A Poetics of Care: Mourning, Consolation, Healing.
A Poetics of Care: Mourning, Consolation, Healing.

Mary Anne Pip Stokes

“Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (By Creative Work and Dissertation)”

July 2010

The Centre for Ideas, VCAM.

The University of Melbourne.
~ Abstract ~

This thesis proposes a synthesis of the discourses of Care with art practices of Care. The thesis is written in two parts: Part 1 outlines this synthesis of theory and practice in two chapters, Chapter 1, Writing Care and Chapter 2, Making Care. Part 2, also in two chapters, describes two installations shown by me in the course of this PhD with accompanying documentation. These are followed by Appendices.

In Chapter 1, Writing Care, theories of Care by Heidegger, Alexander Garcia Düttmann, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Iris Murdoch are examined for concepts which define Care. In this chapter a language, an articulation, which throws light on the concerns of the artwork of Care is also sought. In Chapter 2, of Part 1, I selected four arts practitioners to analyse and interpret processes, materials and subject matter in the light of the elucidation of Care found in the philosophies of Care, inquiring through the artworks into the contribution made to an understanding of Care. The four art practices were chosen to reflect different disciplines, media, materials and subject matter, enabling me to thoroughly test my double thesis question: Can a poetics of Care construct a theoretical and practical framework through which an art practice could be understood? And its implied converse: How does an art practice contribute to an understanding of Care?
One major work from each of the four practices is selected: Derek Jarman’s Garden in Dungeness, Kent, UK; Brambuk, Living Cultural Centre, Gariwerd, Victoria, designed by the architect, Gregory Burgess; an installation, entitled, A Silkroom of One’s Own, by Melbourne artist, Elizabeth Presa and A Woman’s Tale, (1991) a film by the Melbourne based filmmaker, Paul Cox. A growing lexicon of Care is sought in the detailed examination of each work.

These two chapters of the theory and practice of Care in the arts are followed by a Conclusion where I describe the findings of Part 1. This is followed by Part 2, Practising Care, which outlines the two exhibitions I produced in the course of this thesis. The exegesis of my own artworks is treated separately from the “theoretical” component of the thesis as I do not wish to “theorise” my own work, however, I do contextualize A Shrine for Orpheus, my examination exhibition, as a work of Care. All the interests of this thesis arise, in the first place in my own practice, and its concerns with mourning, consolation and healing are clear in the two bodies of work described. I have chosen to make the major exegesis of Care in the arts through four practices other than my own in order to make some enduring and objective findings about this important subject. My own works are the source of a poetics of Care in practice.

The first installation, Metamorphoses: Dresses My Mother Wore, is a work of mourning: it is composed of three dress-like structures made from materials antithetical to “dress” and “body”: rose thorns, paper, beeswax, ash and feathers. This work is not my PhD examination exhibition but is included in brief documentation to deepen the reader’s knowledge of my practice. The examination installation, A Shrine for Orpheus, extends this vocabulary of materials and subjects of Care, incorporating “cremated” bones, books dipped and bound in beeswax, household objects, like vessels and bowls: memento mori cast in beeswax, as well as “found objects,” including mirrors and natural materials. This section outlines an inter-species collaboration with a living beehive, in which various “votive” objects, including poems by writer, Paul Carter, were given to the bees on which to “draw up” their cell building honey comb. This work, underpinned by the model of transformation exemplified in the social biology of the beehive, is a work that meditates on both death and transformation.
~ Declaration ~

This is to certify that

i. this thesis comprises only my original work toward the PhD except where indicated.

ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

iii. the thesis is 45,400 words as approved by the RHD Committee.
~ Acknowledgements ~

I would like to acknowledge the care and support offered to this thesis and creative work by my principal supervisor Elizabeth Presa and my second supervisor Dimitris Vardoulakis. I would also like to acknowledge the “concern and solicitude” offered to this work in conversation and affirmation by Paul Carter as well as for his contribution of “Poems for the Bees,” included in my examination exhibition, A Shrine for Orpheus.

I would like to thank Emily Taylor for the images and video that she made of my installation, incorporated in the documentation of that work in this thesis and to acknowledge my son, Kasimir Burgess, who helped me make the soundscape and my daughter Sophia who collected “things” for me.

To my husband, Gregory Burgess, this work, this vine.
# Table of Contents

Title page .......................................................................................................................... i
Abstract .............................................................................................................................. ii - iii
Declaration ........................................................................................................................... iv
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................ v
Table of Contents ................................................................................................................ vi - vii
List of Illustrations ............................................................................................................ viii - xi

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1 - 9

Part One

Chapter One: Writing Care ............................................................................................... 10 - 37
  Introduction
  Düttmann and “What Matters”
  Heidegger’s “Language of Care”
  Heidegger’s “Fourfold”
  Levinas- “The Call and the Response”: An Ethics of the Other
  Ricoeur and Solicitude
  Derrida and Mourning – The Care of Death
  Archiving the Language of Care
Kristeva: Feminine Care
Iris Murdoch: “Attention,” A Care of Seeing
Weaving the Cloth of Care

Chapter Two: Making Care

2.1 The Cultivation of Care: Derek Jarman’s Garden ........................................ 38 - 57
2.2 Care of Place: The Architecture of Gregory Burgess ................................ 58 - 88
2.3 The Care of Mourning in the Work of Elizabeth Presa ............................. 89 - 114
2.4 The Care of Intimacy: Interiors and “Things” in the Filmmaking of Paul Cox. *A Woman’s Tale* and other Films .................................................. 115 - 134

Conclusion to Part One ................................................................................... 135 - 142

Part Two: Practising Care.

