24, insert 'a' to read 'a Hindu temple'
181	line 16, delete 'Apocypha', insert 'Apocrypha'
201	line 13, insert 'it is' before 'for Jess'
201	line 23, insert 'his' before 'violence'
201	line 25, delete 'Yet', sentence to begin 'For the most part…'
202	line 9, delete 'bastion of unity', insert 'traditional institution of apparently unified strength'
202	line 10, delete 'sought', insert 'seek'
203	line 6, delete 'unraveled', insert 'unravelled'
203	line 10, delete 'the elusiveness of'
204	lines 8-9, insert 'a' to read 'inherently maintain a balance of power'

ABSTRACT

My thesis sets out to self-reflexively acknowledge the vulnerability and ambiguity of a number of intertwined human constructs and engage this understanding with a critical analysis of four of Janette Turner Hospital's texts. My particular notion of postmodernism is built on a framework which includes challenges to modernist ideals of universal truth and human conceptualisations of spatiality. This framework of postmodernism points to human understandings of subjectivity and its vulnerability to distortions such as occur through silence, absence and violence. Likewise it highlights the possible multiple readings of the past, and human morality and ethics in relation to that past. My particular view of postmodernism with which I engage in this thesis points to the prevalence of paradox and the use of irony, as well as the problematisation of representation — its authenticity, originality and authority — and the problematisation of memory and its veracity.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis being available for loan and photocopying.

Heather Thoday

2004

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The intention of this thesis is to set up a political postmodernist framework within which to articulate lived spaces of representation in Janette Turner Hospital's five latest novels. I begin with some statements about postmodernism that explicate the framework through which I engage with the novels. It is not my intention to begin my introduction with an exhaustive and evaluative re-statement of the multifarious beast that is postmodernism, since the reader may refer to those texts with which I critically converse in this thesis (such as Edward Soja's *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* and Linda Hutcheon's texts *A Poetics of Postmodernism* and *The Politics of Postmodernism*,) as well as many other diverse volumes which describe and analyse the historical development and implications of postmodernism. However, I do begin by introducing some of the broad parameters of my postmodernist framework.

The particular understanding of postmodernism which underpins my thesis acknowledges that contemporary discourses have been circulated in intense debate by theorists in fields such as architecture, visual arts, geography, and literary studies, as well as in popular texts and contexts. These discourses have been prevalent during the previous twenty years, as they struggle with postmodernism's unique positioning simultaneously in theory and practice. Most agree that the notion of postmodernism is dependent on a construct of modernism as a coherent beginning point from which to analyse, oppose or build. Ironically, this binary (and arguably, modernist) logic is overlooked by many theorists. While some set up postmodernism as a temporal term following and in opposition to modernism, others dismiss postmodernism as *laissez-faire* aesthetic practice. Both of these positions overlook the potential that is inherent

in postmodernism. Soja advocates a 'both/and also' logic rather than an 'either/or' binary; I agree with his view and adapt it (5). Such a perspective provides a myriad of alternatives and a space for innovative and crucial development. While most theorists agree that postmodernism has some roots in the 1960s' challenge to the grand narratives of the Enlightenment project, the contemporary postmodernism that has emerged is self-reflexively implicated in the very conditions that it critiques, so that it investigates yet paradoxically appears to dismantle its own conclusions. My understanding of postmodernism values its ability as a political tool to question the basis of Western certainty (particularly in relation to notions of subjectivity, representation and history) and appreciates its challenges to, and foregrounding of, human constructs which uphold humanist principles of dominance.

My intended focus is five of Turner Hospital's novels, published from 1985 to 2003 (*Borderline, Charades, The Last Magician, Oyster* and *Due Preparations for the Plague*). I discuss these novels in relation to their intersections with a selection of their contemporary postmodern discourses, particularly spatiality, subjectivity, representation, memory, and spirituality. I have selected Turner Hospital's latest novels as I demonstrate that these enter most actively into dialogue with the contemporary postmodern discourses I intend to discuss. *Due Preparations for the Plague* (published in 2003) does resonate with focii in her earlier novels as they intersect with the range of contemporary postmodern discourses I have selected for analysis in this thesis. Arguably, the weight of my discussion resides in the first four of the five novels, so that discussion of the recently published *Due Preparations for the Plague* is more limited. There is not yet a significant body of critical work dedicated to this latest novel, yet I propose my discussion of it in my fourth chapter is one of multiple possible beginning points. While my chapter headings,

'Transgressions of Spatial Practice: Border Crossings', 'Representations of Space: Through the Frame of Photography', 'Spaces of Representation: Memory and Identity' and 'Lived Spaces of Representation: Realising Spiritualities' signal the distinct focus of each of my chapters, these discourses intersect and permeate my thesis as a whole.

I will introduce my work with some statements about postmodernism in relation to the contemporary discourses with which, I argue, Turner Hospital's work engages. These represent my understanding of postmodernism's self-reflexive acknowledgement of human constructs including notions of universal truth, human conceptualisations of space, subjectivity and the past, prevalence of parodox, use of irony, as well as postmodernism's problematisation of representation and memory.

Postmodernism foregrounds the human constructs that define and order the human condition. Rather than deny their existence and indeed their necessity, as is characteristic of modernist approaches, postmodernism incorporates (as signaled by the word modern encapsulated in the term postmodern) challenges and/or critiques humanist knowledges. Thus, whilst postmodernism does not deny that other spaces and times exist, it recognises that any accounts of these are texts, necessarily present to the reader/viewer through multiple filters. As Hutcheon repeatedly foregrounds in her work in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 'The local, the limited, the temporary, the provisional are what define postmodern "truth"' (43).

Universal truths are *not denied* in the postmodernist framework that I propose; rather, they are *critiqued.* Postmodernism is marked by a deliberate refusal to resolve the inevitable contradictions which, it asserts, are smothered in attempts to construct universal truths or totalising narratives as described by Jean-François Lyotard in his hallmark work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. In keeping with a

number of theorists of postmodernism, I use the term 'totalise' as I do 'problematise', 'theorise' and 'contextualise' to point to the 'in-process' nature of postmodernism, as Hutcheon describes it in her introduction to *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (xi). Such terms are intrinsic to the vocabulary of contemporary theoretical analysis but it is worthwhile to point to their heritage and particular usefulness — in keeping with postmodernist self-reflexivity. Challenges to universal truths or interrogations to the notion of 'consensus', as Hutcheon notes, inevitably lead to the dismantling of borders such as the 'familiar humanist separation of art and life (or human imagination and order *versus* chaos and disorder)' (7). The chapter in this thesis which looks at the problematisation of representation through photography directly engages with the notion that photographs (and other works of representation) are human constructs and cannot be accepted as neutral (devoid of institutional influence), truthful (whose truth?) representations. Rather, I argue that postmodern photographs and other texts (such as the novels of, and the visual and narrative texts within the novels of, Turner Hospital) are 'self-consciously shown to be highly filtered by the discursive and aesthetic assumptions of the camera-holder [or narrator]' (*Poetics* 7). This thesis seeks to demonstrate that Turner Hospital's narrators' and characters' unsuccessful attempts to provide fixed representations of truth exemplify the operations of Thirdspace at play. My thesis discusses the means by which Turner Hospital's texts play with the apparent postmodernist revelations that truth, history and subjectivity are indeed human constructs that are inherently flawed and mobile.

My framework for postmodernism in this thesis seeks to highlight postmodernism's penchant to dismantle the existence of modernist, hierarchically constructed notions of the human condition. This is achieved by critiquing centrist, universal systems, and thus enacting spaces for the 'ex-centric' (*Poetics* 41) or

marginalised (as described in a modernist context) voices to be heard. My framework poses self-reflexively acknowledged other versions of truth and subjectivity. This notion of postmodernism advocates multiple border crossings that point to, and disassemble, the falsehoods of notions of constructed truth that have inherently supported boundaries or the rigid organisation of systematic order. My work engages with Hutcheon's texts as they celebrate this typically postmodern, paradoxical exploitation and destablisation of modernist notions of the coherent subject (*cf.* *Poetics* 46). The urge to critique that is characteristic of postmodernism's endeavour facilitates destablisation and the border crossings within a space that opens up a possible site of operations that Soja has labelled 'Thirdspace'. (It is not my intention to equate Hutcheon's notion of paradox with Soja's theory of Thirdspace, yet Hutcheon's work illuminates the existence of the Firstspace and Secondspace necessary for the operations of a real-and-imagined space or Thirdspace.) The operations of Thirdspace in dialogue with Turner Hospital's texts are introduced here and extensively outlined in my chapter 'Transgressions of Spatial Practice: Border Crossings', as well as permeating the thesis as a whole.

According to Soja, Thirdspace is the creative combination, of and beyond, Firstspace and Secondspace where Firstspace is the real, tangible material which humans receive and Secondspace is the imagined, or perceived real, integrated with human intellect. While the separation of Firstspace, or 'spatial practice', and Secondspace, or 'representations of space' (66-7), is acknowledged to be artificial and arbitrary, their simultaneous existence in creative combination is named as 'Thirdspace'. Thirdspace is concurrently real-and-imagined, accessible through lived experience. Soja describes Thirdspace as the 'spaces of representation' (67) created by the 'Other' — a space that is always already coexistent within any two binary

terms so that it is 'simultaneously real and imagined and more (both and also...)' (11). Such a space is innovative, dynamic, and subject to context. Soja's implicit and explicit notions of postmodernism are intrinsic to his concept of Thirdspace, and are in agreement with the understanding of postmodernism that underpins my thesis. That is, that a positive reading of postmodernism depicts history and subjectivity as a multiplicity of images and experiences which enables open recognition of and acceptance of differences. Thus, postmodernism radicalises the human imagination so that differences, ambiguities, and non-systematic realities can be recognised and incorporated within lived experience.

My thesis explores the means by which notions of spaces of representation, both implicitly and explicitly, permeate and intersect with Turner Hospital's five novels. I note that space is intricately linked with a constant definition and redefinition of its borders and that it is this continual remodeling of borders which shapes and defines postmodern subjectivity. Anthony Elliott points to and names the space where crossings of borders are facilitated 'as a creative realm ...[located at] that point of division between self and other [and other modernist binaries]' (3). This transitory, spatialised subjectivity undermines modernist notions of a 'knowable' subject, yet ironically relies on such notions upon which to build knowledges of alternative subjectivities.

Postmodernist culture (and its expressions through the texts of photography, other visual representations and narrative) is typically self-reflexive in its awareness that it cannot escape the human constructs by which it is informed and shaped. Postmodernist texts thus act in such a way that they problematise from within, simultaneously attempting to incorporate, combine and creatively revise the binary oppositions that they seek to transcend. There is ironic recognition that while

postmodernism challenges purported modernist hallmarks, such as the autonomy of the individual, postmodernism is simultaneously dependent on modernism's so-called oppositions for its own definition. As Hutcheon notes, postmodernism

> raises questions about (or renders problematic) the common-sensical and the 'natural'. But it never offers answers that are anything but provisional and contextually determined (and limited). (*Poetics* xi)

Postmodernist culture problematises modernist notions such as universal truths by pointing to incongruities with an apparent intention and resulting effect being to unravel or dismantle, yet it does not entirely reject these modernist notions. For example, the binary oppositions of time/space and their equations with feminine/masculine are dismantled so that they are no longer consolingly fixed, yet their paradoxical dependence is recognised, foregrounded and subjected to a process of dissipation of power through fragmentation in fluid, dynamic spaces of representation. At least one of the explicit intentions of postmodernism is not simply or mistakenly to form another totalising narrative. Thus its activation in the spatial realm ensures that it is not stagnant but dynamic, restlessly questioning and unresolved. This is the space wherein the notion of Soja's Thirdspace operates.

Subjectivity is intensely critiqued within postmodernism, since it is revealed to be a complex site of discursive operations. As Hutcheon notes,

> the perceiving subject [that is, any subject who interacts with the text, including the reader] is no longer assumed to be a coherent, meaning-generating entity. Narrators in fiction become either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate... or resolutely provisional and limited — often undermining their own seeming omniscience. (*Poetics* 11)

Further, the notion of the unity, coherence, and indeed the 'centredness' of the subject become problematic. The subject is rendered as 'decentred' so that differences and

margins are simultaneously incorporated and critiqued. Such notions of subjectivity further contest binary concepts built on a self/other model, so that boundaries that signal definition of gender, sexuality, ethnocentricity and other measures of identity become multi-directional sites of contestation and disassembly. I argue that Turner Hospital's texts likewise celebrate and explore the intricate interrelationships of centre and margin, where the subject is decentred and destructured in a space that is described in this thesis as 'Thirdspace'. Such a space is characterised by fantasy and dreams that enable the re-membering and reincorporation of that which has been marginalised. It is a fluid space of a subject-in-process.

My thesis explores subjectivity as it is intensely critiqued in and by Turner Hospital's texts. Subjectivity is multifariously viewed in my thesis through the lenses of space, representation, memory and spirituality. I argue that Turner Hospital's texts critique the complexities of the notion of postmodernist subjectivity through the above lenses by numerous, interrelated means. This includes the multiple, complicit interrelationships of characters with narrators in the novels. Narrators are not disinterested. Rather they are inevitably complicit with the narrative, so that they are as much subject to and subjects of, the narrative texts. Further, the novels are saturated with spaces within the texts where characters' identities merge and intermingle with other characters as well as with physical spaces such as the swimming hole in *The Last Magician* where 'shapes undid themselves' (189) and 'everything connects with everything else' (192).

Turner Hospital's texts are loudly multivocal in advocating for the silent, absent or disappeared ones. I note that these texts include women who are silent, who have been silenced or who are 'bruised', and I discuss the means by which many of these characters are empowered, as borders are crossed and the operations of

Thirdspace enable them to construct and reconstruct their identity. Through positing the subject of representation as absent or silent or outside the modernist parameters of heroic subjectivity, Turner Hospital's characters operate in Thirdspace, a simultaneously real and textualised space of operations. Turner Hospital's texts highlight the inherent impossibilities of reaching the referent across time and space — since access to the past is textualised. Such characters are typically women who have experienced sexual, emotional and psychological trauma, and, within a seamless modernist text, would have perhaps remained nameless and faceless with an unknown past and future or at least have slipped unnoticed into the invisible fissures. Such a seam or gap is represented by the space of the 'quarry', described by Turner Hospital's narrator, Lucy, as 'another world, a nether world, invisible, nestled inside the cracks of the official world like a hand inside a glove' (*Magician* 19).

In seeking to discover or recover these subjects, other characters and narrators stumble across or reveal the others that paradoxically and intrinsically comprise their own subjectivities. Ironically, in terms of the plot, these discoveries are often apparently more fruitful than the recovery of the silent or lost identities. Further, the texts illuminate the multi-layered complicity of individual and collective characters/narrators in repressing the silence(d) and absent bodies and voices in each narrative. In addition, I explore Turner Hospital's recurring motifs of fear, violence, silence and appropriation across her work and their association with border crossings and subjectivity. My thesis explores the ways that Turner Hospital's texts reveal that 'loss is a kind of permanent presence' (*Magician* 165). Postmodernism recognises this as a given of the contemporary era, and at the same time celebrates and utilises this notion of absence/presence in a positive sense. Turner Hospital's texts particularly link these to the violence and trauma experienced by those subjects who have been

labeled as 'other' by modernism, such as victims of the Jewish Holocaust, Indigenous peoples, the homeless, and women. Yet her texts do not label their experiences or concerns as equal but rather as individual (see Hutcheon's notion of 'ex-centric'). My thesis delineates the positive and political ramifications that may occur when self-identity successfully incorporates loss and trauma.

Soja equates the operations of Thirdspace, which lead to a 're-visioning' of differences, with the discourse of cultural politics that empowers minorities to resist through a recognition of the multi-faceted nature of difference (96). My argument notes that postmodernism's penchant to question and thereby problematise modernist systems of organisation, particularly based on the human constructs of binary oppositions, provides for the operations of a Thirdspace subjectivity which resembles Hutcheon's notion of 'ex-centric' subjectivity (*Poetics* 41). 'Ex-centric' subjectivity arises when the margins or unwanted fragments of society, that do not fit into the desirable criteria or central human constructs, become recognised and reinstated. Through the political operations of Thirdspace in Turner Hospital's postmodern texts, whereby borders that seek to uphold power are transgressed, these 'undesirables' can be reincorporated into the multifarious social fabric of these texts.

In Turner Hospital's texts this displacement of the self manifests as social justice concerns, fuelled by multiple individual quests for self-empowerment, yet at the same time is evident in community contexts. As individuals seek self-identification, they confront, recognise and embody the other in myriad ways in her texts, indicating that the frequency and possibility of meeting radical difference is unavoidable in contemporary culture and requires acknowledgement and incorporation. Turner Hospital advocates a revisioning and reincorporation of a space which she labels the 'quarry' in *The Last Magician*, or as David Callahan names it,

the 'zone to which we attempt to banish difference' ('Becoming Different' 24). Her texts demonstrate, advocate for and celebrate the interconnectedness of the self and the other, with implications for all modernist (that is, humanly constructed) binaries.

Postmodernism reappraises subjectivity in relation to its fallibility as a human construct. Through my arguments I highlight notions of the closed boundary of the modernist self that are reevaluated through Turner Hospital's texts by various means, perhaps most remarkably through experiences of vertigo. This concept of the self as a closed entity is explored in Turner Hospital's texts in such a way that they are arguably exemplary manifestations of the particular operations of postmodernism, when linked with postmodernist approaches to notions of spatiality, memory, representation, subjectivity, and spirituality. Vertigo can be described as a breakdown of the internal/external binary that results in a blurring of borders with a major effect being a disruptive impact on the organisation of subjectivity. Soja does not explicitly refer to 'vertigo' but his notion of 'thirding-as-othering' could incorporate the experience of vertigo as a personal manifestation of the process of thirding. The instability of the self is also explored in the context of the experience of trauma and its reverberations in my chapter 'Spaces of Representation: Memory and Identity'. The prevalence of experiences of vertigo in Turner Hospital's texts indicates its usefulness to her narratives and exemplifies Soja's 'thirding-as-othering' operations. This has a significant bearing on the postmodern subjectivity that is particular to Turner Hospital's concepts of subjectivity and textuality. In a similar way, the merging of characters' identities with identities of multiple others highlights the ability of the operations of Thirdspace to provide spaces of representation that comprise both (self/other) binaries and third dimensions, with the possibility of further 'thirdings' represented by multiple contradictions of subjectivity.

Turner Hospital's texts further explore the binary opposition of centre and margin in such a way that the notion of Thirdspace can also be clearly seen to be operative. My thesis investigates the means by which her texts embrace the ambiguity and ambivalence of being and recognise the peripheries or margins as they dismantle and deprivilege the centre. Indeed, when Soja comments on the work of the socio-cultural critic, bell hooks, who positions herself as an African-American marginal subject, his remarks can be seen as relevant to Turner Hospital's texts. These texts also demonstrate the 'radical openness of Thirdspace' to deal with 'strategic flexibility' and 'direct relevance' to contemporary political issues (Soja 12-3). As I have noted, Turner Hospital's texts are saturated with what Hutcheon has labelled as 'ex-centric' (*Poetics* 67). In Turner Hospital's narratives 'ex-centric' characters and narrators reside primarily but not statically in marginal positions from which they are continuously 'altering the focus of their perspective' (67). Such characters and narrators variously wrest with power/powerlessness, their spatial position, trauma, loss and gender in relation to subjectivity from their marginal spaces. I will demonstrate the means by which Turner Hospital utilises both visual and verbal texts in her novels to 'illuminate' the depths of the human condition (*Magician* 301-2), from a multiplicity of shifting perspectives, and thereby foreground the postmodern notion of the fluidity of meaning and dependency on context.

As postmodernism re-appraises historical truth, the constructed nature of truth and historicity does not deny the existence of history or describe historical veracity as doubtful but points to its fallible nature as a human construct. As Steven Connor states in his discussion of Hutcheon's work:

> works of fiction which reflect knowingly upon their status as fiction...expose the fictionality of history itself. These texts deny the possibility of a clearly sustainable distinction between history and fiction,

> by highlighting the fact that we can only ever know history through various forms of representation or narrative. (126-7)

The particular stance from which I view postmodernism's approach to history incorporates implications with regard to morality and ethics that correspondingly are addressed both implicitly and explicitly by Turner Hospital's texts. These are outlined in more detail in my thesis and are guided by the implications to which the operations of Thirdspace lead; that is, that the translation of knowledge into action, as a form of liberating praxis, is an extension of the effects of 'thirding' (Soja 22). This particular stance of the operations of Thirdspace marks it as politically responsive to deeply salient issues in the contemporary world arena, such as displacement, loss, terrorism and citizenship, especially in relation to operations of power.

My thesis also discusses the implications of postmodernism's tendency to fuel debate about the veracity and meaning of texts, including photographic texts, thereby facilitating the disruption of modernist interpretations. The chapter 'Representations of Space: Through the Frame of Photography' deals explicitly with this proclivity of postmodernism. An example is my challenge to Roland Barthes' statement that "'In every photograph there is the stupefying evidence of *this-is-what-happened and how*'" (author's italics) (qtd in Burgin 61). My thesis supports arguments such as that posed by Victor Burgin when he argues against such an 'ingenuous assumption' that the photograph mimetically manifests or encapsulates historical truth or actual presence (61-2). Within such approaches, history becomes a problematic entity. It cannot be accepted as unified and truthful for all subjects. Rather, postmodernist approaches acknowledge that the past is textualised. As Hutcheon reiterates in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 'we cannot know the past except through its texts: [yet, paradoxically] its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are *texts*'

(16). Turner Hospital's texts (both narrative and visual) repeatedly refer to the frustrating notion that representation cannot automatically reveal truth, and her texts utilise the play of visual and verbal texts, of labyrinths and riddles to reveal and constantly return to this enigma. The reader is drawn into the characters' and narrators' oft-repeated exclamation that their self-reflexive complicity in the texts of the past is not self-regulated, but is imposed. This point is ironically highlighted in *Charades* as Turner Hospital's character, the physicist Koenig, states, 'I have an old-fashioned craving for a simple narrative line' (189).

The view that this thesis takes is that reiterated by Hutcheon — 'the modern is ineluctably embedded in the postmodern...but the relationship is a complex one of consequence, difference, and dependence' (*Poetics* 38). Similarly, her statement can be paraphrased: the *past* is ineluctably embedded in the *present* but the relationship is complicated by consequence, difference, and dependence. While this statement is not intended to equate the past exclusively with modernism and the present with postmodernism, it does point to the co-existence of the past within the present (and modernism within postmodernism). My argument is that Turner Hospital's texts exemplify this notion of co-existence, in such a way that the operations of 'thirding-as-othering' are evident (*cf.* Soja 60-1). That is, not only are the two elements of past and present manifest, but the process of the blurring of their borders ensures that the operations of Thirdspace are also evident. For instance, while Turner Hospital's narrator in *Borderline*, Jean-Marc, appears uncannily to refer to Soja's 'both/and also' logic of Thirdspace as 'the very stuff of a curator's bag of magic' (131), my thesis points to the recurrence of explicit examples and implicit threads, to argue that Thirdspace is intrinsic to Turner Hospital's texts.

In a sense, as Elliott argues in *Subject to Ourselves* (3), postmodernism is an attempt by modernism to self-critique, so that both operate simultaneously and interactively in the contemporary order. My thesis agrees with Elliott's view that the project of postmodernism seeks to resolve the prevailing ambivalence inherent in the modernist dilemma whereby modernism is in the tenuous position of seeking to discard tradition while simultaneously attempting to establish stability. Thus postmodernist discourse concurrently inhabits border crossings, such as those of security/risk and opportunity/danger.

This paradox is characteristic of postmodernism, paradox being an element which is taken as a beginning point for two of Hutcheon's texts: *A Poetics of Postmodernism* and *The Politics of Postmodernism*. On her own admission, a reader (and indeed, an author or narrator) may be either 'delighted' or 'troubled' by paradoxes and 'shall be either seduced by their stimulating teasing or upset with their frustrating lack of resolution' (*Poetics* x). Hutcheon's texts point to her obvious delight in paradox, just as Turner Hospital's texts point to self-awareness of her own and her reader's seduction, while simultaneously pointing to the irresolute status of postmodernist texts.

In relation to postmodernism, I take the view that irony highlights the fallibility of viewing the past from an external spatial and temporal position. Irony thus serves as a tool through which to point to the inevitable contradictions that arise when simultaneously inhabiting and critiquing human constructs. As postmodernism rethinks history it does not conjure a nostalgic return to the past but sets up a position that calls irony into play. While incorporating Hutcheon's focus on irony in the form of parody as a major focus of her work, my argument is that irony provides a humorous dimension to Turner Hospital's work and is intermingled with her self-

reflexive use of intertextuality. This is perhaps most explicit in her narrative texts when they incorporate references to photographic texts such as the photographs described in *Charades, The Last Magician*, and *Oyster*. I discuss intertextuality of photographs and implications for representation in my chapter 'Representations of Space: Through the Frame of Photography'. As the narrator of *The Last Magician* wryly comments, 'photographs seduce' (322). When read through a modernist framework they pose as *the* truth and promise a presence with a corresponding absence. Yet, when viewed through a postmodernist lens, photographs pose multiple truths, dependent on readers and contexts, and promise both absences and presences.

My thesis explores postmodernist approaches to representation with the view that it is a vital and intrinsic element of Turner Hospital's texts, most apparent through her use of photographic texts within the frames of her narratives. I argue that her texts utilise the discourses of both photography and narrative in postmodernist fashion to question the parameters of authenticity, originality and authority in relation to representation. The texts employ and then subvert photographic media with an effect being to point to their limits as human constructs. My thesis takes the view that representation, when linked to photographic and narrative texts, and simultaneously viewed through postmodernist approaches, enters into dialogue with issues of veracity, subjectivity, and memory.

My thesis argues that popular modernist interpretations of the photograph make assumptions regarding the encapsulation of truth and the subject within photographic images whereas postmodernist thought dismantles such notions. I agree with literary commentators such as Bruce James when he claims that 'the vaunted truth of photography, which was really only ever a moral promotion of verisimilitude, was exposed as fraudulent long before digital manipulation' (16). Yet modernism

continues to mask this truth with theorists such as Roland Barthes continuing to be proclaimed into the latter part of the twentieth century or into the late modern era. Postmodernism with its penchant to banish truth-claims or at least problematise truth, dispels or plays with the myths that surround photographic texts in relation to the past, memory and representation. I highlight examples from Turner Hospital's texts to explore some of the innumerable possibilities that have been unleashed as a result of postmodernist notions with regard to photography and representation.

My thesis discusses the psychoanalytic processes that enable characters and narrators in novels such as *Borderline*, *Charades* and *Oyster* to incorporate memory and trauma into the construction of their self-identity in a continuous atemporal context. This process in many senses parallels the project of postcolonialism whereby, as Leela Gandhi insists in *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 'the subjects of postcoloniality' are empowered 'to live with the gaps and fissures of their condition' (8). I argue that the notion of memory is complex since, as with photographic texts, when read through the framework of postmodernism that I propose and utilise, memory is not fixed. Rather, memory is vulnerable to context and therefore a crucial element in constructing the complexity of subjectivity. An analysis of Turner Hospital's novels reveals a skilled sensitivity to and utilisation of the multiple tensions that arise from this complex process.

As I have stated, in exploring memory and subjectivity, Turner Hospital posits the notion that truth can be multiple since the complex, often contradictory text of the self is implicated in its formation. Further, this richness of simultaneous implication and duplicity creates a notion of subjectivity that cannot be completely coherent and stable, and is indeed unreliable because of its paradoxical reliance on context. Turner Hospital's texts are revealed to be saturated by characters' and narrators' insatiable

drive 'to know what it is that they know', which inevitably reveals the paradox of an ever-widening pool of knowledge that they cannot know. This circular process simultaneously contaminates the pool of knowledge as they repeatedly examine and redefine themselves, which concurrently redefines their other.

In my thesis, I investigate Turner Hospital's texts in dialogue with Soja's notions of Thirdspace. I argue that her texts simultaneously exemplify and interrogate transgressions or crossings of borders, while being paradoxically dependent on the construction of those borders. I explicitly argue that space and its definition and re-definition through border construction shape subjectivity, in extensive dialogue with Soja's work in *Thirdspace*. The operations of Thirdspace in the form of transgressions of borders between modernist binary oppositions of past/present, self/other, powerful/powerless, consciousness/unconsciousness, centre/margin and absence/presence are explored in relation to Turner Hospital's texts throughout my thesis.

As I discuss memory and its implications for the construction of identity I utilise the postmodernist framework and notions of Thirdspace that I have outlined above, as they are equally intrinsic to the operations of memory. In the same way that the veracity of photographic and other texts are problematised by postmodernism, memory is also subject to questioning regarding its authenticity, originality and authority. Whose memory is acceptable and correct? Which version represents the truth? (For example, in *Borderline* is the truth represented by the view of a displaced, third-world woman or in *The Last Magician* is the veracity of a wealthy, respectable judge to be privileged?) I propose and demonstrate some implicit operations of memory in the process of identity construction in Turner Hospital's texts. Simultaneously I point to the resultant difficulties that are inherent, such as the

susceptibility of memory to shifts in time, and the multiple distortions that occur through the difficulties of transferring memories of past experiences through the media of socially acceptable narrative.

While memory and its complex interrelationship with identity-construction are the pivotal focus of this chapter, I simultaneously recognise the postmodernist difficulties of this project. I recognise and discuss the multifarious nature of truth as a significant element of re-membering or reconstructing past experiences in Turner Hospital's novels. The recurring motif of the recall of trauma, particularly childhood trauma, as a significant element in adult construction of self-identity is discussed at length in this chapter. I point to the problematic nature of memory and the 'naïve public [mis]conceptions of memory' which Roberta Culbertson mentions in her discussion of embodied memory. In a similar vein, Sacha Gibbons discusses, in relation to Indigenous writing, a distinction between that which she names as 'traumatic memory' in contrast to 'narrative memory'. She states that 'traumatic memory resists translation into social narratives' and that 'repetitive confrontation' empowers individuals and communities to re-incorporate the memory into narrative form (65). This repetitive confrontation in Turner Hospital's texts enables individual and collective traumatic memories to be incorporated into the social texts of her novels, yet in some instances, individual memories remain inaccessible and elusive. I also discuss some of the means by which knowledge of complicity in causing trauma is repetitively confronted and acknowledged by survivors of violence whilst recognising significant shifting of power boundaries among most characters who identify themselves as survivors of violence and some victors in Turner Hospital's texts.

This thesis highlights the problematic nature of memory that is richly deposited in Turner Hospital's texts. Her texts seem to acknowledge and embrace ambiguity as paramount to the modernist markers that position identity; that is, names, interrelationships, locations and times. The acceptance of this ambiguity by those subject to the text, including characters, narrators, and readers, seems to bring a sense of resolution to a number of individual characters. I also discuss the many manifestations of temporal ambiguity that are divergently engaged by Turner Hospital's texts. These include her clearly delighted engagement with the circularity of plots and time, so that past-present-future merge enigmatically, and the intrusion of memory slivers and voices of dead subjects into the consciousness of characters and the texts is foregrounded. I discuss the destablising effects of by such intrusions and the resultant questioning of truths by those engaged within the texts. In a number of ways, Turner Hospital's texts continuously foreground the reader's, author's and narrator's postmodernist awareness of the unreliability of narrative in relationship to truth and memory.

In the final chapter 'Lived Spaces of Representation: Realising Spiritualities', I focus on the manifestation of a fundamental human desire for interconnectedness of self with others and transformative possibilities as expressions of Western spiritualities evident across Turner Hospital's texts. The texts point to the exclusions and repressions of distorted Western spiritual traditions that have historically been aligned with power and authority, by installing representations of them and then subverting the credibility of these representations. Western Christian and biblical allusions pepper all five texts explicitly with some names such as Gabriel and Angelo repeated across texts but referring to different characters. Other more implicit references to Christian traditions and biblical allusions include poignant spiritual

moments. Terry Veling's comments hauntingly resonate with Turner Hospital's texts. He is particularly referring to the writing of marginal Christian communities in his article:

> They recognise that the Christian tradition also contains many distortions, that it can tend to exclude and repress, that it has as much to do with power and domination as it does with truth and disclosure and, as such, that it demands both critique and suspicion. (37)

The postmodernist framework which underpins my approach to Turner Hospital's later texts is evident throughout the four chapters, each of which views spaces of representations from a different perspective. These chapters focus on spatiality, representation, memory and spirituality, and the intersection of these four discourses is signified by their permeation of the full text of my thesis. The five novels that I examine here, although distinctive in location and to some extent subject matter, are remarkably unified in their critique of contemporary postmodern discourses. Each of the narrative texts wrestles with humanly constructed borders, notions of truth and representation, understandings of identity and constructions of the past, as well as recognition of the other through notions of critique and dispersal of central truths and spirituality.

* * *

CHAPTER ONE

TRANSGRESSIONS OF SPATIAL PRACTICE: BORDER CROSSINGS

While the language of space is frequently dispersed through contemporary interdisciplinary theory and practice — 'place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory, and geography' (Soja 1) — it is my intention here to pursue the means by which notions of space, both implicitly and explicitly, permeate and intersect with Janette Turner Hospital's texts. This chapter will explore the implications of Jean-Marc's statement at the outset of Turner Hospital's *Borderline*: 'at borders, as at death and in dreams, no amount of prior planning will necessarily avail. The law of boundaries applies. In the nature of things, control is not in the hands of the traveller' (11). In this chapter, I will utilise examples from three of Turner Hospital's texts — *Borderline, The Last Magician* and *Oyster* — as I argue that space may exist only by a constant definition and redefinition of its borders and that it is the continual remodeling of borders (which enclose a subject) that shapes a subject, simultaneously indicating what is *both* within *and also* exterior to that subject. Such a transitory, spatialised subjectivity undermines any notion of a knowable or modernist subject. It is my intention here to intersect extensively with Soja's work in *Thirdspace*. Soja takes the increasingly prevalent, contemporary awareness of the spatial dimension of human being as a beginning point for his argument, pointing out that the focus of modernist thought has been on the dialectical

relationships of the temporal and sociological dimensions of being to the detriment of spatial dimensions.

In developing my thesis in this chapter, I will take up Soja's arguments for the interrelationships of the spatial, temporal and sociological dimensions of being. As part of this, I will look at the construction of gender relations in the context of the strategy of polarising time and space. I will utilise the work of feminist geographers such as Doreen Massey in *Space, Place and Gender* as a beginning point in dialogue with Turner Hospital's representation of female subjectivity in at least two of her novels, *Borderline* and *Oyster*. Soja's notion of 'Thirdspace' arguably provides for the transcending of borders that have traditionally divided the binary oppositions of time and space and their associations with supposedly masculine traits and feminine traits. Within such binary approaches, Massey notes, 'time...is typically coded masculine and space, being absence or lack, as feminine' (6). As Patricia Yaeger notes, the binary oppositions of time and space have set up false dichotomies so that 'space [has been traditionally viewed as]...a fragmentary field of action, a jurisdiction scattered and deranged...[while] in contrast, time has seemed, until recently, consolingly linear' (4). In agreement with these feminist theorists and Soja, I argue here that, as Michel Foucault also states in *Power/Knowledge* (149), the spatial realm is not simply stagnant and in opposition to the active, temporal arena, but is equally dynamic and powerful. I then extend this notion so that in keeping with the contemporary climate of interdisciplinary thought, notions of space can arguably provide a filter for readings of Janette Turner Hospital's texts.

As I have noted in the 'Introduction', according to Soja, Thirdspace is the creative combination of and beyond Firstspace and Secondspace, where Firstspace is the real, raw material that is mapped and analysed, and Secondspace is the imagined,

or perceived real, integrated with our intellect. At the same time, Thirdspace is simultaneously real-and-imagined and accessible through lived experience. Soja describes 'Firstspace epistemologies' as theoretical structures that 'tend to privilege objectivity and materiality, and to aim toward a formal science of space' (75). Maps and map-making clearly manifest as texts and enterprises designed to support Firstspace knowledges that, however, Soja argues have been unnecessarily and excessively positioned as closed and objective (77-8). Soja states that 'Secondspace espistemologies' frequently overlap with Firstspace epistemologies in an attempt to re-write and utilise their objective functionality. Thus, 'Secondspace is the interpretive locale of [spatial engineers such as] the creative artist and artful architect, visually or literally re-presenting the world in the image of their subjective imaginaries' (79). 'Thirdspace epistemologies', as Soja describes them, while critiquing Firstspace and Secondspace and their binary, also facilitate a 'remembrance-rethinking-recovery of spaces lost....or never sighted at all' (81). Thirdspace thus provides a powerhouse of possibilities previously unsighted or unacknowledged, yet echoing past textualities, memories, and representations. While Soja acknowledges the openness to criticism that this radical shifting of boundaries, representations, and definitions can create, he prefers to leave discussion and debate open and fluid, in the typical style of Thirdspace discourses.

At first it may appear that Soja's notion of Thirdspace presents something of a conundrum. The title of the introduction to his book, 'Introduction/Itinerary/Overture' (1-23), indicates Soja's metaphorical intentions as mapmaker or orchestral conductor (resonating with Jess as narrator of *Oyster* and Jean-Marc as narrator of *Borderline*). Here Soja attempts to define the space that he repeatedly acknowledges comprises 'a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas' (2) and is 'simultaneously real and

imagined and more (both and also)' (11). In seeking to define this notion, he notes that Thirdspace is the space created by the 'Other' (that, like Henri Lefebvre, he insists must begin with a capital letter) and is always already coexistent with any two binary terms. It is the space inherent in any binary opposition and, while it may run counter to Western social order that is inherently based on dichotomous ideological frameworks, it seeks to dismantle those frameworks by posing alternative conceptualisations or Thirdspace. Soja builds his work in *Thirdspace*, as I have stated, on Lefebvre's notion that

> Two terms are never enough...*Il y a toujours l'Autre*. There is always the Other, a third term that disrupts, disorders, and begins to reconstitute the conventional binary opposition into an-Other that comprehends but is more than just the sum of two parts. (31)

Such an approach by Soja works against modernist underpinnings of acceptable Western thought that traditionally pose dichotomous 'A/notA' structures — where one term (A) dominates and the other (notA) is the absence or lack of the presence of the dominant binary — by interjecting a creative, dynamic third term, Thirdspace (*cf.* Massey 256).

Soja's concept of postmodernism is intrinsic to his notion of Thirdspace and to a great extent agrees with that which I am presenting in my thesis. He states that a positive reading of postmodernism depicts history as a multiplicity of images and experiences enabling open recognition of and acceptance of differences. Soja utilises this view of postmodernism as a vital aspect supporting his notion of Thirdspace. Soja's notion of postmodernism can be further defined through Anthony Elliott's discussion in the introduction to *Subject to Ourselves: Social Theory, Psychoanalysis and Postmodernity* (7) regarding the intricate border crossings or interrelationships between modernism and postmodernism. Elliott's discussion concludes that

postmodernism suggests that cultural ambivalence cannot be overcome, that ambiguity and discontinuity cannot be straightened out, and that social and cultural organisation cannot be rationally ordered and controlled (7). I would contend that while Elliott argues that postmodernity radicalises the human imagination (8), Soja would agree and state that postmodernity enables the operations of Thirdspace to be understood.