Chapter 1: Dresses My Mother Wore
Span Galleries, Flinders Lane, Melbourne ................................................. 143 - 151

Chapter 2: A Shrine for Orpheus
Fortyfivedownstairs, Flinders Lane, Melbourne ................................. 152 - 187

Bibliography .................................................................................................. 188 - 195

Appendices

1. Diary Notes. A Visit to Derek Jarman’s Garden.
4. Video of A Shrine for Orpheus, by photographer/video installation artist, Emily Taylor, with soundscape of bees by Kasimir Burgess.
5. CD images from A Shrine for Orpheus by Taylor.
6. CD images from A Shrine for Orpheus by Gregory Burgess.
~ Illustrations ~

Listed by Chapter.

Part 1.

Chapter 2.1. The Cultivation of Care: Derek Jarman’s Garden.

All images by the artist except where otherwise acknowledged.

Figure 1. Shale site.
Figure 2. The site with nuclear reactor.
Figure 3. Pebble-edged garden planting.
Figure 4. Shale pebble circle with old chain.
Figure 5. Back garden sheltered by studio.
Figure 6. Lumber and metal “totems.”
Figure 7. “Little Sparta,” Ian Hamilton Finlay’s garden.
Figure 8. Rusted chains in Jarman’s garden.
Figure 9. Kale.
Figure 10. A page from Jarman’s Garden Diary.
Figure 11. Carved text of Donne’s poem on cottage wall.
Figure 12. Old French horn on back wall of prospect cottage.
Figure 13. Prospect cottage with Derek Jarman
(Derek Jarman’s Garden, image by Howard Sooley)
Chapter 2.2.  Care of Place: The Architecture of Gregory Burgess.

All images are from the architect’s archives.

Figure 1. Brambuk.
Figure 2. Early sketch of Brambuk.
Figure 3. Grace Cooper-Sailor.
Figure 4. Prototype woven screen by Cooper-Sailor.
Figure 5. Burgess’ copy of “The Spiritual Song of the Aborigines.”
Figure 6. Les Griggs.
Figure 6. The Community building team.
Figure 8. Brambuk’s roofline.
Figure 9. The “mourning log.”
Figure 10. Brambuk interior.
Figure 11. East facing entry.
Figure 12. Anthony Anderson.
Figure 13. Ironbark trunk and the earth.
Figure 14. Interior, upper floor.
Figure 15. The hearth of Brambuk.

Chapter 2.3. The Care of Mourning in The Work of Elizabeth Presa: A Silkroom of One’s Own.

All images courtesy the artist.

Figure 1. Detail of colony of silkworms.
Figure 2. The installation cabinet.
Figure 3. Handwritten text on walls of Linden gallery.
Figure 4. Silkworm cocoons archived in drawer.
Figure 5. The raw cocoon silk screen.
Figure 6. Elizabeth Presa writing texts on the wall of the gallery.
Figure 7. Silk cocoon screen and text inscribed on the wall.

Chapter 2.4. The Care of Intimacy: Interiors and “Things” in the Filmmaking of Paul Cox.

Figure 1. Martha, in A Woman’s Tale, returns to her flat.
Figure 2. The interior of Martha’s Flat.
Figure 3. Martha plays her music box.
Figure 4. Martha handles and tells the stories of her “things.”
Figure 5. Terese, imaged on a clockface in the opening credits of *A Woman’s Tale*.
Figure 6. The “Golden Braid” found by Bernard in a secret compartment.
Figure 7. The “memories” of the Venetian cabinet.
Figure 8. The Dutch oil painting of women attending Vespers.
Figure 9. Cox’s “crucial metaphors” in *A Woman’s Tale*.
Figure 10. Martha sits alone in her flat, smoking in the dark.
Figure 11. Martha, near death, in the bath.
Figure 12. The 360 degree pan around Martha’s flat.

Part 2.

**Chapter 1:** *Dresses My Mother Wore.*

All images by Gregory Burgess.

Figure 1. Arcadian Dress.
Figure 2. Metamorphoses and Rose Thorn Dress in installation.
Figure 3. Metamorphoses.
Figure 4.a,b. Arcadian Dress.
Figure 5. Rose Thorn Dress with Globite suitcase.
Figure 6, a. Detail, Rose Thorn Dress.
Figure 6, b. Detail, Rose Thorn Dress, folded, beeswaxed silk.
Figure 7.a,b,c. Installation.
Figure 8. Letter obscured with beeswax.

**Chapter 2.** *A Shrine for Orpheus.*

Images by Emily Taylor, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Figure 1. Wax tablet inscribed by Paul Carter. Image by Gregory Burgess.
Figure 2. A Shrine for Orpheus.
Figure 3. Wax Mausoleum. Image Burgess.
Figure 4. Vitrine with mummified rabbit. Image Burgess.
Figure 5. Vitrine with wax tablets inscribed by Paul Carter, incorporated into honeycomb by the bees.
Figure 6.a. Vitrine with “cremated” bones and burnt books. Four screens with “writing of the bees.”
Figure 6.b. Vitrine with mummified rabbit. Installation view.

Figure 7. Ossuary, “cremated” bones and mirrors.

Figure 8. The Beekeeper’s Cloak.

Figure 9. Beeswax Fan.

Figure 10. Beeswax shoes, “Shoes for the Underworld.”

Figure 11. Mourning Tree.

Figure 12.a,b,c. Long view of the Gallery and details.

Figure 13. Behind the feathered cloak.