Elliott's argument is based on his definition of 'fantasy' as a space where crossings of borders are facilitated. That is,

> as a creative realm of interchangeable places, multiple entry points, rolling identifications; [located at]...that point of division between self and other, identity and difference, desire and history, sexuality and politics. (3)

Elliott appears to utilise this notion of a 'point of division' to argue that postmodernism is an attempt by modernism to self-critique. Thus he argues that modernism and postmodernism operate simultaneously and interactively in the contemporary order. My thesis agrees with Elliott's view that the project of postmodernism attempts to resolve the prevailing ambivalence inherent in modernism. Thus, the contemporary era is in the tenuous position of seeking to discard tradition while simultaneously attempting to establish stability so that it incorporates, combines and creatively reforms the binary oppositions which modernist borders seek to separate.

This project of postmodernism informs Thirdspace, wherein 'thirding-as-Othering' takes place. This is Soja's term for the process that enables a third possibility that is always already present beyond any binary and transforms its closed either/or logic to dialectically open 'both/and also' possibilities (60).

> *Everything* comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the

> unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (56-7)

'Thirding' as theorised by Soja is a continuous operation that enables recomposition of a binary, containing elements of each binary opposition which inherently include its differences. Each thirding builds on earlier thirdings, countering charges of 'anything goes' that are often associated with such radical openness (61). Thirding-as-Othering or

> trialectical thinking is difficult, for it challenges all conventional modes of thought and taken-for-granted epistemologies. It is disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable in permanent constructions. (70)

Soja is readily able to find other theorists and practitioners who utilise Thirdspace as 'a strategic location for exploring postmodern culture and seeking political community among all those oppressively peripheralized by their race, class, gender, erotic preference, age, nation, region, and colonial status' (106). Gillian Rose's work as a feminist geographer strikes some chords with Soja's notion of Thirdspace and resonates with Turner Hospital's texts. In her book *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* Rose particularly focuses on the emerging subjects of feminism that occupy 'multi-dimensional, shifting and contingent' spaces and are 'also paradoxical, by which I mean that spaces that would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two-dimensional map — centre and margin, inside and outside — are occupied simultaneously' (140). Rose's notion of 'paradoxical space' (140) moves beyond exclusionary disciplinary practices to imagine a spatiality that acknowledges difference, and can be considered as Thirdspace in praxis.

Richard Peet, in his review of contemporary geographical theory in *Modern Geographical Thought*, discusses Rose's work in feminist geography as part of a movement both within and also across traditional discipline boundaries from the early 1990s (285). He notes that Rose and others provide the beginnings of alternative visions of space which are based on a feminist argument that a Same (universal male)/Other (singular feminist) structure is embedded in the Western modernist production of knowledge or Enlightenment thought. For feminist geographers such as Rose, masculine understandings have traditionally produced transcendent visions of neutral truths as much in theorising about space as elsewhere. These masculine understandings that underpin traditional geographical theories simultaneously depend on a feminised Other. Rose considers the possibility of another space; that is, one that does not duplicate the masculinist exclusionary dichotomy of Same/Other. This '"*paradoxical space*" has simultaneous insideness and outsideness, is center and margin at once, and enables an "outsider within" stance which can critique the authority of masculinism' (Peet 288). Rose's 'paradoxical space' (while not the same notion) is in tune with Soja's concept of Thirdspace, as is Doreen Massey's assertion that 'the lived world [is] a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces: cross-cutting, intersecting, aligning with one another, or existing in relations of paradox or antagonism' (3). Massey's notion of 'the lived world' equates with Soja's notion of Thirdspace; that is, the 'overlapping psychological, social, and cultural borderlands of contemporary *lived* spaces' (Soja 111). Soja acknowledges the contributions of feminist and postcolonial discourses to what he names as the 'openly radical' and 'radically open' concept of Thirdspace and celebrates Thirdspace's 'textual and political practice that privileges uncertainties, rejects authoritative and paradigmatic structures that suggest permanence' (107).

In *Borderline*, as in *The Last Magician* and *Oyster*, this process of 'thirding' is evident when Turner Hospital employs Jean-Marc's narration to merge past and present so that they are co-existent. This enables Jean-Marc to attempt to seduce the reader and himself into the illusion that Felicity has not disappeared or died but has temporarily vacated the space of the present and will re-appear in a space and a time of her choice (and arguably of Jean-Marc's choice). Jean-Marc's position enables him to compose a narrative that visualises a conclusion where Felicity is alive and making the morally correct choice of supporting children in need in an exotic location (288). Similarly, Jean-Marc crosses boundaries of time and space in *Borderline* as he links Felicity's childhood traumas in India (42-44) and Australia (153-64) with her adult trauma, as she is interrogated and pursued by the mysterious figures of Trog and Hunter in Canada (131-51). Jean-Marc openly states his reasons for interweaving past and present, since 'the past, as Felicity knows and I know, is a capricious and discontinuous narrative, and the present an infinite number of fictions. The braiding of the two is the very stuff of a curator's bag of magic' (131).

While Jean-Marc equally and openly acknowledges his inability to retain the border between past and present, he constantly proposes that Felicity's confusion arises from her inability to retain borders — particularly between past and present — and that this is most likely to be the cause of her current disappearance. 'She had constantly to try to match up the two columns in her mind, to find out if she was in the right country, [and] the right segment of her life' (142). Jean-Marc transfers his inability to control the fluidity of borders to Felicity so that his narrative seeks to represent her as incompetent. One reading of this conundrum is that Jean-Marc intends the reader to believe that Jean-Marc is not in control. Yet, another reading is that Jean-Marc is unaware of the paradox that is nevertheless apparent to the reader.

Here is perhaps an instance of Turner Hospital's penchant for enigma and paradox. At the same time, Jean Marc's narration appeals to readers who have lived in other places for a substantial length of time and thus can relate to this vertiginous experience of dislocation. While he recognises that this is a widespread phenomenon he argues that this is a flaw in Felicity's character and is a likely (and comforting) explanation for her current (and arguably temporary) disappearance.

The Last Magician opens with the vertiginous impact of the past on the present, so that Lucy almost drowns in the flood of memories that represent the past and cannot be kept in place (24). The intermingling of past, present and future in the narrative seduces the reader into the coexistence of borderless time, so that yesterday-today-tomorrow is as entangled as the events and spaces of the narrative. The narrative exemplifies Lucy's lived experience and opinion that 'the doors to synchronous time and parallel space are everywhere, and between one word and the next, a crevasse can open' (135). Soja's discussion of Jorge Luis Borges' short story 'The Aleph' resonates with Turner Hospital's presentation of notions of time and space in *The Last Magician*. While Soja notes that Borges despairs at the difficulty of writing about 'simultaneities of space' in linear form (8), Lucy's narrative can be celebrated as a successful achievement of the transcendence of borders that have traditionally represented modernist concepts of time. Lucy poses the question, 'Is this happening now or was it a long time ago? I have difficulty with that question, you see....I find that the past lies in wait, just ahead, around every corner' (106). She responds to her own question by apparently agreeing with Charlie's argument that linear time is a 'film-maker's gimmick' and also 'a gimmick of nineteenth century novelists' (106). The narrative self-reflexively bears out Lucy's attempts to counter the linearity of time and represents time as simultaneous and borderless.

As the narrator of *Oyster*, Jess at times seems to be a mouthpiece for Turner Hospital's recurrent treatment of this temporal theme across her texts. Jess states in the 'Prologue' that 'time is a trickster and so is space' (7) and in the narrative she constantly reiterates her difficulty as narrator: 'I find it difficult...to separate the notions of time and space and sound. They seem interchangeable....It is impossible...to pin down where time ends and where space begins' (150). Turner Hospital places Jess in 'breakaway country' among '*deviant landforms*' [Jess's emphasis] as she makes these land-breaking, disruptive and typically postmodern statements (150-1). Jess emphasises the complicity of time with the space that the mapmaker/narrator/reader creates:

> time does not run in a straight line, and never has. It is a capillary system, mapped outwards from whichever pulse point the observer occupies....I know all about the hocus-pocus of precision instruments and of time. (47)

Modernist and postmodernist critiques of the impact of the dawning of a new millennium such as those in Laurel Brake's collection of essays *The Endings of Epochs* are launched from a beginning point which is rooted in the pervasiveness of the Judeo-Christian understanding of the linearity of history (90). In Brake's volume, Jeremy Green's essay on Don DeLillo's *Mao II* (129-38) focuses on the notion of an 'apocalyptic imagination' which resonates with the notions of time and space in *Oyster* and dialogues with Soja's concept of Thirdspace. Green notes that the apocalyptic imagination sees in unconnected events the coherent signs of an ending (129). The narrative of *Oyster* is informed by Jess's 'apocalyptic imagination'; albeit an imagination which arises from hindsight, a point to which Jess ensures the reader is constantly aware. Green continues his critique of DeLillo's text by noting that the prevailing sensibility in *Mao II* could be named 'inertia-hysteria' whereby:

> Inertia indicates a collapse on the part of the subject, the retreat into a kind of stunned indifference....To the numbed and weary subject distinctions appear blurred, categories muddled, hierarchies overturned. (129)

Oyster is similarly saturated with this 'inertia' or 'prolonged state of shock' (15):

> Everyone watches, everyone listens, everyone disappears behind a vacant look that says *It's no use asking me, I don't know anything*, and the question on everyone's mind is: where will it end? (21)

In DeLillo's text, characters respond to this intense inertia by leaping to the other extreme and obliterating the self. While this is the fate of Oyster and his cult members, it is not the response of the main characters residing in the township of Outer Maroo. As Mercy muses that she can no longer 'drift comfortably along without thinking' (22) and that there has been a temporal shift so that 'hours [which] used to flow into days and days into time' (22) are no longer unquestionably linear, she notes that such temporal harmony is not within her first-hand experience but is only available to her through the representations of books and her school teacher, Miss Susannah Rover. The text constantly draws attention to the point that linear representations of time cannot be accepted as true yet the narrative is infused with a sense of hope, of creativity, of a promising future, which is simultaneously tinged with fear, graphically represented by the 'Old Fuckatoo' (4). The narrative successfully combines the past with present and future to create an optimistic yet complex space — a Thirdspace. Not only is the framework of the narrative non-linear so that, for example, the section 'Two Years Ago' is placed between 'This Week' and 'Last Week' in the narrative, and the text also constantly swings from present to past to future. Indeed, *Oyster* is a refined development of Turner Hospital's questioning

with regard to the breaking down of binary oppositions and is an outstanding example of the operations of Thirdspace prevalent in her texts.

The operations of Thirdspace which account for the dismantling of the binary oppositions of past and present also can be utilised to describe the postmodern dismantling, disordering and refashioning of the binary oppositions of self and other. Kathleen M. Kirby outlines in *Indifferent Boundaries* a modernist viewpoint that exemplifies traditional thought underpinning the notion of the Enlightenment individual in such a way that the modernist self can be graphically represented as a closed circle (38). Such a spatial representation of the self depicts a defining non-permeable boundary that encloses the self and excludes the other, reinforcing an inside/outside or centre/margin dichotomy. This notion of the Enlightenment individual or Cartesian subject successfully equated the *self* with notions of centre, white, and male while the *other* was equated with margin, black, and female (4). Although this has proven to be a damaging fictional representation of the self, modernists have found that it can be paradoxically useful since it provides clear boundaries organised within a stable environment. Traditional cartography mirrored this modernist representation of the self, reflecting its origins as a science propelled by the Enlightenment. Indeed, as Kirby notes, 'cartography selectively emphasizes boundaries over sites' (43). It seems that modernism is nostalgically viewed as being controlled through systematic organisation. A further step in the late modernist project saw the overturning of this concept, so that the dominant self was depicted as no longer remaining within the closed boundary of the circle, and a reversal of position occurred. In this scenario the self lost its position and was totally usurped by the other who took over the enclosed position within the circle. The liberation movements of the 1960s exemplify this graphic schematic representation of a closed circle.

Arguably, the late twentieth century saw the erasure of these apparently non-permeable lines that had previously kept separate phenomena and objects apart, so that binary oppositions such as self/other are removed and entities which were previously represented as fortified and distinct have become fluid and fractured. This is a useful, clear illustration of the conditions in which Thirdspace might operate, yet it paradoxically sets up an unfortunate dichotomy of postmodernism versus modernism, with postmodernism being the dominant binary term. Since such a stark view is at odds with my notions of postmodernism, as I have discussed earlier, I uphold the view that postmodernism is not so much a step beyond modernism but, rather, a development and critique of modernism.

Postmodernist dismantling of borders erodes containment within boundaries, perhaps signaling chaos and danger. Indeed, as Barbara Hooper so prophetically writes in her unpublished manuscript,

> 'In times of social crisis — when centers and peripheries will not hold — collective and individual anxiety rise and the politics of difference become especially significant. The instability of the borders heightens and concern with either their transgression or maintenance is magnified. When borders are crossed...hegemonic power acts to reinforce them: the boundaries are...vigorously disciplined....In these periods, bodies, cities, and texts become key sites of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic contestations'. (qtd in Soja 115)

Thirdspace critiques and moves beyond this dichotomous notion of the modernist self in numerous and complex ways. For example, the multiple interrelationships of characters with regard to each of the narrators in Turner Hospital's texts bear out the complicities of the narrator with his or her narrative. Thus, Jean-Marc has multiple roles in *Borderline*, and Lucy has duplicitous roles as

narrator and character in *The Last Magician*, and, similarly, Jess's complex position in *Oyster* clearly demonstrates the operations of Thirdspace in praxis. As I have noted elsewhere, Jean-Marc, Lucy and Jess become much more than disinterested narrators. Indeed, their characters merge imperceptibly with those characters in the narrative they each create. As Massey would argue, Jean-Marc, Lucy and Jess are

> inevitably within the world (the space) being observed. And this in turn means that it [the space created by the narrative] partly constitutes the observer and the observer it, and the fact of the observer's constitution of it means that there is necessarily a multiplicity of different spaces, or takes on space. (3)

While Jean-Marc simultaneously acknowledges and denies his complicity, he is intricately implicated in the identities of the main characters, and also some of the minor characters, so that his self-identity merges with the identities of each of Seymour, Gus and Felicity. As the son of Felicity's long-term lover, Seymour, Jean-Marc blatantly detests his father's treatment of Felicity, while saturated with Oedipal desire and emulating his artist-father's appropriation of Felicity as an art object. Jean-Marc's relationship with Gus's daughter, Kathleen, is loudly pronounced as innocent by Jean-Marc, emphasising the narrator's guilt in echoing the lust of Gus as well as Seymour. Jean-Marc's self is multi-dimensional in interrelationship with Felicity's identity in *Borderline* so that they interact/merge in a space both real and imagined; that is, they operate in a Thirdspace. This is apparent when Felicity, from her grave or at least from beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of the text, contests Jean-Marc's representation of her self. Even as Jean-Marc imagines Felicity's rebuke in response to his representation of her self, his identity merges with her own, so that Felicity's aunts are heard by Jean-Marc to remark, 'This is quite improper. You're beginning to laugh her laughter' (120). Turner Hospital adds a sardonic postmodern

twist here as Jean-Marc abruptly informs the reader with 'a full and frank confession: I do not understand women. Or anyone else I've ever known, for that matter' (120). If this is the case, the integrity and authority of Jean-Marc as narrator is instantaneously undermined. Yet, despite this slip, this 'confession' is repeated and emphatically contradicted by Jean-Marc throughout the text, and his penultimate chapter concludes with these musings: 'I know Felicity. I know the way things slip her mind' (283).

In *The Last Magician* the merging of Lucy-as-narrator and Lucia-as-character in the text points to the creative operations of Thirdspace in such a way as to highlight a merging of self with other. Indeed, play with Lucia's name is apt, as she undergoes metamorphosis: elusive, Lucy, lucid, loose, lose. Characters' identities merge and intermingle in Thirdspaces throughout this text. The 'quarry' or underside of Sydney is a physical and metaphorical space within which characters experience a merging of self with other. The quarry is a metonym for unity where its inhabitants are enabled (albeit with the assistance of drugs) to 'dolphin about for hours in the ocean of I-am-you, you-are-me' (18). Further, Cedar Creek Falls can be viewed as a metonym for the text as a whole, so that the swimming hole that is the childhood retreat for Catherine, Cat and Charlie is described as 'that fluid place where shapes undid themselves' (189) and 'that weightless space where everything connects with everything else' (192). Later in the narrative, as an echo of the swimming hole memories of Charlie, Catherine recognises that she thinks of Cat and Charlie as the 'puzzle-pieces' that enable her to construct a sense of self-identity and wholeness (285-6). Lucy, as narrator, seeks to construct a narrative that articulates *her* desire to integrate all three of her childhood friends or soulmates, Catherine, Cat and Charlie, into her self-identity. Lucia-as-narrator constantly examines and re-examines her

intentions as creator of the narrative, acknowledging her complicity in compiling the sequence of events and confessing to the opacity and Dantean shape of her narrative:

> I haven't told lies....I am well aware of bits of embroidery, indirections, avoidances, digressions and subplots (but these are because I am going in circles myself, stalking the meaningful coincidence, sniffing at possible connections, leaving no meander unwandered). (131-2)

In the final section of the book Lucy self-reflexively points to her complicity in gathering together and shaping her narrative when she states: 'they're an arrogant and dangerous lot, the photographers, the film-makers, the story tellers and spinners of images and words, the black magicians' (324). In the same way that Jean-Marc is heavily complicit in his narrative of *Borderline*, so too is Lucy in her construction of *The Last Magician*. Perhaps the narrative has been an illusion, so that perhaps Lucy is Cat, or perhaps Catherine is Cat, formulated from what Lucy freely admits she does not know. This uncertainty that is implicit to the narrative causes Lucy to muse, 'if only we could know what we know' (324). Following this confession by the narrator, Lucy's hesitation in telephoning Catherine creates disorder in the narrative as the reader glimpses the possibility that Cat is Catherine or Cat is Lucy (325). While this is postmodern subterfuge according to the narrator's confession, it has the strategic effect of disrupting the narrative in such a way as to enable the operations of Thirdspace to come into play and enhancing the reader's experience of a dismantled border between text and context.

Turner Hospital's penchant for blurring the borders between the self and other is no less prevalent in *Oyster*. Mercy, in a play on her surname Given, is representative of a predominant aspect of the apparent hopelessness prevalent throughout the narrative; that is, that there are no universal truths, a truth cannot be taken as a given and that there are a multiplicity of valid perspectives. As noted in

more detail elsewhere, Mercy's self-identity is intricately interrelated with the identities of each of Susannah Rover, Jess Hyde and Sarah Cohen, in particular. Mercy is able to communicate with her schoolteacher and mentor, Miss Rover, even across the death-divide. Mercy can also communicate with Jess without the use of spoken language despite Jess's chosen silence. 'She can feel Jess's thoughts coming back to her through the pressure of Jess's hand' (26). Mercy senses that Miss Rover and Jess 'see and know' her 'real self': 'the one that has always been smouldering and fizzing away somewhere under her skin' (28) and she desires a utopian future in which she will be her 'real self'. This 'real self' can only be achieved in the present time of the narrative in interrelationship with the other (as Miss Rover or Jess). Further, Mercy experiences a vertiginous episode when she is also able to identify with Sarah to the extent that she can communicate with Sarah whilst Sarah is unconscious.

The experience of vertigo as a disruption between the internal and external spaces of the self is explored in my chapter on memory and particularly in relation to trauma. However, 'vertigo' is also relevant to my discussion of spatiality and subjectivity, although not directly referred to by Soja in *Thirdspace*. Kirby proposes that subjects, particularly female, may be more likely to acknowledge or experience vertigo when they are situated in a space which they have not chosen for themselves and which is therefore a hostile environment. Kirby argues that when an external space is hostile, the self feels out of place and dissociates its internal space from its external space. This experience of '"dissociation"...refers not only to detachment of [the] subject from the world, but also to the deterioration of the internal ordering of subjectivity' (101). When the external space presents as being governed by logic that is 'structured to reflect and sustain a subject position directly opposed to their own'

(99), the experience of disrupture manifests as vertigo. Vertigo can be described as a breakdown of the internal and external binary that results in a blurring of boundaries/borders and impacts on the organisation of self-identity.

> Things begin to circulate, and no longer know their places. Foundations and frameworks crumble and...the inside flies to pieces...[so that] the outside melts and fragments, and elements from both sides drift freely across an indifferent boundary. (101)

However, while Kirby notes that there is a relaxation of boundaries dividing internal subject and external environment, she does not articulate that there is a radical, new, third space. Kirby's arguments are useful in pointing the way towards striving to overcome borders that set up and sustain hierarchical differences, yet her thesis relies heavily on binary logic. Soja's notion of 'thirding-as-othering', although it does not explicitly refer to 'vertigo', could incorporate the experience of vertigo as a manifestation of the process of thirding. The notion of vertigo could then be a useful descriptor for 'shapeshifting' and other experiences of identification with the other which are prevalent in Turner Hospital's texts.

Experiences of identification with the other that tend to be highly disruptive to the self, such as the way that Lucia/Lucy merges with others, are also manifested in *The Last Magician.* Lucy claims that she has refined the habit of 'shapeshifting. From time to time, I find myself inside the skin of other people. I see out of their eyes' (37). Such a conundrum creates for Lucy 'an inconveniently busy and skeptical mind' (36) and the narrative reflects this approach so that the reader is presented with simultaneous and yet contradictory truths and identities. Lucy describes the 'landmark' time in the past when she first remembers her ability to find her self 'inside the skin' of the other (38-42). This is as Lucia Barclay, a refined and privileged private school student, waiting on a train station with other students. Lucia

and the other students are confronted by a disheveled screaming figure that represents the other world of the 'quarry'. Lucia is able to identify with the woman to the extent that she can feel the discomfort of the woman's shoes on the soles of her feet and subsequently questions herself as to whether the woman could be her mother (39). Immediately afterwards a second dirty and otherworld figure confronts Lucia and this girl spits on her, yet Lucia can also feel herself within the skin of this girl. Lucy vividly recalls this day; it is the

> day when the air parted, when she saw suddenly that there were parallel worlds, that you could cross a line, that you could fall through a hairline crack and cartwheel giddily down and round and down in slow motion. (37)

Lucia/Lucy's first Alice-like experience of vertigo points to the possibility of the coexistence of other worlds, both for Lucia/Lucy and the reader (Carroll 26-9). The older woman, Sheba/Circe unconsciously entices Lucia to pursue her so that Lucia must follow her into the quarry to discover her identity as Lucy (*Magician* 141-2). *The Last Magician* is riddled with these vertigo-experiences in relation to most of the characters, both male and female. Turner Hospital signals these 'thirding' operations by the quotation from James Gleick presented on the title page of 'Book I: Charlie's Inferno': "'*The first message is that there is disorder*'" (author's italics) (1).

This text, as do other Turner Hospital texts, constantly points to multiple identities as created by the tenuous nature of stability. The necessity of multiple border crossings across cultural, gender, age, or socio-economic contexts is constantly foregrounded. *The Last Magician* undermines any modernist notion of the stability of identity through the doublings of characters so that Lucy-as-prostitute is Lucia Barclay, Gabriel Gray is Gabriel Brennan, Robbie Gray is Sonny Blue and Judge Robinson Gray as an adult, and Charlie Chang is Fu Hsi. Not only do characters

manifest as multiple selves but they achieve this in vertiginous contexts. For example, Charlie becomes acquainted with Lucy in adult life as a photographer with Lucy-as-prostitute as his photographic subject. Charlie is searching for Cat, his childhood sweetheart. Lucy unconsciously reveals glimpses of Cat through her actions. Placed in, and choosing, this position, Lucy-as-narrator is 'shapeshifting', creating an unstable narrative and causing Charlie to experience vertigo, while she is simultaneously attempting to stifle images or memories as the past manifests itself in the present. As she states and simultaneously despairs, 'This is what happens when worlds and incarnations intersect: vertigo' (128). She is aware of her complicity in the events that underlie or undermine the narrative and, while this awareness surfaces unexpectedly in vertiginous moments and hints at multiple identities, she unsuccessfully seeks at least to maintain borders that signal safety and stability.

As Jess laments, and simultaneously celebrates, early in her narration of *Oyster*: 'That is the trouble with complicity. It is so intricate; it is like a gigantic cobweb; it clings; you can never get it off; you can never tell where any one thread is going to lead' (49). Jess's and other characters' entanglement with the events that inform the narrative of *Oyster* create angst for Jess in determining a beginning point for her narrative (49). It is as though Jess is the mouthpiece for herself and other characters who desire separation from their oppressors yet simultaneously admire and seek identification with them. While Jess is able to pinpoint multiple circumstances and numerous characters that lead to the fiery culmination of Outer Maroo, she is hard-pressed to disentangle the intricate web of events and characters. The desire for entanglement in and complicity with the narrative creates intricate border crossings and re-crossings, so that oppositions become blurred, merged and ultimately subjective. Turner Hospital is thus able to justify a narrative that has multiple entry

points and subject positions, requiring readers to read with discernment and indeed identify with the notion of complicity to the extent that readers become overtly complicit themselves.

Notions of the closed boundary of the modernist self are critiqued through the merging of characters' identities with each other. In *Borderline*, this is played out most starkly in the merging of Felicity's self with others so that the space between or the border is imperceptible in the merging of self with other, while simultaneously providing a creative space in which to reshape the self. One instance of this is when Felicity realises that Dolores is not La Magdalena or a living version of a Perugino painting but rather 'a memory of myself' (47). In this instant Felicity realises that Dolores embodies 'the moment when Felicity knew she would never see her father or Didiji [the ayah of her Indian childhood] again' (47). The merging of Felicity's self with others is evident when other memory-voices that haunt Felicity, particularly her aunts, her unseen mother, her father and Hester create disturbances at the seams of the narrative. Such disturbances subvert modernist order and law, and potentially provide opportunities for a Thirdspace in which new identities may arise.

As I have noted, the text of *The Last Magician* is a space in which characters transgress the borders between the world of power and privilege and the underworld of the quarry in such a way that they are complicit in both the creative aspects and the violence of both worlds. The unspoken 'crime' that underlies this text is the murder of Cat by Judge Robinson Gray that primarily arises from his inability to recognise and accept the other or to incorporate both worlds within his sense of self. His inability to recognise or incorporate the other or his alienation from his self, causes Judge Gray to become, in the words of his wife, 'a caricature of himself' (345). One reading of the text implies that Gabriel and Charlie have also disappeared at the hand of Judge Gray

because of their danger to him in that they suspect that he is responsible for Cat's disappearance. Through her narrative of these events, Lucy seeks to develop a Thirdspace in which both worlds may flourish with interconnectedness. She seeks to connect with the disappeared others which are aspects of her self — particularly Gabriel, Cat and to a lesser extent Charlie — and proposes a documentary film to be made by herself and Catherine which will celebrate allegorical (Thirdspace) aspects of Aboriginality in northern Queensland (351).

The Cedar Creek swimming hole episode, while it later becomes the scene of the grisly murder which threatens the narrative and the far-from-idyllic childhood of its participants, arises from Charlie's, Cat's and Catherine's ability to face 'the teeth of fear' and submerge themselves in 'that fluid place' (189) or Thirdspace which the swimming hole represents. Robbie Gray is never able to lower himself into the water when the other three children swim in it, in the same way that he refuses even as an adult to recognise the other within himself. Turner Hospital articulates this theme across many of her texts, so that discomfort or the experience of vertigo which is a necessary aspect of multiple crossings of the border between self and other is also linked to fear of the strangeness of the other world.

In *Oyster*, Mercy is made aware of the coexistence of at least one other world by her teacher, Miss Susannah Rover: 'there was the Gospel Hall view of things, and there was the view from Miss Rover's books' (75). Even though Susannah has been 'disappeared' (with echoes of Felicity's, Dolores's, Cat's and Mather's disappearances), she is deeply embedded in Mercy's unconscious. Mercy is sometimes able to call on Susannah consciously, such as when she secretly and figuratively descends to the depths of Aladdin's Rush to pore over and absorb Susannah's books (74-83) or when she is confronted by situations in which she feels

powerless to act alone (93). At other times, Susannah emerges unbidden into the daylight, most often when Mercy is subjected to situations of fear. Mercy is able to take solace from the wisdom that Susannah provides her: '*Fear is just another form of superstition, Mercy; we breed it ourselves, we make it ourselves in our minds; we can unmake it*' (author's italics) (183). Mercy is able to overcome her own fear and provide support to other characters through the strength that her identification with Susannah provides.

This aspect of the operations of Thirdspace; that is, the merging of identities or the breakdown of divisions between self and other, is evident in other characters in *Oyster*, most notably the female characters. One of the chapters that points to this is 'Last Week/Tuesday' in which Sarah stumbles into Outer Maroo in search of her daughter, Amy, and stays with Mercy Given and her parents (169-99). Although as readers we know that Sarah is too late to save her daughter Amy from death, Sarah is not informed of this by the townsfolk but is made aware of this fact in her unconscious moments. In her dreams and day-dreams, Sarah recalls an afternoon when Amy is flying a balloon and builds on this to a realisation that she cannot grasp the string of the balloon and that Amy is lost to her (182). While Mercy struggles to respond to the pain of Sarah's cry of despair and loss as she dreams, it is as though Mercy intuitively knows the pain as her own. Such an experience of Thirdspace links with Julia Kristeva's concept in *Strangers to Ourselves* which she names the 'semiotic'. Elliott describes Kristeva's notion of the 'semiotic' as 'the scene of something other, an otherness central to the fluidity of the "subject-in-process"; an otherness which underlies the multiplication of fantasy as it intersects with received social meanings' (Elliott 30). This semiotic experience is elaborated in the section of my thesis regarding memory and identity.

Multiple contradictions of subjectivity are created because the existence of the other is unconscious (in such forms as dreams and memory fragments) yet actively subverts the possibility of social order and law through border crossings, resulting in ambiguities. Psychoanalysis is vital to reframing the concept of the autonomous individual since it poses the subject as decentred and it 'emphasizes the *ambivalence of identity*, the tension between self and other, desire and lack, life and death, consciousness and the unconscious' (7). As I have stated elsewhere, Elliott's emphasis on the ambiguous nature of the human condition informs my view of postmodernism as one where history is a multiplicity of images and experiences that transcend temporal boundaries and open up recognition and acceptance of differences (7). Soja utilises this view of postmodernism as a vital aspect underpinning his notion of Thirdspace.

Lucy, early in her narration in *The Last Magician*, poses 'two short pieces of evidence' that point to an other world, an unconscious world (20). One of these is represented as a report from a 'Sleep Disorders Clinic' where a patient presents himself as exhausted and sleep-deprived yet he appears to be scientifically asleep when observed each night for six weeks. His unconscious state ravages his sleep so that he experiences a constant state of wakefulness. The second is a Chinese Taoist story where a man Chuang Tzu dreams he is 'a turquoise butterfly like the Blue Wanderer' (20) yet when he awakes he is merely a man. He 'was never certain if he was Chuang Tzu who had dreamed he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Tzu' (21). The possibilities of contradictory, yet simultaneous, truths are constantly explored in Turner Hospital's texts in such a way as to suggest that this is a truth that Turner Hospital advocates. Indeed it is a truth that coincides with my

notions of the operations of Thirdspace within the postmodernist framework of this thesis.

In *Borderline*, *The Last Magician* and *Oyster*, Turner Hospital's narrators' attempts to provide a true, fixed representation of the self are unsuccessful, flawed, and ultimately unachievable since the operations of Thirdspace are at play. Turner Hospital is apparently aware of the incongruity of Jean-Marc's, Lucy's and Jess's projects as narrators and uses their characterisation to highlight the impossibility of pinpointing the representation of any given self and, in so doing, inadvertently provides examples of the operations of Thirdspace. In *Borderline*, Jean-Marc notes that 'truth is never pure and rarely simple' (26), seeming to require a merging of artistic input with scientific input, rather than merely facts. Although Jean-Marc seeks to resist ambiguity he reiterates his acknowledgement of the ambiguous nature of truth and thus of self-identity. Through his characterisation of Gus in particular, Jean-Marc points to the frail human condition that adds artistic elaboration to 'soften the blows' caused by hard facts or realities. He reiterates that failure to recognise the ambiguities of self-identity propels Gus through immense suffering, exhaustion and ultimate death as he seeks to make amends for his failure to meet his self-expectations, as driven by his work performance, Catholic faith, conjugal and paternal duties. Paradoxically, or perhaps predictably, Gus's failure to fulfill the criteria for perceived masculinist success enables him to identify with the voices of 'wounded' women, constantly 'dinning inside his skull' (167). Gus's promises to himself and to those he seeks to love and protect are constantly hollow and unfulfilled. While scorning Gus's weakness, Jean-Marc is paradoxically somewhat like Gus in that he also seeks control, yet simultaneously refutes any ability to identify or merge with the characters in his narrative, both male and female — through his role as narrator or

artistic director and thereby through the identities of self and others. This is declared through his grand statement that 'the entire cacophonous universe could be tuned. This is a mathematical possibility and a great comfort, requiring only infinite patience. I proceed note by note' (26). Here, Jean-Marc appears to seek harmony and to assert a patriarchal viewpoint. Yet this statement is undone throughout Jean-Marc's narrative, either through his own statements or through the events of the unfolding narrative. Although the narrative depends on his representation of events, Jean-Marc is neither anti-patriarchal nor firmly patriarchal. He is ultimately powerless to determine the fate of Felicity and his relationship to her, since his narrative is active in dismantling and also subsuming binary oppositions. Here, *Borderline* articulates the operations of Thirdspace, a space in which both oppositions in a modernist binary are dismantled, included and rewritten in a dynamic interrelationship, so that truth and non-truth, and art and mathematics may function without contradiction.

As I have noted, while Jean-Marc attempts to play the part of omnipotent god, he is simultaneously powerless to intervene in the outcomes of his narrative, he is both in control and *not* in control. He represents many of Turner Hospital's characters and narrators who simultaneously and often unintentionally reconstruct their own self-identity as part of the process of seeking to locate themselves and others in time and space. It becomes increasingly apparent to the reader that the creativity of Thirdspace plays a tune that Jean-Marc's narrative is powerless to manipulate to his satisfaction, so that while borders become blurred the process of thirding-as-othering creates thirdspaces that Jean-Marc has neither expected nor can successfully and tidily incorporate into his narrative. Thus, while Jean-Marc begins as a 'chronicler of clues and memory' (204), a recorder of 'dreams' that 'pick up the day's trivia' (203), the narrative builds his thirst for omnipotence so that he increasingly manifests a drive

towards a modernist urge to become a creator in his own right. As he states, his gathering of clues and memories develops in such a way that the text of *Borderline* is not merely mimetic representation but manifests a 'truth [that] must be tempered...[since] mere accuracy was false' (204). He states that, while Felicity exhibits a strong moral sense of complicity and responsibility for the well-being of others, he is not driven by any moralistic intention other than his own selfishness and is therefore not accountable for the truth of his narrative. He reiterates that, while he is aware of this deficiency in his character he is not prepared to 'change his tune'; perhaps due to his immense desire to create a tune that is harmonious with his subjectivity.

Clearly, Jean-Marc's project is an 'uncanny' one, in the sense of Kristeva's definition in *Strangers to Ourselves*, since 'uncanniness occurs when the boundaries between *imagination* and *reality* are erased' (188). Kristeva's definition of uncanniness builds on Freud's concept of the other or stranger as that which the self has repressed. I would argue here that Kristeva's notion of uncanniness is linked to Turner Hospital's texts (see also my chapter on memory and identity). Further, I suggest that this is an intrinsic aspect of the postmodern operations of Thirdspace. The multiple instances of identification of self with other in Turner Hospital's texts exemplify the transgressing of boundaries of the ideal modernist self and are thus distinctly 'uncanny'. Indeed, Kristeva controversially states that the self no longer exists since the work of Freud because the self has been revealed 'to be a strange land of borders and othernesses ceaselessly constructed and deconstructed' (191). Arguably, *Borderline*, *The Last Magician* and *Oyster* can be seen as positing such deconstruction of the self as the notion of Thirdspace critiques the modernist self and moves beyond the enclosed space of the subject.

Kirby discusses Freud's texts *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, published early in the twentieth century, and emerging from the discourse that surrounded the space of the subject at that time. She notes that modernism can be represented as being about the management of environmental spaces and a reshaping of the space of the subject on local, national and global scales, in such a way that a new consciousness of borders could be posited in the modern era (68). While Freud arguably pioneered a focus on the psyche as an interior space in such a way that subjectivity has emerged as a mapping of the inner self, it must be remembered that his notion of 'the subject' does not include its contemporary breadth of meaning. However, his work provides a substantive base on which theories of the operations of the conscious/unconscious are grounded. The graphic representation of this binary as a closed circle would enclose the state of consciousness within the boundaries of the circle, and all that lies beyond the control of this limit is unconscious and, by extension, ungovernable. The space of subjectivity is thus represented as the space of consciousness and within the bounds of the self, while that which is beyond this limit is alien and labeled unconsciousness.

A further development of the modernist notion of the boundary that locates self and other at fixed spatial points is the concept of the binary opposition of centre and margin. In the same way that the interrelationships of modernity and postmodernity are argued strongly in my thesis, the notions of centre and margin are also intertwined. In order to facilitate a beginning point for the position of these notions within the concept of Thirdspace, it can be baldly stated that: whereas modernity's project is to maintain control of the self (and other) by placing the self at the centre, postmodernity's project is to embrace the ambiguity and ambivalence of being and to recognise the peripheries or margins of the centre. Yet, as Hutcheon

suggests, an aspect of postmodernist theory, that I seek to emphasise here, is *difference* rather than the binary and hierarchical oppositions of self/other. Since I agree with Hutcheon that 'meaning can be created only by differences and sustained by reference to other meaning', I argue and demonstrate that postmodernism is expressed in Turner Hospital's texts through 'a more plural and deprivileging concept of difference and the ex-centric' (*Poetics* 65). Thus, postmodernism celebrates the intricate interrelationship of centre and margin, where the subject is decentred, and a myriad of differences occur, in contrast to the modernist view that the subject has complete agency and control of the self. The postmodernist destructuration of the self occurs in Thirdspace; that space wherein fantasy and dreams enable the remembering and reincorporation of that which has been marginalised, so that the previously repressed binary opposition comes into play in the fluid space of a subject-in-process.

Soja adds that the openness of this space ensures that it is flexible in dealing with oppression and inequality and particularly relevant to contemporary politics (13). These qualities arise, states Soja, through the exploration of Thirdspace being guided by praxis : 'the translation of knowledge into action in a conscious...effort to improve the world in some significant way' (22). In his critique of the postcolonial opportunities available through the openness of Thirdspace, Soja points to the increasing prevalence of spatial exploration in the lived spaces of the borderlands or the boundary between centre and margin (129-30). Soja surveys a number of postcolonial theorists including Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Edward Said and notes that they each confront the opposition of centre and margin. Soja states that Spivak 'chooses' marginality and in so doing asserts the radical otherness of marginalised voices (134). Spivak states that she 'chooses' the margins not because she has been unanimously assigned to that position according to her 'otherness' but

rather as partially a means of asserting her self or her identity and ultimately as a remapping of the terrain of identity (134-6). She argues that since the centre is defined by its marginality (or the self is defined by its other) then her marginal voice is a powerful, definitive one.