Figure 14. Threshold of the Shrine.

Figure 15. The convex mirror.

Figure 16. Beekeeping project in the garden in Ivanhoe.

Figure 17. Beuys installing the “Honey Pump.”

Figure 18. Laib’s architectural wax structures.

Figure 19.a,b,c. “Poems for the Bees,” by Paul Carter, engraved on beeswax tablets.

Figure 20.a,b. The burning of the books.

Figure 20.c. The burnt books in installation.

Figure 21. Installation image.
Introduction. A Poetics of Care: Mourning, Consolation, Healing

“A Poetics of Care: Mourning, Consolation, Healing,” addresses a double question: Can a poetics of Care construct a theoretical and practical framework through which an art practice could be understood? And its implied converse: How does an art practice contribute to an understanding of Care? This thesis demonstrates the existence of a reciprocal relationship between Care as theory and Care in practice, giving consideration to how the artworks themselves produce Care.

The origin of my interest in this question arises in the first place within my own practice as an artist, where themes of mourning and loss, both personal and of the wider world, are expressed in materials and processes which evoke states of transition such as renewal and transformation. Concealed in my thesis question lies a problem that is addressed in the thesis. It is a problem, that my art work, and the artwork of many artists, seeks to “heal”: this is the problem of a lack of Care in the world: ecological as well as social and spiritual “care-lessness.” That there is a growing awareness of this carelessness and its outcomes of degradation and destruction of the social, spiritual and ecological systems that sustain us, is witnessed on many fronts: in Copenhagen at this time, the third global meeting on climate change seeks agreement on measures to control greenhouse gas emissions, and not a month later, we hear of the “failure” of the Copenhagen summit to reach agreement. The “need” for Care is addressed also in contemporary literature which seeks to bring Care to consciousness.
I am currently reading a book entitled, *A World Without Bees,*¹ which outlines the “Colony Collapse Disorder” phenomenon that threatens the survival of the Honeybee, critical for the pollination processes of a third of our food supply. The book outlines a steady industrialization of beekeeping that abuses the ecological health of the bees, placing profit and expediency above stewardship (Care) of the natural environment. These calls of Care are frequently not heeded. Artists, however, increasingly (and urgently) place matters of Care before us through their material language, sometimes addressing matters of Care directly, as we shall see in two of the art subjects this thesis studies in Chapter 2, Making Care. In this chapter we look at the work of architect, Gregory Burgess and filmmaker, Paul Cox, who engage artistically with “real world” problems associated with different responses to the human Care of “dwelling.” Other artists, such as Derek Jarman and Elizabeth Presa, also subjects of Chapter two, manifest the “inward gesture” of Care in their art works, as “Care of self.”²

What is the relationship between “carelessness” and art? And in the terms of my thesis question, how can art contribute to solving the problem of a lack of Care? We have noted that although there is a demonstrable awareness of the need for Care in the making and sustaining of our world, this urge more often than not is frustrated and cannot, seemingly, be endowed with the stability needed to bring about healing and transformation. My thesis proposes a role for art in this critical environment. A major obstacle to caring is the lack of Care taken of communication: to communicate in attenuated terms about the state of the world is to imprison us in careless ways of thinking and representing. Art in its most fundamental nature is a concentrated form of communication; a communication that engages us through our senses, our souls, “speaking” to us through its materiality. I will argue that the artwork of Care uniquely extends and sustains the reach of Care.

To discuss art in terms of Care and healing implies a “social” purpose. The “social value” of art is often framed in a language that is reductive, a language that deprives art of its complexity and emotional resonance or, worse, makes art appear purely instrumental. If a language appropriate to the character of art and its modes of

communication were used, this would change. For example, a language that is careful could show that a major function of art is to Care – to Care for materials (and therefore for our world) and for psychic attachments (Care of ourselves, each other and the places and things with which we belong.) The problem at the centre of my thesis question, then, is also a double one: to address carelessness and to find a language of Care that can show that certain forms of art address carelessness in powerful transformative ways that, in turn, engender Care.

To locate the nature of the Care that inhabits art and the benefits of recognizing that, I approach my subject from two aspects: the theoretical and the practical. Chapter 1, Writing Care, explores some of the twentieth century philosophers of Care. These philosophers were all chosen because they illuminate different aspects of Care that are found to articulate concerns of the artwork. In this survey of different discourses of Care, I search as an arts practitioner for signs in that philosophical landscape that will help me locate Care as defined in theories of Care vis à vis the arts and a language that throws light on the cares of the artwork. Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur and Alexander Garcia Düttmann are surveyed. In my travels, I discover women philosophers have also mapped Care from a uniquely feminine perspective, grounding Care in language, love and connectedness. Julia Kristeva contributes to this landscape of Care and Iris Murdoch is referenced for her insights into “attention,” a form of Care that directly addresses the artist’s ethics of “seeing” and “attending.”

The foundations of a philosophy of Care in the modern era arose around the “break” in philosophical thought brought about by the abyssal event of the Holocaust, the event itself and its representation. The selection of these philosophers assumes that Care emerges as a philosophical problem in the context of regrounding philosophy: Care emerges because the “carelessness” of the Enlightenment project, as characterized by its ideals of rationalism and “progress”; its belief in the “perfectibility” of humankind, (embodied, for example, in the “science” of racial eugenics) has been catastrophically exposed. The Care I invoke is not a kind of phenomenological absolute: it is a historical concept that makes sense within a particular milieu of disaffection, shock and alienation. This Care, therefore, has a particular, critical stance towards late Capitalism and most forms of violence.
engineered against bodies and environments in the name of Science. However, referencing the work of these philosophers selectively leaves out some profound realities. For example, the post-war position of some of these philosophers was one of hostility to the arts. Levinas, in particular, had in his earlier years a deep objection to art and poetry, regarding both as facile and hypnotic at a time when the truth had to be faced. Adorno notably said that there could be no poetry written after Auschwitz.