Soja also surveys and celebrates the work of bell hooks, a socio-cultural critic who positions herself as an African-American marginal subject and in so doing, remarks that her 'purposeful peripheralness [provides] a strategic positioning that disorders, disrupts, and transgresses the center-periphery relationship' (84). While hooks is arguably positioned outside of the lived space of the margins because of her adoption into the halls of white academia, Soja highlights her claimed and, more significantly, chosen marginality. He states in his 'Introduction' to *Thirdspace*, 'I have found no one better to illustrate the radical openness of Thirdspace, its strategic flexibility in dealing with multiple forms of oppression and inequality, and its direct relevance to contemporary politics' (12-3). He argues that the space in which hooks is positioned is one of radical openness (that is, a Thirdspace) from which she can powerfully justify her critique of the centre. He states that 'hooks recomposes our lived spaces of representation as potentially nurturing places of resistance, real-and-imagined, material-and-metaphorical meeting grounds for struggles over all forms of oppression' (12) and adds that 'it is a politics and spatial positioning that is explicitly but cautiously and critically postmodern' (85). Soja notes that hooks is choosing a space that is not hegemonically determined and therefore not reliant on a dominant static other or centre to determine one's position, thus its emphasis is on what Hutcheon calls difference (*Poetics* 65). Rather her position is held in and of itself. Soja includes a quotation from another activist black subject: '"Such a narrative thwarts that binary hierarchy of center and margin: the margin refuses its authoritative

emplacement as 'Other'"" (97-8). This dismantling of the spatial binary opposition of centre and margin disarms the problematic of both the subject and subjection as it creates a Thirdspace in which other binaries such as those I have noted are likewise less sustainable.

One of the keys to postmodernism, as signaled by Soja, is the 'disordering of difference' (92-6), a term which is inclusive along the spectrum of binary restructuring to the reconstitution of difference incorporating those who identify as 'peripheralized, marginalized, and subordinated by the social construction of difference' (93). Soja notes that bell hooks, among others, appropriates and uses marginal spaces as a political act, not to confirm her relation to the centre but rather as a disordering of difference. Such appropriation provides a '"definite distinction between the marginality which is imposed by oppressive structure and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance"' (hooks qtd in Soja 98).

Borderline's characters reside primarily but not statically in marginal positions. These marginal positions are dynamic and multifaceted in *Borderline*. Dolores Marquez and her cohorts exist in an apparently shadowy non-space as political escapees without Canadian citizenship and therefore devoid of legal rights. In diverse ways Dolores represents the other of Gus's and Felicity's self-identity and, through her manifestation in their lives, brings about confrontation with the other for each of them. Gus and Felicity seek in vain to rescue Dolores from her marginality and to wrest her from what they perceive as an oppressed, undesirable position. Dolores's spatial positioning as a marginalised subject is one with which they can readily identify and they assume that she is experiencing pain and powerlessness. While Gus becomes more deeply mired in his self-guilt as a result of his contact with his other through Dolores, Felicity is empowered to escape the framing narratives of

both Jean-Marc and Seymour that have imprisoned her subjectivity. However, Dolores apparently remains powerless, at least within the margins of the narrative, and is unable to bring about significant change to the lives and political rights of her children, her nation or her gender. Jean-Marc has higher aspirations. He seeks to move outside of the margins and to be accepted for his grand performance, and yet he is ultimately unable to do so. While he verbally advocates the margins as the safest place for a piano tuner, he does not heed his mother's advice in his role as narrator of *Borderline*. He highlights but does not heed his mother's advice: 'the limelight is a very bad place to be; and that, in dealings with luminaries, it is preferable to be in a position where you can tell them to go to hell' (52). Jean-Marc's narrative does seek to place other characters on the centre stage, but his presence is loudly heard from the wings. His own emphatic statement that, 'he [the piano tuner] does not care for the limelight, he works backstage' (53) — is arguably revoked by his actions as composer of the narrative. Paradoxically, however, his narrative empowers the reader to become the composer, so that the effectiveness of Jean-Marc's voice becomes questionable and therefore marginal to the performance of the text.

Felicity's positioning is the most complex in *Borderline*. While Jean-Marc warns Felicity-as-character of the dangers of being visible, or of being on the centre stage, and he shouts that he is powerless to save her, he is as guilty as Seymour of framing her for containment like an insect specimen to be placed on show for his benefit (53). Felicity has a repetitive dream that opens with herself trapped in a painting. She escapes the frame of Seymour's art work, in much the same way as she eludes the pages of Jean-Marc's narrative (19). In the dream, Felicity is unable to escape the art gallery in which Seymour's paintings are being exhibited since her passport photograph has a hole in it, as does her view of Seymour's painting of her

body. She is hurried back to the frame by male 'border guards' and positioned for viewing (20). While this dream may be subjected to feminist readings that would detail the painting, framing, guarding and viewing of the female body, I am viewing and positioning this episode from a perspective where the borders between centre and margin are being dismantled. According to Jean-Marc's narrative, Seymour has placed his marginalised view of Felicity at centre stage so as to challenge the 'establishment' and welcomes the reviews of art critics who grasp futilely at his intentions. Seymour's sense of power is fed by his ability to place Felicity's image in a position that cannot be translated by those who purport to be at the centre and in a position from which they can justifiably pronounce judgement, yet at the same time his marginal representation remains seductive to those at the centre. *Borderline* concludes with Seymour's and Jean-Marc's helplessness in the face of Felicity's escape from their grasp (288). In my opinion, *Borderline* concludes that marginal positions are radically open spaces in which binary oppositions can be challenged, dismantled and reshaped in dynamic ways. These radically open spaces or Thirdspace are apparent through the non-closure or multiple possible continuities of Turner Hospital's texts.

The Last Magician is a narrative in which Charlie as filmmaker and Lucy as narrator have a mission to discover and represent the 'truth' that surrounds the events of Cat's disappearance. In pursuing this goal, they seek to be a lens and a voice for the marginalised. Their goal is to depose Judge Robinson Gray, the epitome of acceptability, of power and of the centre that is diametrically opposed to the gendered and cultural position of Cat. As Charlie states emphatically, 'Oh, he's very much in one piece. A pillar of the community. A judge' (53). The operations of Thirdspace in the text enable truth to be questioned through its separation from the centre and

alignment with the margins. Lucy's narrative is somewhat like Charlie's ability 'to shuffle incongruities and hold them up to the light and show that their contours matched' (56). Turner Hospital's penchant to pose simultaneous yet contradictory truths in and across her texts is exemplified in Lucy's mapping of Charlie's quest and her pursuit of the truth regarding Cat's disappearance.

The narrative is apparently primarily told from the margins and builds images of the corrupt nature of the inhabitants of the 'privileged' centre. However, while the narrative celebrates the margins, the origins of the narrator are a charade. After all, 'Lucy' is merely an acting part that Lucia plays, although Lucia 'wished desperately to appear native. She wished to belong to the non-belongers' (31). Indeed, Lucy-as-narrator notes that her position in the narrative should be merely marginal since 'It's not my story', yet she concedes that she may be guilty of inserting herself in the tale (71). Since Lucia/Lucy's marginal position at least is suspect and corrupt, readers may also question the stability of other both marginal and central positions. Lucia/Lucy's positions decentre the expectation of the privileged location of a narrator. The effect is twofold since it undermines notions of binary logic and moves away from univocal gendered authority. Such a stance provides for a space of play, a Thirdspace, which does not provide grounds for use of either binary position of centre or margin to support truth and thus radically dismantles this binary logic.

The characters that inhabit the margins signified by the quarry in *The Last Magician* are by no means limited to this artificial divide. Rather they recognise and celebrate their ability to associate with and traverse the multiple strata of society. As I have stated, the narrator is both Lucy and Lucia, characters and narrator. Likewise, other characters have duplicitous, complicit roles. Lucy notes, for example, that 'Charlie was situated, you might say, in the first circle of the quarry. He occupied the

borderlands. He looked both ways' (79). For Gabriel, Cat, Lucy and Charlie 'the doors to synchronous time and parallel space are everywhere, and between one word and the next, a crevasse can open' so that their subjectivity is transitory and cannot be located or mapped (135). While they are 'by no means uninformed or innocent of an awareness of the seamy underside of things [that is, the 'quarry']' (134), they are not captive to the space and time of the quarry and may traverse across borders as they choose marginality.

Oyster similarly suggests that marginal positions are simultaneously powerful and radically open to multiple possibilities. Yet there is an apocalyptic tinge to this suggestion in relation to *Oyster*. One utilitarian reading could suggest that although there are sacrifices along the way, such as the deaths of Amy, Gabriel, Brian Given and Susannah Rover, these benefit the ultimate goal of cleansing the town of greed, violence and corruption. The three remaining survivors of the 'armageddon' are Ethel (a Murri woman in search of her Murri name and heritage), Major Miner (a World War Two veteran and small scale opal miner) and Jess Hyde (narrator and ex-government surveyor) (45). Ambiguously, Outer Maroo is a place that is only found by those who are lost (5) since 'by cunning intention, and sometimes by discreet bribery (or other dispatch) of government surveyors, Outer Maroo has kept itself off maps' (4). All of the characters in *Oyster* are marginally positioned, in both a physical sense so that they are geographically remote or non-existent on official maps, and in a social sense whereby they are alienated by their difference whether through gender, ethnic background, or religious belief. They are 'ex-centric'. As I have noted, 'to be ex-centric, on the border or margin, inside yet outside is to have a different perspective...one that is "always altering its focus"'(67). A number of the characters

of *Oyster* are intentionally positioned by the narrative in the geographical and social margins of Australian society.

Intention signals power and defies placement by any other. Even the Murri woman, Ethel, is not on the borderland of Outer Maroo awaiting admittance to its culture. Likewise, Ethel is not on the edge or margin, seeking an inversion of centre and margin; rather, she is critical of the centre, proud of her heritage and seeking her own name. 'She is waiting for a lost language....She is waiting for a name other than Ethel....She is waiting to meet her other self' (44). Such a proud marginal stance challenges the nineteenth century European geographer's gaze which seeks to objectify the subject and, as Rose states,

> thinks space can always be known and mapped, and that's what its transparency, its innocence, signifies: that it's infinitely knowable; [and] that there are no obscure corners into which geographical vision cannot penetrate. (70)

Ethel is communicating across time with her own ancestors and can complacently state, from a position in which she feels powerful and knowledgeable, '"reckon us Murris got the last laugh"' (44-5).

Neither is Jess seeking a space of comfort or centrality in the narrative of *Oyster*. In simultaneous relation to her narrative enterprise and her own life experiences, she states, 'mapmaking is...a [futile] desire to impose order on the ungovernable' (154-5). At the time of her narrative, she is not yearning for any space other than her position in Outer Maroo, following her gypsy childhood and years in a convent, and her career as a government surveyor (154). As David Callahan notes in his article 'Janette Turner Hospital and The Discourse of Displacement', Turner Hospital's texts are concerned 'with the margins of self-possession and the embattled provisionality of belonging', as are postcolonial texts, but 'without postcolonial

overtones of racial or cultural disadvantage' which are the hallmark of such texts (335). Rather, the processes that accompany alienation provide substantial space for the regeneration that can be an outcome of dealing with trauma, loss and difference (335). As Jess reveals through the insistent return of memory slivers in *Oyster,* her childhood alienation and rejection have not been erased from her memory. Rather, in a process of 'thirding-as-othering' she has reincorporated her gypsy heritage and her convent years, which were parallel worlds represented in her dreams as parallel pairs of railway tracks that would not converge (159). As a re-working of the postcolonial image of 'living on the wrong side of the tracks', this space works as a newly possible and dynamic Thirdspace. In this Thirdspace between the tracks, she has dismantled the two separate 'worlds' of her childhood and reincorporated them in a dynamic spatial sense to define her current identity. This provides her with a space in which to break her silence and speak as narrator of *Oyster* and as a character in relationship with the other survivors of the 'armageddon'.

Simultaneously, there are implications with regard to morality and ethics that intersect with some of Turner Hospital's apparent concerns in *Borderline*, *The Last Magician* and *Oyster*. In his postscript to the Introduction to *Thirdspace*, Soja notes: 'the exploration of Thirdspace must be...guided by some form of potentially emancipatory *praxis*, the translation of knowledge into action in a conscious — and consciously spatial — effort to improve the world' (22). Soja nobly states that the praxis that informs his exploration of Thirdspace is focussed on practical solutions to human inequality and oppression that are currently more prevalent through the economic and political restructuring that is occurring in our contemporary era. His 'ultimate goal' is 'to contribute to the progressive resolution of at least some of the problems associated with this contemporary restructuring-generated crisis' (23). He

notes that these problems include a 'multiplicity of confusing and often brutal events'; a list of which could include Tienanmen Square, the Los Angeles uprising, Bosnia and contemporary political unrest in relation to the 'war on terror' in contexts such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Such a list is reminiscent of Felicity's 'wilderness file' with its 'clippings of dark and bizarre events, world news, the familiar international insanities' (16) in *Borderline*.

Turner Hospital's texts invariably engage with the notion of identity in relation to political contexts and *Borderline* is no exception. Turner Hospital discusses her moral and political attitude in the context of writing *Borderline* in an interview with Christine Hamelin. Turner Hospital states: 'What I set out to do, really, was try to imagine what that [identity as a Central American refugee] is like....I wanted to recreate in the reader that unbearable need to know, and the sheer inability of ever being able to know' (107). However, while Turner Hospital is emphatic, in this interview, that she does not intend to tell a reader what their moral or political stance should be and does not intend to press her own ethical agenda on to readers, in an earlier interview with Ron Store, published in 1990, she states, 'I write to shake people up, you know, to make them see that most of the time we slide through life rather glibly unaware of what's going on within a mile of us' (33). I would contend that her writing strongly supports oppressed subjects in diverse ways such as through implicit and explicit content as well as the techniques with which she deals with simultaneously contradictory circumstances.

In *Borderline* Turner Hospital deals explicitly with citizenship, refugee status and treatment, belonging and displacement. Although published in 1985, *Borderline* is relevant in the current postcolonial era as it remains pertinent to the South American context and dialogues with similar contemporary topics in Australia in relation to our

Indigenous population as well as our treatment of asylum seekers in Australian detention centres. Jean-Marc discusses the impact of local events on global events and warns: 'Do not dismiss these micro-changes as anything less than cataclysmic' (51-2). He warns that the marginal must not be forgotten and that the reverberations from the periphery ultimately impact significantly on the centre. He takes historical instances of unacceptability, or of marginal protests, and notes that these have ironically become orthodox: 'Nonconformist troublemakers in England became the Pilgrim Fathers of hallowed memory. Today's illegal alien is tomorrow's Resistance hero' (51). While *Borderline* does not necessarily advocate perfect cosmic balance, it does lean towards listening to the voices of the marginalised, most of whom may appear to be silent or are at least silenced.

Silence is loud in asserting identity in *Borderline* (notably Dolores and Felicity), *The Last Magician* (especially through the absent figures of Cat, Charlie and Gabriel) and *Oyster* (particularly Jess or 'Old Silence', Susannah Rover and Ethel). Turner Hospital's recurring fascination and evolving characterisation of silent women is discussed in my thesis chapter on memory and identity and particularly in relation to Verity in *Charades*. As Turner Hospital states in an autobiographical sketch in *Kunapipi*: 'Silences and absences haunt me. I am absorbed by the ways in which silence, for the radically marginalised and disempowered, can be a form of protection, dignity, and survival' (128). In *Borderline*, Dolores Marquez, in her attempt to save her life, loses her name, her children, her homeland and her voice. She is silent to Felicity and Gus, so they impose on her their own guilt and narrative, as though she is a book with empty pages or a canvas as yet unpainted. For example, Felicity names her after an image with which she is familiar but which has little or no meaning for

others, and rebukes Gus for touching Dolores, supposing that Dolores's reaction of immediate withdrawal is probably due to the trauma of rape (47-8). Even if Dolores were to choose to speak, her language and her story would be alien to Felicity and Gus. In a sense, Felicity and Gus unintentionally impose a border between that which is knowable and that which is alien for Dolores, even while they try to save her from the border guards and other border-imposing authorities. Such a paradoxical dilemma is a postmodern conundrum that highlights the human element in the construction of borders and/or binary oppositions. Here, the notion of Thirdspace, a space in which borders are dissolved and the oppositions interact in a process of 'thirding-as-othering' would enable the dilemma to be resolved in a dynamic process. Within the frame of the narrative of *Borderline*, however, Dolores is 'La Desconocida, the unknown or unknowable one' (11) and remains one of the disappeared.

Felicity is silent in *Borderline* in the sense that she is not readily accessible to the reader. Her 'voice' is only translucently available. Her identity is filtered through Jean-Marc-as-narrator and through Jean-Marc's description of Seymour's representations of Felicity where Seymour has represented Felicity-as-subject in his paintings. From the beginning of his narrative, Jean-Marc asserts that his representation of Felicity is the 'true Felicity' and reports that he contests her assertions in voicing her opinion as 'bad taste' (16). Further he states: 'I quite simply resent anyone else writing about her at all. No one else (besides myself) is *qualified*....I can assure you: This is not Felicity' (16). Like Dolores she is one of 'the Holy Innocents, *los desaparecidos*, the disappeared ones' (12), emphasising the dismantling of another border — that between reality and art. Felicity escapes the grasp of Seymour, the border-imposing authorities represented by Trog and Hunter and the narrative framework imposed by Jean-Marc, without the opportunity of

representing her narrative of her self in her own voice. In the framework of Jean-Marc's narrative, though, Felicity seeks Dolores, propelled by the question 'Just how accountable *are* we?' (44). In the central incident of the narrative at the border, it is as though Felicity's collection of media cuttings in her 'wilderness file' (16) no longer lies dormant but has become an aspect of reality. Jean-Marc's musings as to the purpose of his narrative become equally applicable to Felicity's plight and disappearance for which there may be 'only three possible defenses: the first is not caring, and the others are irony and art' (14). It is as though she is being reminded of the marginalised and dispossessed, perhaps so that her position of relative power and privilege is not unquestioningly accepted. Here is another instance of a blurring of the border between representation and reality, so that Felicity's 'wilderness file' and representation at Seymour's art exhibition becomes a lived experience or Thirdspace. She tells Gus that she is congenitally soft-hearted: 'I attract messes, they gravitate to me' (45). Further, Felicity's later recognition of Dolores as her double seals her complicity and her deviation from her earlier intention to escape from commitment to another (Aaron and Seymour) (47). However, Felicity does not remain unwaveringly committed. According to Jean-Marc, there are instances where she hopes that by closing a file or closing a drawer of photographs that her commitment may end. At one point she confesses to Gus, '"To tell you the truth", she said slowly, her voice thinner than air, "she disappeared totally. Right out of my mind. I was hoping she never existed"' (126). However, Gus's confirmation verifies the truth that she does indeed exist other than in Felicity's mind. Felicity's complicity in the spatial operations which foster silence is apparent, yet her self-consciousness motivates her to act as best she can within the context of the labyrinth of Jean-Marc's narrative and the resistance network. However, as Angelo, an El Salvadorean resistance worker puts

it, 'we become the puppets of our personal wounds' (212) and Felicity is powerless to separate her personal implication from her (in)ability to act. Such a reading of *Borderline* accounts for both Dolores's and Felicity's loss of voice and control so that they become silent and manipulated subjects or 'puppets' within the context of Jean-Marc's narrative.

The narrative of *The Last Magician* is also driven by the characters' multiple pursuits of the silent (silenced), absent character, Cat, who is unwittingly present within the identities of those characters who are searching for her. In seeking to discover the absent subject, Cat, the narrator, Lucy/Lucia, Gabriel and the childhood acquaintances of Cat ultimately seek to fill gaps or absences and to discover the other that contribute to their own identities. Indeed, the text continually illuminates their self-discoveries that they have been complicit in Cat's absence and silence, as they realise that she is their individual and collective repressed other. Charlie's collection of photographs represent his map of the quarry and the photograph entitled '*Mute Testimony*' reveals absent 'cut-out silhouettes' where Cat, Catherine and Charlie should be represented and points to the loud intensity of silence(d) and absent bodies in the narrative (245). Lucy's description of the value of absence is pertinent when she describes an ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu's allegorical reference to the usefulness of a pitcher being in 'the hollow where the clay is not' rather than in the clay itself (84). In the same way, the value of a space that is Thirdspace is the space itself, not the borders that confined it prior to the 'thirding' process. Lucy is writing in relation to Gabriel when she notes that 'absence is potent, [so that] unanswerable questions are the ones that engage us, [and] the silences are thick with story. All I can do is feel my way, advancing, retreating, positing theories, testing, rejecting, going in circles' (85). Lucy's narrative is her vocalisation of her posited theories and circular

unraveling of stories as she seeks to discover the 'otherspace' within her self which simultaneously includes the repressed other that is Cat. As I have noted, vertiginous glimpses of the other, as the self/other border is transcended, abound in *Magician*. In the same way, the absent other is coexistent with and impinges on the present self, highlighting the ineffectiveness of repression. Charlie's emphatic response to Lucy's question ('Who is Cat?') is equally applicable to Lucy, Gabriel, Catherine Reed and Robinson Gray. Charlie states, '"She's part of me"' (163). The narrator, Lucy, interjects at times to remind the reader, but primarily to remind herself, that 'I've learned something....you will find Cat and lose her....but loss is a kind of permanent presence' (165). The search for Cat is threaded throughout *The Last Magician* so that her absence is very much overturned and her presence becomes a major feature of the narrative and is manifested through the identities of many of the characters. Indeed, Cat is not silent or silenced, despite violent attempts to repress her voice. Rather, through the narrative, she is extremely communicative.

Jess, as narrator of *Oyster*, is perhaps the most vocal character in articulating her silence. She states:

> It is a curious thing, a self-imposed silence, the way it invites confidences and revelations, and the way it reveals some deep-seated belief that the mute are also deaf, and are possibly stupid, but are certainly innocent, and are a safe repository for secret things....They thought of me as they would think of a wall or a boulder, or perhaps as a rock cavern in the breakaways: hollow, receptive, capable of the infinite absorption of sound, a black hole that gave nothing back.
>
> This suited me.
>
> It is, in fact, accurate. (160)

Jess continues her narrative by telling of two of her selves, a gypsy-self and a convent-self, both of which are composed of her childhood experiences of self-

identity. As a child the importance of maintaining the abyss or border between her two selves was vital. When the two selves merge as an adult, resulting in her stabbing a man who attempts rape, Jess escapes to the margins and finds herself in Outer Maroo where she assumes silence as a protective device (163-4).

Self-identity is linked with social justice concerns in Turner Hospital's texts, where numerous characters express responsibility for the plight of marginalised characters and, through recognition of and assistance to others, they develop a stronger self-identity. Soja's discussion of bell hooks's creation of a Thirdspace in which social justice is conceived in a re-visioning of difference (96) is pertinent here. Soja comments that in hooks's book *Yearning* 're-visioning' operates in a Thirdspace wherein multiplicity equates with empowerment, since differences can be combined rather than fragmented in 'competitive...and separated communities of resistance' (Soja 96). Within this discourse of 'the new cultural politics', differences that arise through gender, socio-economic and cultural concerns are not 'fighting' separate 'causes' but are empowered to resist together through a recognition of the multiplicity of difference. In *Borderline*, this occurs explicitly when Felicity and Gus are compelled to 'rescue' Dolores from the border authorities. Their actions are fuelled through a multiplicity of concerns, not the least of which are their individual quests for self-empowerment, details of which are discussed elsewhere in my thesis.

In *The Last Magician*, the operations of Thirdspace in the intricate relation of social justice within conceptions of self-identity are prevalent. For instance, Robinson Gray's fight to construct his identity in such a way as to sever his childhood links with Cat are thwarted so that, even as a result of the episode when he strives to overcome this link by wounding Cat through the death of her brother Willy, the connectedness of marginality with authority is not disengaged (209-24). Throughout the narrative,

Robinson Gray attempts to deny this aspect of his self-identity through running away from confrontation with Cat (237). The narrative highlights the many ironies that arise from Robinson Gray's occupation as a judge and thus ensures that there is not an unchallenged and automatic equation with social justice. Gabriel, Robinson Gray's son, is 'driven by a riddle and by grief' (266) in his pursuit of Cat. He seeks to understand the truth about his father's relationship with Cat and is paradoxically driven by Robinson Gray's statement to Gabriel as a boy: '*The law is like railway lines, Gabriel, straight and true. The law protects the truth. What the law decides is truth*' [author's emphasis] (266). (Again, this image evokes the divisiveness of railway tracks, as a marker signaling imposed truth, and the value associated with being born on either side of them.) Even as his father speaks the words, Gabriel questions their truth so that 'long before he could articulate it to himself, something lurking underneath his father's dogma: heresy, perhaps; a countertruth; a lie' (266) presents a riddle which Gabriel seeks to unravel. At the same time, the narrative details the strength of Charlie's identification with Cat's 'cause' so that his self-identity is equivalent to his patient quest for truth which has fueled him. As a result, Charlie has '"stuffed up every hole where the past might show through"' '"for twenty-five years"' (238). As Soja notes, 'those who are territorially subjugated by the workings of hegemonic power [may choose to utilise]...this putative positioning, their assigned "otherness," to struggle against this power-filled imposition' (87). Charlie patiently awaits photographic opportunities to record and 'see what he has seen', proposing that the power of photographs is in their ability to represent space and the spaces of representation, and thus subversively to transgress borders and reveal truths (243). Lucy's conclusions include her musings that 'humankind cannot bear very much lack of meaning' and that 'the need to understand' (300) is paramount to a

narrative, despite contemporary postmodernist fashions in readers' expectations of narrative (296). Yet Turner Hospital's intentions across her writing ensure that *Magician* has a great deal to say about the prime importance of social justice and the impact that this has on self-identity. The narrative bears out Roslyn Gray's apparently flippant remark that '"violence in fiction...should illuminate. It should not simply horrify'" (301).

In *Oyster* social justice concerns empower those who are apparently repressed or marginalised or subjected to violence, to recognise and assist others in disempowered positions. As I have noted, Mercy is empowered by the 'voices' of the 'transferred' subject, Susannah Rover and the silent Jess Hyde, so that she is able to assist Sarah to grasp the reality of her step-daughter's disappearance and death. It is Mercy's ability to identify with the other that enables her to escape from the ruins of Outer Maroo and drive to an imagined future in which she will discover her 'true self', a state to which she has been aspiring since her emerging identification with Miss Rover. Simultaneously, however, the reader is aware that Jess Hyde is constructing this narrative and must rely entirely on Jess's version so that the myriad of possible truthful outcomes to the narrative is not available. The reader and possible representations of Mercy are subject to Jess's self-confessed map-maker's 'stratagems' which attempt 'to get a foothold on chaos' (154). These strategies attempt to map voices, spaces and time in a vain attempt to seek to make a meaningful narrative from chaos. Jess's 'desire to impose order' (154) and represent socially just outcomes in her narrative apparently direct the concluding section, 'Epilogue' (427-33). Yet the concluding pages belie Jess's comments throughout her narrative and are uncharacteristic of Turner Hospital's other texts' endings, in such a way that Turner Hospital's stance seems uncharacteristically didactic and moralistic at this point.

Callahan labels Turner Hospital 'a moralist', yet laments her penchant to include violence in her narratives. He states that she 'appears to see in the encounter with difference one of the principal moral problems of our time, a source of self-knowledge and — more dispiritingly — of violence' ('Becoming Different' 24). In a number of articles, Callahan sets out to explore the multiple layers of difference that may be encountered through the transgressing of boundaries between men and women, cross-cultural contexts and, intersecting these, encounters between those who claim and wield power and those who are oppressed ('Acting in the Public Sphere', 'The Discourse of Displacement', 'Becoming Different'). Violence is an aspect of contemporary society that is extensively explored by Turner Hospital. She acknowledges the unfortunate prevalence of violence in human relationships at both micro and macro levels, with particular reference to the equation of power and violence. She acknowledges in an interview with Store that it has become a personal and integral aspect of moral and political concern particularly since her personal victimisation in an attack by a number of young men in Boston in 1987 (22). Rather than repressing this memory as she believes she had with her childhood memories, she claims that this theme is explicitly explored in her five most recent texts.

In *The Last Magician*, Lucy-as-narrator seems to voice Turner Hospital's concern with the prevalence of violence when she states, 'I have to concede that from before the very first once-upon-a-time, there has always been another world, a nether world, invisible, nestled inside the cracks of the official world like a hand inside a glove' (19). However, it can be argued that the notion of violence is as much an undercurrent of Turner Hospital's early novel *The Ivory Swing*, first published in 1982 as it is in *Oyster*, which was published in 1996, and is a primary ingredient in *Due Preparations for the Plague* published in 2003. While I discuss trauma in relation to

memory in a later section of this thesis, I am particularly discussing violence here in relation to the dismantling of borders in the dynamic process of Thirdspace.

Callahan argues that when difference is relegated to an 'underworld' or beyond an arbitrary border that separates 'unacceptable behaviour' from 'respectable attitudes and behaviour', interconnectedness is denied and violence may erupt as a result. He notes that contemporary mobility across geographical, cultural and political borderlines is a prime cause of such dislocations, and that this is mirrored in Turner Hospital's texts ('Becoming Different' 24). The characterisation in Turner Hospital's texts exemplifies this dynamic interrelationship across borders, so that characters and/or narrators such as Lucy in *The Last Magician* comment: 'As for me, I go back and forth, above and under. I cross borders. That world, this world, they coexist all the time and I move between them' (19). Also, as Jean-Marc comments in relation to Felicity in *Borderline*, she 'had crossed more [figurative and physical] borders on more continents than anyone would want to keep a file on' (11). Yet even Felicity's familiarity with border-crossing procedures does not prevent her from being subject to powerlessness and its associated fear, violence, silencing and appropriation. As I noted earlier, Felicity's experience of border crossing and its associated violence, manifests itself at an unconscious level for her as she dreams of attempted escape and then being locked into the imposed frame of Seymour's representation of her self (19). Seymour repeatedly inflicts violence on her as exemplified when he stresses to Felicity, '"You're an idea of mine, remember that"' (88). Jean-Marc is as complicit in Felicity's powerlessness as Seymour, since he also seeks to manipulate her to fit within his narrative frame. Both Jean-Marc and Seymour are all the more insidious because they cannot or refuse to see their complicity with violence. As is blatantly emphasised in different ways in the narrative, '"Whatever side of the fence you're

on," Seymour said, "it's a rank weed, violence. You can't be silent about it"' (236). According to Jean-Marc's narration at this point, Felicity advocates silence in response to violence. Indeed, his narrative does indicate that Felicity is silent about the violence she receives at the hands of Seymour in his representation of her, in the same way that she is also rendered silent by the narrative. Yet one feminist reading of the narrative could indicate that Felicity successfully escapes the frame of Jean-Marc's narrative. The narrative implicitly (and arguably against Jean-Marc's intention) indicates that Felicity recognises herself as a subject on whom violence is inflicted. An instance of this is when Felicity experiences an intimate (and vertiginous) moment of identification with Dolores Marquez — 'Felicity...thought dizzily:...She is a memory of myself' (47).

Violence is not neatly confined to female victims and male instigators in Turner Hospital's texts. There are explicit instances of female violence as well as implicit complicity by females in violent actions. Most often, however, victims of violence are female. In *Borderline* Hester is clearly a subject of violence, across the female/male divide, so that she is subjected to ridicule and physical violation by her female classmates (157-8) and sexual harassment and rape by a gang of schoolboys (162-4). Jean-Marc stresses that Hester's response to violence is the fuel for Felicity's firm stance that silence is the most powerful response to violence. However, the reader is explicitly reminded that this is Jean-Marc's version. Another reading could be that Jean-Marc has not written Felicity's voice in to the narrative because he chooses not to listen or because he seeks to maintain his position of power. Indeed, Jean-Marc is himself a perpetrator of violence when he takes such a stance.

Violence, and powerful responses to its infliction, underpins the narrative of *The Last Magician.* The narrator Lucy signals the reverberations of the local on the

global when she notes that 'the oscillation of butterfly wings in Brazil may set off storms in Texas' (82). The power of this motif is implied when Cat wears a plastic turquoise butterfly brooch (157) on the day that Gabriel's life is cataclysmically altered (a day which echoes Lucia's life-altering, 'border-collapsing' experience as a schoolgirl on a train station). In particular, Charlie's characterisation as a subject on whom violence is inflicted embodies the operations of Thirdspace in *The Last Magician*. Although he is a male, his racial difference is fuel for his victimisation and simultaneously facilitates his identification with the female characters, particularly as the violence is perpetrated by male violators. In seeking to break the silence which shields both Cat's and Charlie's subjection to violence, Lucy receives little response to her repeated question to Charlie, '"What did they do?"' (222-24). She notes, 'But he could not speak of it. Nearly forty years later, all he could say was, "They taught us a lesson"' (223). He eventually breaks his silence and confesses to Lucy an instance when the Wilston boys '"pulled our pants off and did things. And then the Wilston boys pissed on us and one of them shat on us"' (224). This victimisation by acquaintances is prolonged and multi-faceted so that the stench of it has marked Charlie's identity and he supposes it has also marked Catherine's and Cat's identity. He notes in relation to Catherine's and Cat's victimisation and his own that '"Shame is more deadly and permanent"' (223) when the violence is inflicted by others that are known, in contrast to unpremeditated attack by a stranger. For Charlie, however, the presence and non-intervention of Robbie, as he stood and watched, was the most memorable feature of the attack, indicating that complicit violence can be more insidious than infliction of physical pain. Later in the narrative, Lucy outlines a story told by Charlie, which he has read in the *New York Times* and which highlights the falsity of the border between violence and intimacy (230-2). In this story, the police

explain that 'an act of violence is an intimate act' thus 'the greater the violence, the greater the intimacy. And vice versa' (232).

In response to the question 'Why Do I Write?', Turner Hospital acknowledges that the stark contrast between her fervent evangelical home culture and the 'lower working class culture' of her Brisbane neighbourhood provided the first of her lifelong experiences of borders and their crossings, so that the demonizing of the Other, or the false maintenance of borders, is both an integral and explicit aspect of her texts (*Kunapipi* 127). She states that this notion of 'demonising of the Other' is a point of view which has fuelled the maintenance of binary oppositions in Western culture. This is an example of another impact of the operations of Thirdspace, wherein 'undesirable' traits of one binary opposition can taint the other binary opposition within the dynamic 'thirding' process that occurs in Thirdspace. In *The Last Magician*, violence is an insidious aspect of both the well-bred authority figures at the centre and the marginalised sub-culture that is represented by the inhabitants of the quarry.

In *The Last Magician* the 'quarry' or the underside of Sydney is clearly the space to which the other is exiled, yet the interconnectedness or complicity of the identity of the self with the other, prohibits the possibility of disconnection between these binary oppositions of self and other. In the same way that binary oppositions such as self/other and past/present are dismantled in *The Last Magician*, so too is the opposition of respect[st]ability/violence. Turner Hospital notes in her interview with Francine Ringold, the complicity of 'the respectable affluent professional side of the city' with the 'murky desperate underside' (29). Indeed, Lucy notes, in *The Last Magician* 'the membrane between manicured lawn and quarry [is] so wafer thin' (334). The blurring of the border between these two binaries is evident in *The Last*

Magician so that violence is equally prevalent across the lived experience or Thirdspace of the text. Respectability is maintained by holding at a distance or beyond the circle that defines respectable society that which is tainted by violence. Yet, ironically, respectability is also maintained within the boundaries that define the quarry, so that the quarry arguably has standards of acceptability. I am not suggesting that the opposition of respectability/violence has been reversed in this instance. Rather I contend that *The Last Magician* performs a space in which the oppositions are dismantled and in dialogue. In *Thirdspace* Soja discusses this point when he refers to the 'multisidedness of power', noting that power is often simplified into 'hegemonic' versus 'counter-hegemonic' cultural politics (87). He states that '[hegemonic power] *actively produces and reproduces difference* as a key strategy to create and maintain modes of social and spatial division that are advantageous to its continued empowerment and authority' (author's italics) (87). Soja asserts that subject(ion)s within a spatialised hegemonic power dynamic must either submit to their powerlessness or resist and that the operation of thirding-as-othering is a mechanism through which this resistance can occur. *The Last Magician* exemplifies this notion. As a result of Cat's particular ability to wield power she initially prevents ridicule in her childhood being directed to her. Yet the desire for power which seethes below the surface of her relations with Robinson Gray and the other Wilston boys ultimately could not remain suppressed and resulted in her brother Willy's and her own violent death (202-13). The transformation of Willy's inquest into a 'trial of Cat' (216) supposedly marks the wresting of power back from the quarry inhabitants (which Cat represents) to the rightful authority of the judicial establishment (represented by Robinson Gray). Yet the shift which denies the alignment of power with truth is evident in this scene, so that the court rules that power is authority rather than truth

being authoritative. The violence perpetrated by Robinson Gray and the three Wilston boys in the aftermath of the inquest/trial underlines the association of power with violence and authority (222-4).

In *Oyster*, Susannah Rover is clearly marked as a target for male ridicule and violence, so that she is 'transferred' or 'disappeared' from Outer Maroo. Yet her voice remains clear to Jess and Mercy, empowering them to struggle against power structures and, within the framework of the narrative, to be released from subjection to violence. In a sense Hester, Cat and Susannah serve as redemptive figures for other female characters, enabling Felicity, Lucy and Mercy to be free to articulate their self-identity, yet with reference to their historicity, in a process of thirding-as-othering.

In Turner Hospital's texts, Thirdspace epistemologies facilitate and critique possibilities for a 'remembrance-rethinking-recovery of spaces lost' (Soja 81), through the operation of liberating experiences of merging and identification with the other, across dispersed borders. As binaries are dismantled and overturned, through the actions of embracing the ambiguity and ambivalence of being, peripheries or margins other than the centre are recognised and reincorporated. The political implications are manifold. As repressed binary oppositions come into play, guided by a translation of knowledge into action, an incredibly powerful conscious effort to enrich social spatiality is in operation. This is the transformative potential of the operations of Thirdspace. In the politically postmodern context of Turner Hospital's texts, as we have noted, the centre is defined by the margin, facilitating multivocal possibilities. In these texts, this opens infinite spatial positions for identification of the self with the other thus foregrounding and questioning notions of belonging and displacement.

CHAPTER TWO

REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE: THROUGH THE FRAME OF PHOTOGRAPHY

'Photographs seduce.
The longer you look at them, the more you see'.
(*The Last Magician,* 322)

Intersections across postmodernism and photography permeate Janette Turner Hospital's texts posing a multiplicity of questions concerning representations of space. Turner Hospital utilises photographs and theories around art and the visual in many of her novels and short stories, and in this chapter I look particularly at the use of photographs in *The Last Magician* and also in *Borderline* and *Oyster*. I argue that these texts utilise photographic discourse as a postmodernist lens through which to respond to questions of representation, authenticity, originality, authority and power. Turner Hospital employs both narrative and photography, which, as Hutcheon notes in her work on postmodernist politics, 'have traditionally been assumed to be transparent media which paradoxically could master/capture/fix the real' (*Politics* 41). I argue that Turner Hospital's texts simultaneously subvert and dismantle these media to reveal their positioning as constructs.

In this chapter, I will look at Turner Hospital's use of photographs as political texts within her narratives, mainly through the work of Soja's *Thirdspace* and Hutcheon's *The Politics of Postmodernism.* I agree with Hutcheon's demonstrated claim that 'postmodernism challenges our mimetic assumptions about representation:

assumptions about its transparency and common-sense naturalness' (*Politics* 32). Turner Hospital's texts challenge the narrator's and the reader's assumptions about the perceived real or, as Soja names it, the Firstspace of both visual and verbal representation (6), or 'spatial practice' (66). Furthermore, Turner Hospital's texts locate photographs as 'representations of space'; that is, as examples of what Soja defines as Secondspace (66). For Soja, photographs are capsules of the 'dominant space' or 'control and surveillance' products of the 'storehouse of power' that is evident in any society (67). While photographs can be viewed as instruments of Secondspace, their meaning becomes more complex in the directly lived arena that is Thirdspace. In Turner Hospital's texts, the visual spatial dimension is always mediated through the textual dimension of the narrative so that representation is foregrounded as limited and dependent on other texts or intertextually determined, so that representation is unavoidable. As the photographs are not published within or alongside Turner Hospital's texts, the reader's access to the photographs is limited to the interpretative lens of the narrator. Further, this self-reflexive awareness is repeatedly confessed by each narrator (whether it is Lucy in *The Last Magician*, Jean-Marc in *Borderline* or Jess in *Oyster*) to be unreliable. Yet the narrated images are an integral aspect of each of the written texts in such a way that neither visual nor verbal texts are independent. Instead they rely on and enhance each other. Turner Hospital's texts are rich in visual imagery so that Hutcheon's comments on 'postmodern text/image combinations' are applicable to Turner Hospital's verbal/visual texts:

> [Postmodern text/image combinations] point to the coded nature of all cultural messages. They do so by overtly being re-visions: they offer a second seeing, through double vision, wearing the spectacles of irony. (*Politics* 124)

Hutcheon states that postmodern photographs are 'literally photo-*graphic*' (*Politics* 124). Turner Hospital's coining of the term 'photograffiti' to describe the clamouring of voices that accompany a collection of photographs in the opening pages of the ironically titled chapter, 'Photograffiti and Silence' in *The Last Magician* (225-34), resonates with Hutcheon's comparable concern with the presentation of and interactions between image and meaning (*Politics* 124). Hutcheon shares her delight with the potential multiple meanings generated by visual and verbal interaction and notes that,

> They offer the attractions and pleasures of deciphering: they demand active participation and self-conscious work in creating the meaning of the text. In photo-graphy these riddles foreground the fact that meaning may be conditioned by context, yet is never fixed. (*Politics* 125)

Hutcheon is particularly careful to point out that she is not implying that the verbal text will secure a guaranteed visual meaning. For her, the verbal is not a repetition of the visual text. In a similar vein, Turner Hospital's narrative points to multiple verbal texts for a single visual text, indicating dependence on the interpretative filters of each viewer/reader and on the context within which photographs are viewed/read. As Hutcheon notes, this is in opposition to Roland Barthes who argues that one function of a verbal text alongside a visual text is to 'anchor' 'the many possible signifieds of the image, and thereby guide identification and interpretation' (*Politics* 124-25). Barthes suggests that an alternative function of a verbal text when placed in addition to a visual text is to add or transmit extra information that is not evident in the image. Hutcheon argues that postmodern 'photo-graphic' texts have neither an anchoring nor a relay function but instead dismantle the

hierarchical organisation of texts or de-naturalise the privileging of one text to the disadvantage of another.

In her role as narrator of *The Last Magician*, Lucy self-consciously works to balance the human need to apply meaning and to understand, against the literal interpretations that she asserts readers/viewers will apply to a text. Her self-conscious construction of her role as narrator includes the provision that the narrative must 'illuminate' the depths of the human condition, making the image an integral aspect of a narrative (301-2). Lucy's intense 'need to know' mirrors her reader's search for truth by constructing meaning from the myriad of offered pieces and is summed up when she states:

> humankind cannot bear very much lack of meaning....We have to get to the heart of the labyrinth where the minotaur lurks. We want to know that the labyrinth is mappable, that there is a minotaur, that there is at least something at the core of things.... (300)

However, Turner Hospital's narratives conclusively admit the impossibility of revealing one straightforward truth. As Gabriel despairs, understanding of the past is inaccessible since it is 'like having a drawerful of photographs without any captions or any known sequence' (182).

Similarly, in *Borderline* Jean-Marc recalls Felicity's grandparents' drawer.

> There was a drawer in an old dresser that was crammed with photographs. When anyone opened it, the pictures would spill onto the floor like fish out of a burst aquarium. A waterfall of the past. All the pictures were a sort of creamy brown color, not even proper black and white. (154)

One of these photographs is of her mother who had died during Felicity's early childhood. The photograph confirms her mother's inaccessibility since the more

intently Felicity looks the more indistinct her mother's image appears. As an adult, Felicity's own 'arrangement of arcana' includes:

> The photograph of her father — he was on a beach mending nets; and the one of the mother she had never known — a woman in white, walking away from the camera (21).

This collection of photographs, like her 'wilderness file' containing a collection of 'clippings of dark and bizarre events' (16) brings Felicity no closer to understanding or accessing her past. In the same way, when 'official' photographs of Dolores are shown to her by Trog and Hunter, she cannot access her memories through them (133). Felicity's intense 'need to know' her past mirrors Jean-Marc's own project as narrator, as self-appointed constructor of a desired reality. Jean-Marc's selfish quest for the disappeared character Felicity provides fuel for his narrative of desired images and possibilities.

In *Oyster* possession of photographs of family members likewise does not provide a passport to their presence. Rather, wielding of a photograph signals absence, such that Mercy refuses to view a photograph of Amy held by her stepmother Sarah as she searches for her lost stepdaughter (105). It is as though in the viewing of this photograph, Mercy will hit the final nail in the coffin of hope. Here, the operations of Thirdspace enable Mercy to simultaneously hold the possibilities of both absence and presence. The awesomeness of 'this all-inclusive simultaneity…invokes an immediate sense of impossibility' (Soja 57) and incomprehensibility to the reader and to Mercy, yet Mercy is prepared to live with this spatial conundrum and the reader is likewise invited to participate in this creative possibility enabled through the complexities of Thirdspace.

The double-encoding tendency of postmodernism, with regard to the relationship between photography and narrative, intersects with Craig Owens's statement that allegory as a structure 'encodes two contents within one form' (1980a 84). Thus Hutcheon would support Owens's notion of 'reciprocity' between verbal and visual texts, whereby 'words are often treated as purely visual phenomena, while visual images are offered as script to be deciphered' ('Allegorical Impulse' [Part I] 74-5). In writing about allegorical influences in postmodernism, Owens likens images — visual and verbal — to hieroglyphs in Renaissance allegory with the result being 'pictogrammatical' or like a 'rebus'. He cites Walter Benjamin who describes the replacement of letters by the use of rebus (a puzzle comprised of pictures representing words) or iconographic images, by artist-scholars during the Renaissance ('Allegorical Impulse' [Part 1] 74). This, Hutcheon notes, brings about the enigmatic effect of 'riddling' therefore demanding active participation and self-conscious work in creating meaning, and foregrounding the postmodern notion of the fluidity and multiplicity of meaning and its contextual dependence (*Politics* 125), as well as the displacement(s) of meaning(s) from text(s).

The narrator of *The Last Magician*, as I have noted elsewhere, delights in conundrums, riddles and labyrinths (*cf* 300). Turner Hospital draws on her knowledge of Renaissance scholarship in her play with the notion of riddles, enigma, hieroglyphs and rebus, to illuminate many of her texts. In *The Last Magician* the reader is given the answer to a central riddle on the first page (3), and alerted to the existence of at least one other riddle well before being acquainted with it (56). Characters' names are another riddling device used in many of Turner Hospital's texts. In *The Last Magician*, the effect of multiple naming is to highlight the complexity of the self. Thus, Lucia Barclay slides across her roles as narrator and character (as Lucy/Lucia),

and constantly manipulates the representation of her self so that at times she becomes the characters whom she is describing or pursuing. As she admits, "'I step into any name they want"' (29). In the same way, there are plays on other characters' names and identities, with the truth claims of photography being undermined throughout the text, as the same photograph is re-interpreted to represent different meanings in different contexts. 'Photographs *beckon*, he [Charlie] said. Photographs seduce' (229). 'Their seeming passivity and their silence is irresistible, it invites transgression' (228-9). Charlie describes the tantalizing seduction in which the viewer participates and concludes 'All photographs lie and they all tell their own particular truth' (229). The deceptiveness of truth and the truth that underlies deception are foregrounded by Turner Hospital as she installs then subverts representations such as names and photographs.

Borderline is strategically littered with plays on names, as well as riddles and enigma, so that claims to truth are constantly undermined and reinstated with shifting emphases. Dolores Marquez is re-named by each of the characters who pursue or seek to assist her according to their own image of her. She is variously named La Magdalena by Felicity after a Perugino painting, La Salvadora, because of her country of origin, and 'still others referred to her as La Desconocida, the unknown or unknowable one' (11). Gus creates his own image of Dolores Marquez so that she becomes one of his personal imagined saints whom he adds to his chain of saints hanging from his dashboard. He names Dolores, 'Our Lady of Sorrows', and raises her to sainthood alongside his wife, whom he names 'St. Therese' (220). This manifestation of saints meant that 'there was scarcely room for Gus in his Chevy, surrounded as he was by so great a crowd of witnesses, all the saints and holy martyrs and the women he had wronged' (221).

In *Oyster*, riddles, labyrinths, and the fluidity of identity and truth is evident in the landscape itself, aptly named 'The Breakaways', and described by Jess as similar to the pointilist artworks of Seurat. Such a landscape implies that 'the world is made of shifting points of sand which blow about and regroup themselves' (205). This results in the disconcerting effect that, for both the reader and the characters, 'you are never quite sure if something happened or if you imagined it or if everyone imagined it at once' (205). For Mercy, or at least Jess's version of Mercy, this vertiginous effect (or intertextual echo of Lewis Carroll's *Alice*) manifests as an inability to fully know her self-identity and the identity of others. Mercy cannot differentiate borders that define her self and others. Mercy muses that 'we can only know a few pinpoints of someone' and this is one of Mercy's dilemmas in the narrative (206). Mercy seeks to look through the eyes of others — through the eyes of her school-teacher, Susannah Rover and the 'otherworld' that her books promise; and through the eyes of the missing teenager's mother, Sarah (129) — so as to discover more of her self through the lens of others. This postmodern notion of the complexity and multiplicity of selves is discussed elsewhere in this thesis in relation to memory and identity in Turner Hospital's texts.

The ambiguity of photography as a visual medium makes it particularly suited to enterprises incorporating postmodernist representation. Turner Hospital's texts exemplify the ambiguity of photography beyond functional representations of space or Secondspace so that photographs are viewed beyond 'real' and 'imagined' spaces in a 'lived' space that is Thirdspace (Soja 64-5). Turner Hospital's texts can also be seen to exemplify Hutcheon's notion that photography is 'semiotically hybrid' (*Politics* 130). That is, 'it is both indexical (its representation is based on some physical connection) and iconic (it is a representation of likeness) in its relation to the

real' (130). Photographic images, like history, hold a problematic connection to the 'real' events that are past, so that the interpretative filters of the present impinge on the meaning that can be viewed/read from a photograph. Hutcheon adds that where photographs are linked with written text, 'the addition of language is the addition of the symbolic to the indexical and the iconic' (131). This has implications for working beyond reciprocal relationships, since the symbolic implicates language as another filter beyond indexical and iconic connections. Since both language and photography are signifying practices they contribute to the production of meaning, in complex interrelationship between narrator and reader, artist and viewer. The enigmatic nature of the interrelationship between verbal and visual texts raises powerful questions when modes of representation are being challenged in a contemporary context.

Hutcheon draws an image of two stones being simultaneously thrown into a pool of water, causing ripples which meet, intersect and merge in such a way as to create something new which is nevertheless based on the separate elements which preceded it. Hutcheon uses this image as an analogy for the notion of 'fringe interference', whereby the ripples which emanate from postmodern photographic theorists and practitioners, impact across modernist boundaries at a location which she describes as a 'postmodernist site of operations' (*Politics* 118). She prefers the term 'fringe' to 'margin' citing it as a more dynamic term; however, in this thesis, I prefer the term 'margin' as this term implies close proximity to the borders which I argue postmodernism transgresses. She sets out to explore the 'fringes' of postmodern photographic practice, where she identifies a process which 'interrogates and problematizes, leaving the viewer no comfortable viewing position...[and]...upsets learned notions of the relations between text/image, non-art/art, theory/practice' (*Politics* 119). Hutcheon's analogy lends itself to an image of one of the two stones as

narrative or verbal texts and the other stone as photography or visual texts. This image of a 'pool' or 'postmodernist site of operations' can describe Turner Hospital's texts. This image is echoed by the swimming hole in *The Last Magician* into which Robbie Gray (189) refuses to plunge, through fear or ridicule of those with whom he does not choose to identify, as well as signifying the merging of Cat's, Catherine's and Charlie's identities. Similarly, the crossing of borders both metonymic and literal in *Borderline* create a Thirdspace or postmodernist site of operations within which Dolores merges with Gus and Felicity, as does Seymour with Jean-Marc, and Jean-Marc with Felicity.

A vast literature extensively documents the invention of the camera and the development of photography (*cf* Burgin). Methods of recording permanent images were perfected in the 1830s by Louis-Jacques-Mande Daguerre and William Henry Fox Talbot. The techniques of photography were officially patented at a meeting of the Academy of Sciences in 1839. In the ensuing decades, questions around the issue of representation became increasingly apparent. In his chapter 'Photo-Unrealism: The Contribution of the Camera to the Crisis of Ocularcentrism', Martin Jay summarises the predominant questions regarding representation that arose among intellectuals in the 1840s and remain contemporary issues. First, the notion of correspondence between the photographic image and truth; second, the relationship between art and photography; and third, the societal impact of photography (345). The modern context of the invention of the camera and the early development of photography has been significant in the views that arose in response to such questions, and this chapter includes some of these responses. As Jay comments,

> Without a doubt the commonplace view of photography ever since its inception during the heyday of the Realist reaction to Romanticism is that it records a moment of reality as it actually appeared. Daguerre's camera

was immediately called a 'mirror' of the world, a metaphor frequently repeated to this day. (345)

Samuel Morse extended this notion further when he noted soon after the invention of photography that photographs '"cannot be called copies of nature, but portions of nature herself"' (Morse cited by Sekula 86). Numerous technological innovations from the 1840s onwards, according to the modernist ideal of progress, strove to dispel the barriers or cross the borders between the real (the photographic subject) and it's so-called representation (the photographic image).

Victor Burgin traces some effects of visual art theory on understandings of photography since its emergence (10-1). In the early 1980s he stated that while both Romanticism and Realism have made lasting impressions on how photographs are viewed, and Modernism has freed painting from traditional obligations to representation, photography (to the 1980s at least) has adhered to a nineteenth century mode of thinking. He sees this as evident in interpretations of photography which are dominated by a metaphor of 'depth' where the surface projects something 'beyond' or 'behind', something more 'profound' and hidden, awaiting discovery by the viewer. In contrast, Burgin argues that photographs, rather than containing a mysterious message, gather their meaning from their context (41). Turner Hospital's texts play with this notion from multiple points of view. For example, Lucy, in her role as prostitute in *The Last Magician*, wryly comments that context is crucial to identity, so that her presence is only present when there is a corresponding look of recognition (33).

In contrast, Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, published around the same time as Burgin's *Thinking Photography*, claims that the essence of photography is reference, since every photograph is 'co-natural with its

referent' (*Camera Lucida* 76). To be fair, it must be remembered that Barthes's work preceded the impact of recent technological innovations, which have significantly changed the construction of photographic discourse. Further, his earlier work had been based on Saussurean semiotics that argues for reciprocal correspondence between the signifier and the signified. Burgin notes that in Umberto Eco's essay 'Critique of the Image' (Burgin 32-8), Eco's beginning point for dismissing Barthes's argument (which attempts to match an object and its image) is a rejection of the notion of correspondence in photography (61-2). Eco notes that postmodernism has dismantled the premise that the photograph is an analogue of reality.

Turner Hospital takes a typically postmodern approach when she employs and then subverts the apparent transparency of photography in the genre of documentary film-making in *The Last Magician.* The narrative is framed by Lucy and Catherine's enterprise as documentary film-makers in juxtaposition with the postmodern film-making of Charlie Chang, highlighting Turner Hospital's contestation of the apparent transparency of photography and narrative. While Charlie claims that he takes photographs 'to see what he has seen', the narrative repeatedly and paradoxically points to the opacity of the photographic text. Likewise, such a desire to capture, to understand and to seek transparency, is at the heart of Soja's concept of Thirdspace: 'spaces of representation [including complex combinations and re-combinations of visual and verbal texts] contain all other real and imagined spaces simultaneously' (69). While Linda Andre notes that the documentary genre is traditionally and 'happily naïve about its status as picture, as representation, [with] claims to transparently reflect reality', postmodernist theory and practice would challenge that status as does indeed *The Last Magician* (33).

Charlie Chang, the photographer in *The Last Magician*, uses his camera as a tool to probe and capture at least partial glimpses of the depths of reality. Although he is constantly frustrated in his goal, he avidly collects photographs as though they are capsules of reality with the power to facilitate access to the presence of Cat. Ironically, Charlie cannot transcend the absence/presence border. Indeed, Soja's description of his realisation in *Thirdspace*: 'the incapacity of language, texts, discourses, geographies and historiographies to capture fully the meanings of human spatiality' (57) reflects some of Charlie's desire and the narrator's eventual insight. '*Lao Tzu says that speaking in words is like trying to sound the middle of the ocean with a six-foot pole*' (author's italics) (*Magician* 350). Charlie's frustrated attempts to traverse marginal spaces recall Owens's comments on the resemblances between photography and allegory. For Owens, photography parallels allegory in

> its capacity to rescue from historical oblivion that which threatens to disappear. Allegory...throughout its history...has functioned in the gap between a present and a past which, without allegorical reinterpretation, might have remained foreclosed ('Allegorical Impulse' [Part 1] 68).

In relation to questions of representation, *The Last Magician* can be read allegorically, according to the above criteria outlined by Owens. Indeed, Owens points to 'the allegorical potential of photography', particularly in regard to the self-conscious intention to preserve that which is transient or impermanent. He states that 'as an allegorical art, then, photography would represent our desire to fix the transitory, the ephemeral, in a stable and stabilizing image...[therefore]...that desire becomes the *subject* of the image' ('Allegorical Impulse' [Part 1] 71). Owens emphasises another element of allegory, whereby fragments are continuously collected in such a way that allegorical structure can be named 'obsessional neurosis' ('Allegorical Impulse' [Part 1] 72). 'Obsessional neurosis' can be an allegorical

method of construction which may appear random or arbitrary to any one other than those involved in the progression of the allegorical work of construction. This 'neurosis' parallels Charlie's apparent obsession with taking and collecting of photographs in a wide range of contexts, as well as the accumulated official documentation on Cat's identity which comprises 'police photographs,...reform school files, court record files, surveillance photographs...endless reports and treatises...' (*Magician* 302).

Contemporary postmodern texts, according to Owens, are notably hybrid in method and content, and are typically composed of eclectic combinations, across aesthetic boundaries ('Allegorical Impulse' [Part 1] 74-5). While Lucy appears to accept incongruities as the narrative of *The Last Magician* unfolds and poses a multiplicity of end points, Charlie becomes increasingly frustrated by the inability of photographs to hold onto a singular meaning, and, it could be argued that this frustration is an ultimate cause of his own disappearance. Although Charlie and his camera are always attempting to capture the subterranean, the underside, the quarry — the labyrinthine existence that underli(n)es respectable and acknowledged reality — he cannot reveal meanings in entirety (*Magician* 14-5). To bring such knowledges beyond the realm of the quarry is rare, as their marginality ensures their non-entity outside of the context of the quarry. Contrary to Charlie, Lucy simultaneously claims to achieve this rare ability of being able to bring meaning to the surface while acknowledging her inability to pose as a reliable narrator — a quality that she constantly and self-consciously holds in equilibrium. She states:

> As for me, I go back and forth, above and under. I cross borders. That world, this world, they coexist all the time and I move between them. It's a kind of greedy curiosity I have, a voraciousness, I was born with it, a hunger to live all my possible lives. (19)

By the end of her narrative, Lucy has returned to where she began and must learn to live with a number of contradictory realities or truths, represented by boxes of Charlie's photographs and his films, particularly 'Charlie's Inferno'.

Charlie's photographs glimpse aspects of truth because he uses what Hutcheon describes as postmodern photography's traits. His photographs simultaneously adopt the genres of modernist art-photography and the 'documentary "victim" photography of the 1930s' (*Politics* 43-4). In chapter three of *The Last Magician*, Charlie encourages Lucy to pose in conventional erotic poses so as to 'show you [simultaneously the photographer, viewer and subject] things you don't know about yourself' (25). By using conventional poses Charlie employs and then subverts the power of those conventions and attempts to uncover the truth for himself, the viewer and also the subject.

Lucy's narration develops her, and the reader's, recognition that texts, whether written or photographic, are open to a multiplicity of interpretations and a play of differences in which 'the meaning' is constantly deferred. Jacques Derrida calls this gap between form and meaning, this elision, 'différance'. Burgin cites Derrida:

> 'the so-called "thing itself" is always already a *representamen* abstracted from the simplicity of what is intuitively obvious. The *representament* functions only in giving rise to an *interpretant* which itself becomes sign and so on to infinity. The identity itself of the signified is concealed and displaced *ad infinitum*'. (54)

As I stated earlier, the reader is not privileged to *see* the photographs in Turner Hospital's texts. Rather, in *The Last Magician* the photographs are described through the filter of Lucy as narrator who is concurrently frank about the possibility of her unreliability as an interpreter. In this as in other Turner Hospital texts, the number of

'deferrals of meaning' are multiplied to such an extent that the reader cannot rely on the texts' referential relationship to truth.

Barthes writes that he once received a photograph of himself of which he had no recollection. Although he could not deny the existence of the photograph, he experienced a 'distortion between certainty and oblivion' which he calls 'vertigo'. He states that 'photography never lies: or rather, it can lie as to the meaning of the thing, being by nature "tendentious", never as to its existence' (*Camera Lucida* 87). He concludes that 'every photograph is [at least] a certificate of presence' (87). I contend, however, that every photograph is a certificate of *absence* since it represents the presence of that which was once present but is now textualised and contextualised, to the extent that the referent is no longer present.

Turner Hospital plays with and contests this aspect of the notion of presence in her texts. In *The Last Magician*, Barthes's experience of vertigo is recalled by Lucy's narrative on two occasions when she sees an image of herself in Charlie's film 'Charlie's Inferno' (4-5 & 323). Lucy comments, 'I stumbled over my own feet as it were, [and] bumped into myself on a cinema screen...The shock was so great that I blacked out' (4-5). From a Barthesian viewpoint, Lucy can regard her presence in the film as not so much a copy of reality but an 'emanation' of a possible reality. Hence, for Lucy, Charlie as photographer is a magician, a producer of magic. Although Lucy can dissect the technical process by which Charlie constructed her image in a place and time she could not recall, and although she identifies herself as a story teller and film-maker, Lucy disapproves: 'They're an arrogant and dangerous lot, the photographers, the film-makers, the story tellers and spinners of images and words, the black magicians' (324).

At other points in her narrative Lucy is more receptive to the myriad of messages spun by photographs, as though she is acknowledging that the viewer's exposition of photographs is paramount in their interpretation and reception. Gabriel also experiences an inability to remember a past that is presented to him in a photograph. Gabriel's intense need to comprehend his childhood and the departure of his father Robbie/Judge Robinson Gray creates a huge void in Gabriel's identity. The presence of a photograph apparently taken by his father of Gabriel, puzzles him further since he cannot recall the instant at which it was taken (182-3). Andre's statement would seem to explain Lucy's and Gabriel's separate experiences of vertigo:

> Much of the pleasure we derive from photographs comes from the way they seem to provide us with an unmediated experience of something real. We suspend our awareness of the photograph's status as photograph — the process of signification — to pay attention to the subject of the photograph — the signified...Photography satisfies our...curiosity....There is also the pleasure that comes from implicating oneself in the photograph, as we would a film, imagining ourselves in the situation photographed. (25)

However, as Lucy almost remarks at her interrogation by the police, curiosity does not bring pleasurable fulfilment; rather, 'curiosity killed the cat' (*Magician* 310). In *The Last Magician*, photography does not satisfy curiosity but feeds it. Curiosity in turn leads to obsession, and obsession leads to death or at least disappearance, absence and silence (310).

In Turner Hospital's work, the manipulation of presence is ironically only possible where there is absence, and the frames of both photography and narrative provide ideal spaces for questioning the representation of presence. This longing for presence is a central theme of Turner Hospital's texts. In *The Last Magician*, the

presence of primarily Cat, and of Charlie, Gabriel, and numerous others are continually frustrated by the illusion of offers, in the form of photographs and film, that promise the possibility of touch, of a closing of the gap between reality and representation, or an end to waiting. As the narrative unfolds, however, Lucy becomes increasingly aware that the existence of a photograph or an image on a film is not a precise match for an actual presence. This unbridged gap between absence and presence is acknowledged and played out in a number of ways. First, it is evident in the search that drives both Lucy in *The Last Magician* and Jean-Marc in *Borderline*, as narrators, to tell of their undertaking. Their work as viewers and/or writers is like Sisyphean labour, whereby each is continually doomed to yearn for and never reach the elusive other and therefore the elusive self. This yearning is echoed by many other characters in the narrative, such as Gabriel's deep need to understand his father. This desire drives him to map the quarry: 'He collected faces...he scribbled notes on the backs of Charlie's photographs, documenting and dating. He was looking for clues' (265). Gabriel also seeks the truth; that is, to discover the extent of his father's implication in a murder. Further, the text of *The Last Magician* is indeed focussed on the elusiveness of the 'real' subject, and it is Charlie's grief, as much as it is Gabriel's grief, that drives and haunts each of them.

In a similar fashion, in *Borderline* the elusiveness of Felicity's mother haunts Felicity. A photograph of 'a woman in white, walking away from the camera' (21) is the only tangible evidence that Felicity can grasp in relation to her mother. The narrative merges the border between Felicity/Felicity's mother and Felicity/Dolores Marquez in such a way that each becomes reciprocal. Through the suspect and tainted filter of Jean-Marc's narrative, the reader is confronted with Felicity's dissatisfaction with the gap between experience and the representation of it as a memory to the extent

that it 'distresses' Felicity (22). The narrative construes Felicity's disappearance as the result of her experience of distress, elusiveness and non-agency.

Whereas children search for their parents in *Borderline* and *The Last Magician*, in Turner Hospital's *Oyster*, Sarah Cohen and Nick McCree are only present in the narrative because of the alleged absence of their children. These desperate parents arrive in Outer Maroo in search of Amy and Angelo, who in a sense have been absent before their arrival, since at Oyster's Reef they are named Rose of Sharon and Gideon. Mercy is privileged to know of Amy and Angelo's existence through the power of the use of their true names. As Amy states, 'secretly, we've used our real names to each other, Angelo and me. It's like, it feels like a stick of dynamite in our hands' (91). Mercy also knows of the existence of a photograph of the pair taken by Major Miner using Amy's Polaroid camera. Mercy is aware of the power of this photographic image 'like a stick of dynamite' in Ma Beresford's sack of unposted letters and parcels, so that she protests when Sarah's mother tries to show her a photograph of Amy. Sarah states '"I am looking for Amy"' (103) as she hands the photograph to Mercy, as though this paper is a representation of the truth of Amy's identity and existence. In giving Mercy the photograph, Sarah is unwittingly confirming Amy's absence and, indeed sealing her death, from a Barthesian viewpoint. Nick (another of Turner Hospital's name-shifting characters variously named Nikos Makarios/Nick McCree) does not wield a photograph of his son Angelo. Rather, he is empowered by his 'photographic' memories of his son and of his grandmother's warning that Angelo is one of the 'troubled ones' who will require Nick's diligent paternal 'eye' (111-2). Nick's memories are described as photographic so that when 'he closes his eyes tightly and sees a red network of rivers branching and

circling' it is as though he is envisaging 'a bloodshot photograph' of his memories (114), creating metaphorical links between his paternal 'eye' as camera.

Barthes's narrative in *Camera Lucida* is driven by the author/narrator's grief for his absent mother. Grief for his dead mother, as subject of *The Winter Garden* photograph, causes Barthes to suggest that the photograph represents the point at which death occurs. He muses that the photographer's 'contortions' to produce lifelike effects are useless, since the operation of photography constructs the self as an object for classification and disposal (14). Eduardo Cadava's article 'Negative Imprint: Film, Photogram, and the Apocalyptic Moment' also argues that a photograph 'corresponds to a self that only appears in the apocalyptic moment of its disappearance' (266). This notion is encapsulated in the action of taking photographs. For Barthes, this immobilises time and brings about 'stasis', so that photographers are 'agents of death', responsible for separation from the past (*Camera Lucida* 89-91).

Turner Hospital's texts implicitly, and sometimes more explicitly, play with this modernist concept that depicts photographers as 'agents of death'. In *The Last Magician*, Lucy narrates two stories told by Charlie which both link photographs and death in such a way that the photographer could be construed as an agent of death (230-4). The first story tells of an innocent connection to a professional burglar who is killed as a result of being identified in a 'holiday snap'; a coincidence which also didactically underlines one of *The Last Magician*'s underpinning themes that 'an act of violence is an intimate act' (232). The second story told by Charlie details his innocent implication in the paedophilic activities of a neighbour, so that Charlie's photographs are transformed into an 'officially documented' record that becomes unintentionally entangled in the guilt and resultant suicide of his neighbour. Charlie's story points to the slipperiness of interpretation that enables the act of photography

and the resulting photographs to be mistakenly perceived. In this instance it is the viewer's interpretation rather than the photographer's claimed intention that is taken into account by those institutions who wield authority. Pornographic intention is implied in the purpose to which these photographs are put.

A further paradox along the border between absence and presence is also evident in *The Last Magician* with Lucy's rejection of touch, while at the same time she sympathises with and assists Charlie in his quest for the present location of Cat. Lucy muses on her role as prostitute: 'It's what appeals about the life...the money always between,...the sweet fact that you can never be touched' (34). Lucy-as-prostitute repels touch, and appreciates the camera as partition, apparently preferring the clarity of borders uncrossed. Yet, at the same time, Lucy-as-narrator acknowledges the existence of borders and her ability to co-exist in two realms. However seductive her desire to straddle the gap that divides absence and presence, the transcendence of this gap is merely a dream, a glimpse of a partial reality, never quite touching or viewing totality (229). She recognises Charlie's quest to cross borders and to bring together the two realms of reality and representation in his ability to splice '...the two together in that seamless way that constitutes film-making magic. Hey presto, the rabbit pulled out of the hat, the coin from behind the ear, Cat at my fingertips' (324). Simultaneously, she recognises and challenges Charlie's frustrated intention, throughout *The Last Magician*; that is, to use photography to achieve the possibility of the presence of Cat.

In his discussion of the landmark 1979 photographic exhibition 'Pictures', Douglas Crimp argues that representation can only take place where the original is absent. 'The desire of representation exists only insofar as it never be fulfilled, insofar as the original always be deferred' (98). The elusiveness of Cat in *The Last Magician*,

Dolores Marquez in *Borderline* and Amy and Angelo in *Oyster* echoes Crimp's statement when he maintains that photography achieves its presence '...through absence, through its unbridgeable distance from the original, from even the possibility of an original' (94). Crimp develops his notion of presence in opposition to Walter Benjamin's notion of the aura. Crimp proposes that '...the aura has to do with the presence of the original, with authenticity, with the unique existence of the work of art in the place in which it happens to be' (94). While Benjamin commented on the loss of aura at the time of the mechanical reproduction that accompanied photography, he did not allocate 'aura' solely to hand-produced works and 'non-aura' to mechanically reproduced works. Rather, Benjamin locates the aura with the quality of presence of the subject in the photograph, whereas in a painting the aura is located with the presence of the painter in the painting. Crimp suggests that Benjamin appears to have accepted the loss of the aura as positive and liberating, with the result that contemporary photography is widely recognised as empty of aura.

According to Crimp, contemporary photography does not indicate presence of both/either the subject or photographer, so that there can no longer be claims as to a work's uniqueness (95). In *The Last Magician*, on the other hand, Sheba claims that the boxes of photographs of herself point to the absence of her self as subject and signal instead the presence of the photographer. Thus, she asserts, '"We're not looking at me, you drip. We're looking at the blokes who took the pics"' (326). While Lucy-as-narrator would deny such a position, Lucy-as-character is paradoxically seduced by the photographs and, despite her desire to remain untouched, captivated by her desire for them to reveal the presence of both the absent subject (Cat) and the absent photographer (Charlie). Lucy says 'I sift through the boxes and boxes of photographs that Sheba keeps....It's as though Charlie's photographs retain the lost

essence of their maker and their subjects and the essence comes off on my hands' (320). Postmodern theorists would argue that the interpretations of Sheba and Lucy are equally valid, being contextually determined. Both Sheba and Lucy recognise that the photographs represent 'Charlie's stamp' which is paradoxically Cat's stamp, while at the same time echoing modernist photographic conventions in a typically postmodernist fashion, as noted earlier. Here, presence is defined by the photographer's stamp which is, at the same time, the subject's stamp. However, the subject remains absent in a temporal sense.

The craft of the photographer is revealed by Crimp as he gives examples of postmodern photography where '*a priori* images' are visualised before the photograph is taken (*cf* 'Allegorical Impulse Part 2' 77). In the same way, both Charlie Chang and Robinson Gray as photographers, have images (of the absent subject, Cat) in mind before they take photographs and they later direct Lucy and Sheba to pose according to these pre-existing images. As I have noted earlier, Hutcheon refers to 'appropriated images' as a mark of postmodern photography (*Politics* 43). Craig Owens comments that the work of Cindy Sherman is emblematic of postmodern women photographers, who subversively appropriate images of women in their photographs: 'Sherman's women are not women but images of women...specular models of femininity...they are, in other words, tropes, [and] figures' (77). Lucy attributes to Charlie a photograph that she believes is 'unmistakably stamped with Charlie's mark' since the subject's pose mirrors Cat-as-prostitute in black mesh stockings sitting astride a chair. Sheba quickly responds to Lucy that it was taken by Sonny Blue/Robinson Gray (*Magician* 327). The participants in the visual and/or verbal texts of *The Last Magician* are reminiscent of Crimp's statement in relation to the postmodern photographic work of Sherrie Levine: 'the presence that such photographs have for us is the presence of déjà

vu, nature as already having been seen, nature as representation' (99). Indeed, Charlie's photographs are the product of highly manipulated, self-consciously composed, directed, *a priori* images, as illustrated in his photographic session with Lucy in chapter three (*Magician* 25-45). Crimp would see this 'directorial mode' as a postmodern strategy '...to use the apparent veracity of photography against itself, creating one's fictions through the appearance of a seamless reality into which has been woven a narrative dimension' (99).

I would agree with Hutcheon when she states that the project of 'postmodernism challenges our mimetic assumptions about representation... assumptions about its transparency and common-sense naturalness' (*Politics* 32). Postmodernism challenges the assumptions that equate photographs with an unmediated access to reality; rather, photographs are yet another filter between representation and reality. As Hutcheon notes, the poignancy of postmodernism is that it foregrounds 'many of the usually unacknowledged and naturalised implications of narrative representation' (35) so that the reader can ask with regard to *The Last Magician*, for example, have many of the characters — or the reader, who has experienced the existence of photographs through the filter of Lucy's narration — ever known Cat from more than one angle? The traces of Cat's existence are accessible representations for the narrator and characters in *The Last Magician*. However, at the same time, these representations signal her absence both to the characters and, through the frame of the narrative, and therefore at a double remove, to the reader. In discussing Angela Carter's contemporary text 'The Loves of Lady Purple', Hutcheon notes '...that women (as prostitutes, in particular) are never real; they are but representations of male erotic fantasies and of male desire' (*Politics* 32). Both Charlie Chang and Robinson Gray take photographs of women posing as prostitutes in their

attempt to gain access to Cat, albeit an isolated aspect of her identity. However, the act of gazing through the eye of the camera to take photographs, while acknowledging Cat as referent, does not bring them into closer contact with Cat's presence.

The Last Magician also looks at the issue of authority through the lens of a postmodernist approach to photography. While a discussion of the undermining of the narrator's reliability — and therefore her authority — is discussed elsewhere in my chapter on memory and identity, phallic authority is interrogated by Lucy's perception of the instrumentality of Charlie's camera. This is particularly evident in chapter three of the novel where she is not silenced by Charlie and his camera as he directs her to assume positions as prostitute which recall his perception of Cat (25-45). The camera problematises the subjectivities of both Lucy as the subject of the photographs and Charlie as the photographer. Charlie's initially stated intention to capture the representation which recalls Cat for him; that is, as a 'snare', 'a trap that a man swims into' (25), is undermined by his uncertainty as to whether he is in control or powerlessly being propelled by the subject. 'Is he the stage manager or a puppet, the magician or the magician's stooge? He is never sure' (30). As Sue Lovell notes in her discussion of this chapter, 'The camera is not an instrument by which representations are merely created or consolidated but is instead a means of questioning any singular representation so that the narrative works to undermine phallic authority' (206). In chapter three, Turner Hospital apparently signals her intention to expose a multiplicity of possibilities for representation, and utilises the lens of postmodern photographic discourse as one of her vehicles.

Lovell points to another postmodern paradox wherein 'the subject-framing eye of the photographer is difficult to reconcile with the objectivity of the camera's technology, its seemingly transparent realism of recording' (120-1). In *The Last*

Magician, this paradox is specifically acknowledged through the characterisation and voice of Charlie. The narrative undermines both the imaginative and the mimetic possibilities of representation for the photographs he takes of Lucy-as-prostitute, when he visualises a 'photofallus' in response to her complaint, 'I might as well be a coat rack as a waitress' (32). The text is here acknowledging that while photographs can be singularly focussed or phallic, photographs are also fallacies (in a plural sense), since as Lovell notes they do not capture the entirety of the contextual moment and are embedded with multiple meanings (206). Turner Hospital's multiple rendering of the selves Lucia/Lucy as narrator/character/photographic subject, highlights the notion of the self as imaginary construct — an aspect of Turner Hospital's work that I have discussed in my chapter on memory and identity.

Hutcheon's work redresses what she labels as a dismissal of postmodernism, a view wherein she states that there is no coherent 'truth', that the centre is empty or absent and therefore posing the subject of representation as absent. Rather, Hutcheon states that this centre is called into question by a view of postmodernism which disrupts 'that sense of the coherent, continuous, autonomous, and free subject [as]...a historically conditioned and historically determined construct' (*Politics* 38). *The Last Magician* uncovers the emptiness and, indeed, the corruption of the central construct of so-called 'truth' and presents the subjectivity of the individual and of society as in process, rather than fixed or stable. Further, it illuminates the postmodernist notion that representation constructs both the self and the other. Hence, in *The Last Magician*, the constructs of 'triage' and 'the quarry' are juxtaposed in a reciprocal relationship, as subtext to the characters. Likewise, Lucy/Lucia is both narrator and narrated, a fissured subject, sliding from third to first person (Hutcheon *Politics* 40-1).