The language used by Heidegger, has itself, been critiqued, as covertly political by the German Marxists in the 1950’s and 60’s and by Pierre Bourdieu (b.1930), who cites the example of the word “care,” Fürsorge. Once endowed as a philosophical word with all of Heidegger’s associations with “being,” common notions of “care,” such as social care or welfare – Sozialfürsorge- are stripped out. Such a reassigning of meaning was thought to carry social and political consequences. However Heidegger’s philosophical concerns have survived and been influential in the modern era which, as we shall explore in Chapter 1, re inscribes Care with its ethical dimension. Philosophers like Derrida, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze have been profoundly influenced by Heidegger but their readings are not Heideggerian, in the sense of his concern with “being.” Heidegger’s strategies of conceptual and linguistic “disturbance” of conventional language have been useful tools in the deconstruction of theories of power, knowledge and discourse to these theorists. Heidegger found the language he used to express “being” (which is indivisible from his understanding of Care), in part, in the poets and it is in his “poetics,” his remaking, of conventional thought about poetry, art and language, that Heidegger is indispensible to “a poetics of Care” vis a vis the arts. Similarly the artists chosen as subjects of study were born during the war or shortly after and respond to their world in modalities of Care, a mourning Care, as we shall define it. This is the context of my readings.

Cultural and historical links between the artists and between the art and the philosophers underlie this thesis as a kind of implicit linking conversation: one such “dialogue” is between Jarman’s garden at Dungeness, “the fifth corner of the world,” as he describes it, and the “end” of the European project. Dungeness is symbolically and geographically where Europe begins and ends. It is on the Dungeness coastline that troops were holed up at the end of the war and where the metal fortifications of that defence line were left to rust and corrode in the salt for the next forty years,
creating a ruinous, un-cared for wasteland, inhabited in the post war era only by a nuclear reactor. It is into this historic and cultural context that Jarman began his work of “cultivation” in 1986, beachcombing, collecting the debris of war as enthusiastically as a collector of natural wonders, and incorporating them into a coastal shale garden of renewal; in the process making a new contract with place – a contract that incorporates Care in the face of successive historic and ecological “carelessness.”

The unfolding of this theory of Care, as I describe it, is not a linear narrative, but a weaving – back and forth- “to and fro”- with Heidegger’s thought as the loom from which the cloth of Care is woven. His articulation of “the burden” of Care, mourning Care, the tending and attending to the “need,” haunts this thesis from start to finish, however, building on the weave, we are able to nuance this with threads of solicitude, connectedness, intimacy, responsiveness: the consolation (and “burden”) of the presence of “the Other.” Heidegger also endows us with concepts that resonate with the material processes of the work of art: concepts such as “cultivation,” (“tending to the vine”) the cultivation of Care, lead us toward understanding how the artwork “works” into the matter of our world in a way that produces Care. The metaphoric parallel with the “cultivation” of the soil that ploughs, plants, ripens and harvests is not an accidental one. We shall reference this key finding of the “cultivation” of Care in each of the four artworks studied in Chapter 2.

The thesis develops a poetics of Care that clarifies the role Care plays in “making.” In doing this it interrogates and makes fresh application of the language of Care endowed by the philosophers. In this process the art work may show us the limitation of the philosophical discourse on several fronts. For example, theoretical discourses of Care are conducted around the paradigm of “the Other,” with Care arising as a response to the “call” of the Other. This gives us a fundamental structure to understand and articulate Care, but as we shall see, the artwork applies this “concern and solicitude” not just to the abstraction of a theoretical human “Other,” but extends Care’s concern to the non-human world of plants, animals, land, materials as well as

---

to the sacred and the “things” of our existence, in the process, bringing all Nature under an ethics of Care and extending Care’s domain through “cultivation” to a wider environment. We find the artwork of Care expands the philosophical concept of the Other in ways that are critical to our contemporary world.

Insight into the Care extended by the artwork can be gained, too, through questioning the metaphoricity of the language of theories of Care in the light of the artwork. For example, if we transpose the term, “burden,” which we have referred to as a nuance of Heidegger’s *Sorge* and *Fürsorge* (caring, *as in tending to the sick or dying*)⁵ to the “burden” of *mourning* in the work of art, we shall uncover that through the processes of making and the materialization of the artwork a transformative process occurs that “incarnates” the “burden” into what Kristeva theorizes as, the “sensorial reality of the object”:⁶ what was unbearably heavy is metamorphosed into something which can be “bourn”: what was inconsolable will find the consolation of Care (if not consolation itself). We find that an aspect of the gift of the artwork of Care is that the “burden” is “lightened.” As we shall discover, this is an aspect of the Care produced by the artwork.

There are many other philosophers who address Care, such as Foucault, *The Care of The Self*,⁷ Eng and Kazanjian, *Loss, The politics of Mourning*⁸ and the contemporary English philosophers Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor, *On Kindness*.⁹ While I reference some of the insights of these important theorists, the philosophers I have chosen to include in Chapter 1, are selected because their thoughts and language lend themselves to an interpretation of Care which addresses concerns found *a priori* within the artworks. The metaphoricity of the theorists’ language articulates and illuminates concerns found in the garden, building, art installation and film discussed as works of Care in Chapter 2.

Making Care, Chapter 2, studies four separate, but evolvingly linked, art works:

Derek Jarman’s Garden in Kent, England: Brambuk, a building for the Indigenous in

---


⁷ Foucault, Michel, *The Care of the Self*, op cit.


Victoria, Australia, designed by the Melbourne architect, Gregory Burgess: an art installation titled, A Silkroom of One’s Own, by Melbourne artist, Elizabeth Presa, and a film by Melbourne-based filmmaker, Paul Cox, entitled, A Woman’s Tale. Each cultivates an inhabitation of Care. Metaphorically the first subject, the garden, is the site of this inhabitation and its cultivation; within the garden we find a shelter, a site of dwelling; within the sheltering habitation, a room to cultivate the culture of silkworms; within the room, a shelf where “things” lie, cultivated by, and, in turn, cultivating Care. The four studies of artworks devolve through scales of intimacy, enabling us to focus more and more closely on the exact nature of objects of Care made by these four artists.

Each of these artworks has a death at its centre; each seeks to address that death in a way that is transformative and healing. Mourning, consolation and healing are not peculiar to art, but are uniquely communicated through the artwork of Care in a therapeutic form. Through analysis of our four subject artworks we uncover many shared traits of the work of Care. In brief, their main qualities are fourfold: in process the artwork of Care addresses a “need” for Care and cultivates Care as a healing or transformative phenomenon: it is collaborative or “conversational” in its process: it works with neglected or modest subjects and, as an extension of this same impulse, reuses or repairs “poor” or “ordinary” materials, transforming these through an act of imaginative remaking, and, fourthly, the work is deeply immersed in the project of what Derrida has called, “the work of mourning,”¹⁰ that is, it invokes transience and death as a constant meditation. As we shall establish, it is the transformative act of making, through the cultivation of materials, places and people that uniquely recasts these elements into something therapeutic, something that produces Care.

The third and fourth chapters in this thesis: Practising Care, (Part 2) document the two solo exhibitions exhibited during the course of this PhD The first exhibition, an installation, Metamorphoses: Dresses My Mother Wore, (2006)¹¹ is a work of mourning, which explores themes of the feminine condition through three dress-like sculptures. The materials and methods employed and the gestures of making,

¹¹Metamorphoses: Dresses My Mother Wore. Span Galleries, 54 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, 26 September-7 October, 2006.
reference the “women’s work” of sewing and dressmaking. These are however used
in a way that is subversive, in that they cannot make a dress. I have used beeswax and
feathers, ash and salt among other natural and found materials to make empty skin
and bone-like “garments”: metaphoric garments that evoke an absence or a
disembodiment. This section is a brief introduction to this work only as it is not my
formal examination exhibition. This exhibition is one of five exhibitions in which I
have participated over this four year period.  

The second exhibition, A Shrine for Orpheus, (2010) has themes of transformation
and healing embodied in its references to the beehive, the significances of which we
shall explore in this chapter. The Shrine ruin is made from several hundred cast
beeswax blocks which form a temple-like structure around a traditional bee box. Over
the past year or so this bee box has been home to a collaboration with a living
beehive, where I have placed objects associated with poetry (the Orphic realm of
music, healing and bardic utterance) – books, wax plates engraved with poems to the
bees, as well as objects associated with death, such as bones, into the beehive for the
bees to transform with their natural wax cell-building processes. Accompanying
this Shrine are two wax mausoleums, each with void spaces, evoking an underworld,
which contain Orphic traces such as burnt books and manuscripts which have been
immersed in beeswax. A “beekeeper’s costume” continues one of the material themes
of this installation (and of beekeeping itself): protective netting. The netting is recast
as a shamanic garment, densely feathered with the white feathers of sulphur-crested
parrots sewn in and hemmed with fine bones which have been “cremated” in a kiln
rendering them porcelain-like. Some of these bones have been bound with silk thread,
as a gesture (from the vocabulary of “womens’ sewing”) toward the “domestication,”
or “making intimate,” of death.

12 The other four exhibitions were: Reclaiming, group show in collaboration with Gregory Burgess, Art
Shelter: On Kindness, a collaboration with Gregory Burgess, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne International
Duetto: a collaboration with Gregory Burgess, Australian Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide.
13 The wax tablets were engraved with original aphorisms for the bees by Melbourne writer Paul
Carter. The tablets have been incorporated into the honeycomb building of the bees. They are archived
in a vitrine installation within the exhibition, A Shrine for Orpheus.
Both of these bodies of work reference the beehive and its productions of beeswax, honey and pollen. Metaphorically, these works evoke Beuysian cosmologies of the beehive, with their social/spiritual indications for the Care of humankind through a poetics of metamorphoses, death and resurrection. As noted, themes of Care address a perceived “lack” and both of these exhibitions bring to bear an ecological sensibility addressing the dire state of nature and the ensuing sense of loss and absence. The artworks mythologise this connection to nature, through the use of liminal and telluric materials and processes that evoke religious ritual or votive offering; materials such as honey, beeswax, pollen, salt, ash, as well as found ephemera from nature. In the transforming use of natural materials, and living ecologies of creatures (bringing them into “cultivation”), these works address mourning and healing through nature, in the process, caring for nature, and caring for our place in it.
A Poetics of Care

Part 1.