Turner Hospital's texts are postmodern in that they characteristically subvert the assumed stability of human constructs of 'truth'. When Hutcheon discusses Barbara Kruger's 'photo-graphic'works, she notes that Kruger's shifts in narrative tense highlight the notion of '"shifters"' or '...empty signs that are filled with meaning only by their context...[and] this works to disrupt (traditionally male) pleasures of visual voyeurism' (*Politics* 136-7). When Charlie tries to describe his intentions for his film 'Charlie's Inferno', saying it is '"a sort of photographic decomposition...The declensions of an image...The subject matter keeps changing"' (*Magician* 52), he is also describing the nature of his photographic quest for Cat. His comment is also apt for Lucy's project as narrator. Further, his statement highlights Turner Hospital's critical use of conventional approaches to the construction of subjectivity in photographic and social discourse. As the narrator says, '"I myself. What a riddle that is. Where, in the grab bag of costumes and masks, does the self hide out?"' (56). As the text unfolds, Lucy's narrative reveals her growing acceptance and realisation of the futility of constructing any stable notion of 'the truth' or 'the self', while at the same time, Charlie, Lucy and the reader discover the multiplicity of the selves of Cat. Indeed, as Lucy reminisces, 'part of his black magic... his uncanny power...[and] second sight' is (or was) Charlie's ability '...to shuffle incongruities and hold them up to the light and show that their contours matched' (56). In the same way, ironically, Lucy develops her postmodern narrative from a kaleidoscope of viewpoints.

As discussed earlier, contemporary art photography has been significantly influenced by the project of postmodernism. Andre notes, in 'The Politics of Postmodern Photography' (17), that the early connections of postmodernism with photography during the late 1970s were seen as indicative of a new avant-garde. Postmodern photography was viewed as a new discourse wherein photographic artists

viewed reality as increasingly being channelled through visual mediation, implying that visual representation is a crucial aspect of contemporary human experience. Douglas Crimp is cited by Andre as a germinal theoretical voice in this regard. In his discussion of the 1979 photographic exhibition 'Pictures', Crimp states that a small number of American photographers in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Sherrie Levine, Cindy Sherman and Richard Prince) are highly significant and influential as they

> addressed photography's claims to originality, showing these claims for the fiction they are, showing photography to be always a representation, always-already-seen. Their images are purloined, confiscated, appropriated, stolen. In their work the original cannot be located, is always deferred; even the self which might have generated an original is shown to be a copy. (98)

While Andre acknowledges 'a grain of truth' in Crimp's premise, she criticises his particular postmodernism which, she believes, dispenses with the possibility of firsthand experience of the contemporary real (22). She argues that while representation is not the equivalent of presence of the real it has more substance than merely re-presentation. Andre argues that Crimp's vision is typical of early assumptions by theorists of the postmodern in that he dispenses with the possibility of reality outside of representation: 'Crimp holds that our visual experience is mediated by representational and cultural codes. Just as there is nothing outside of the text, there is nothing outside of representation' (Andre 21). Andre notes that Crimp can therefore propose

> that the notion of originality is a myth; there can be no author, since all texts are only reworkings of already-written ones; no creativity, since anything that exists inside a person's mind has already been inscribed, encoded by language and culture. An artist can only copy what is already

> a copy. Not even a photographer can hope to transparently reflect anything real. (21)

Andre argues that such a view both depoliticises and disempowers the potential for creativity and representation (31).

Turner Hospital's texts, I would argue, support Andre's view. In *The Last Magician* Lucy's narrative appears to work by the premise that there is unending potential for creativity and that contextually determined meanings enable equally valid representations from a multiplicity of beginning points with a multiplicity of outcomes. Lucy acknowledges this as she constantly re-visits a collection of Charlie's photographs, stating that she knows they have something to tell her but she 'cannot translate' (340). This highlights the notion that Turner Hospital's texts pose and re-pose: that is, that photography is as much about manipulation and decoding of messages as any other text so that what the viewer sees depends on the context of both viewer and photographs. Thus, the viewer/reader must determine his or her own contextualised 'translation' or meaning. Charlie states that he takes photographs for the purpose of seeing what he has seen, as though by viewing each photograph outside of its context he will have a clearer understanding of his own journey or map (34 & 36). Yet this meaning eludes Charlie as his photographs become re-interpreted in the context of powerful societal structures and the photographs become instruments to be used against him. While Turner Hospital's texts do not set the reader up to expect a transparent reflection of reality, they do pose the expectation that the reader will be creative in 'writing' their own contextually meaningful text. As Lucy muses in the concluding chapter, 'There are things we know. And there are things we don't realise we know. And there are times when we decide it is better not to find out what perhaps we unconsciously know' (348-9).

Deborah Bowen argues that Turner Hospital seems to view photographs as a 'magical site of potential transfiguration' wherein 'photographs present opportunities for the reinterpretation of appearances into new harmony' (195). Bowen then concludes that 'Hospital is a romantic rather than an ironic postmodernist' since she 'discloses an attachment to the notions of essential meaning, narrative coherence, and the unity of the subjective consciousness' (195). However, I would argue that while Turner Hospital's characters do yearn for a coherent plot, the construction of Turner Hospital's texts belie her 'attachment' to notions of contextual meaning, narrative circularity, and multidimensional subjectivity. Turner Hospital's texts give evidence of her commitment to the value of photographs and images as contextually determined aids to memory so that while they can provide extra meaning to embodied memories, they are not imbued with the power of transfiguration. Indeed, at times for Felicity in *Borderline*, photographs can be frustratingly opaque texts:

> Felicity looked at the photograph in her wallet. The two little girls and the old woman stared impassively back. They told her nothing. She looked at her other photographs: her father was mending nets, preoccupied; her mother would not turn around. No messages there either. Nothing. (243)

On the other hand, the creative potential of photographs in Turner Hospital's texts enable readers to 'expect the unexpected', so that her inclusion of the 'other' in a range of forms are creatively framed by her approaches to photography and its inclusion in her texts. Jay, in the title of his article, 'Photo-unrealism: The Contribution of the Camera to the Crisis of Ocularcentrism', points to one paradox of photography. That is, the camera's potential to reveal the unseen by rendering visible the shadow side, the unconscious. In *The Last Magician* this is symbolised by the quarry or the unsightly and hidden underside of Sydney. Through the camera lens,

both Charlie and Lucy grant to photography the capacity to reveal something other than celebrated images of truth. Lovell states that the role of photography is opened up by Charlie so that not only is he telling Lucy's/Cat's story but she is telling her own. 'What she says makes a difference to the picture' (25). Lovell argues that '[Charlie] is not interested in perpetuating the status quo but in understanding how it is constructed, how it is based on the suppression of the invisible. He is preoccupied with how the underworld or the quarry supports the walled gardens of the respectable' (206). As we have noted, through his camera lens, Charlie hopes to at least sight a glimpse of the lost Cat and ultimately to re(dis)cover her. The text positions Turner Hospital as a 'political postmodernist'; that is, a novelist who demands engagement and relevance to contemporary cultural politics, yet is obviously self-ironic as she questions the idealism of such an enterprise. The subjectivity of Cat within the text of *The Last Magician* is representative of Turner Hospital's postmodern stance. This positioning of postmodernism as political is summarised by Hutcheon: 'the postmodern argues that what we so valued is a construct, not a given, and, in addition, a construct that occupies a relation of power in our culture' (*Poetics* 203).

The text of *The Last Magician* is primarily concerned with the quest for Cat yet in doing so both narrator and photographer become caught in something much bigger which, while it remains secondary to the plot, is significant to the outcome of events. Charlie's photographs, which render visible and ironically picturesque the underside of Sydney, resonate with Susan Sontag's claims that

> photography first comes into its own as an extension of the eye of the middle-class flaneur... The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes (55).

Lucy explains to Charlie her methods of avoiding immersion and consumption by the 'urban inferno' when she states '"I'm a tourist...An explorer..."' who 'prefer[s] the camera as partition' so that she 'can never be touched' (34). Lucia Barclay's quest to understand both sides of society and consequently other dimensions of her self leads to her reinvention of her self as Lucy. As narrator she comments about herself, 'She wished desperately to appear as a native. She wished to belong to the non-belongers' (31).

A Foucauldian reading of Turner Hospital's texts reveals that in her texts power is positioned as a complex phenomenon which is installed within existing structures and has the potential to subvert from within. I agree with Kate Temby when she states, '*The Last Magician* [and other Turner Hospital texts analysed in this thesis] contains a discourse on power which questions the relationship of the power of the centre to the power of the margins' (47). The result is that 'traditional understandings of power as a centralised repressive force' (48) are challenged and refuted. The operations of power in Turner Hospital's texts exemplify this challenge to a modernist concept of power, so that power operates within pedestrian contexts and disregards social or economic status. However, I disagree with Temby's dismissal of the potency of the complex power relations that operate in this novel:

> *The Last Magician* is ultimately pessimistic about the possibility of the marginalised overcoming the power structures that oppress them, or transforming the conception of power that structures a hierarchical and oppressive society. (48)

I argue that since power is present in non-traditional forms, it is less obvious to the contemporary modernist observer.

As Turner Hospital's texts explore the world of what Lucy terms the 'non-belongers' (31), 'quarry'-dwellers (19-23), or the underside of respectable urban

Australia, one of these traditional forms of power is given the term 'triage'. 'Triage', as defined by *The Last Magician*'s narrator, is 'a system of priorities designed to maximise the number of survivors in times of crisis and natural disaster' (91). In *The Last Magician*, triage describes a system where the elite are heard and the margins are silenced. Charlie seeks to capture 'triage' in his camera lens in a number of contexts. One photograph is entitled 'Triage'. It is a dark blur with the fang of a snake and a handful of chosen ants in its illuminated centre (91-2). The second photograph is entitled 'The Descent into Sydney'. It is of a gutted building which merges into resemblance of Dante's 'Inferno' which merges into Sebastaio Selgado's photographs of a gold mine in Serra Pelada, Brazilian Amazonia, in the early 1980s (*cf.* Ransom 7-9), which merges into a children's chant (*Magician* 92). The multiple interpretations of Charlie's photographs facilitate notions of the instrumentality of photography. While Charlie's photographs may be interpreted as private snapshots, they are shown — in another context — to be re-interpreted in a completely different manner when they are caught in the net that 'triage' (90-2) casts in its endeavour to maintain the utilitarian goals of the *status quo*. Contrary to Temby's statement above, I argue that the narrative seeks to contradict this net of power so that, although Cat is a silent subject of/in Charlie's photographs, her 'power was absolute' (202).

> People with a different sort of power...despised the kind of power that Cat had, they snapped their fingers at it, they did not acknowledge that it was any kind of power at all... They ignored it because it made them uneasy, because it didn't acknowledge their kind of power. (202)

While acknowledging the power of Cat-as-character, the narrative ambivalently claims that triage drives the use of photographs as instruments of power, enabling 'innocent' or private snapshots to be utilised as state documents of evidence. This transformation of purpose ensures that subjects such as Cat and Lucy are silenced

through the instrumental use of Charlie's photographs at the interrogation following Charlie's and Gabriel's disappearances (308-12).

A third photograph entitled 'Triage' depicts two debating teams on the occasion of the debate on the same topic (254). While, on the surface, the narrative of *The Last Magician* seems to be resigned to the outcome of the school debate; that is, the triumph of triage in all its modernist splendour of logic and order in opposition to passion and chaos (254). The narrator maintains a glimmer of hope by posing numerous endings to the text and multiple interpretations to the photographs. Multiple interpretations can be posited by the installation of legitimate conventions of photography; that is, teams probably set out in rows, before the 'battle' begins. Yet notions of authority and power are no doubt undermined by Charlie's intention as photographer within what can be perceived as acceptable conventions. As Hutcheon notes, 'all representations have a politics; they also have a history', and they also have multiple possible interpretations on the basis of their context (*Politics* 46). Ironically, Charlie, when questioned as to his reason for taking photographs, responds with a spiritual reflection that "'...the Tao of the photographer is like the stretching of a bow"' as photography "'...brings down what is high; it lifts up what is low. I quote Lao Tzu"' (*Magician* 35). According to Charlie, then, photographs are powerful instruments in dismantling privilege and power. For Lucy, Charlie's three photographs of 'triage' are part of the narrative rather than part of the evidence and therefore no singular truth or representation can be applied to them, yet they seem to remain symbols of hope in her narrative. Given the placement of Chuang Tzu's story in the concluding pages of *The Last Magician* it would seem that the narrative supports the de-privileging and dismantling of Western constructs of knowledge and truth. Although this would logically and ironically seem to eliminate the possibility of

any truthful conclusion, which is of course the ultimate dilemma of extreme postmodernism, Lucy's narrative concludes with the hope that 'we hang on to the lifeline of the silence that connects us, [with] the great beating wings of our absent ones deafening us and filling the air with light' (352).

The authority of photography has been historically raised as a further tension that persists in photographic discourse and this questioning has been a means for discounting its value as a discourse. Charles Baudelaire is among the early acclaimed voices of the later nineteenth century who loudly derided what he perceived as the intentional trespassing of photography into the realm of the imagination (Baudelaire in Jay 351). When the news of the invention of the camera was first released, there were claims that 'painting was dead' with accompanying fears for the annihilation of the imaginative arts. Even over a century later, Barthes speaks for many when he notes in *Camera Lucida* that 'photography has been, and is still, tormented by the ghost of Painting' since painting is purported to be the absolute, paternal Reference, the parent of all art (30-1).

While in *The Last Magician* there is no reference to painting, Turner Hospital's *Borderline* addresses the falsity of the notions of authority and truth of painting as juxtaposed to photography more explicitly than *The Last Magician*. In *Borderline*, Turner Hospital points to the propensity of painting to deviate from the truth and to employ imaginative strategies so that the subject of a painting may be critiqued as 'not real. She is an idealization, an embodiment of the painter's fantasies' (17). This confusion of identity becomes Felicity's predicament as she cannot separate her identity from that which Seymour imagines for her in a myriad of paintings: 'Felicity often overheard herself described as a painter's dream. For years the remark bothered her because it took on a life of its own' (17). Jean-Marc reports that she

stated that 'when I'm right there, in flesh and blood, in front of his paintings...I get this queasy feeling that it's vulgar of me to insist on being literal' (18). Her insubstantiality works against Felicity since Jean-Marc has previously experienced her ethereal quality as a temporary trick of light, perhaps prefiguring her disappearance.

In the light of Turner Hospital's use of photography within the frame of her narratives, I agree with Jay when he argues that in at least two senses 'the Baudelairean disdain for the corrupting effect of photography on art was mistaken' (351). Firstly, photography, like other artforms such as painting, has never been a mimetic, transparent form, despite early claims as to its truthful correspondence. Postmodernism acknowledges that photographs 'still represent (for they cannot avoid reference) but what they represent is self-consciously shown to be highly filtered by the discursive and aesthetic assumptions of the camera-holder' (*Politics* 7 & 59). Secondly, contemporary approaches to photography have enabled it to be utilised in an extensive range of new contexts as supplement and/or stimulus in the production and manifestation of new aesthetic possibilities. Hutcheon sees art as overlapping and interacting with social systems, where a discourse of visual arts intersects with a discourse of the social, so that there is no neutral, value-free location from which representation can originate (*Politics* 46). Postmodernist approaches to representation therefore propose that the humanist separation of art and life (or human imagination and order as opposed to chaos and disorder) can no longer hold.

Turner Hospital juxtaposes the frames of photography and narrative to bring about new possibilities in an innovative Thirdspace. The narrator in *The Last Magician* constantly refers to the reader's ability to bring together images and stories. At one point, she asks, 'can a watcher, a mere watcher, influence the course of events? I have come to think so. Watchers, after all, make choices; they choose what to see.

And certainly the course of events changes the watcher' (82). Lucy comments on the splicing of visual texts with verbal texts when she admires Charlie's ability to juggle incongruities and when she talks about his uncanny ability to be 'an interpreter of the gaps and the spaces...and...read between the cracks [so that] he saw the negative print' or 'underexposed' aspects of texts (83).

Further, Turner Hospital's texts foreground other modernist approaches to photography which view the image as instruments of the state. Another social implication of photography came about as a result of A A E Disderi's invention of the personal *carte de visite* or private calling card in 1854. This invention of a reduced and reproducible photographic card has been utilised for public documentation and identification purposes, such as licenses, passports, and other state-regulated forms of identification and surveillance. Jay notes that many theorists have commented on the use of such images. Jay quotes John Tagg as an example of a theorist who, from a Foucauldian perspective, writes that such images are

> a leading example of the disciplined and normalized subject produced by modern techniques of power : 'the body made object; divided and studied; enclosed in a cellular structure of space whose architecture is the file-index; made docile and forced to yield up its truth; separated and individuated; subjected and made subject'. (353)

Turner Hospital's texts both foreground and render problematic some of the issues which result when women's subjectivity is inscribed by others through 'modern techniques of power'. Although photographic identification cards are not used in *The Last Magician*, the two police officers, Trog and Hunter, are the agents of the state who render the subjects of Charlie's photographs as inert objects. The police interrogation of Lucy renders her subjectivity immediately guilt-ridden so that her words are snapped up and re-translated through the lens of officialdom, of 'triage',

and she loses power over their meaning. In the same way, the inertia or silence of the photographic subjects is constructed by Trog and Hunter in such a way that these texts become docile subjects that are inscribed with whatever translation is read into them. When Lucy is confronted with the official 'documentation on Cat, [including] the files, [and] the photographs' she is confronted with a realisation that 'the details of a life on film and microchip' can be 'astonishing' (310). Earlier in the narrative she remarks 'It is quite amazing, actually, how many photographs they have of Cat. More than Charlie does, I would say' (302). Lucy also notes the unending words that stand as reports on the life of Cat. In ironic contrast throughout her narrative, Lucy is consciously aware of the imbalance of Cat's silence. Lucy's narrative provides an alternative reading of the collection of images and words that are the traces of Cat's existence as a contrast to the official translation of the same documentation. Lucy is able to deny the official version of truth because of her defense that, as a postmodernist narrator, her role is not simply to illuminate but rather to point to the violence to which Cat is subjected which is denied by the official version of truth (300-2).

Likewise, Jess's voice in her role as narrator of *Oyster*, and other voices, particularly women's (Susannah Rover and Mercy Given), are empowered to deny 'officialdom'. While time and memory are acknowledged to be 'tricksters' by Mercy, she is buoyed by the possibility of prohibited letters from Miss Rover (85). Whether these letters are imaginary or real is disputable. For Mercy, they were full of the promise of liberation, and they 'were long and witty and irreverent and encouraging and full of all kinds of illicit knowledge' (85). Mercy hopes that an exception will be made to the postmistress's rules and that she will be able to read them when she escapes from Outer Maroo. Outer Maroo is effectively unmapped, providing a refuge

for those who wish to escape official obligations, including financial commitments (Dukke vanKerk or, in an ironic play on double meanings, Mr Prophet (79-80)), or personal responsibilities (Susannah Rover (82)). Technology is determinedly minimised so that telephone communication is restricted to local calls; newspapers and *Women's Weekly* are scrutinised and available to only a select few; television, radio, computers or internet access are forbidden (222), and water supplies are limited. Patriarchal structures are challenged by Susannah Rover, whose teaching contract is terminated by her 'transfer', and by Jess Hyde (or Old Silence), whose self-imposed silence is a self-acknowledged costume which enables her to far more successfully use and then subvert the power structures that grip Outer Maroo. This subjectivity is typical of Turner Hospital's penchant to disperse and locate power in the margins, in the silent ones, in a lived space of representation created by the operations of Thirdspace, as much as in the traditional locations at the centre.

While Turner Hospital's texts foreground and address the politics of (particularly female) subjectivity, they contest notions of autonomous, humanist meaning so that the narratives and their structure provide alternative avenues of power. Turner Hospital's typically unstable and disordered narratives pose problems for any notions of a coherent, stable and unified narrative self (Temby 51) in her texts, and they facilitate the creative and disorderly operations of Thirdspace to come into play. Representations of the spatiality of the self, whether visual or verbal, are filtered and therefore necessarily multifaceted through the frame of photography in Turner Hospital's texts, so that Thirdspace operations are 'all-inclusive and transdisciplinary in scope yet politically focused' (Soja 70). Thus representations of space, or photographic texts and verbal texts, are contextualised and involved in a process of 'journeying to new ground [that] never ceases' so that the texts are 'always...moving

on to new possibilities and places' (82). This continuous movement is typical of Turner Hospital's texts where representations of space through visual and narrative texts are explored and developed with the understanding that there can be myriad interpretations.

CHAPTER THREE

SPACES OF REPRESENTATION: MEMORY AND IDENTITY

Recent psychoanalytic approaches to social theory and literary theory (such as those of Anthony Giddens and Linda Hutcheon) assert that memory shapes the construction of self-identity, while pointing to the paradoxical nature of memory. In keeping with such approaches, and as I analyse a number of Janette Turner Hospital's novels, I assert that memory is not necessarily stable and indeed can be illusory and transitory, given the provisional nature of space and time. I argue that while Turner Hospital makes use of a postmodernist, anti-humanist view that the self is a site at which construction occurs and that there is no fundamental core or essence, she at the same time sustains dialogical tensions which involve moral responsibility and truth.

Turner Hospital's later novels, particularly *Borderline, Charades* and *Oyster*, simultaneously utilise and challenge traditional approaches to notions of memory and identity. For Turner Hospital, memory is complex; it does not mimetically reflect 'the truth' and cannot be a static, definitive map of the past. The effect of memory on identity-formation, its openness to questioning and its ability to mask truth and interrogate responsibility impact on characters who are disempowered through their political positioning as vulnerable subjects within the context of traumatic events and thus endure the ongoing experience of trauma in their daily lives. I will argue that, while the operations of trauma may simultaneously enhance and prevent recall of memory, and are a crucial element in shaping self-identity, they also intersect with feminist concerns, since the operations of trauma describe those who are positioned as vulnerable subjects or as subjects without agency. In his discussion of some of these multiple tensions in Turner Hospital's work, Callahan concludes that her novels are marked by a 'search for stable points of memory and thus for sources of personal

identity' ('Acting in the Public Sphere' 73). However, it becomes apparent to the reader, as well as the characters and narrators, that as their desire for self-knowledge is pursued in Turner Hospital's novels, the process of constructing the self, built from memory that is inherently erratic and elusive, becomes problematic.

Notions of Thirdspace that inform understandings of memory and identity-formation have three similar yet overlapping tendencies. As I have noted in earlier chapters, broadly, the concept of Thirdspace is an infinite spatiality wherein a simultaneous multiplicity of images and experiences are possible. The coexistence of fluid and open constructions in Turner Hospital's texts point to this tendency. This challenges notions of a true, fixed representation of the space of the self and poses such a closed representation as flawed and unachievable. In Turner Hospital's texts, this is experienced most obviously through episodes of vertigo, conundrums, enigma and 'uncanny strangeness' that become incorporated as aspects of the self. Thirdspace also transcends temporal boundaries, so that borders between past/present/future become fluid, dismantled and apparently meaningless. Vertigo and play with chronological aspects of the narrative are imprints of this tendency in *Borderline, Charades* and *Oyster.*

Memory is an elusive and paradoxical, yet crucial, element in the construction of identity and this is borne out in at least four of Turner Hospital's novels, *Borderline, Charades*, *Oyster* and *Due Preparations for the Plague.* In these texts, narrators and characters offer fragments of memory for the purposes of construction and reconstruction of the self and, through this course, become implicated in the process of construction of the identity of self and others. A common analogy for memory has arisen which reflects a modernist context. This is the notion of the brain as a 'storehouse' of images of the past that may be selectively recalled. Such an

analogy has been adopted for technological purposes, such as computer storage systems, but its application in the human context is limited, since memory is clearly more than learning skills and a set of responses to actions. *Memory*, Mary Warnock's seminal text, is chiefly concerned with expanding the notion of memory beyond these limits to delineate a history of theories of memory with a particular emphasis on the inextricable linkages between memory and self-identity. She argues that memory uncovers knowledge of the self thus enabling connections to be made between knowledge of the self and awareness of the self continuously existing through time. Warnock seems to conclude either that the self is an effect of memory or that memory is an effect of the self when she states:

> Thus, what happens to me can be *turned into* one of my belongings; but it is the concept of myself as the recipient and possessor, the systematic organizer of experiences, that is central. Memory could neither exist, nor be valued, if this centre of experience, the familiar self, did not exist. (61-2)

While Warnock concludes that memory and the self are intertwined, neither concept being prior to nor separable from the other (75), her work implies a contradiction, particularly in regard to her explicit references to the modernist self as the 'centre of experience'.

The complex intertwining of the memory and the self are at the core of my analysis of memory and identity in the postmodernist context of Turner Hospital's novels. Her novels engage with the multiple and slippery tensions that arise from this complex relationship. As Jean-Marc states in the opening to his narration of *Borderline*, which is arguably a quest to map boundaries that define self and other, 'no amount of prior planning will necessarily avail. In the nature of things, control is not in the hands of the traveler' (11). However, despite this apparent recognition,

Jean-Marc is involved in an intense struggle to control both the route and destination of his map-making throughout *Borderline*. While Jean-Marc's opening to his narration may perhaps be included to throw the reader off the track in terms of Jean-Marc's control of the events of the narrative, at the same time Turner Hospital depicts Jean-Marc setting out to chronicle events according to his memory and experience. Thus the text may be pointing to the author's inability to establish and maintain control of her work as author as well as the unreliability of Jean-Marc's role as disinterested narrator. This self-conscious awareness of both author and narrator should signal to the reader the need to be wary of the deceptiveness of appearances. Similarly, Jess, the narrator of *Oyster*, playfully states that 'Cards riffle through my mind like a waterfall of light' (431) as she makes decisions to include or exclude and so to shape identities of both herself and others. The reader and the narrators, Jean-Marc and to a different degree, Jess, are made aware that they do not control the infinite choices and thus cannot hope to wield ultimate power in identity construction, either for self or other.

While memory shapes identity, Callahan notes that at the same time both 'may slither all over the place' ('Acting in the Public Sphere' 75). In *Charades* memory can seem playfully malleable: Katherine, a friend of Charade's mother and a central character, glibly comments 'I can do what I like with the past; it is easy as plasticene; it only exists now and then'(141). Turner Hospital's novels fulfil the criteria that Elliott lists in his introductory comments on the operations of fantasy in the space that I have discussed in my chapter regarding Soja's 'Thirdspace'. These criteria ensure that

> fantasy is understood as a creative realm of interchangeable places, multiple entry points, rolling identifications; [located at] that point

> of division between self and other, identity and difference, desire and history, sexuality and politics. (3)

Turner Hospital utilises this space of fantasy or Thirdspace in complex conjunction with memory and identity throughout her novels. An example is when the fluidity of the past is apparently celebrated whilst the past is simultaneously viewed from a position of responsibility. Thus, the Holocaust, for example, is represented in such a way in *Charades* that it is a strong reminder that truth cannot be erased by making memory elusive and beyond boundaries. In *Charades*, the Holocaust is represented in drawings by the children of Koenig's housekeeper (36), through Koenig's wife Rachel as she bears witness to her position as a Jewish child (224), as memories of Rachel intrude on Koenig (247-58), and in complex ways through the characterisation of Charade's mother, Verity (72, 317-8). As in *Borderline* and *Oyster*, the operations of memory increasingly reverberate across temporal boundaries as the narrative unfolds and returns to its beginning point. The circular nature of Turner Hospital's narratives, informed by their intertextuality with Alighieri Dante's *La Divina Commedia* and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* seems to support the view that while the past can be subjected to a myriad of interpretations it cannot be completely pliable and therefore narrative retains a moral obligation to represent truth.

A crucial element of memory that is apparent in Turner Hospital's novels is primarily a responsibility to promote truth. Soja describes this specific, political motivation of Thirdspace when he discusses bell hooks's enterprise as part of contemporary 'polyvocal political movements capable of linking together many radical subjectivities and creating new..."spaces" for diverse oppositional practices' (86). Soja applauds those who have manipulated political spaces wherein memories

and voices emerge to proclaim empowered identities. Primo Levi, a contemporary Jewish author of his experiences as a survivor of the Holocaust, remarks in *The Drowned and the Saved* that 'human memory is a marvellous but fallacious instrument' (11). He notes that 'the victor [of any traumatic experience] is the master even of truth and can manipulate it as he pleases' (3). I would add that in the context of Turner Hospital's novels, while the perpetrator is simultaneously the manipulator of truth, in some instances, a space is concurrently available in her texts in which the victim may also become the ultimate 'master' or teller of truth. She seems to posit the notion that truth can only be spoken when the self is implicated. In this process, truth becomes multiple, reflecting the complex and often contradictory text of the self. This richness of implication and multiplicity creates a self that cannot be completely coherent and stable. Such a view is supported by Callahan when he notes that

> characters are insistently involved in Hospital's work [in] not simply reconstructing but deciphering; they want to know, they want to fit the pieces together, even knowing that they must inevitably affect the data the more they examine it. ('Discourse of Displacement' 339)

Although his work relates to the postcolonial experience, Homi Bhabha's comments are appropriate here when he states that '"remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present"' (qtd in Gandhi 9). The narrative of *Charades* may be seen as an act of 're-membering'. Charade puts together a collection of memory fragments to assist her to construct a supposedly coherent sense of self-identity which can redress the imbalances that the trauma of 'not-knowing' (her origins and hence her own identity) inflicts on her present consciousness. Some of Charade's memories are accessible and some are buried,

while further memories are the memories of others. As Charade undertakes this process of 're-membering' from her position of 'interestedness', her lover and arguably her surrogate father, Koenig, is in a sense her unwitting psychoanalyst, assisting her to release the meaning of the events remembered.

Similarly, *Oyster* is a narrative act of 're-membering' as the narrators and characters gather together the memory fragments that filter through following the explosive events that mark the apocalyptic ending of Oyster's Reef. *Oyster* is a narrative of the act of 're-membering' in the sense that recall and incorporation of the traumatic reverberations of past experiences, into Jess's and Major Miner's present, is a primary purpose of the narrative. Further, the pain of recollection is increased for Jess and Major Miner by the knowledge that no position is disinterested:

> That is the trouble with complicity. It is so intricate; it is like a gigantic cobweb; it clings; you can never get it off; you can never tell where any one thread is going to lead. (49)

Knowledge of complicity in the traumatic events that frame the narrative of *Oyster* can be seen to permeate the narrative in the form of guilt. Turner Hospital repeatedly refers to cobwebs and spiders as images of guilt throughout the text so that Pete smears his face with spiderweb in recognition of his guilt in not preventing the death of Susannah (273), and 'the sticky cobweb of sin' is spun by Dukke Prophet, the fundamentalist preacher at the Living Word Gospel Hall as well as local tycoon landowner and self-appointed manager of the town of Outer Maroo and its economic interests (275-77). The 'Old Fuckatoo' is variously described as 'a sort of mephitic fog, moistureless and invisible', (3) and a type of stench (15) that infiltrates the area in and around Outer Maroo, particularly at times of fear of invasion from 'foreigners' or when complicity and guilt are foregrounded. In the 'Prologue' Jess concludes that

'some, in retrospect, claimed it was moral decay; though it was probably the simple stink of fear' (4). The reader can conclude that it is most certainly another image of guilt that accompanies the memories of the town's inhabitants, as a reminder of their complicity. So, 'remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection' for any who have been touched by the traumatic experiences represented in *Oyster*.

This position of complicity is highlighted in *Charades* through the Zundel trial and also through memory traces that litter the narrative. One of these is the photograph of Koenig's ex-wife, Rachel, as a little girl amongst women and other children: 'the photograph is always there, an arrangement of parallel lines: barbed wire and bones' (224). This photograph haunts Koenig and takes on a life of its own so that it not only represents a past event yet, moreover, is an aspect of the echoes of trauma which reach into the present. The photograph is representative of Koenig's experience of the court scene at the Zundel trial at which Rachel is bearing witness: that is, the photograph is representative of his embarrassment at her brazen openness, as well as the requirement to recognise complicity, in order to bring about reconciliation. However, for Koenig, 'the photograph grows and grows the way things in nightmares do, it expands infinitely, projected onto the courtroom screen, and from the witness stand his ex-wife's voice says, "There. That's me," as flatly as though she were pointing to a souvenir snapshot' (224). The implication that responsibility is not recognised by Koenig at this point in *Charades* is redressed in the final chapter as he learns to live with the gaps and fissures, and the irreducible equations that comprise the social interactions of the self. Indeed, as Callahan notes,

> while Turner Hospital loads the narrative dice in favor of committed intervention, the destabilizing of identity witnessed in her work through her examination of the operations of memory and

> cultural displacement render the basis for such action highly problematical. ('Acting in the Public Sphere' 79-80)

Turner Hospital's work stresses moral obligation and implication while simultaneously pointing to the slipperiness of any attempt to establish a coherent self-identity. This double bind highlights the unreliability created by the unstable operations of both memory and culture.

Oyster is perhaps Turner Hospital's most intense engagement with questions that arise regarding moral implication in a postmodern context. *Oyster* is clearly set in the timeframe of the end-of-century countdown to the year 2000, 'as the zeros on the calendar got closer' (11). An apt reading of *Oyster* might be through this millennial frame; a frame that highlights the urgency of thinking through the memories of the past century, even, as the Murri character Ethel does, getting in touch with the past millennia (44). Jess signals the salience of such a reading: 'I have a hunch that stories such as this one are too common for comfort these days. They will get worse as the decade advances. They are breeding in the dank millennial air' (8).

Turner Hospital's novels self-consciously foreground the construction of identity within a temporal framework and in doing so highlight the multi-faceted nature of this process. In his discussion of the necessity to undertake active construction of self-identity in the contemporary era, Anthony Giddens states that 'self-identity...is not something that is just given...but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual' (52). In an approach that could arguably be said to parallel Turner Hospital's project, Giddens proposes an analysis of self-identity through individuals 'whose sense of self is fractured' (52). Giddens summarises such individuals as characteristically biographically discontinuous, haunted by external dangers and typically silent or

'empty'. Turner Hospital's novels include characters with a multiplicity of such characteristics: individuals who are obviously, and sometimes not so explicitly, traumatised so that they are hiding from fears and experiencing untold narratives. If 'a person's identity is...in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going* (author's italics)' (Giddens 54), then this yearning for identity is what fuels the narratives of Turner Hospital's novels.

A primary concern in Turner Hospital's work is the immense struggle by virtually all of her main characters for a sense of self that is positioned as coherent and capable of sustaining a continuous narrative. Her work arguably follows in a trajectory from the work of Sigmund Freud through Jacques Lacan so that her narratives construe a sense of self-identity which emerge from differentiation of body and self. This disembodied self or the self that is dissociated from the body is necessary to the early formation of self-identity, according to Lacan's mirror theory. In his treatise on the body and power, *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that disciplined control of the modern body is vital in maintaining a secure sense of self. The embodiment of the self is an assumed requirement for an ongoing narrative of self-identity as 'routine control of the body is integral to the very nature both of agency and of being accepted (trusted) by others as competent' (Giddens 59). The imperative to maintain control of the body is thus crucial in ensuring inner security through self-knowledge and sustaining relationships with others. While Turner Hospital's narratives reveal that this apparently straightforward project is an increasingly complex undertaking in the contemporary era they, in a typical Thirdspace manoeuvre, simultaneously point to the possibilities of infinite spatiality wherein paradoxical truths are possible within a fluid temporal context.

The traumatised subject, Verity, is an example of disembodiment, through her positioning in the margins of the narrative of *Charades*. Indeed, her marginal position is problematic when it becomes obvious to the reader that she is the answer to Charade's urgent question. In a play on her name, meaning 'truth', Verity is Charade's mother. Verity does not wield the agency to hold up her hand and state that she is Charade's mother. No other character accepts her competence, except perhaps Nicholas for a time, so that she remains the 'bruised woman' who is incapable of shaping her own identity. She loses what may be seen as a final opportunity to develop her self-identity when Nicholas hands their daughter, Charade, to Kay who passes her to Bea to mother (318-9, 337). The narrative of *Charades* positions Verity in such a way that she fits a general description of those who are subjects of the Holocaust. She manifests a typical 'dissociation of body and self' in an 'attempt to transcend dangers and be safe' (Giddens 59).

On the other hand, the notion of an embodied self can be suggested as an illusory construct, or at least a problematic enigma, which is ironically captured by Koenig's perception of Charade as the hologram girl in *Charades* (20-3). It seems that Koenig concludes here that Charade's body is beyond the control of herself and others, even those such as himself who seek to establish control under the guise of scientific discipline. Such a questioning of the possibility of reliable control problematises the notion of the embodied self. The concept of the self as embodied poses the question as to whether disembodiment is more desirable since it can provide an opportunity for the self to maintain control of identity. The desirability of the notion of disembodiment contests Foucault's interpretation of discipline wherein he argues that the body is the vehicle of agency. Disembodiment can be viewed as desirable when such a notion is linked to Lacan's mirror stage of development of the

self when dissociation is necessary to formation of self-identity. I would argue that embodiment is another captivating mechanism of modernity, which is transcended in Turner Hospital's novels. This enables Charade to escape her captivity to her father (and simultaneously to Koenig), so that Koenig is able to pose simultaneous theories that support the likelihood of her presence while concurrently refuting such a possibility (342-5).

Culbertson, in her article, 'Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self', discusses the 'victimized survivor of violence' and her attempts to establish routine control of her body. Culbertson argues that, having experienced violence and trauma, the body is entirely preoccupied with rebuilding control or re-establishing the self (169). She refutes 'naïve public [mis]conceptions of memory' which seek to frame memory within coherent, linear narrative and suggests instead that there is an insurmountable paradox in the presence of memory and trauma which is embodied and is simultaneously both internal yet inaccessible to the self (169). There is a double silencing factor at work here. Simultaneously there is an 'internal' silence and an 'external silence'. The 'internal' silence functions to hide the 'self from the self's experience'. The 'external' silence occurs where the self is unable to recount to others, partially due to fear of non-belief but primarily due to an inability to overcome the hurdle between embodied memory and spoken narrative. However, while this silence is apparent to others and serves to mask ongoing pain or trauma to the view of others, the disempowered self is 'preoccupied with the memory of it, which itself seems both absent and entirely too present' (169). According to Culbertson these embodied memories 'are left apart from the story of the self because if included in it they would destroy it, being so counter to the self's conception of itself as whole as to be inimical and threatening to it' (174).

Survivors of violation are paradoxically locked within their skin as a survivor, 'obeying the logic of dreams' and 'patterns of consciousness below the everyday' and mocking linear time in 'a reverberating present' (170). Indeed, Culbertson boldly asserts, such experiences are 'not "memory" — that is, a personal, narrated account of something completed, locatable in time — at all' (170). For Culbertson, 'body memories' cannot be incorporated into narrative since they cannot be expressed in this form, leading to the notion of silence or disappearance. This silencing factor leads to a separation of traumatic experience from a continuing integrated story of self and produces repressed memories or apparent gaps in the narrative of the self.

Turner Hospital's narrative structures and content are successful in revealing the problematic nature of memory and particularly point to the 'naïve public [mis]conceptions of memory' which Culbertson discusses. The narrative structures of each of *Borderline*, *Charades* and *Oyster* indicate attempts at the production of coherent stories of self which seek to pursue linearity but these narratives become subject to underlying disruptive currents comprising memory fragments and repressed memories. In *Borderline*, for example, while Jean-Marc attempts to narrate the life of Felicity in an effort to bring her presence into his present, since he is 'a historian writing history', his project cannot overcome the gaps or gather in all aspects of the past. Despite his continuing noble stance as historian, he acknowledges the futility of this enterprise.

> For the past, as Felicity knows and I know, is a capricious and discontinuous narrative, and the present an infinite number of fictions. The braiding of the two is the very stuff of a curator's bag of magic. (131)

Indeed, as *Borderline* reveals, there are a multiplicity of elements, including gaps, beyond the simplistic braiding of two strands.

The transcendence of embodiment is evident in Dolores Marquez's ability in *Borderline* to escape a name that will precisely pin down her identity as well as her ability to escape capture by Canadian authorities and El Salvadorean authorities. Further, Dolores is able to escape embodiment by Gus, Jean-Marc and Felicity, each of whom seek to clothe her with their imposed notions of her identity. In *Oyster*, Susannah transcends efforts to 'transfer' her out of the township and continues to wield agency even following her death, through her presence in the recesses and tunnels of Aladdin's Rush, as well as in Jess's (50-1) and Mercy's (85-7) unconscious.

In *Charades*, the narrative of Verity's self is characterised by gaps and questionable fragments of her past. Charade offers multiple versions of Verity's past before realising that Verity is her mother. These versions are the narratives that she reads from a photograph that she discovers amongst Bea's belongings (81). 'Every morning a different history came off it like fog and she took deep breaths, gulping down one past after another' (81-2). Although Charade is unaware of it at this point of *Charades*, her efforts to construct the identity of Verity are integral to her efforts in re-membering the construction of her self-identity, of her past and of truth. Charade's attempts to locate Verity take place within a dream world with intertextual allusions to Carroll's 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' (82-5). The compilation of Verity's self-identity is not explicitly declared as the project of any other character or of the narrator, so that Verity's story is only told through the filters of characters who are positioned as supposedly central to the narrative. Bea shouts at Verity, 'you've got this fragile bruised look....You've got this goddamn gold-embroidered tragic bloody

history that you want us all to pay for, pay for, pay for!' (83). For readers of the narrative of *Charades* the identity of Verity (and of 'truth') remains at best ambiguous and incoherent, comprised of fragments which are rarely glimpsed, although clues are inserted into the narrative often enough (*cf* 81, 101). At one point, Verity does give a partial account of her past to Katherine/Kay (167-9). However, this is almost immediately contradicted by the version that Nicholas tells Katherine/Kay (179-82). Verity's personnel file at her last known place of work summarises her ethereal identity in the narrative:

> And what was the sum total of the evidence in Verity's file? Almost nothing. Reason for resignation: *personal*. Forward address: left blank. (266)

The narrator of *Oyster*, Jess, wrestles with the point at which to begin her narrative. She concludes that any narrative of the self cannot be linear and suggests that the sequence is her ultimate, indeed omniscient, responsibility (50). She muses:

> In the *beginning* is always now, and ever shall be, world without end, amen; and starting points are like so many cards to be shuffled. They change shape, they change in value, according to how they are dealt. (50)

In *Oyster*, as in *Borderline* and *Charades*, the reader is offered memory fragments but the points of view are more diversified. Jess's is not the sole narrating voice; there is also an anonymous third person narrator who equally arranges the sequence. Jess's position is questionable because she is also implicated and complicit in the events of the narrative and, further, as a character she is a silent survivor of traumatic experiences.

In the work of Turner Hospital, identity is constantly repositioned through active engagement and paradoxically disengagement with knowledge of the self. In

Charades the main character, Charade, seeks to reconstruct her father according to her selection of her memories of him. Charade says to Koenig 'What I am is an editor of my own past. I collect versions of my pre-history, arrange them, rearrange them, and then tell them to you' (263). Yet, her attempt to reconstruct her father proves an unsatisfying task since his identity avoids collection and arrangement and he is constantly shifting away from her grasp: 'he may or may not continue to spend his life as a global nomad' (25). Ultimately Charade accepts her inability to control the construction of her father as she comes to a fuller knowledge of her self. This self no longer requires closure of her desire to achieve fulfilment of her memories and dreams. Charade's self-knowledge is expanded when, like other characters in Turner Hospital's novels, she seems to recognise and accommodate the presence of otherness within herself. Charade's acceptance of the coexistence of multiple truths allows her to move beyond her need for her father, or her father-substitute, Koenig. In this instance, Koenig is instrumental for Charade in the narrative because of his ability to explain Heisenberg's theory (18) and the Double Truth theory (31). Thus, while Charade is 'the hologram girl' (16) — elusive, magical, enigmatic — she is able to utilise theories of physics as a means to explain phenomena that otherwise appear unfathomable to her.

Turner Hospital's novels seem to move in increasingly sophisticated ways toward empowering subjects through a therapeutic approach to remembering and reconstructing a self that can actively participate in identity-construction. The construction of the character of Felicity in *Borderline*, when compared to the construction of Charade in *Charades*, illustrates this point. Felicity is narrated by Jean-Marc and painted by Seymour; as such she is a Jean-Marc/Seymour construction, displaced in her story, incapable of escaping beyond the multiple

framing devices of which *Borderline* as novel is one. Jean-Marc notes that Felicity is often reminded by Seymour that she is his invention: 'You're an idea of mine, remember that' (88). Jean-Marc, as narrator of *Borderline*, even while making constant asides about Felicity's inability to exist as a coherent self as well as Seymour's futile attempts at control of Felicity, is himself complicit in seeking to construct an identity *for* Felicity. In *Charades*, Charade is able to take control somewhat more effectively than Felicity, though the notion of control of self and others is always problematised in Turner Hospital's work. Charade is primarily the narrator — indeed she is like Scheherazade, the teller of tales in *Stories from the Thousand and One Nights* — or at least the compiler of fragments of memory that are aspects of her quest for knowledge of her personal origins. As such, Charade is able to manipulate construction of her self in a way that Felicity is not empowered to undertake in *Borderline*. Yet, at the same time, there is a constant reiteration of the unreliability of memory and the ways that apparently true stories can be undermined. For example, when Charade checks the truth of Kay's stories with Bea, she receives a quick reply, '*Bloody rubbish. ... One of Kay's stories again*' (author's italics) (227). The reader is at this time becoming increasingly aware that Bea has hidden the truth of Charade's maternal origins from Charade for more than twenty-three years, so any questioning becomes circular and dubious.

Through her work, Turner Hospital points to the problematic nature of memory in regard to its instability, a condition brought about through its transitory and illusory nature. She writes about memories of the same events through a multiplicity of perspectives, thus placing emphasis on the multiplicity *between* individuals as well as multiple selves *within* an individual. Her novels are littered with references to the ambiguity of identity through multiple selves, multiple names, and

multiple positions. Characters are featured who, in Turner Hospital's own words, are 'constantly obsessed with places other than where they are at the moment' (Brydon 21). This suggests human beings are not only a product of their individual and collective histories but are intensely saturated by memories that keep seeping through from the past into the present. In her interview with Diana Brydon, as Turner Hospital describes her fascination with the lithographic process that brings about a phenomenon she labels 'the stone's memory', parallels become visible with Turner Hospital's narrative structures and methods. The stone to which she refers is a printer's lithographic stone that has been exposed to continual use and re-use over many years, rather like a palimpsest. The porous nature of such stones enables some of the lithographic ink to remain within the stone, following erasure of the lithographic stone's surface, and occasionally this ink will inadvertently re-emerge to appear on a future unrelated lithographic composition (15).

The dynamic nature of memory is constantly emphasised in the novels and often takes the form of unexpected intrusion, like the 'stone's memory', of the past into the present. These unexpected slivers or fragments of memory break into the interstices of the present in such a way that characters experience intense sensations or vertigo. The effects are experienced with incredible magnitude, as the narrator of *The Last Magician* aptly comments: 'Sometimes he [Gabriel] could hardly breathe for the pain of that lost time' (278). Turner Hospital's novels constantly make reference to unexpected intrusions of the past in ways that impinge on present and future to reveal that the impact of knowledge of the past can range from emancipatory to traumatic, so that knowledge of the past is not necessarily desirable or pleasurable. This is apparent in *Charades* in the multiple interpretations of Katherine and Koenig's meeting in Toronto. Katherine's version (204-18) is as illusory and unstable as Koenig's version

(256-7) which is set within the context of a tale told to Charade, a tale told with multiple purposes beyond entertainment or accessing truth. As a prologue to her version, Katherine questions the intrusion of the past into her life. Is she 'manic obsessive' because she constantly has memories of Nicholas Truman, Charade's father, invading her present consciousness (204)? The memory of Nicholas for Katherine is like that of a traumatic experience as it is a memory that is hidden or repressed and 'launches' with unexpected fervour into her present when invoked by memory-triggers.

> It was one of those diseases like malaria. It hung around. It skulked, dormant, in the blood, going into remission for years and years, for decades, and then *shazam*, flaring up again like poisoned toadstools after rain. (205)

The memory of Nicholas is resurrected for Katherine in her meeting with Koenig, and the memory of Nicholas is doubly invoked for Charade through her storytelling to Koenig and in her relationship with Koenig. Memories of Nicholas transcend boundaries of space and time, are multiple and equally (im)plausible within the framework of their narration by Charade and within *Charades*.

The instability of the operations of memory is also apparent in *Charades* where notions of stable concepts of space and time are again questioned. Instances include Charade's sickening realisation, when Koenig begins to tell his tale or parable, that all experience can be reduced across space and time: 'There are only three channels in the world, she thinks, and they recycle the same old plots' (242). This experience of vertigo is reiterated further when the notion of the circularity of plots becomes self-explanatory to Charade. 'We inherit plots, Charade thinks. That's the explanation. There are only two or three in the world, five or six at the most. We inherit them and ride them like treadmills' (258). Thus, both Charade and Koenig

struggle to know where to begin telling tales, given that endings are interwoven with beginnings. Koenig states 'I know it's not logical for a physicist, of all people, but I have this old-fashioned craving for a simple narrative line' (189-90). This echoes contemporary concerns for many theorists including space physicists, geneticists and theologians for whom 'the problematic of a time indissociable from space, of a space-time in infinite expansion, or rhythmed by accidents or catastrophes' is a preoccupation (Kristeva 192). In *Charades,* while acknowledging that 'time curves' (190) Koenig paradoxically seeks to transcend this empirical evidence and construct a straightforward plot. Charade mocks his inability to narrate his story along linear lines and thus construct his identity (an ability which, ironically, she does not have herself). Koenig eventually, through the narrative of *Charades*, comes to the realisation that any construction of temporal linearity is a futile enterprise. Cathy Caruth argues in *Unclaimed Experience* that narrative is necessarily about repetitions of traumatic events. Caruth puts forward a less than optimistic view of history which is certainly borne out by Turner Hospital's texts: 'history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, [and] that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas' (24).

Self-reflexive awareness of the repetition and circularity of plots is one of the hallmarks of Turner Hospital's texts. Jess opens her narrative (43) in *Oyster* with the scene that concludes the novel (427-30), as the fires burn following the apocalyptic moment which ends the township of Outer Maroo. She muses on the seductive circularity of plots and the inability to tease out beginnings from endings.

> But beginnings and endings have always puzzled me. How can we tell one from the other, since they so inevitably swallow their own tails, their own tales?....Both the flash of the starter's gun and the finishing post are so dependent on point of view, they are so damned tantalising, that the very idea of pinning them down provokes. (43)

Turner Hospital's construction of circular narratives within novels, as well as similar but expanded concerns across novels, also exemplifies this notion. Past, present and future blend in an atemporality that contrasts with the modernist notion that knowledge of history will ensure progress and thus prevent repetition of the past. The interrelationships of past-present-future are also crucial in *Oyster* where the narrative structure interweaves these elements of time, as well as in the construction of identity. Boundaries become unclear and destablised so that Miss Rover intrudes into Jess's narrative/identity and Mercy's consciousness, as do the lost children of Sarah and Nick, and in the same way that Bugger Harvey does for Major Miner.

Since the operations of memory cannot be clarified and stabilised within a linear framework, or indeed within the limits of embodiment or place, attempts at positioning certain texts as reliable come into question. Turner Hospital's novels constantly question veracity since memories are as elusive as much to the self as to others. Likewise memories are unstable when used in the process of constructing narrative. Thus, in *Borderline* both Jean-Marc as narrator, and the narrative itself, undermine the possibility of securing omnipotent knowledge of memory. Jean-Marc's explicit project is to garner indisputable facts. Yet, he constantly and paradoxically interjects regarding his inability to provide an accurate reconstruction of the past. He self-consciously acknowledges that he cannot have access to all interpretations of an event:

> I make discoveries as I write; I wonder why I did not think of this when I began....Though how do I know what she [Felicity] thought? Her stories bombard me, they seem to have become my own memories, they writhe and change and regroup in the way true memories do. (159)

Paradoxically, though, Jean-Marc asserts his representations of events as the most plausible interpretations:

> In any case, all this conjuring is both true and not true....The truth is, I seem to know more about Felicity's life than about my own. I understand hers better....This seems to be true with Gus and with all of the characters I record. I seem to *recognize* them. I remember the view from their eyes, as though I were a salamander that slips into the envelopes of other people's lives. (192-3)

Indeed, Michael Wilding poses a pertinent question when he asks, in relation to *Borderline*, 'what weight can we put on any of the narrative?' (4). He points to Jean-Marc's act of installing and then retracting 'narrative certainties', arguing that such action indicates Turner Hospital's penchant to exploit the postmodernist aesthetic for its political value (5).

Both *Borderline* and *Charades* constantly point to this self-reflexive postmodernist awareness of the unreliability of narrative. Jean-Marc's qualities as narrator in *Borderline* appear to be echoed when he narrates the magical scene where Felicity's maiden aunts, the Misses Sayer (echoing Dante's soothsayers in *La Divina Commedia*), turn the making of apple wine into an oft-repeated ritual to accompany generation and regeneration of Felicity's existence:

> As the spirals of peel went slinking into bowls that might have held half the world, so the stories uncoiled themselves, and curled up again into new shapes, and twisted and laced their way into past and future and each other. (116-7)

This magical incantation of Felicity's existence resembles Jean-Marc's own undertaking as inventor or conjurer of Felicity, and of the absent subjects in *Borderline*. Turner Hospital's novels often feature at least one absent subject. This

subject is one whose voice is predominantly unheard, whose perspective is perceived solely through their narration by others, and whose presence is positioned as past and only retrievable as memory. The identity of each of these absent subjects is constructed through the compilation of others' memories. Such characters include Dolores Marquez, Augustine Kelly and Felicity in *Borderline*, Nicholas Truman in *Charades*, Susannah Rover and Oyster in *Oyster*, and Isabella Hawthorne and Mather Hawthorne/Sirocco in *Due Preparations for the Plague.* Aspects of memory which have been discussed above, including its definitive role in identity construction, its illusory nature and, as will be discussed in more detail in the latter part of this chapter, its operations within the process of trauma, are crucial in considering the role of absent subjects in Turner Hospital's novels.

Turner Hospital's apparent preoccupation with the role of absence can be explored through *Borderline*. One of the central characters is initially nameless, a displaced non-citizen who has attempted illegally to escape El Salvador in a meat van, deriving her name from a figure in a painting 'La Magdalena' (46), and a disappeared one 'La Desconocida'. She is known by a multiplicity of names, yet her legal name 'Dolores Marquez' is unknown until she is 'officially' declared dead late in the narrative (134). By this stage of the narrative her initial names have garnered meaning and permanence in constructing her identity. Jean-Marc obscures her identity even further when he asks 'Why, depending on the light, does Dolores resemble Hester resemble Felicity?' (193). Dolores's muteness and her positioning as a work of art point to feminist concerns in *Borderline* which coincide with similar concerns raised in other novels by Turner Hospital. I discuss some of these feminist concerns particularly in relation to the operations of memory in trauma and also in my chapter 'Transgressions of Spatial Practice: Border Crossings'. The identities of other

characters in *Borderline* also remain ambiguous and transient, such as Trog and Hunter, the supposed FBI agents, who may be figments of Felicity's guilty imagination or useful agents through which Jean-Marc can explain Felicity's disappearance. Such characters underline the uncertainties that arise in Jean-Marc's obviously constructed narrative and lead the reader to question the truth of their existence. The unreliability of memory is an aspect of the construction of the absent subject and prevents the possibility of pointing to 'the truth'; instead, the reader discovers the possibilities inherent in the myriad nature of truth.

A significant aspect of the narrative of *Due Preparations for the Plague* is Lowell Hawthorne's preoccupation with his subjectivity and memories by which he is haunted, particularly magnified following his father's death. The reader is led to believe that, prior to the narrative, Lowell's dysfunctional identity and parenting style was a manifestation of his mother's death when the airline was hijacked and his father's work-related absences during his childhood. The narrative opens with Lowell's evident incapacity to function around the time of anniversaries of the hijacking. Lowell's inability to come to terms with the absences of both of his parents is evident through his refusal to respond to telephone calls from Samantha who is avidly researching all those connected with the fatal airline flight: 'Lowell erases ['information on the hijacking and on the death of your mother'] from the machine immediately and entirely, though less successfully, less entirely, from his memory and his sleep' (4). The narrative evolves as it provides evidence of the circumstances surrounding the lives and deaths of each of Lowell's parents. Like the narrative, Lowell 'edits and fine-tunes as he goes' (14). Lowell's embodied memories (which I discuss later in this chapter) and memories of those who are absent play a significant part in the construction of his own identity. The narrative describes the constructive

process that each character undergoes: 'these pieces which make up the puzzle of the self are held together by the glue of memory', so that Lowell, Samantha and other survivors of the trauma can 'construct him [self and other] from the traces he leaves in other lives' (47).

Turner Hospital's novels provide opportunities for critique of modernist approaches to the concept of truth through multiple perspectives that variously interpret the same experience, highlighting the multifarious nature of truth. In *Borderline*, for example, Seymour's memories of Felicity's father run counter to her own memories of him, so that Seymour rebukes her: 'You think you're free to invent him as you wish. I know more about both of you than you'd ever dream' (87). Jean-Marc narrates that Felicity inwardly disagrees with this statement. The reader is aware that Seymour has freely created his own invention of Felicity's father in a painting in which he resembles St Sebastian (87). Yet Jean-Marc, as narrator, states that Felicity's declared reason for her initial interest in Seymour was because he knew her father. This perspective can also be disputed given Jean-Marc's unreliability and position of interestedness as Seymour's son, as well as his questioning of the reliability of his own narrative. 'Why does Felicity's father, receding into the Indian Ocean in his fishing boat, have a cargo of paintbrushes? Why does he have bushy eyebrows like the Old Volcano?' (193). Jean-Marc's craft of 'tempering' as a piano tuner resonates with his willingness to tamper with truth until it suits his purposes. While he seeks accuracy he simultaneously acknowledges its imperfection and inability to represent with accurate veracity and concludes truth 'is never pure and rarely simple' (25-6). At the same time Jean-Marc claims to want to tune 'the entire cacophonous universe' arguing that 'this is a mathematical possibility and a great comfort, requiring only infinite patience' (26). The contradictory nature of Jean-Marc's claims to tame truth

are simultaneously and constantly problematised by the narrator and point to the plural nature of truth.

While the Zundel trial in *Charades* is a prime example of a space for the examination of the truth of eyewitness accounts, with legal protections to supposedly ensure that this purpose is achieved, such an episode is equally open to multiple interpretations of memories from the past. Memory is as much at play in the public space of the courtroom as it is in the private space of Koenig's bedroom. In his article on trauma and literary theory, James Berger asks, 'do events in history have consequences' (571). This apparently obvious question is particularly pertinent to Turner Hospital's writing. Indeed, this is arguably one of the central questions seeking to be answered in Turner Hospital's texts. As I have noted earlier, her novels point to the need to take responsibility to advocate truth in both the public and the private spheres, particularly since they are at each end of the local-global continuum. This dialectic ensures interpretations of the past impact equally on all aspects of the continuum.

As a consequence of her absorption with past experiences in her novels, Turner Hospital highlights a phenomenon of Western contemporary experience that is noted by theorists such as Berger and Gibbons. Berger discusses his perception of a contemporary preoccupation with accounts of the truth in relation to past traumatic events, citing popular visual media such as disaster films and 'real life' police drama. He writes of 'the preoccupation with family dysfunctions — child abuse, incest, spousal abuse — in the media', and fascination with eyewitness accounts by survivors of traumatic experiences (571-2). Turner Hospital utilises these media in her narratives, often incorporating them as intrusions from the past into the present. Felicity's 'wilderness file' in *Borderline* is the most explicit example of this

contemporary obsession with truth and trauma. Felicity keeps this secret file (which she has apparently shared with Jean-Marc) of 'clippings of dark and bizarre events, world news, the familiar international insanities' as 'a kind of proof that I didn't invent my own childhood' which was full of 'even stranger things, worse things, though they have no reality here' (16). For Felicity, the file contains memories that give her some substance or evidence of her existence.

Turner Hospital's novels constantly play on the reader's fascinated engagement in the search for truth, so that the reader is placed in a position as detective that requires a garnering of grains of truth. While the narratives are definitely non-linear, they take on the form of eyewitness accounts by survivors of traumatic experiences, subject to the intrusion of past traumatic events in their daily lives. Gibbons discusses 'traumatic memory' and its reincorporation into social narratives and social history in her discussion of Ruby Langford, an Indigenous Australian writer. Turner Hospital's texts exemplify what Gibbons describes as a characteristic human need to 'repetitively confront' 'traumatic material in an effort to master it' (65). Turner Hospital's narrative style echoes 'post-colonialism's interest in testimony as a literature of resistance' (66) so that her writing '"always signifies the need for a general social change in which the stability and complacency of the reader's world must be brought into question"' (67).

As I have noted, Turner Hospital's texts engage with the operations of memory in the lives of individuals who are positioned as vulnerable subjects as a result of past traumatic experiences. Her novels bear out the notion that *trauma* is more than an alternative term for *disaster*. Rather, trauma is delineated as an experience or experiences that have ramifications across time and space. Turner Hospital's novels bear out Berger's statement that,

> the idea of catastrophe as trauma provides a method of interpretation, for it posits that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the event. Moreover, this dispersal occurs across time, so that an event experienced as shattering may actually produce its full impact only years later. (572)

Retrospective reconstructions of the traumatic event facilitate partial comprehension of the event but this is always fragmented, always interpreted through the filters of space and time. In *Oyster* Jess states that the operations of time are similar to those of 'stepping into a story or constructing a map' and can be similar to 'tossing a stone at a window: the cobwebby lines fan out from the point of impact in all directions at once' (47). The construction of the self includes all of these elements; that is, confronting and working through memories which have become opaque and dispersed over space and time and constructing a narrative or map which incorporates these constructed memories. When the past includes trauma then this re-claiming and reconstructive process of re-membering or 'mapmaking' will take unexpected and often paradoxical forms.

The narratives of *Borderline*, *Charades*, *Oyster* and *Due Preparations for the Plague* are arguably about quests to retrospectively reconstruct events that have been buried from consciousness. Characters in these novels are seeking understanding of past events that can be interpreted as traumatic or catastrophic. Quests such as these are perhaps contrary to the human impulse to bury traumatic events so that they become, as Judith Lewis Herman notes in her article 'Crime and Memory', '*unspeakable*' (4). Like the Heisenberg theory or 'uncertainty principle' underlying the narrative of *Charades*, there is paradox in 'the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud' which marks the operations of

memory in relation to traumatic events (5). A key to this paradox is an understanding of the physiological state of individuals at the time of a traumatic event. The experience of trauma causes the body to undergo an altered state of consciousness known as 'hyperarousal'. At this time of hyperarousal, 'attention is narrowed and perceptions are altered. Peripheral detail, context, and time sense fall away, while attention is strongly focused on central detail' (6). Hyperarousal may cause contextual information to be lost and the focal point becomes the retained memory of the traumatic event. Herman reports that self-hypnosis techniques are documented as having been effectively invoked by political prisoners and abused children (7). In *Borderline*, Hester seeks to eliminate the focal point as well as the contextual information. She explains to Felicity her self-hypnosis strategy for avoiding the fear and pain that she experiences when she is physically attacked and raped by the girls and subsequently by the boys: 'It used to hurt....But I learned a trick....As soon as they start, I pretend my leg is made of wood...[and later] I have to practice pretending that part is made of wood too' (159). However, Felicity is unsuccessful in 'pretending to be made of wood' and cannot dissociate herself as completely as can her friend Hester. This enables her to recall the details of the traumatic experience and the 'intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation' (Herman 6) that she recounts to Jean-Marc after fifteen years' silence (*Borderline* 164).

Silence is a significant aspect of the reverberations of trauma. In narrating to Jean-Marc the story of Hester and her part in it, Felicity has broken her silence regarding this traumatic event. Felicity's positioning as absent in the overall narrative, subjected to Jean-Marc's discretion in the shaping of her identity, is complicated through the narration of this story. As readers, our feminist sympathies are evoked. Felicity's identity is shaped in such a way by this story that she now becomes a

survivor of a traumatic childhood experience. In a later twist, the reader may become more hardened to Jean-Marc's glib playfulness and more sympathetic to Felicity's plight when Jean-Marc questions and virtually dismisses the validity of Felicity's experience, suggesting that Felicity may have told the story to ease his pain as a child. 'For all I know, Hester was a story she made up to distract me when I was ten years old. Perhaps I should delete it' (165). Putting aside our disbelief as readers that Felicity would fabricate such a tale to satisfy a childhood appetite for storytelling, Jean-Marc sets himself up to be an accomplice with the perpetrators in his threat here to re-invoke Felicity's silence.

It can be contended that Jean-Marc's inclusion of one of Felicity's traumatic childhood experiences points to Jean-Marc's attempt to establish linkages to the past for the purpose of shaping Felicity's identity. (There are other traumatic experiences that haunt Felicity and are alluded to but are not detailed in Jean-Marc's narrative, perhaps because he has not had the privilege of access to them or he may view them as oppositional, peripheral or ineffective to the construction of his version of Felicity.) Felicity's identity arguably becomes more whole with the integration of this repressed memory, which can be integrated with her more recent experiences to form a more richly interwoven fabric of her identity.

A number of characters in Turner Hospital's novels may be considered as survivors of traumatic experiences, who seek to reconstruct both the traumatic events and thus their self-identity through retrieval and working through of repressed memories. Turner Hospital's novels, as discussed in the chapter on the marginalised, dialogue with the psychoanalytic notions of dealing with the return of the repressed and working through trauma so that her narratives centralise rather than marginalise trauma. In *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* Dominick LaCapra

seeks to address some of the issues surrounding representation of the Holocaust. He proposes a theory of trauma in relation to memory, discussing trauma in such a way that it is not minimalised nor given a closed meaning. LaCapra's project draws some parallels with Turner Hospital's novels. His discussion focuses on 'transference' that enables a repetition of past events or relationships in a new context and thus provides opportunities for critique. Such a strategy draws on notions similar to those in contemporary narrative therapy. As Berger observes, LaCapra argues that a theory of trauma enables a critique of postmodern and poststructuralist theories which links with Berger's call for approaches to work through the contemporary 'preoccupation with loss, aporia, dispossession, and deferred meaning' (576). These concerns also seem pertinent for Turner Hospital. There are a significant number of characters, narrators and a researcher, who are positioned as witnesses to events or view themselves as called upon to chronicle events for the sake of others. Such characters and narrators include Jean-Marc in *Borderline*, Charade and Rachel in *Charades*, Jess in *Oyster*, and Samantha in *Due Preparations for the Plague*.

Survivors of traumatic events who continue to experience the reverberations that are symptomatic of trauma include those whom Mick Donovan's father in *Charades* would describe as 'bruised'. In reference to Verity Ashkenazy he emphatically states: '"There's some women just waiting to be bruised. Don't ask me how or why they got that way, but they give off something, you know?....they won't cry, these women. They just get silent. They bruise"' (72). Other traumatised or bruised women in Turner Hospital's novels include Felicity, Dolores Marquez and Hester in *Borderline*, Rachel in *Charades*, Jess in *Oyster* and Cassie in *Due Preparations for the Plague*. Through the threads of their memories as victims and

survivors of traumatic events, these women are linked to feminist concerns which foreground the victimisation, marginalisation and silencing of female subjects.

Storytelling or narration is a means by which characters rediscover and integrate memories to re-construct their self-identity. Notably, Charade as the main storyteller in *Charades*, and Jess, as the principal narrator of *Oyster*, are two of Turner Hospital's bruised women who select memories from which to build their own and, in the process, others' identities. In contrast, the bruised women I have listed above, in *Borderline, Charades, The Last Magician* and *Due Preparations for the Plague*, are not responsible for their identity construction. They have become disempowered and sometimes function as doubles or are an integral aspect of the identity of others. For example, Cassie in *Due Preparations for the Plague* provides a vital clue that links Lowell into the narrative, enabling Lowell to more successfully discover and incorporate information and memories of his parents and to develop a broader sense of his self-identity (78-80). Margaret K. Schramm asserts in 'Identity and the Family in the Novels of Janette Turner Hospital' that the plot structures of Turner Hospital's novels ensure that 'taking responsibility for the plight of another character (particularly a double), becomes a means of redemption' (86). While this is true in relation to a significant number of the bruised characters in Turner Hospital's novels, I would suggest that this is too simplistic and just the type of teleological explanation that her texts seek to overturn. However, the political implications are an aspect of Turner Hospital's ongoing concerns in dealing with moral issues in the local-global dialectic.

The notion of the global or other as an integral aspect of the local or self is reiterated as a primary political concern in Turner Hospital's work. This is an area I discuss in more detail in my first chapter 'Transgressions of Spatial Practice: Border

Crossings'. Yet it is important to note here that trends in contemporary psychoanalysis such as those discussed by Elliott, highlight the possibilities of psychic ambiguity and enigma (25). These trends are in opposition to Freudian psychoanalysis that builds on the modernist dichotomy of fantasy, dream or imagination as distinct from reality. As I have argued elsewhere, postmodern subjectivity is characterised as creatively open to paradox and to the transcendence of boundaries. Postmodern subjectivity attempts to critique and displace the imposed ordering of modernity and this is apparent in the operations which bring about dispersal of difference. In such a sociocultural context, connection of the self with other(s) is generated in processes whereby meaning is constructed. As Elliott notes:

> The unconscious process of meaning-construction...is one characterized by an inmixing of self and other; the migration of subjective meaning into the other, tangled and confused... [and] there is a remarkably fluid and reflexive encounter with otherness generated under the cultural conditions of postmodernity... [that] restructures the local/global intersection, and hence our experience of otherness. (28)

In Turner Hospital's novels the interrelationships between self and other are particularly salient in relation to characters for whom traumatic experience and its reverberations are integral to their subjectivity. In *Borderline*, blurring of the boundaries that delineate the modernist self and other occur between Jean-Marc and Seymour, Felicity and Dolores Marquez, Gus and Dolores Marquez, Dolores Marquez and a painting titled 'La Magdalena', as well as many other characters. In *Charades*, the interconnections among characters are 'remarkably fluid', so that identities become 'tangled and confused' and the narrative takes on its own authority to construct meaning. Koenig merges with Nicholas for both Charade and Katherine/Kay. At the same time, for Koenig, Katherine/Kay merges with his wife

Rachel (342). Koenig recognises that Katherine/Kay in turn merges the characters of Rachel and Verity, through obsessions leading to and stemming beyond the Zundel trial/trail (256-8, 342).

In *Oyster*, 'migration of subjective meaning into the other' results in a blurring of the boundaries between self and other so that positioning in space and time also becomes blurred in a number of ways. This occurs, for example, in Mercy's journal and in her daily life. 'She could hear, as she so often did, Miss Rover's voice inside her head: the measure of days from any one event to another is determined by a slide rule, Mercy, and time is a trickster. So is memory, Mercy thought' (85). In Mercy's dialogue with the forbidden and physically absent other, Susannah Rover moves in and out of monologue so that Mercy is occasionally invoking Miss Rover as her self and sometimes as other. Mercy's yearning for 'her real self, the one Miss Rover saw, the one Jess sees and knows, the one which has always been smouldering and fizzing away somewhere under her skin', (28) manifests itself when in dialogue with the other (that is, Miss Rover or Jess) and is released in the final pages of the narrative. At least this is the order in which Jess shuffles and deals her cards so that the narrative concludes with Jess's vision of this resolution for Mercy. In *Due Preparations for the Plague*, Dr Reuben's notes record that Mather attempts a logical approach to his confused identity:

> S for substructure, subterranean, subterfuge. S for split selves, Siamesed. It is by the other man, Salamander, that events have been nudged in dreadful directions....I want you to stop this, Dr Reuben....I want you to stop me from disappearing. (219)

For Mather, as for Lowell, the interaction of self with other is uneven so that the other threatens to shrink and consume the self (219). Integration of the other is a painful traumatic process.

Oyster is very much about characters seeking their 'real' self-identity wherein they are in dialogue with an other. Ethel, a Murri woman who lives on the margins of Outer Maroo, is one of the three survivors remaining at Outer Maroo after the events of the narrative. She has been waiting to meet her other self for all of her life (44) and the apocalyptic events hold this promise for her. Ethel 'is waiting for a lost language', 'waiting for a name', 'waiting to meet her other self' (44). She is one of the three remaining after the 'Day of Wrath', the time from which the narrative is written. Ethel's story is not written in the language of the text of *Oyster*, perhaps because her story is told through 'the bora rings' that she so lovingly tends (44), or perhaps because her traumatic experiences cannot be translated into the time and space of the narrative of *Oyster*. Ethel is recognised as an example of the postmodernist transcendence of the modernist boundaries between self and other, as are Jess the narrator and Major Minor (45). This space that contains both self and other, while simultaneously bringing about the creation of a third dimension which is always already present in each binary, is discussed in more detail in the first chapter 'Transgressions of Spatial Practice: Border Crossings'.

A contemporary feminist psychoanalytic reading of the interrelationship of self and other in the context of traumatic experience, as is prevalent in *Borderline*, *Charades*, *Oyster* and *Due Preparations for the Plague*, highlights the human subject's capacity for creativity in working through this unconscious process of construction of meaning. Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* is a particularly useful text in relation to Turner Hospital's approach to the disintegration of boundaries

between self and other. Kristeva's approach to the dissolution of boundaries between self and other ensures the presence of the other within the self, since she argues that the space in which the human subject becomes creative is available through a 'semiotic' connection to the self's maternal embodiment. Elliott succinctly and usefully defines Kristeva's notion of the semiotic when he provides his own definition:

> The semiotic is the scene of something other, an otherness central to the fluidity of the 'subject-in-process'....'so that access to the self's maternal embodiment or re-membering is through'...the alterity, the strangeness and uncanniness, of human subjectivity. (30)

Kristeva follows in the tradition of Freud when she states that the trauma of separation from the maternal body is the first trauma that all humans are subjected to. She argues that this first experience of trauma renders the self as universally divided but is a necessary step in creating a space within the self where the self may encounter the other (185). This space within the self is a place in which imagination and fantasy may play, a space which contemporary psychoanalytic approaches harness in their production of alternative stories. Indeed, this space is a Thirdspace.

Experiences that Kristeva describes as typified by 'uncanny strangeness' (182-3), that manifest as a '*destructuration of self*' (author's italics) (188), discomfort (such as, the mismatch of the 'two columns' of Felicity's life in *Borderline* (142)), vertigo (for example, a dizzy gap of nothing in *Oyster* (92)), and the feeling of inhabiting 'for' where 'everything shifts with the light, everything floats' so that the fog's inhabitants 'live on different planets' in *Due Preparations for the Plague* (46), are notable in Turner Hospital's work. These resonate with Kristeva's notion of 'the sense of strangeness' which she argues is a 'mainspring for identification with the other':

> Confronting the foreigner whom I reject and with whom at the same time I identify, I lose my boundaries, I no longer have a container, the memory of experiences when I have been abandoned overwhelm me, I lose my composure. I feel 'lost', 'indistinct', 'hazy'. (187)

I take up the two strands of thought that Kristeva pursues regarding uncanny strangeness, as I argue that these are apt to an understanding of the operations of memory in Turner Hospital's novels.

Kristeva proposes the notion of 'uncanny strangeness' as a 'manifestation of the familiar repressed' (188). Here the past intrudes on the present at unexpected moments and is most often caused by memory triggers, such as incidents or sensory experiences that invoke recall of past experiences, particularly those that have been repressed. Such intrusions of the past may summon fears of loss of control of the self in the present and pose a threat to the process of rebuilding control that is a major preoccupation of the self who has experienced violence and the ongoing effects of trauma. The intrusions of memory slivers are doubly dangerous in that they are unconsciously recalled from the repressed, where they have been subjected to internal silence. Here, the self who has sought to hide from the self's experience is being unwittingly summoned. Culbertson notes that 'slivered memories' are most often survival responses to violence or trauma which, rather than recall the violence itself, 'arrange to avoid it in the future, using whatever cues can be stored and maintained.... This is not memory to be told, not memory to be analyzed, but memory to be used for purposes of survival' (175). It is not my intention to match notions of Kristeva's uncanny strangeness with Culbertson's memory slivers or with Gibbons's notion of 'traumatised memory'. Yet, Culbertson aptly summarises these notions of memory of traumatic experiences as 'the memory of other levels of reality, sensed not even by the

five senses, but by the body itself, or by the spiritual mind, the interior of the body' (176). Such memories are embodied — signifying 'memory without language [and] perhaps without image' (176). These intrusions threaten efforts to maintain or re-establish the continuity of self-narrative and present an unwelcome breach in the boundary between self and other. Yet, if harnessed creatively and worked through effectively these experiences of uncanny strangeness provide opportunities for incorporating the repressed in the ongoing narrative of the self.

In *Charades*, the experience of uncanny strangeness is described as 'pleats in time' (188). The space of twenty-three years is dispersed when a hike in the Glasshouse Mountains (187-203) resonates with a visit to Toronto (204-18) so that, for Katherine/Kay, the years between simply disappear within the folds of the 'pleats'. Katherine/Kay's entangled obsession with Nicholas underlies her conscious self to the extent that memory triggers instigate his evocation in another man who turns out to be Koenig (204-18). At the same time, Charade *consciously* pursues Koenig in the hope of the past being manifested in the present, so that she may communicate directly with Nicholas, her father, rather than through the memories of others, particularly Katherine/Kay and Bea.

This notion of uncanny strangeness as a 'manifestation of the familiar repressed' could be argued to be dangerously close to being described as 'narrative fetishism', in Eric Santner's use of the term in his article 'History Beyond the Pleasure Principle'. He states that 'the construction and deployment of a narrative [is] consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called that narrative into being in the first place' (14). Santner contrasts the use of narrative as fetish with Freud's notion of the 'work of mourning' which is '...a process of elaborating and integrating the reality of loss or traumatic shock by

remembering and repeating it in symbolically and dialogically mediated doses' (14). The major concern of Santner's excellent discussion is in its critique of the historians' debate regarding historical truth in relation to the Holocaust, a debate that Turner Hospital touches on through the characters of Verity and Rachel and with the inclusion of the Zundel trial in *Charades* (214).