Chapter 1: Writing Care

Introduction

The foundations of a philosophy of Care in the modern era are rooted in the work of Martin Heidegger. His work on the “concernful” (Care-ful) relationship of “self” to Being is indispensable to the later philosophers of Care referenced in this chapter, who developed Care as Solicitude for (Care of) the Other. However, I wish to begin this survey of the literature with a seminar given by the contemporary philosopher, Alexander Garcia Düttmann because he addresses art practice directly and brings into focus the double question addressed in this thesis: Can a poetics of Care construct a theoretical and practical framework through which an art practice could be understood? And its implied converse: How does an art practice contribute to an understanding of Care?

Discussion of Düttmann’s seminar opens out the ground to view the theories of the philosophers in the light of the four practices addressed in the following chapter,
Making Care. Düttmann proposes that the artist’s “concerns” form a “burden” of Care. These “concerns” impel artists to produce “what matters” and that “what matters,” is, in itself, a form of Care that will also “matter to the world.” This circular movement shows a central characteristic of Care as I propose it: Care making and being made by Care in the arts. This contributes, as we shall find, to answering the further consideration of my thesis question: “Do the artworks themselves produce Care?”

This section on Düttmann is followed by an exploration of Heidegger’s ontological philosophy of Care, which introduces his “language of Care” from the text, “Thinking, Building, Dwelling,” which is referenced in the following Chapter 2.2, on the architecture of Gregory Burgess. Heidegger’s philosophy of Care is extended in a brief review of each of the following philosophers of Care: Emmanuel Levinas, who inscribes Care with an ethics of intimacy; Paul Ricoeur, whose concept of “solicitude” (Care), builds upon Aristotle’s conception of the “mutual character of friendship” as “the exchange between giving and receiving”\(^1\) in the midst of a shared awareness of mortality; Jacques Derrida, who bestows Care of mourning,\(^2\) which is a concept central to Care as I find it located in the four art works addressed in Chapter 2 and which forms a main typology of Care as solicitude for death, expressed in art as “mourning for mourning,” from which all other aspects of Care unfold. This is followed by Julia Kristeva’s feminine perspective, analysing the “interiorization” of Care in a psychosexual interpretation of feminine Care and Iris Murdoch’s description of an ethics of seeing in her philosophy of “Attention.”

**Düttmann and “What Matters”**

Düttmann’s seminar, entitled, “Do Artist’s Know what they are Doing?” was given in 2006 alongside the Melbourne conference, “Wandering with Spinoza,” at the Centre

---

for Ideas, Victorian College of the Arts and Music. This account is based on my personal notes. I wish to follow Düttmann’s thinking closely as it reveals insights critical to my research into Care in art practice. Düttmann’s direct addressing of the practitioner discloses primary impulses of Care that impel an artist’s production. Within Düttmann’s discourse I discover a language of Care prefigured in Heidegger’s writings, given fresh relevance for artists.

Düttmann proposed that the artist is impelled “to bring to light” something which is initially only vaguely intuited, something which the artist knows little of, something which is “unpredictable.” The artist feels there is something that “matters,” something which weighs upon him as a “burden.” It is perceived as a “burden” because it “goes beyond one.” It is personal to the artist yet has universal bearing: “a subjective universality.” (Düttmann acknowledged Kant’s Third Critique with this reference).

The artist makes the artwork not knowing what it will be. He makes it because he needs to see what it is but also because there is a need for it in the world. Düttmann said: “The art product needs to be brought about because it will matter to others also.” In this context Düttmann clarifies that it only “matters” if the artist “means it”; if the artist “takes it seriously,” if there is “something at stake,” an “urgency.” Düttmann says this goes beyond “the merely agreeable,” it is not just a matter of taste; it goes beyond the private realm of “likes and dislikes.” It is the seriousness of intention, the “burden that must be expressed” that insures the work will also have meaning for the world. This points toward what emerges as a central characteristic of Care in the arts: that art, made by Care, makes Care.

Düttmann acknowledges the tension between the burden of what needs to be made and the artist’s “unknowing” of what that will be. He says “the less we know about the thing we are making - the more we will mean it; the more we will be engaged in finding out “what is at stake.” Düttmann emphasized that we do not make these

---

3 This and all following quotes taken from precise notes at Alexander Garcia Düttmann’s seminar entitled “Do Artists Know what they are Doing?” At the “Wandering with Spinoza” Conference, Centre for Ideas, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, 2006. I have used quotation marks for direct quotes from Düttmann and reported the rest of his lecture, keeping accurately to my transcription.

4 Düttmann was addressing a seminar of practising artists.
artworks to “understand something finally,” but rather to “make the lack of understanding deeper.” He proposes the art work as something we can “engage in”; it is not “for agreement.” Düttmann places the artist in a context of a struggle, the struggle of “not knowing,” but at the same time “feeling impelled” to make the art work. This struggle matters enough for the artist to “risk failure.” In Heidegger’s philosophy, art is also the site of struggle, of “strife.” The Heideggerean “strife” is to do with “disclosure,” a mythic notion about revealing the true nature of things through art. Düttmann brought the idea into relation with art practice. He discussed “mythopoeises,” saying that myth is what allows us to come close to the object through indirectness; that “indirectness” and “obliqueness” are part of the constraints of an art object, not “a symptom of something lacking in the art work.” The indirectness is “a sign of success.” Indirectness also veils, protects, conceals and shelters (concepts of Care from Heidegger); allowing poiesis to be disclosed through the art work, but not “laid bare” for consumption or disposal. This “protection” by veiling the art work is then a characteristic of Care manifested in the artwork itself which also “cares for” the spectator of the artwork – protecting the viewer from the direct “burden,” the suffering Care, of the artwork: mortality veiled with beauty.