The main relevance of Santner's work here is that he does suggest the limited acceptance of the space which uncanny strangeness may create for the coexistence of self and other. He points to contemporary political events that continue — both consciously and unconsciously — to seek to expunge traces of the past (and the other). Here, to eliminate such memories is to seek to 'master' the other and to promote the self as ideal. Such a stance ignores the continuing reverberations of any trauma, in this case 'the traumas of Nazism and the "Final Solution"'(154). Such a project (and Santner likens it to a train which cannot be halted) continues to ignore the possibilities of the space which uncanny strangeness may create. Any project that disregards the past as it seeks to construct the present will assuredly come unstuck; or at least the reader may come to this conclusion as a result of reading Turner Hospital's work. For example, in *Charades*, Verity's inability to work through the past has resulted in her failure to care for her baby daughter and perhaps in Verity being incapacitated in a nursing home. Yet, more importantly, in addition to her exclusion from agency in the narrative of *Charades*, Verity is disconnected from her daughter, possibly unable to incorporate the other within her self, and probably functioning as a truncated survivor of violence. As Culbertson notes, 'to return fully to the self as socially defined, to establish a relationship again with the world, the survivor must tell what happened. This is the function of narrative' (179). As I have stated, the memory that can be told as a socially acceptable narrative will always be a shadow of that

experience, since language cannot translate the sensual richness and the full layers of the experience. In *Charades*, Koenig's inability to communicate with his wife Rachel, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, has contributed to their marriage breakdown. In contrast, one reading of the narrative could conclude that Charade's ability to confront and tell the narrative of her past has enabled her to move forward into a future which incorporates that past. However, like Koenig, Charade harbours 'niggling doubts' (342) in the wake of unanswered questions since the truth that is revealed is devoid of Verity's presence and the language in which it is spoken is an abbreviated echo of embodied memories.

In *Due Preparations for the Plague*, memory slivers are 'pieces which make up the puzzle of the self' and 'are held together by the glue of memory' (47). For Samantha, these memory slivers are 'images with torn edges, scraps of them, [that] flicker without warning across the screen of her mind:...they do not add up' (53). Samantha actively searches for the slivers or pieces and catalogues them so that 'she is mapping her way out of fog' (47). She and those other survivors of the trauma of the airline hijacking who are actively constructing their subjectivity are 'forced to become scavengers of our own past, searching, finding, relearning, reassembling the self' so as to construct 'a jigsaw puzzle in order to explain what happened in September 1987 and how it happened and why' (47).

Uncanny strangeness may take on a more overt political dimension when it is viewed as an experience of discovery of otherness. This can occur where the 'foreigner' is recognised as incorporated within the self so that, ultimately, there can be no foreigner, no enemy, no other (see Kristeva 191-2). In *Charades*, Rachel may achieve this as a result of her willingness to bear witness at the Zundel trial. However since she is a minor character the reader is not acquainted with the extent of her

engagement with her past or with the other within her past. This strand of uncanny strangeness may also take on the guise of narrative fetishism where traces of the other are ignored or expunged. This may lead to either no possibility of rupture with the past or, where the past is acknowledged as separate from the present, there is no memory of past otherness. Turner Hospital's novels seem to indicate that experiences of 'uncanny strangeness', vertigo or shock, open a creative space; that is, a Thirdspace, within which the self is able to engage with difference or otherness. Such a space signals a 'revision of modernity' for Elliott wherein he argues is the context in which postmodernism operates (128). This space is characteristically marked by a provisional sequence with sources dispersed across space and time, as in *Oyster* (43-51). Thirdspace results from 'a resolute emancipation from the characteristically modern urge to overcome ambivalence and promote the monosemic clarity of the sameness' — a space that is not named as such by Zygmunt Bauman but is aptly described by him in *Modernity and Ambivalence* (98). Such a space as Thirdspace enables experiences of trauma and memory to be reincorporated into self-identity.

Traumatic experiences and their reverberations, particularly loss, dispossession, absence, while facilitating the ability of characters to identify with each other and thus to deal with the construction of their own identity, interweave with the present in such a way as to create new meanings. For example, in *Borderline,* Jean-Marc's need to construct his own identity, in the aftermath of the absence of Felicity, underlies the construction of the narrative through which he seeks to recover Felicity. The narrative is as much about his own obsession with his self-identity as it is about the construction of Felicity's identity. Similarly, Charade's stories in *Charades* are as much about constructing Koenig's identity as they are about constructing Charade's own identity through knowledge of her absent father and subsequently her mother.

Oyster is primarily the construction of Mercy's discovery of the other within her self as an aspect of her self at the same time as it is Jess's and Miss Rover's selves within her. The narrative of *Oyster* is permeated with understandings that arise from the benefit of Jess's hindsight as she views traumatic events that have origins in the recent past and as far back as World War Two and post-war immigration to Australia, while at the same time being profoundly saturated by contemporary sociocultural and political influences. Similarly, while the plot of *Due Preparations for the Plague* 'is extraordinarily relevant' 'in its timeliness', as Nikki Tranter notes in a recent review (1), it is not a mimetic reconstruction of recent international events. Rather, 'Turner Hospital grabs all those events we struggle to understand' (1) and questions notions of truth, so that any recalled event is a reconstruction of the past that is tainted by the impregnation of the present. Indeed, Turner Hospital's novels illustrate Caruth's observation in that 'the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located' (8). Turner Hospital's work constructs memories that are not mimetic representations of past events or experiences of trauma but are necessarily delayed and infused with present understandings or hindsight.

Turner Hospital's texts demonstrate the view that the self-social dialectic ensures moral engagement that implies a requirement for intervention, so that the characters, the narrators and the readers are always morally positioned. Callahan promotes this view when he asserts that Turner Hospital is always morally engaged. This, he argues, points to a 'feminist postmodernist' approach that is aware of the provisionality of the subject but is prepared to assume responsibility and necessary engagement ('Acting in the Public Sphere' 75). Turner Hospital's work upholds and develops moral positions, therefore, in relation to representations of trauma. Her work is in dialogue with the trajectory of sociology that argues for all morality being

produced by society. This leads to the modernist view as described by Bauman in *Modernity and the Holocaust* that 'allowed the socially unregulated (whether disregarded, unattended to, or not fully subordinated) manifestations of humanity to be cast aside as instances of inhumanity or, at best, as suspect and potentially dangerous' (173). If one were to adopt this particular modernist moral position, Turner Hospital's work takes what could be regarded as an 'immoral' position in regard to 'the socially unregulated manifestations of humanity' (173).

Her novels are filled with 'disregarded' and 'unregulated' characters from the margins of respectable society, such as the dispossessed and disappeared (Dolores in *Borderline*), traumatised and displaced (Verity in *Charades*), disorderly (Charade in *Charades*), socially disruptive (Susannah in *Oyster*) and traumatised (the hijack survivors who form the Phoenix club in *Due Preparations for the Plague*). Turner Hospital's moral position is one of positive recognition and celebration in relation to such characters. Each is positioned to utilise memory or their knowledge of the past to escape the boundaries that a modernist view of morality would seek to stress. In *Borderline,* Dolores defies disappearance by reappearing to Gus (*cf* 121-30). This act of defiance is echoed by the final page of the narrative belonging to Felicity rather than a celebration of Jean-Marc's triumphant 'last laugh' (287). As Lovell argues in 'The Search for Agency in the Fiction of Janette Turner Hospital':

> Felicity is continuously both absent and present...she is both inside this narrative but clearly preoccupied, as it were, with her own...The very name Felicity comes to represent all silenced, absent and damaged women... (210)

Felicity does represent such women in Turner Hospital's text, and her subjectivity is blurred with such 'bruised' women as Hester and Dolores so that while they retain their separateness, they simultaneously become interchangeable in the narrative.

Seymour's and Jean-Marc's inability to contain and explain Felicity's and the other women's identities point to their agency beyond or 'in excess of their representations' (210) as delimited by the narrative frame of *Charades*. Indeed, the narrative although supposedly composed by Jean-Marc, is constantly being undermined by the elusiveness of these women's identities so that the supremacy of Jean-Marc as omnipotent creator is constantly at risk.

An integral part of the narrative of *Charades* celebrates the disorderliness of the character Charade as she exemplifies the coexistence of paradoxical possibilities against the backdrop of Koenig's preoccupation with the Heisenberg theory. Charade explores and poses countless possibilities that are clearly feasible through her constant and disorderly storytelling as a means of marking her position on a map (35):

> But where, Charade wonders, is the beginning? And how does she cut her own story free from the middle of the history of so many others? (46)

As Charade views a photograph of Bea, Nicholas and Verity at Bea's twenty-first birthday party, 'every day for weeks...a different history came off it' (81-2) so that she attributes multiple versions to it, all of which are equally plausible truths. Charade cannot luxuriate in these possibilities for long though, as the chapter concludes with this disclaimer: "'A photograph," Bea said, "is no more use than a snakeskin after the snake has crawled out"' (86). As Katherine listens to the previously unspoken words of Verity, and as she speaks of her experiences as the child of French-speaking Jews (167-71), Verity's recognition of this almost spiritual transcendence of her violation through her narration in Katherine's presence is powerfully celebrated in the symbolic, communal sharing of her raisins (171). Katherine is a privileged participant in the telling of recollections of childhood trauma. These recollections, as I have noted previously, are essentially problematic and limited since, as Culbertson notes,

'childhood memories are difficult for the adult to comprehend because...her sense of self and its embeddedness in an awareness of cultural realities is new' (180-1). The leap from embodiment to linear narrative is generally recognised by theorists on traumatic experience to be inadequate. While Verity's self-identity is perhaps the only one that cannot be loudly celebrated, the narrative structure of *Charades* provides a space in which she is the answer to Charade's question, when Charade eventually re-shapes her question. Verity then becomes the central focus of Charade's quest and is no longer disregarded. In this instance, Turner Hospital highlights the moral positioning which is characteristic of her work. That is, Turner Hospital challenges the modernist approaches to sociological thought which position particular characters beyond the margins of acceptability.

In *Oyster,* Susannah Rover is a source of threat to the patriarchal stability of the outback town of Outer Maroo and is subsequently violently silenced by the upholders of that stability. Yet she is the forerunner of other unstoppable forces that threaten and dismantle the equilibrium. As the narrator notes in the 'Prologue', 'The arrival of any foreigner changes the map, and foreigners spell the beginning of the end' (10). Within this narrative, Susannah Rover's impact on the town is inevitable. Although similar to other Turner Hospital texts, the difficulty with the narrative is its confinement to the linear form of a written text, and there can be multiple beginning points, the unravelling of the town's stability is not solely located at the point of Susannah's arrival. Even though Susannah's voice is silenced following her challenge to the leaders of the town outside the hotel at Outer Maroo (55-72), her life and her death provide a continuing source of energy and ultimate emancipation for Mercy (particularly in the pages of Susannah's books and journals, secretly retained by Mercy in Aladdin's Rush) (73-86).

In most instances, then, Turner Hospital represents women as agents of power, enabling the dissolution of boundaries that allow for the gaps and fissures to be creatively recuperated and operative in the semiotic space. This leads to a crucial challenge of postmodernism; that is, as Elliott states, 'the creation of subject-positions in which unconscious flux and fluidity on the one hand, and symbolic representations and meanings on the other, are directly related to each other' (36). Such positionings have the potential to bring about experiences of uncanniness that may occur when that which has been alienated through repression is recuperated and reincorporated. This may be viewed as traumatic and could lead to psychotic symptoms, but instead, in most subjects in Turner Hospital's novels, become opportunities for creativity. Subject-positions such as these would not eliminate uncanniness but would enable the subject to operate fluently within such a context. In keeping with my view of a postmodernist dismantling of modernist dichotomies, however, this positioning is not simply the self embracing the other. Not all of Turner Hospital's women are in equal subject-positions at various points in the texts, nor do they all have equal access to a voice in the narratives.

As I have noted, the text of *Borderline* both explicitly and implicitly marks the self-conscious positionality of the narrator, Jean-Marc, so that while Jean-Marc applauds his own slippery grasp of Dolores's and Felicity's presence and absence in the (tune of) the narrative at the place and time that he conducts/chooses, they are significantly elusive. Their identity, and particularly Felicity's identity, is not within the grasp of Jean-Marc, as his narrative reveals. Although Jean-Marc signifies his intent to discover Felicity's whereabouts through his narrative, it is much more about himself and his claim to power through wresting possession of his stepmother (Felicity) from his father (Seymour). This claim to power is revealed in Jean-Marc's

celebration, 'Oh the last laugh is definitely on the Old Volcano. And the very last word is with me...you have to reach past me to touch the world' (287). Dolores's and Felicity's identities are intact, untouched by Jean-Marc's narrative, remaining primarily their own, to be told in other narratives of their own telling.

In *Charades*, Charade seems to accept the implications of Koenig's lecture on Heisenberg's theory about the '*necessity* of uncertainty' and states 'it seems to me to have a bearing on my life. Philosophically speaking, that is' (15). She can be seen to occupy a position of power when she poses multiple stories to explain her subjectivity. These stories transcend boundaries of reality/imagination and self/other and creatively recuperate and occupy a semiotic space. She diversifies the question which is the focus of her quest and, instead, becomes more comfortable with the opportunities offered by her present situation, allowing her memories to become integral aspects of her self rather than intrusive slivers of traumatic experience (336-8). She can also be seen to occupy such a subject-position when Koenig poses a number of theories concerning her position as a subject. She poses the theory that she is a hologram rather than an embodied self or an opposing theory that 'it was not he who invented Charade, but that he is being slept, or dreamed, and that she invented him' (342). Here she is positioned in his fantasy, or he is positioned in her imagination (a reciprocal positionality which is in opposition to the space that Jean-Marc permits for creation of Felicity's identity in *Borderline*). Either way, there may be a sense of strangeness to the reader of *Charades*, although I would argue that there probably is not by this stage of the narrative. Further, Koenig is apparently very comfortable with these subject-positions and decides to retain both theories since the uncertainty principle would support the paradoxical truth of co-existence of both of these truths.

Female subjects in *Oyster* appear to have successfully transcended borders and reincorporated embodied memories and symbolic representations to reach a fuller positionality of empowerment. Susannah Rover and Jess are vital catalysts for Mercy Given's blossoming sense of recognition of her full subjectivity, which enables her to escape from the physical confinement of Outer Maroo. They are notably both 'foreigners' in the sense that they were not born in the area yet they can wordlessly point to the location of gaps and fissures in Mercy's identity of which she had been unconsciously aware prior to their sojourn in Outer Maroo. Ironically, it is through Susannah's death and Jess's survival that Mercy is empowered to move on and to drive through the gap that will take her to Brisbane (431-3) — or, at least, that is how Jess deals the story-telling cards of her narrative.

As the narrative of *Due Preparations for the Plague* unfolds, the ability of Samantha to be a 'scavenger' (46) of memory traces in the lives of herself and others is empowered by her desire. As she states "'I would just like to *have* a past"' (56). In this text there is no omnipotent narrator. Rather, the power is fragmented, fluid and decentralised. The website that has been designed and is a means of communication for the survivors of Air France 64 symbolises the 'intense connection' of these survivors and the memory traces underpinning the narrative (54). Simultaneously, as Samantha maps her place in the fluidity of this 'fog' of information and interconnection, her identity and the identity of others are discovered and integrated. 'She and Jacob piece together faces but their edges are never sharp and they drift into fog. The task gives them vertigo' (53).

Turner Hospital's texts assert that self-knowledge is constructed through the complex tasks of confrontation with and re-incorporation of memories. At the same time, her texts delineate and problematise the complex aspects of identity formation,

which are often fraught with contradictions. Memories are as elusive and illusory as photographs, when viewed through my postmodernist framework. Indeed, they are arguably as contextually dependent as photographs since they can be viewed as spaces of representations or Thirdspaces, which can be multifariously interpreted. In Turner Hospital's texts, memories are highly subjective, dependent on context and subject to diverse translations. Her texts point to the transitory and subjective nature of memory so that while all memories are valid, some are embodied, some validate institutional truths, while others deny political truths. Yet memories are essential to the formation of the subject and at the postmodernist site of construction that is the self, Turner Hospital's texts demonstrate that memories are simultaneously incorporated, dismantled, rejected, and reincorporated in a 'thirding-as-othering' process that is disordered and subjective. In Turner Hospital's texts, this leads to subject-positions that incorporate the absent, silent, disregarded, dispossessed, traumatised and socially disruptive elements that creatively use memory so as to inhabit an inclusive, atemporal Thirdspace.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIVED SPACES OF REPRESENTATION: REALISING SPIRITUALITIES

'Humankind cannot bear very much lack of meaning.
We have to get to the heart of the labyrinth
where the minotaur lurks.'
(*Magician* 300)

'The dead never stop telling us stories.'
(*Due Preparations for the Plague* 265)

Postmodernism's penchant for 'plurality, contingency, particularity, and transience...contrasts with traditional theology's privileging of unity, stability, order, universality and continuity, whether in dogma or revelation' (Brown 179). In this chapter I discuss postmodernism's self-conscious awareness of possibilities for multiple, complex and paradoxical viewpoints, and its dismantling of the assumed notion of 'common sense' or conventional wisdom that supports the assurances of unified truths in relationship with a focus on Western spiritualities. Indeed, Western spiritualities may be read ironically as one of the sacredly held grand narratives that postmodern deconstruction seeks to dismantle. However, I do not wish to signal a total disavowal of this certainty. Rather, I agree with Patricia Waugh when she states in her 'Introduction' to her edited work, *Postmodernism*, that 'grand narratives' are 'ways of formulating fundamental human needs and their "grandness" is a measure of the urgency and intensity of the need. They are unlikely, therefore, simply to die, though they may need to be profoundly transformed' (9).

Before I turn to detect imprints of spirituality in the context of Turner Hospital's novels, I will attempt to clarify my understanding and use of the term *spirituality.* As I invoke this term I am aware that *spirituality* can signify, as David Tacey states, 'either a New Age phenomenon — that is, [a space where spirituality is] viewed as fashionably cultic and anti-intellectual — or it is berated as an Old Age superstition — that is, considered to be a cultural backlash against modernity' (84). Thus, I agree with Tacey, that this term can bear the weight of significant negative connotations (84). However it is my intention to acknowledge the richness and relevance of spirituality as an unashamedly dynamic, immanent presence within everyday experience and culture. Indeed, this *lived* experience connects here with my understanding and use of notions of Thirdspace. A spatial understanding of a lived experience of spiritualities celebrates possibilities for concrete vital engagement of marginal writing and marginal experiences with those spiritualities.

While acknowledging that s*pirituality* inherently eludes rationalistic definitions I use the term here in relation to Turner Hospital's work as 'a desire for connectedness, which often expresses itself as an emotional relationship with an invisible sacred presence' (17). A key understanding is interconnectedness, separating it from modernity's persistent theme of individualistic self-motivation and self-concern often translated as self-imposed alienation. Thirdspace, or lived spaces of representation transforms the 'categorical and closed logic of either/or' (Soja 60) frameworks of understanding into infinite multivocal possibilities of inclusion-exclusion, belonging-not-belonging, and self-other. Through the interconnectedness and re-incorporation of spiritual dimensions of being, lived marginal writing and experiences will re-vision and redefine spaces of representation. This is the process of 'thirding-as-othering' in praxis.

In his introduction to his book *God — The World's Future*, Ted Peters defines spirituality through translation of the Greek word '*ecumenic*': 'It connotes the sense of oneness with the human race and perhaps even the sense of ecological oneness' (ix). Australian Catholic priest and historian, Paul Collins, in *God's Earth* bases his treatise on 'the profound interconnections between' the physical world, God, ecology, and humanity (2). Collins defines the meaning of *spirituality* as interchangeable with notions of religion: it is 'our mysterious, intangible, and difficult relationship to the transcendent; it is within this context [of our co-dependent relationships with other humans and the natural world] that we sort out the meaning of our existence' (3). Each of these theorists is aware of the complex nature of spirituality, deeply imbued with a sense that 'the new spirituality...is plural, diverse, fragmented and decidedly eclectic' (Tacey 21). Australian Catholic priest and educator, Michael Morwood, provides a clear yet much narrower statement regarding spirituality: 'Spirituality is simply the manner in which we allow [our images, thoughts and relationship regarding God]...to direct the way we live' (97). I argue that these notions of spirituality as interconnectedness, co-dependence, transformation, and immanence, are evident as lived spaces of representation in Turner Hospital's work.

While it is my intention here to demonstrate the transformative possibilities that impregnate Turner Hospital's texts, particularly *Borderline*, *Oyster* and *Due Preparations for the Plague*, I seek to take notice of Noel Rowe's warning that

> there are theologians who have set out to explore Australian literature in the hope of arriving at those true symbols of our culture which best be sacralised, and they have not always avoided the temptation to treat literature as a storehouse of themes, they have not always remembered that liminality informs how meaning is made, not simply what meaning is made. (143)

In this chapter I argue and demonstrate that it is in the 'liminal' spaces of Turner Hospital's texts, in the gaps, fissures and, I propose, the thirdspaces, that meaning is made. My intention is other than that which Rowe laments when he despairs at the manner in which Australian theology is using Australian literature. The hidden agenda in much theological selection of Australian writing is a preference for texts to sustain the realist epistemology and metaphysical symbolism which still underwrite most of our theologies (142).

The height of secular humanism that has accompanied modernity gave birth to the colonial era during which Australia was invaded by European colonists and convicts. It is an era that has been noted as marked by an obscuration of 'all things spiritual' with an obsession with materialism. The relegation of religion and spirituality to the individual, essentially private and personal, realm has limited common understandings in Australia of God's presence and relevance. I agree with Tacey, who states in *Re-enchantment* that, historically, in the past two hundred years of European-Australian occupation of this land '"common sense", social reality, and an extraverted attitude to life' (1) have excluded public recognition of spirituality in Australia. Tacey continues by stating that

> True morality and social justice will be achieved once we activate the lost spiritual side of personal and political experience. Morality, unaided by a spiritual dynamic, is weak, flawed, subject to the whims of governments and social pressures, and very likely to fail us entirely. (148)

A modernist, rationalistic approach in relation to notions of spirituality then, has been described as at least flawed and at most impossible, thus leaving humanity alienated from our context, our landscape and from each other. Postmodernist approaches incorporate this modernist view yet propose and accept that spirituality eludes rationalistic definitions, recognising that while there cannot be a pure

experience of connectedness with sacred experiences, there can be valid non-rationalistic experiences that are plural, diverse, fragmented, and eclectic (21). As I have discussed in my chapter on representation, Hutcheon notes that

> postmodernism challenges our mimetic assumptions about representation... [It renders problematic] assumptions about its transparency and common-sense naturalness....Our common-sense presuppositions about the 'real' depend upon how that 'real' is described, how it is put into discourse and interpreted....There is nothing natural about the 'real' and there never was. (*Politics* 32, 33)

A Thirdspace approach is truly radical and challenging as it incorporates a multiplicity of rational and spiritual experiences, enabling reconnection with pre-modern notions of spirituality but through diverse, contingent behaviour. This creates a sense of crisis for institutions such as the Western Christian Church and law enforcement agencies that were formed and at the peak of their vigilant effectiveness during the modern era. Suspicions of religion have been endemic through the last twenty years, as are suspicions of any institutions that seek to monopolise truth. Historically and particularly in the nineteenth century, the Western Christian Church's symbolic meaning became detached from and swamped by its moralistic and dogmatic overtones. As Tacey claims, 'especially in the nineteenth century, it used coercion, guilt and the rhetoric of damnation to maintain its flock, thereby making itself an enemy of reason, social progress and individual liberty' (30). It is the 'Western dualism between body and spirit that continues to mar and undermine the church' in a majority of instances (32).

Denial of spirituality, alienation, and anti-authoritarianism have been an integral part of Australia's Western cultural heritage. Historically, Australia's education system has reinforced this penchant for defiance of hierarchical authority through its

history texts. While these notions remain embedded in our contemporary culture, social, environmental, and theological commentators have noted changing attitudes to spirituality in Australia in the previous two decades. For example, Caroline Jones, in her collection of interviews recorded in *The Search for Meaning*, interviews a number of well-known Australian figures who reiterate this theme. Among them is Phillip Adams — a self-claimed agnostic — who notes that 'as a kid it seemed to me that...religion would be as dead as the 'dodo' but it's showing every sign of having a great revival [in Australia]' (84). There is an increasing awareness of and engagement with spiritualities that are emerging in our contemporary context and are being perceived as 'fluid, expansive, non-exclusive, changing, metaphorical, non-literal' (Tacey 34).

Tacey argues that this contemporary 'rising awareness and articulation of the spiritual dimension to life' in Australia is derived from 'our innate hunger for spiritual meaning' which is 'dramatically accelerated when society goes through a period of critical instability and uncertainty' (6). As I note is evident in Turner Hospital's texts the contemporary era is 'on the cusp' of modernity/postmodernity so that there is accompanying resistance and suspicions, with the crumbling of old paradigms (7). In some contexts, at least,

> God is no longer conceived as a distant powerful figure who intervenes in human affairs from 'above' or who works upon us from outside creation. Rather, God is seen as the divine presence within nature and the powerful force that works towards wholeness and holiness at the heart of human creativity. (37)

While Tacey notes that post-secular enlightenment is not a return to the premodern but is typified by new and altered concepts and expressions of the sacred,

he adds that there is a co-dependency between 'rationality' and 'spirituality' which must be balanced in the post-secular context.

> Rationality without spirituality leads to dryness, inhumanity and lack of meaning....Spirituality without rationality leads to emotionalism, superstition, wild enthusiasm and fanatical loyalties...we need reason and passion, *logos* and *mythos*, economics and mysticism, to keep society balanced and sane. (12)

Tacey's modernist pretensions accentuate the dualism inherent in this definition which emphasises the value of balance and its equation with sanity. Is he proposing that the way to *insanity* is through an imbalance of rational/spiritual dimensions, so that too much of one or the other is ultimately dangerous? A Thirdspace approach would incorporate the binary and generate further spaces that would pose transformative (perhaps dangerous) possibilities.

I refer in this chapter to a range of theologians, social anthropologists, and commentators of marginal Western and Eastern spiritualities who argue that images of God, Jesus, church and spirituality must be radically transformed if they are to be relevant in contemporary Western contexts. Some speak from their various denominational heritages and differences along a conservative-liberal Protestant-Catholic Christian continuum, such as Peters, John Hick and Morwood. Others, such as Tacey, Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs, and Collins, speak from their positions as social commentators, historians or environmentalists. Others speak from their understandings of fundamentalism such as that evident in contemporary apocalypticism. These include Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer, who argue in their 'Introduction' to the papers that comprise *Millenium, Messiahs and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* 'that a wave of apocalyptic and millennial ferment has been washing over [North] American society and culture for several

decades', generating academic and popular discourse (1). As editors, Robbins and Palmer broadly argue that apocalypticism has arisen in North America as a fundamentalist religious response to postmodernist dismantling of centrist ideologies (1-27).

In the context of postmodern discourse where borders are dismantled and other truths are recognised, contemporary theologians and commentators are incorporating postmodern understandings into theology. There are profound implications when, as Marcus Borg argues, it is recognised that the Bible can be seen as a 'metaphorical narrative' that 'can be true without being literally and factually true' (17). Postmodern theology embodies metaphorical stories from diverse traditions that include Western Christian beliefs and practices, Eastern mysticism, nature religions and New Age spiritualities. Borg describes examples of these similarities but notes that they are not necessarily due to cultural contact with the other but that 'the similarities flow out of similar reflections on human experience, perhaps even out of similar experiences of the sacred' (169-70). One example that Borg describes resonates with understandings of existence in Turner Hospital's texts. He discusses the echoes between Qoheleth's conventional wisdom as recorded in the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Christian Bible and 'the writings of Lao-tzu, a sixth-century BCE Chinese wisdom teacher whose teaching is preserved in the *Tao-te-ching*. Lao-tzu's thought is similar to that of Buddhism, especially Zen Buddism' (168). The operations of Thirdspace are evident in this spiritual interconnectedness that is occurring in contemporary theological discourse.

Having generally outlined the state of transition that characterises contemporary spiritualities in Australia, I turn to identify traces of spirituality in the context of Turner Hospital's novels. In the contemporary era new understandings of

biology, technology, and astronomy, as well as historical, literary and theological scholarship have begun to ask questions of a literal spiritual worldview, and it is my contention that Turner Hospital's novels are intertextually impregnated with timely spiritual insights that provide 'new' readings of 'old' texts, and thought-provoking images that build new understandings of the mysteries that define spirituality.

Veronica Brady sardonically observes in her book *Caught in the Draught* regarding Australian culture's interrelationship with theology in the 1990s, 'religion is at best a harmless recreation, like gardening or collecting stamps, and at worst a perversion of intelligence' (274). Modernism's disregard for the social, spiritual and ecological continuity of the cosmos is described by Kevin Hart as symptomatic of the elimination of the realm of the transcendent and its loss of salience for 'how we live and how we die' (4). A significant legacy of modernism in the Australian context is the pervasive notion of the irrelevance of notions of spirituality. Brady laments the peripheral intellectual cognisance given to spirituality as an inevitable historical development derivative of Australia's colonisation experiences. At the same time, Brady highlights the historically paradoxical expression of unrecognised spirituality within Australian culture. James Tulip writes in the same vein, in his review of Hart's anthology *The Oxford Book of Australian Religious Verse*, and points to the resultant brokenness of Australian culture into at least two elements — 'religious object and human subject — which are largely indifferent to each other' (179). For Brady and Tulip, the legacies of modernism are recognisably poignant in the Australian context where colonialism has been a critical factor in exemplifying the Western project of modernism. This thesis supports their view that the project of colonialism not only collided with and brutalised the Indigenous cultural landscape, but also has its casualties among the perpetrators who could not accommodate the objectified forms

of a traditional and codified faith to the realities of the Australian 'desert' (Brady 261-71, Tulip 179-80).

Borderline is saturated with ritualistic symbolism that apparently fails to interconnect with the pace and reality of the context of the narrative. These forms which echo traditional and codified faith superficially serve to plague certain characters and, indeed, the narrator and hence the narrative of *Borderline.* These forms include 'a host of guardians (the nuns and priests of his [Gus's] school years, keepers of the faith) [that constantly] hovered on his lee side' (68). Likewise this 'host of guardians' 'hover' and haunt the narrative yet, as the narrator Jean-Marc remonstrates: 'The absolutely accurate is too narrow; it is false and imperfect' (25) and he proposes that the craft of 'tempering' is a vital ingredient in the discovery of truth. The narrative supports Jean-Marc's argument — with which he paradoxically wrestles — that truth 'is never pure and rarely simple' (26). While Jean-Marc's omnipresence directs the narrative, his representation of events, and the implications for the characters, reveal as much about Jean-Marc as about the narrated subjects. Thus, 'signs' 'of the Good Living seal of approval' (69) justify and impregnate the motivations of characters, the narrative, and the narrator. The narrative is as much about demarcating the space of spiritual truths as it is about political and other truths.

Spaces for dialogue about, or interconnection with, 'religious ritual' (333) appear to be brushed aside in the plot of *Due Preparations for the Plague* until Salamander's 'The Decameron Tape[s]' (297-353) are viewed by Samantha and Lowell and simultaneously shared with the reader. One of the ten hostages, Homer Longchamp, asks:

> How can we account for this spontaneous outbreak of ritual, *religious* ritual — this reverence for death itself, and for life itself, and this grief for

> the death of strangers — how can we account for this arising from the death of Satan and the silence of God? (333)

As Homer predicts, there is no response. He states that prayer is notoriously futile: '"We know that God, if He's there, and if He watches and listens, never answers. He's turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to suffering for millennia"' (332). This is particularly relevant to Homer, one of Turner Hospital's characters who encapsulates the incorporation of self and other, and reinvention of the self through the operations of Thirdspace. Homer is a 'descendant of slaves on one side, and of a seventeenth century French plantation family of stupendous wealth and great classical scholarship on the other', and is passionate about psychology, philosophy and jazz (334). Through Homer, the narrative ponders and seeks answers to the 'three great mysteries....Life. Or death. Or randomness' (333) through the use of religious ritual and storytelling. With this apparently implicit spiritual insight, the ten hostages, without the advantage of Salamander's lectures to his students in espionage, employ his 'personalized survival weapon': 'the most crucial piece of classified information you will ever receive' is that 'the body can be fooled by the mind' (262). He advises, 'when *in extremis*, close eyes, open mind, step out into the uncharted abysses of your own memory and imagination, open parachute, create a floating world, explore its tunnels and byways, stay there until All Clear signal sounds' (262). With echoes of Gus's visualisation techniques in *Borderline* and Mercy's Aladdin's Rush in *Oyster*, Turner Hospital creates a space in which spiritual truths can transcend temporal and physical boundaries to be creatively deployed in contexts where horror is embodied and death is impending.

The plot and the narrative of *Oyster* point to the futility of transplanting a spiritual community with modernist structural forms and expressions in the unmapped

region of the desert on which Outer Maroo and Oyster's Reef stand. Outer Maroo has supported three communities of Western faith (the Living Word, a Catholic congregation, and a nameless one of which Charles Given was the leader), as well as the Murri community which was disregarded by the European settlers from the beginning of their colonisation of the land and the apocalyptic group at Oyster's Reef. In all, this is at least five faith communities. On the other hand, the narrative supports the success of opening a spiritual space that incorporates attunement with the land, with regard for the bora rings, and the songlines that Ethel seeks to reinvoke (44-5).

In *Due Preparations for the Plague*, due preparations do not begin until death is imminent. Borg notes that spiritual narratives, such as Ecclesiastes, written by Qoheleth, can contain wisdom teachings to illuminate understandings about life. He notes that 'Ecclesiastes is haunted by death' (164) and that through understanding death humanity paradoxically learns how to live (168). Thus 'due preparations for death' incorporate the spiritual understanding that 'death is the teacher of true wisdom' (169). In *Due Preparations for the Plague*, these preparations are inherently intensely spiritual and reliant on the spiritual and ethnic heritage of each individual, so that Hindu, Afro-American, Jewish and Christian symbolism provide salient frameworks for each of the ten hostages. One of these ten, Avi Levinstein, initially states:

> 'I am a secular Jew....I don't have a religious bone in my body — at least, that is what I have always believed. I have always said that my only religions are music and love'. (326)

Then, he adds:

> 'I discover, after all...that I am a religious Jew. I see now, I understand, that the religious impulse begins in awe, and awe begins at death'. (326)

This apparent shift in belief arises from a phenomenon that is commonly experienced, whereby those who are forced to leave their homelands are confronted by questions regarding their self-identity. Terry Veling refers to an Egyptian-born, French-speaking, Jewish poet who grappled with the question:

> what does it mean to be an *exiled* Jew, a Jew who only becomes aware of *belonging* to the Jewish people and tradition through the experience of *non-belonging*? 'This may seem paradoxical,' writes Jabès, 'but it is precisely in that break — in that non-belonging in search of its belonging — that I am without doubt most Jewish'. (36)

In *Due Preparations for the Plague*, in the underground bunker, the hostages inhabit a space of non-belonging from which they seek to escape, so that they grapple with questions of identity and make 'due preparations' as they yearn for a sense of belonging.

Borderline is underpinned by characters and a narrator who struggle with, and become crippled by, an intense spiritual awareness and culpability, that is based on a distorted view of traditional Christian teaching and its efficacy and application to the context of contemporary lifestyles. Gus struggles with the inability of traditional forms to help him make sense of his contemporary context. He is pushing at the boundaries of the efficacy of traditional faith forms and on the cusp of being consciously ready to take steps to seek alternative theological understandings, spirituality and practices. Rather, Jean-Marc narrates him as blindly blundering along a marginal path along which he questions rules and practices of faith. For Gus — passive, powerless, plagued by fears — his intense emotional connection with the unseen, the almost-achievable promise at the end of 'a fail-safe series of steps' (69), is interlaced with his understandings of spiritual teachings, so that his spiritual restlessness cannot be resolved. He is driven by a set of 'blueprints for the good life'.

These include '*whatever the mind can conceive, the mind can achieve*' (author's italics) (69) and conceives of himself as being able to grant absolution to himself and others (68) (with echoes of Jean-Marc's own project to calm the 'cacophony' of the universe).

In *Oyster*, as Jess narrates in the 'Prologue', residents of Outer Maroo intentionally seek to lose themselves yet recognise the human inclination to belong. While they cling tenaciously to the need to be 'non-belongers', they ironically discover a community to which others who have sought to lose themselves have gravitated (5). 'The riddle of what it is exactly that has glued them all together' keeps Mercy awake through nights. It is a question that is perhaps answered by the end of the narrative, if not for Mercy, at least for the reader (27). As I have noted previously, it is widely acknowledged that 'what inspires [any] spiritual search...is a profound disillusionment with the present social system' (*Re-enchantment* 6) since 'spiritual restlessness is dramatically accelerated when society goes through a period of critical instability and uncertainty' (6). This diverse need to escape the past and reveal or create an improved future is the story behind every character in the text of *Oyster* and is the answer to Mercy's riddle. Yet, ironically, even this community of people who have sought to lose themselves, and who to varying degrees has sought to create an idyllic escape from institutions that have dogged them in their past, have set up modernist institutions. These include the post office, the Country Women's Association and the Returned Servicemen's League, and two denominational Christian churches represented by the Living Word Gospel Hall and St Chrysostom's Catholic Church (33-4). The corrupt, untenanted or dysfunctional state of these modernist institutions parodoxically indicates their irrelevance for their context.

Veling's paper about the marginal space between 'belonging and non-belonging' is relevant in describing this unmapped region of outback Australia wherein the residents of Outer Maroo 'live both "inside" and "outside" of a religious tradition that both provokes their existence as possibility and haunts their existence as non-possibility' (37). These characters are subject to the exclusions and repressions of distorted Christian traditions that have 'as much to do with power and domination as...with truth and disclosure and, as such,...demands both critique and suspicion' (37).

The region of Outer Maroo is inhabited by a geographically marginalised community within which live micro-communities that are likewise geographically marginalised. This marginalisation is due to their spirituality, as with the Indigenous peoples or as in the case of Oyster and his acolytes, or by choice, as in the case of the Godwin family. Relationships within and between these micro-communities are characterised by tensions between '*trust* and *suspicion*' (author's italics) (37). These so-called communities contain individuals who are incredibly suspicious of others, largely derived from a distorted reading, or millennialist interpretation, of the Christian book of Revelation in the Christian Bible that the 'end of the world' is imminent. The structures that arise as a result of this mistrust are peculiarly functional to those that operate within the structures, yet appear incredibly convoluted and dysfunctional from the point of view of the uninitiated. For example, Oyster's converts are only permitted to venture outside of their community at Oyster's Reef when they are organised into groups of three. Another example is when Mrs Dorothy Godwin's shoplifting tactics are accepted and supported, as 'a point of honour' by the shop assistant Mercy Given, by Mrs Godwin's daughter Alice Godwin and her son, Junior, who discreetly returns the goods a day or two later (23-4). While 'everyone

watches everyone else, eye to eye' and 'everyone understands that such mutual vigilance is necessary', 'in Outer Maroo, forgetting and honour are as crucial to survival as a good artesian bore' (24).

Vigilance, distrust and suspicion are manifold in *Due Preparations for the Plague*. As Salamander warns while instructing his students, 'Outwitting him [the other] is the secret addiction...that will obsess you to the exclusion of everything else in your life' (229). The intricacies of international intelligence systems including 'foreknowledge', 'spies' and 'informers' (251) weave through the narrative, as do double-crossings and interconnections of liaisons. However, it is not until after the hijacking of Air France Flight 64 and the consequent deaths that the 'riddles and slow torments begin' (6). The reverberations of

> what people will believe and what they will hope for and what they will do within a thirty-day radius of the anniversary of the hijacking is utterly unpredictable. This is a dangerous time. This is a time when clinical depression is epidemic and the death rate peaks, both for survivors and for relatives of the deceased. (5)

As Tranter notes, an implicit theme of the narrative 'is the idea of "not knowing". The book examines the psychological destruction inherent in personal loss, especially loss clouded in ambiguity....Turner Hospital suggests that any kind of definite understanding or unwavering belief in information received is simply impossible' (1).

Turner Hospital suggests that the best way to prepare for death is to tell stories, to pass collective wisdom on to future generations so that, hopefully, they will not become embroiled in errors and immersed in fears that have plagued those that have lived in past generations. Borg discusses in detail the importance and power of telling these 'conventional wisdom' stories, as recorded in the collection of Israel's wisdom stories in the book of Ecclesiastes, and he links these with the Chinese

wisdom teachings recorded in the *Tao-te-ching* (168). Both of these collections of Western and Eastern wisdom teachings enlighten the reader or listener regarding the futility of clinging to life. Rather, the *Tao-te-ching* instructs: 'don't miss it. Don't let it slip by unnoticed; don't live it in the fog; don't waste it chasing the wind' (169). Turner Hospital, through Salamander, refers to Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* and Albert Camus's *The Plague* as examples of tales told by those who are 'haunted by their own nightmares, by their own betrayals, and by their dead. Like the Ancient Mariner, they were condemned to tell the stories of those who haunted them as an act of propitiation, to keep their Furies at bay. The dead never stop telling us stories' (*Due Preparations* 265). Like Charade's storytelling to Koenig in *Charades* and like Scheherazade's storytelling in *One Thousand and One Nights*, Turner Hospital's text proposes that due preparations for the plague, for death and for life, are woven through the telling and retelling of stories.

As I have noted above, *Borderline* is saturated with allusions to traditional Christian forms, doctrine and spiritual expressions. These include the 'host of guardians (the nuns and priests..., keepers of the faith)' (68) that 'hover' at the elbows of Jean-Marc and Gus. Choirboys' 'antiphonal echoes' (75), and the 'voice' and 'torn, flapping, black dress' of Dolores Marquez, named La Magdalena (*cf* 121), are faith-reminders who haunt Jean-Marc, Gus and to some extent Felicity, throughout the narrative. Early in the text, Jean-Marc makes significant mention of differences in perspective and the validity of different beliefs and forms of faith, in the light of Felicity's childhood experiences as the daughter of a preacher and missionary, with contrasts illustrated between the Missionary Society and presumably Hindu temple in India (76-7). These two and at least one other faith community are referred to,

including St Sauveur, the respectable French-Canadian Catholic church of Felicity's aunts, at which Father Bolduc is the priest (77). However, Jean-Marc's narrative intentionally works at dismantling the validity of recognising differences of perspective. Allusions to condemnation and hell reiterate Gus's stated belief that Catholics are 'trained to spend our lives in hell so we'll consider purgatory a good deal' (66). Even though Gus wakes at the 'shrill jangling' of the thrice-crowing of the cock at dawn it does not prevent his continuing self-betrayal (75). These allusions are interwoven in the text with Gus's visualisation techniques, positive thinking and self-scripting, signifying his confused crisis of faith (*cf* 71-5).

The narrative of *Oyster* is peppered with biblical allusions. Biblical quotations fortify the believer, such as '*Lord, make me to know mine end*' (author's italics) (84) and behave as magical incantations which have ironic implications for the plot and for *Oyster* as a narrative text. Mercy's dogs are called Exodus and Leviticus (108), whilst characters' names point to biblical or church traditions — such as the Prophet and Godwin families, Mercy Given, Susannah (an intertestamental text traditionally regarded as part of the Apocypha) and the adopted names of Oyster's acolytes including Rose of Sharon and Gabriel.

Due Preparations for the Plague includes some overt references to recognisable Western Christian traditions and biblical allusions as in *Borderline* and *Oyster*, such as Sirocco's statement to the ten hostages:

> You will achieve immortality. And you may yet be inscribed in the Book of Life. You may be saved. That depends on the decisions of your governments. Ten for ten. An eye for an eye, a life for a life. (165)

Other instances include dismantling and re-writing ancient stories and miracles by getting inside the mind of Daniel when he is thrown to the lions and understanding Jesus' ability to walk on water (263).

Characters in *Oyster* are depicted as multiple, ambiguous and capable of communicating in dimensions other than physical. Oyster is a messianic figure described as a fisher of people, with a slippery, alluring bait: 'You could swallow it whole, raw and silky, like an oyster, and then Oyster could reel you in' (11). Oyster's recruitment technique, according to Jess's recall of a leaflet once kept by her, includes biblical allusions: '*Opal is the Logos made manifest. Prepare ye the Way of the Lord. Join the seekers and ye shall find*' (author's italics) (12). According to Jess, his advertising persuasions also include New Age references to Gaia, the Earth Goddess (12). In contrast, Ma Beresford, the general store owner/manager, discounts the 'foreigners' who flock to Oyster's Reef, yet offers a startlingly prophetic statement. Ma states: '"if you go in for religion too much, that's what comes of it. They give me the pip, the whole lot of them. They can go up in smoke, for all I care"' (96).

Contemporary theology self-consciously foregrounds its own inevitable complicitous relationship with its context and reprimands modernist theology for its denial of its complicity. As Brown states, postmodernism points to a need for 'a critical awareness of the humanness, and hence inadequacy, of all theology in its discourse about Mystery, together with a keen sensitivity to what it may be excluding' (181). A new awareness of textuality, where there is no authorising, single voice *behind* a text, enables a myriad of possibilities for contextually based divergent readings, each of which is inherently true for each community of readers. This of course opens texts to relativism, viewed as a dangerous possibility by some, that can

lead to justification for outrageous behaviours, as in the manifestation of the apocryphal community initiated and ended by Oyster in *Oyster*.

Jean-Marc's omnipotent quest to arrange events and people in the narrative of *Borderline* exemplifies a relativistic justification for the bizarre events leading to Felicity's disappearance. As noted in earlier chapters of this thesis, Jean-Marc's stated desire to conduct and set down his version of the messy and unrepresentable truth, requiring a well-tempered blend of artistry and scientific approach, is embarked upon with 'infinite patience' (26). As Jean-Marc's project proceeds, both Jean-Marc and the reader can increasingly recognise the artifice of a proposed endpoint of truth. In the later pages of the text, Jean-Marc continues to steer single-mindedly towards the point that he had set out to prove at the beginning of his narrative. Despite the evidence he continues to maintain his faith that Felicity will return.

As I have indicated throughout this chapter, imprints of spirituality are evident in Turner Hospital's texts through various characters' profound interconnectedness and multi-dimensionality in relationship with each other and their physical world. These techniques are highly refined in *Oyster*. These include the young girl, Mercy, the teacher, Susannah and the narrator, Jess. Mercy Given's character is a leading example of this interconnection. Her psychospiritual connection with her natural environment and with humanity enables a rediscovery of spirituality in the environment and in relationship with others. Mercy's subjectivity is narrated as not only multi-vocal but in addition she is multi-dimensional. Her self-boundaries of life and death are blurred so that she can invoke Miss Rover, her teacher, even after Susannah's death. She is, in a sense, Miss Rover's keeper, since she maintains the memories of Miss Rover both through being curator of her collection of books and letters and through her invocation of her teacher in times of danger or threat to her

self-identity. When Miss Rover had been alive, Mercy perceived her as astute enough to recognise and nurture 'her real self, the one Miss Rover saw, the one Jess sees and knows, the one which has always been smouldering and fizzing away somewhere under her skin' (28).

Through her communication with Sarah Cohen, a parent in search of her stepdaughter who was an adherent at Oyster's Reef, Mercy is aware that she is experiencing a vocal cacophony in her head and 'managing so many differences at once' (128, 129). She is thrilled to discover that 'Sarah suffers from the same disease' (129). She experiences attunement with her environment and other points of view so that she 'can feel pins and needles of excitement along her arms. How obvious, and yet how electrifying to find that there are vantage points from which she, Mercy, is *foreign*' (129). Mercy is able to incorporate Sarah Cohen's sensuality within her own subjectivity to the extent that 'she imagines she sees the impact of her thought in the flicker of Sarah's eyelids' (130).

Jess Hyde or, ironically, Old Silence is narrator or shuffler of the cards which form the narrative of *Oyster*. Mercy's and Jess's interconnectedness plays with notions of boundaries of the self as their identities are subject to transgressions of borders to swap sardonic comments, to comfort, to express solidarity and to communicate with each other as well as with others. Jess's fragments of memory — her 'various bits of my self and my history' — 'have accompanied her as she has immersed herself in the township of Outer Maroo, all simultaneously correct and present and buoyant' for the 'time being' (154). Jess's life experiences enable her to be a spiritual mentor for Mercy. Aladdin's Rush is the storage space for Susannah Rover's words, and it is in this space that Mercy experiences the power of Jess's presence. It is also the space where Mercy experiences an intense spirituality in the

shape of a unity with the Earth as Mother — 'the walls … folded her in' (75). The tunnels of Aladdin's rush are the space to which Jess escapes, as does Mercy, being a spiritual space for retreat and rejuvenation, enabling each to be resourced to participate in the 'real' space of Outer Maroo (75). Jess plays with the idea of the 'deviant' rock formations known as the 'breakaways' in the 'breakaway country', a space wherein 'time and space and sound … sneak across their own boundary lines, and their separate states coalesce' (150). This signals an ability for intensely spiritual observation ironically narrated by a woman whose avowed silence permits her to commune only with Mercy. Tacey would argue that this environmental interconnection indicates what he perceives as a shift from modernist texts that speak of alienation in a harsh, untranslatable environment. Jess's communion with the landscape of the breakaways in this chapter collapses boundaries between self/other or self/environment, facilitating one-ness with the natural environment. As Tacey argues, humanity's 'ecological task' is 'to turn the soul inside out, to return meaning and interiority to the outer world, to reanimate the environment and rediscover soul in the world' (177).

Crucial spiritual questions are being foregrounded in postmodern contexts where a new ecological vision is characterised by 'profound interconnections between' our natural world, God, ecology, and humanity, according to Collins' treatise argued in *God's Earth* (2). I stress here the chords that are reiterated in Turner Hospital's *Oyster*. It is in relationships with each other and the natural world that humanity sorts out the implications and meanings of its existence (3). While Collins derides 'post-modernist philosophy' as a 'nihilist and purposeless ideology' that is useless for defining and analysing reality, I would argue that elements of his own

work are remarkably resonant with my own approach to ecological interrelationship with spirituality (5).

In *Due Preparations for the Plague*, the Phoenix Club comprises international survivors of the Air France Flight 64 hijacking — ironically named for the survivors' ability to rise from the ashes of the hijacking and explosion — who communicate through an internet site. The Club includes Jacob, Samantha, Cass and Agit, whose parents were among the ten hostages who were killed. Phoenix One and Phoenix Two (Jacob and Samantha respectively) 'are Siamesed from the same charcoal pit, two barbecued peas in a pod' whose identities are prone to merge with the effect that 'sometimes their edges match so exactly that a waiter will bring them only one drink' (69). The embodied memories of these members of the Phoenix Club link them with Turner Hospital's other survivors of trauma, particularly Dolores and Hester in *Borderline* and Verity in *Charades*. Indeed, for Samantha, the 'messages that she bears in her body still' (84) haunt and fuel her desire to revisit the past that is so inherently present for her and the other survivors.

While Samantha is a significant driving force in gathering data and linking the stories that comprise the hijacking, the narratives are told through a variety of media, including Salamander's lecture notes, the Decameron tape, and Dr Reuben's psychiatry files of his sessions with Mather Hawthorne. This fragmented approach to the narrative has several effects. Firstly, the text is multidimensional so that there is no omnipotent control of the narratives or their outcomes. Choices of response are personal. Power to act is personal. This leads into another dimension; that is, that while there is no revelation of the mystery of what will happen tomorrow, human resilience in the face of death through the telling of stories, is paramount. As Turner Hospital states in an interview with Jane Sullivan: 'I can't bear to cut off hope...I'm

always fascinated by the redemptive resilience of the human spirit. People live through the most horrendous things, and somehow keep going' (6). Lovell notes that

> Turner Hospital ends this novel with Samantha sitting on a bench in the very Manhattan park that will soon become the holding station for firemen to bring the survivors from the Trade Towers...[reminding readers] that due preparations for death involve living a life that enacts and articulates a personally sacred dimension. (5)

Robbins and Palmer note that 'a wave of apocalyptic and millennial ferment has been washing over American society and culture for several decades' (4), generating academic and popular discourses. Notions of apocalypticism and millennialism are based on the Judeo-Christian understanding of linear time that informs modernist thought and imagination. They state that 'apocalypticism is a form of *eschatology* or divinely revealed teachings about the final events of history' (4). David G. Bromley notes that apocalypticism is a term borrowed from Judeo-Christian theology and that it has been fused and confused with millennialism and doomsday predictions and scenarios. Here, I take up Bromley's proposal that 'apocalypticism be considered more generically, as a radical form of social organization' that 'is constructed through extreme implementation of the *prophetic method*' (32). Western views of apocalypticism are often characterised by a '*crisis-judgement-reward*' model, with current events being encountered as 'signs' of approaching crisis so that 'end days' or 'last days' are always psychologically imminent.

In contrast to this notion of linearity, *Oyster*'s narrative is not linear so the 'end days' are interspersed with past times and present time, creating the effect of either further disorientation or parodying the notion of 'end times' as dependent upon perspective. Oyster's apocalyptic dreaming and purpose is told to Sarah Cohen by her stepdaughter Amy in a dream:

> I believe we are interlinked with every other soul on earth. We have to listen to the sighing of the earth, Oyster says, and to the message of the sea. God is everywhere, and we are in the Last Days. A thousand years are as a day in the sight of God, and the Day of the Earth has reached the evening of its last thousand years...At the dawning of the year 2000, Oyster says, all that we know shall pass away, and the New Age will begin. (177)

Robbins and Palmer identify apocalyptic viewpoints as '*deterministic*' so that 'signs' and 'end days' are predetermined (5). They note that another hallmark of apocalypticism is that it claims that the present is the '*time of greatest evil*', leading into the *crisis* and *judgement* episodes when evil will accelerate, explode, and then disperse (7). The *reward* episode is experienced when evil is no longer manifest and has dispersed. The roosting of the 'Old Fuckatoo', as 'a sort of mephitic fog' (3) in *Oyster* is the indisputable manifestation of evil: 'the Old Fuckatoo was extremely present, that was certain' (14).

Mercy's father, Charles Given, surrenders to apocalyptic thought, and reads signs of end days into events, such that the attempt on his family's lives and the resultant fire in which two young men are killed is shrugged off with a lame, formulaic dismissal, 'He gestures up at the stars. "Our comfort and our strength, Mercy, is that we are each accountable only to God for our actions, and after that, whatever is going to happen is His will"' (210). Following a different formula, on the days following the deaths and fire, Mr Prophet sermonises that protecting oneself against the 'gathering forces of the Prince of Darkness' is absolutely essential in order that 'a Remnant of the faithful will be saved' (225).

The residents of Oyster's Reef in many ways echo the residents of Outer Maroo in forming a radical alternative social organisation and with an apocalyptic vision or focus on the future. Oyster is the high priest, parodying the role of Mr Prophet, the

leader of the Living Word Gospel Hall congregation. Bromley describes the 'prophetic method' of leadership as

> anti-structural in the sense that...it challenges official nterpretations of reality...Prophetically structured organizations derive their energy from a negative relation to institutions in the existing social order...it entails rejection of and resistance to established institutions (39).

Paradoxically, even though Outer Maroo's residents seek to escape from and resist institutional order, they have not successfully created an alternative social order that can survive without institutional support. As I have mentioned, therefore, a number of necessarily corrupt, modernist structures have been developed to attempt to support the community. However, at Oyster's Reef, radical restructuring of social organisation has been achieved, as described by Bromley:

> [The] morally elevated status of [the] prophetic figure(s) and the morally degraded status of adherents...accompanied by weighty sacrifice and obligation as well as stringent testing of loyalty and commitment [where] movement adherents assume new identities, create a social structure that models the future order, and may even begin a new lineage...(39)

The social structure at Oyster's Reef is revealed in fragments throughout the narrative. Mercy experiences it first-hand when she seeks to find her lost brother, Brian Given, and is held against her will. She is forced to eat of the Tree of Knowledge and drink of the Living Water so that she 'will know all things, forbidden things, and secret things, and the secret desires inside the minds of others, just like me, Oyster said' (132). Amy is re-named Rose of Sharon and is one of Oyster's Special Ones (92-3) and Angelo is re-named Gideon. He is Oyster's recruitment manager, one of a rare handful, who is released to trawl towns and cities of Queensland for new recruits for Oyster's Reef (175-6).

This strategic restructuring of time, space and logic destabilises experiences of present time, while separating from and rejecting the contemporary social order through communal organisation and stringent ritualistic observances produces a heightened focus on an apocalyptic vision. Bromley notes:

> The deconstruction process places apocalyptic groups at the edge — of time, space, and order. The destructuring process takes these groups out of the organizational matrix of conventional social life and leaves them on the edge — between a world that they reject and one that has yet to be born. (42)

The liminality of Oyster's community is echoed by the less-focused marginalisation of the Living Word flock.

As I have noted, Bromley proposes that, while 'apocalypticism' is a concept borrowed from Judeo-Christian theology, the term can be generically used to describe radical forms of social organisation (32). As a form of social organisation, the term can be applied to the Islamic cell responsible for the hijacking of Air France Flight 64 in *Due Preparations for the Plague*, since this group is focussing on achieving release of Muslim prisoners. This vision is to be achieved by the 'prophetic method', resulting in '*Operation Black Death, the revenge of Suleiman, praise be to Allah the All-Merciful*' (author's italics) (165), which Genevieve labels '*triage*' (166) and becomes the 'weighty sacrifice' that is the remainder of Mather Hawthorne's life ('Constructing Apocalypticism' 38-9).

Understanding of concepts of time and place, and deprivation of knowledge of temporal linearity, are destabilised through the narrative of *Due Preparations for the Plague*. Yasmina Shankara is the first hostage to tell a story and, after acknowledging 'we are outside time' and asking 'what use are maps or watches to us now?', she tells a childhood story and sends it through a Hindu cloud messenger to her son (303-6).

She also acknowledges the destabilisation of space in which she finds herself, in juxtaposition to the certainty of her position behind the 'many, many layers of wealth between me and the children who die in the street. Inside the high wall around our house are lawns and fountains and peacocks and those who serve us. Outside is contamination' (304). 'Now' she is 'sent into exile' and 'banished to the end of the world' mirroring a Bollywood movie of an ancient Sanskrit poem that has been retold for many years as well as the memory of the beggar girl outside her gates (304-5). Ironically, it is only when Yasmina inhabits the margins that signify disempowerment and otherness that she can understand and be prepared for life and death. In this creative space, this Thirdspace, she discovers spiritual meaning.

In *Oyster*, it is also in the marginal space that is created by the narrative of the communities of Oyster's Reef and the Living Word in Outer Maroo that our own contemporary questions and concerns can be critiqued and re-constructed. Turner Hospital's texts often play with the creative possibilities that marginalisation promises. Indeed, Veling's 'Abstract' promises 'that the interpretive space of "the margins" is a creative, productive, vital site of receptive and critical engagement with a tradition's enriching and distorting effects, and with our own contemporary questions and concerns' (35). Each of these communities, dysfunctional as they appear, parodies religious traditions from the margins in a way that, as Veling states in relation to marginal Christian communities, 'both provokes their existence as possibility and haunts their existence as non-possibility' (37). However, when a community such as those at Oyster's Reef and the Living Word are subject to exclusions, repressions and distortions, it is difficult to read them as creative sites for critical engagement.

When 'marginal space is [read as] a space that confuses oppositions' (37), where the membrane of the space between binaries of self/other, inclusion/exclusion, belonging/not belonging are diffused, then a space of interaction, a Thirdspace, is created. The narrative of *Oyster* can thus be viewed as a transformative performance within a marginal space, a Thirdspace, with Mercy being a principal player in the performance. Mercy wrests her future from the apocalyptic communities of Oyster's Reef and the Living Word so that she 'imagines that a chrysalis must feel like this, locked inside the cocoon. Waiting. Waiting' (430). Her re-birthing follows her life in the margins outside of the security of dogmas and absolutes, including her experiences of juggling differences, mismatched moments, and discordant voices. Her experience is such a significant movement from the margins that by the conclusion of the narrative 'she is driving back on to the map. She imagines that some qualitative change will occur. Perhaps the light will be different. Perhaps the pull of gravity will shift' (433).

'The Decameron Tape' in *Due Preparations for the Plague* is witness to the storytelling of each of the ten hostages (299-353). This section tells, from ten perspectives, the stories of this marginal community. While Veling's discussion focusses on the creative potential of marginal Christian communities, his remarks are equally applicable to ecumenically inclusive understandings of marginal spiritual communities:

> They are concerned with the causes of indigenous and Third World cultures in the face of dominant eurocentric traditions. They are seeking alternate theologies, spiritualities and practices, casting their 'voice from the margins over the whole social-symbolic order, questioning its rules, terms, procedures, and practices'. (Chopp qtd in Veling 51)

The ten individuals who form the disparate community in the sealed underground bunker share a common space and time for a brief duration. This is the space in which they tell of their wisdom, their experiences and understandings of life, their regrets, and their love, all of which form their individual spiritualities. The creativity of this space provides illumination on the understanding of the author of *The Plague*: '*What we learn in a time of pestilence*, wrote Albert Camus, *is that there are more things to admire in men than to despise*' (author's italics) (*Due Preparations* 285).

This marginal community within the bunker establishes unspoken rules, enabling individuals to take turns to tell their tale before the red, unseeing, disembodied eye of the camera. They have no means of knowing if they have an audience, to whom they speak, or in what time and place their stories will be viewed. Each of the characters is what 'dominant eurocentric traditions' would name as marginal. They include an Indian female actress, a Jewish Auschwitz survivor, a Jewish musician, a female Jewish singer, a saxophone-playing Afro-American academic, a female Australian travel-writer, and an esoteric French publisher. Their self-identities 'converge. They have become, it would seem, one organism, multicelled, and an atavistic decree has gone forth: due ritual is required; due obsequies must be performed'; and due preparations must be made (308).

The evidence of 'The Decameron Tape' (299-353) testifies to the unity of this marginal community, as it is built through the rituals of storytelling and the patterns of 'such rites as his or her own tradition suggest' (308). The stories signify the hope of each individual as they prepare for their death. For example, Daniel Schulz tells a Jewish story from the days of Baal Shem Tov when, even as Death rode through the streets on his black horse, 'the spark of the divine cannot be quenched' (309-10). The hostages participate in a Jewish 'dance in Death's waiting room' to keep this hope

vibrant. The eight stories or capsules of wisdom signify the apparent steps towards preparation by the eight hostages who die. The fate of the last two hostages, Tristan and Génie, is not revealed in the text. Although they do tell stories, these are fictional, and perhaps the reader can speculate they have not prepared for death (347-53). Yet, as I have argued earlier, I believe that this storytelling process signifies 'due preparations for death', since understandings of death and life are intertwined and it is the metaphorical element of stories that ensures their profound truth, even if they are not literally true (Borg 17).

Within the narrative of *Oyster* the reader discovers the pearls of wisdom/letters that Susannah Rover writes to Mercy (or perhaps they are the letters that Mercy writes to herself through her representation of Susannah). These are stored in the smooth tunnels of Aladdin's Rush, or perhaps in the recesses of her memory for evocation through her incantation '*Come over, Miss Rover*' that is chanted whenever Mercy is experiencing stress and requiring empowerment (75-83). Miss Rover's/Mercy's margin-writing represents opportunities for play with words as opposed to the burden of adherence to dogmatic texts that are already written. Veling notes that Terry Eagleton celebrates the 'vital engagement' of writing in the margins '"with the living situations of men and women: it is concrete rather than abstract, displays life in all its rich variousness, and rejects barren conceptual enquiry for the feel and taste of what it is to be alive"' (42). The irony of the marginal text that Miss Rover supposedly writes is that she is dead, having been transferred out of Outer Maroo, some months previously. Her words are equally, if not more, powerful, echoing Veling who writes, 'margin-writing revels in and draws attention to its own playfulness. It does not pretend to be "serious" or to represent things "as they actually are"' (42).

By invoking Miss Rover's writing from the margins, Mercy can critique and question the *status quo* and pose alternative possibilities. Susannah Rover's/ Mercy's writing is not wasteful or superfluous; indeed this writing is powerful in its agency to bring about the development of Mercy's ability to effect change in her own life and the lives of others. Their marginal voice(s) also shape the traditional bodies of the Living Word and Oyster's Reef. In a sense, writing from the margins defines the boundaries that divide from and form the doctrines and practices of these apocalyptic forms. Veling names this space as the '*interpretive edge*' (author's italics) wherein is located the creative power of marginal Christian communities (52). He seeks to rescue 'the term "marginal" from its negative connotations as "on the outside"...a negative place of withdrawal or isolation, a place that need not be taken seriously because it lacks significance' and, rather to view marginality as 'between' as 'it is a word that both joins and separates: inside and outside, belonging and non-belonging, presence and absence' (53). This broadens the creative potential and activity of margin-writing, as performed through the transformative, multi-possibilities of the ending pages of Jess's narrative in *Oyster*.

While *Borderline*'s text creates a 'marginal space' wherein that 'marginal space is [read as] a space that confuses oppositions' as defined by Veling (37), it provides a different perspective to that of the marginal spaces in *Oyster*. The narrative of *Borderline* is littered with confusions and interactions across boundaries, so that a performative space, a Thirdspace, is evident. Jean-Marc, despite his role as narrator and his proposition that he is the mere 'chronicler' of events, is the principal player in the performance. The transcendence of the character/narrator binary is dismantled in the scenario of this text so that Jean-Marc is dangerously implicated through his desire. This includes his desire for his father's lover, Felicity, his desire for Gus's

daughter, Kathleen, his uncanny mirroring of Gus's tendencies for visualisation and 'optimistic pessimism', and his penchant to take on Seymour's — his father's — characteristics. As Jean-Marc 'confesses', 'The joke is this: I've been bitten, I've had a taste of the stage, I got carried away by the performance....It's the *shape* of the thing, and the power' (282).

For the narrator the gigantic proportions of the enterprise that is comprised within the pages of *Borderline* are ironically border-less. 'An absence...calls forth compensatory action' (262) whether it is the death or loss of a human being or some other element of being, or whether it is absence of a(n)other spiritual dimension. Such absence is the inspiration for Seymour's enormous canvas that fills the exhibition gallery with light on the final pages of the text of *Borderline*. (287) Seymour states that the painting represents '"the shadow of a woman who left me....The idea of a woman I lost"' (287). Seymour's final painting in the text represents alternative possibilities that are open, not simply for Felicity, not merely for the narrators and characters of *Borderline*, not simply for Dolores Marquez, but for all human beings who take the dangerous steps towards questioning and critiquing imposed borders of respectability or sacredly held grand narratives from marginal spaces or Thirdspace. This painting, on the surface of its canvas, represents Felicity's escape from the bondage and limits of Seymour's artistic endeavours, as well as escape from the limits of Jean-Marc's text. Her escape enables light to flood the gallery as well as Seymour's and Jean-Marc's consciousness of her well-being and her ability to return unexpectedly.

Felicity's and Susannah's absence from the borders of the narrative texts which seek to delineate their subjectivity point to unique liminal spaces or Thirdspaces created by these texts, wherein meaning is made. 'A leap in faith' is required to

assume Felicity's and Susannah's continuing existence, so that rationality interweaves with spirituality (as I have previously defined it). Rationality and spirituality interweave in a mystical realm so that in the closing pages of *Borderline*, Felicity can be visualised by Jean-Marc 'wearing sunlight' that 'falls like wings on her shoulders....and...she is trailing streamers of children' (288). Similarly, in *Oyster*, Susannah communicates spiritually with Mercy through letters that are hidden in the tunnels of Aladdin's Rush — their absence serves as a powerful presence. This 'presence' is implicit in deeply significant interconnections between humanity, spirit, and environment.

Mather's absence from the narrative text of *Due Preparations for the Plague* echoes his absence from the lives of his son Lowell (91-7) and wives Isabella (92) and Elizabeth (19) in life. He tells Dr Reuben, his psychiatrist, 'I want to be inside a different skin. (You could hang up the Salamander one, the burned skin, carefully, like a wedding tuxedo, and someone else could use it secondhand.)' (222). However, the continuing reverberations, even thirteen years after the hijacking of the plane, do not enable him to discard the guilt and complicity that plagues the wearer of the Salamander skin. He is guiltily aware that his absence from the scene of the hijacking belies his complicity in the event, with ramifications even after his inconclusive murder/suicide. Despite his claim that he has at least saved the children from death before the explosion of the plane, he lives with the horror of Sirocco's (and ultimately his own) failure to save the adult passengers and hostages (283). Further, Mather lives with the 'blasphemy' and 'moral stain on the national conscience' of denying those who died their 'due rites and obsequies' (284). Broadcasting of the material evidence of his complicity in the horrendous events of the narrative is achieved through his own request. Mather's desire to have his (Salamander's) journal and the videos

publicised, even after his death, signals Turner Hospital's continuing fascination and play with the blurring of the boundaries between self and other, and absence and presence. Through this act, it is as though Mather is trying to redress the denial of spiritual rites that marked the death of so many and continues to haunt the lives of himself and the survivors.

A spatial understanding of a rich and relevant lived experience of spiritualities celebrates possibilities for concrete vital engagement of marginal writing and marginal experiences with those spiritualities. The notion of Thirdspace describes a key understanding of spiritual 'interconnectedness' in Turner Hospital's novels. Thirdspaces, or lived spaces of representation, provide infinite possibilities of inclusively re-membering and reincorporating transgressions of spatial practice and representations of space. In Turner Hospital's texts, the process of 'thirding-as-othering' manifests as dynamic praxis.

CONCLUSION

Janette Turner Hospital's work is hugely celebratory in regards to employment of postmodern hallmarks, challenging the formation and employment of grand narratives in relation to contemporary discourses in the postmodern arena such as space, subjectivity, representation, memory, and spirituality. These discourses are variously approached and interwoven across her texts so that, while themes may be replicated, approaches to them are not. Turner Hospital upholds her celebration of postmodernist approaches by challenging assumed notions of truth from multifarious angles.

Refreshingly different approaches to common threads interweave these five novels by Turner Hospital. These threads include understandings of the dispossessed (focusing on subjection to and responses to dislocation, homelessness, and exile), yearning for missing pieces of the past, and undermining of those who assume positions of power and authority. Turner Hospital's compassion for those displaced because of socio-economic status, cultural or religious differences, or political reasons is evident across all five texts. I would agree with Callahan when he points out that 'there runs a current of sympathy in Hospital's work for the dispossessed, for those outside society's structures of approval or power, whether men or women, broken old men, prostitutes, drug addicts, the poor, Aborigines' (26). While Turner Hospital's representations of these characters could be viewed as either 'liberal wish-fulfillments or literary conventions' (27), my postmodern approach advocates that any reading is dependent on the reader so that such characters may be seen as stereotypes or postmodern textual representations, and/or also as both. However, as I have argued, Turner Hospital's texts successfully locate the reader in the position of other in such a

way as to enable the reader to understand but also to become that other in lived spaces of representation.

The uniqueness of Turner Hospital's texts, states Callahan, is in their ability to construct recognition of otherness as a transgressive and liberating process, yet simultaneously powerful in that it paradoxically shifts power structures (27). Characters are subject to what Lucy as narrator of *The Last Magician* calls 'shape-shifting' so that characters become synonymous with the other; that is, the previously unacknowledged underside within the self. Such a moment occurs on the train platform when, as a schoolgirl, Lucy can see through the eyes of the unkempt old woman and realises 'that there were parallel worlds, that you could cross a line' (37). In Turner Hospital's texts, shape-shifting or recognition of the other in one's self can occur across gender, social and ethnic boundaries. In *The Last Magician*, Charlie can recognise Cat as part of himself: '"She's part of me"' (163). He can also recognise himself in Catherine, 'He simply looked at her and wanted the missing parts of himself' (285).

Characters in these five of Turner Hospital's novels are actively engaged in reconstructing versions of the past and their relationship to it, using fragments of memory and photographic glimpses to construct and reconstruct versions of their past and thus of their self-identity. As I have noted, Charlie Chang tells himself as much as he is telling the reader through the narrative, that the purpose of his photographic pursuit is to 'mostly take them [photographs] for myself. So I'll see what I've seen' (36). However, this single-minded pursuit is paradoxically contrasted with and balanced against his and the text's understanding that a photographic text is an opaque rather than a mimetic representation. As I have argued, Charlie, like Jean-Marc in *Borderline*, Charade in *Charades*, Sarah and Nick in *Oyster*, and Lowell in *Due*

Preparations for the Plague, ardently seek to transcend the absence/presence border. They are engaged in a similar pursuit to cross the border between absence/presence just as Charade is engaged in telling Koenig and herself, in *Charades*, multiple versions/histories/memories of her past (81-6). Discovery of this space of representation is hinged on a photograph: 'she hid it and read it every day for weeks....Every morning a different history came off it like fog and she took deep breaths, gulping down one past after another' (81-2).

Borders *are* dismantled in Turner Hospital's texts as the texts question the assumptions that underpin the positions of those in power and authority. In *Borderline* the text opens with the illegal crossing of the Canadian-American border by a woman who boldly flaunts and seeks to escape the laws of the country. This transgression of borders that seek to limit political voice and power relations is another hallmark of Turner Hospital's texts. Silence becomes powerful, as for Jess (known as Old Silence) as narrator of *Oyster* and Susannah Rover whose voice continues to speak through Mercy from the underground tunnels of Aladdin's Rush. The power to use one's voice is approached from different angles — through the explicit ritualistic symbolism of Dolores's appearances in *Borderline,* to the mute non-verbal passivity of Verity in *Charades*, to the chosen selective silence of Jess in *Oyster*.

My thesis has not included direct reference to the social context of the family, yet I wish to acknowledge here that Turner Hospital's texts do work these common threads into the arena of family contexts. In *The Last Magician* Gabriel breaks free, as does his mother, from the cloistering effects of his father Robinson Gray's greed for power, violence and non-recognition of the 'ex-centric' fragments of society to the extent that he befriends the same others that his father has sought to deny, and hides with his mother and her second family. Yet, for the most part, the families in her texts

are fundamentally dysfunctional and fractured, unable successfully to communicate on more than a superficial level. Hence, teenagers such as Amy and Angelo flee their family origins to adopt new identities with Oyster at the opal mining colony in *Oyster*, and in *Charades* Charade relentlessly pursues her family origins to unravel the unexpected identities of her parents. The opening pages of *Due Preparations for the Plague* reveal Turner Hospital's most explicitly dysfunctional family, through Lowell's dismal lack of parenting skills and repression of his childhood memories, and can be seen as a development of Gus's characterisation in *Borderline*.

Even in this bastion of unity, Turner Hospital reveals the fissures and gaps that modernist enterprises both intentionally and inadvertently sought to conceal. The composition of Turner Hospital's textual families can be read as a causal aspect of her characters' 'need to know' their identity, since familial disunity creates a background for the multiple displacements to which characters are subject in her texts. What is most haunting and disturbing is that, as exiles from their family contexts, as well as their self-identity, in the space of Lacan's Symbolic, a place in which the self wanders after differentiating one's self from others, Turner Hospital's characters are unable to return unchanged to an imaginary state of unity. They are beyond the zone of comfort, in a Thirdspace that may be liberating yet at the same time requires continuous movement, not just treading water but swimming. Again, Turner Hospital's texts' echoes of dislocation, homelessness and exile manifest themselves so that, in *Oyster* for example, Mercy must drive away from the devastation of Outer Maroo, along the promising yet endless Warrego Highway (433). While this elusiveness and mystery can be construed as vulnerable non-agency and damaging to the integrity of the subjectivity of women as hinted by Callahan ('Discourse of Displacement' 337), I

argue that this is a typical phenomenon of the paradoxical nature of lived spaces of representation.

My thesis highlights one of the highly acknowledged dangers of postmodernism: that is, its openness to ambiguities due partly to its paradoxical dependence on modernism which it questions. It is a space as yet unmapped and untraversed, flaunting mysteries to be unraveled and solved, signs and symbols to be deciphered, naming and re-naming of spaces, and acknowledging of gaps and fissures. Yet the nature of postmodernism is its paradoxical defiance and questioning of maps and inflexible positionings. Jess's comments in *Oyster* on the inevitable ambiguities and immeasurabilities of mapmaking echo the elusiveness of the enterprise that is Firstspace, or traditional spatial practice:

> there can be no illusions, whatever calibrated surveying instruments and theodolites may say, all the tables and taxonomies and charts are flickering *wishes*, nothing but tapers signifying a desire to impose order on the ungovernable, signifying an undying and touching faith in magical thinking, which is what mapmaking is. (155)

Postmodernism's penchant to privilege disordered, non-linear, non-coherent textuality and subjectivity 'can be politically transformed from liability and weakness to potential sources of opportunity and strength' through a postmodern spatial politics of difference, encapsulated within the notion of Thirdspace, wherein subjectivity is chosen by the self (Soja 117). As we have seen, Soja's advocacy of the openly radical and radically open possibilities of Thirdspace, particularly evident in his surveys of contemporary spatial feminist discourses, has significant salience for Turner Hospital's texts. He notes:

> In the new postmodern cultural and geographical politics of difference...we position ourselves first by subjectively choosing *for*

> *ourselves* our primary 'marginal identities'....But we do not remain rigidly confined by this 'territorial' choice, as was usually the case in modernist identity politics. We seek instead to find more flexible ways of being other than we are while still being ourselves, of becoming open to coalitions and coalescences of radical subjectivities, to a multiplicity of communities of resistance. (117)

Soja warns of the implicit dangers of choosing marginality since such a move can appear to reinforce the divisions between margins and centre and inherently maintain balance of power. Further, Fuss warns of the dangers of inappropriately identifying with marginality as 'romanticization of the outside as a privileged site of radicality' and states that awareness of 'the outside' signals 'insideness' and indeed cohabitation across the centre/margin divide. 'We really only have the leisure to idealize the subversive potential of the power of the marginal when our place of enunciation is quite central' (5).

Within the limits of the lived spaces of representation of Turner Hospital's texts, Thirdspace epistemologies enable a re-visioning of submerged spaces made available through the lifting of borders. As these lived spaces of representation reincorporate marginalised spaces, multivocal possibilities and infinite spatial positions become available. The all-inclusive interplay of suppressed, marginal voices enables them to participate equitably in challenges to traditional understandings of power and its structural operations. The voices that speak in these lived spaces of representation, made possible through the operations of Thirdspace, are politically focused in that they seek opportunities for inclusive representation. There is an understanding that these lived spaces of representation are dynamic, and open to myriad interpretations which are equally true, if not literally or concretely true.

Simultaneously, in the same way that socially disruptive elements are re-embodied in contemporary discourses in Turner Hospital's texts, temporal aspects are crucial. Stories of the past, the present and future are dispersed in the narratives since, while they may not be literally or factually true, they are subjectively true. It is these subjective truths that ensure the political focus of the operations of Thirdspace in Turner Hospital's texts. A further dimension of these subjective truths is their spiritual interconnectedness, possible through the all-inclusive operations of Thirdspace. These multifarious, yet interconnected, disruptions provide political focus for the infinite possibilities for reincorporation of raw material and imagined perceptions and experiences in the dynamic lived spaces of representation that are Turner Hospital's texts.

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