What is this “burden” that Düttmann speaks of in the context of the art work? This thing “which weighs upon one,” and that also “matters to the world?” As will emerge from our survey of theories of Care, these words and phrases: “the burden that goes beyond one”; “the burden that must be expressed”; “what matters,” fall within the lexicon of Care. It is the language of Care. The “burden” of Care; what “weighs” upon one, is carried in the etymologies of Heidegger’s Sorgen and Fürsorgen: “worrying,” “caring,” as in “tending to the sick and the dying,” but also the human being’s (Dasein) “concern,” “anxiety” in the face of Being.

I will establish that Care is reflected in the process, subject and materials of artists of “aesthetic seriousness” as well as giving the artist a disposition of “concern” toward her subject and that such an art work is, in itself, performative of Care. My thesis

---

5 Martin Heidegger, “The origin of the Work of Art,” in Basic Writings. (Revised ed. David Farrell Krell, London: Routledge, 2000,) see pp.174, 175ff. For Heidegger the art work participates in the great creative struggle of world and earth, which reveals beings and allows them to come to appearance under the cultivation and protection (Care) of humankind.

6 Düttmann used this term acknowledging Adorno.
establishes that Care has a self reflexive movement – the work of art that “responds” to Care’s “call,” generates Care. Düttmann’s insights into “what matters” to the artist and consequently will also “matter” to the world underscores the reciprocal relationship of Care in the arts.

The framing of Care by Düttmann has applications to each of the art works discussed in the following chapter addressing four specific practices. His thoughts provided the initial theoretical impulse for this thesis and the compass for choosing the four projects, as projects that, in the first place, address “what matters.” In Heidegger, too, “what matters” is Care and Düttmann ascribes this form of Care to the very drive of art production, “the burden that must be expressed”: the originary source of Care in the arts. From Düttmann’s seminar, I concluded that artists are driven by “what matters”: that is, Care. And that the project of artists of “aesthetic seriousness” could be constructively framed by a poetics of Care.7

**Heidegger and the Language of Care**

Heidegger is a primary source of the language of Care, founding a poetics of Care, which I have referenced in this thesis. Heidegger sourced this language from archaic Greek and Old High German, re-inscribing the words philosophically through close etymological analysis. Naming things is, in his thinking, a form of “keeping,” “gathering” and “preserving” (Verhälttnis), that is, Care.8 In this chapter and throughout the thesis I archive these words, (I “preserve,” “hold,” “cherish” these words),9 creating a resource for and an enactment of a poetics of Care, building a language that helps us articulate the concerns of the artwork of Care. This is built upon with a feminine language in a section of this chapter and later in the chapter where I address the work of Elizabeth Presa, whose material language adds to an archive of “a language of Care.”

---

7 Heidegger’s concept of fürsorge, a form of Care (German, to care for, to tend, as in nursing a sick one) implies a “burden”: this “burden of Care” was one of the concepts explored in Düttmann’s seminar and given fresh relevance to artists.


9 Some of Heidegger’s “words of Care,” found in, “Building,Dwelling,Thinking.”
We uncover the sources of this language in the mythic, primordial origins Heidegger ascribes to Care. Heidegger defines Care thus: “Care is always concern and solicitude.” This is the underlying sense of Care that informs all the nuancing of Care explored in the other theorists in this chapter and underpins mourning as the main typology that emerges consistently throughout this thesis: mourning, as we shall see in Derrida, is the Care of death and Care of the anticipation of death; a concern and solicitude for death, with its implication of an abiding state of mourning.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger translates an “ancient fable” from Seneca’s Latin and gives us the primordial picture of the origins of “Man” under the aegis of Jupiter, Saturn, Earth and “Cura” (Care):

Once when ‘Care’ was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took up a piece and began to shape it. While she was meditating on what she had made, Jupiter came by. ‘Care’ asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, he forbade this, and demanded that it be given his name instead. While ‘Care’ and Jupiter were disputing, Earth arose and desired that her own name be conferred on the creature, since she had furnished it with part of her body. They asked Saturn to be their arbiter, and he made the following decision, which seemed a just one: ‘Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since ‘Care’ first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And because there is now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called ‘homo’, for it is made out of humus (earth).”

This myth suggests that humankind, born of the clay of Earth and the spirit of Jupiter, is forever “held fast” by Care, as long as this entity “is in the world”: pointing to the time-bound nature of human beings, for it is, significantly, Saturn (Time) who is the arbiter in this myth. Heidegger identifies the very nature of “humanness” with Care. It

---

is bound up inextricably in his thinking with his philosophy of “dwelling” on the earth. In “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” Heidegger adds “cultivation” to this picture of the caring destiny of clay-made homo, a word etymologically rooted in “dwelling” (“bauen”), “culture” and “growing things.”\(^\text{13}\) The verb “to cultivate” – “cultivation,” (“tending to the vine”) is a term with which we will find fundamental parallels in the material processes of the artist.

In the same chapter on Care, Heidegger cites Burdach’s “double meaning” of the term “cura” (Care), that is, “anxious exertion” on the one hand; “carefulness” and “devotedness (Sorgfalt, Hingabe), on the other. In this context he relates that Seneca prefigures this understanding in his last epistle (Ep.124). I will quote this in full as it gives a mythic picture, of humankinds’ relation to Care within a cosmology very similar to Heidegger’s own “fourfold” (das Geviert) of dwelling – earth, sky, mortals and divinities:

Among the four existent Natures (trees, beasts, man, and God), the latter two, which alone are endowed with reason, are distinguished in that God is immortal while man is mortal. Now when it comes to these, the good of the one, namely God, is fulfilled by his Nature; but that of the other, man, is fulfilled by care.\(^\text{14}\)

Heidegger concludes from this that humankinds’ transformational sojourn on earth, his “perfectio,” his very purpose – is accomplished by Care. We see from the cosmic setting surrounding Heidegger’s discussion of Care, that it is an \emph{a priori} condition of being human, a primal “given,” not an \textit{ethics} as such. Heidegger does not define Care as something which arises in response to “the cares of life” or out of “devotedness,” an ethics which we find in the later philosophers of Care, who make “responsiveness” central to Care.

“Care” is primal for Heidegger. It is burdened with the meaning “anxiety” (\textit{Angst}). The \textit{Dasein} (the self, the human being) finding itself brought before itself, experiences anxiety. Heidegger proposes a “concernful” relation of the self to things,

\(^{13}\) Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” p101. “… this word \textit{bauen} however also means…to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the soil.”

\(^{14}\) Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, op cit. p.243, my emphasis.
abstractions, Others, places and so on. This “concernful” (sorgfält) relation preserves our relationship to “Being.” The reason for this gap is that in Heidegger’s thinking “anxiety” (Angst) is generated in the face of “Being,” which approaches and withdraws, leaving the “Dasein” in a state of existential concern and care. This anxious “gap” between self and Being is the generating crucible of Care in Heidegger’s philosophy of Being and resonates with Düttmann’s idea that the artist “is impelled” to express a “burden.”

**Heidegger’s “Fourfold.”**

In this section I discuss Heidegger’s poetic cosmology of “the fourfold” from his treatise, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.” This proposes that “dwelling” is an a priori, a fundamental, of the human condition – and Care, manifested as a “cultivation” of “dwelling” characterizes building which arises from this impulse. I reference Heidegger’s text in Chapter 2.2, to frame a meditation on a seminal building for the Indigenous by Gregory Burgess: Brambuk Living Cultural Centre, a building which attempts to create “home” in the midst of “homelessness.” Heidegger’s poetics of dwelling contributes to a language of Care that enables us to articulate Care as it exists in the processes, materials and architectural expression of Brambuk.

**Heidegger and the Care of Dwelling**

In the previous section we found that Heidegger identified Care with being human per se and that Care maintained a “concernful” relationship between humankind and “Being.” In “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” Heidegger adds many dimensions to our understanding of Care in relation to architecture as “dwelling.” I am exploring Heidegger’s philosophical treatise because it gives a theoretical model for an architecture of Care in the form of a poetic cosmology of “dwelling,” articulating a language and a framework for viewing architecture’s unique capacity to both endow and engender Care. This is crucial to an understanding of Burgess’ work; a work which, in turn, enables us to gain a critical perspective on the limits as well as contributions of Heidegger’s theoretical discourses of Care.
Heidegger explores humankinds’ situatedness in the world, claiming that an “authentic” existence is one where “being” and “dwelling” give rise to building, to architecture, where “dwelling” is an *a priori* requirement. Architecture can *house* dwelling but also, precisely, can only come into being where there *is* dwelling: “to build is already to dwell,” Heidegger writes, and, “We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell.” Heidegger is concerned that the privileging of rationalist materialist thinking and technology in modern society (as well as the scientific jargon or technical language associated with these) has separated humankind from this capacity to “dwell” - and “mortals,” “must ever learn to dwell.”

To answer Heidegger’s question, “What is it to dwell?” requires following his excursion into arcane etymologies. This etymological excursion unfolds aspects of Care which specifically articulate aspects of Care in architecture. Heidegger establishes that the German word “*bauen*” (to build, building) means, “to dwell.” He unfolds out of the etymologies of “*bauen,*” indications of how one is “to dwell” and how fundamental dwelling it is to the existence and identity of humankind. Heidegger uncovers the connection between “*bauen*” and “*bin*” (I am), claiming these words share the same root, “*buan.*” He writes, “To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.”

In his thinking to say “I am” is already to say “I dwell.” From this same root, “*bauen,*” Heidegger draws out the way in which humans dwell, “this word *bauen*… also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for.” From Old Saxon and Gothic sources Heidegger adds the additional meanings: “to be brought to peace” (*Friede*), “to remain, to stay in a place” and also that *bauen* “means preserved from harm and danger.” From the word “*Friede*” (peace), Heidegger draws out, “to free,” meaning “to spare.” He expands on this, writing, “The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving.” In Heidegger’s words this takes place, “when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we ‘free’ it in the real

---

17 Heidegger, op cit. p.102.
sense of the word into a preserve of peace.” What is “returned to its being” is, in turn, free “to become.”

What is being “preserved” in this interpretation of dwelling? Heidegger writes: “To spare and preserve means: to take under our care, to look after the fourfold in its presencing. What we take under our care must be kept safe.” In Heidegger’s thinking, “the fourfold” both gives rise to dwelling/building and is preserved in it. In the terms of this thesis, it proposes a form of Care that both produces and is produced by Care. The fourfold is Heidegger’s hymn to dwelling on the earth as a “mortal” on the “earth,” under the “sky,” before “the divinities.” The “earth” includes all that grows, lives and sustains life: the plants, animals, the water and soil. As we saw in the preceding section, the Care of “earth” is “cultivation.” The “sky” is related to the passage of the sun and the cycles of the moon and stars, endowing time and seasons, weather and clime. The “divinities” are “the beckoning messages of the godhead.” Through dwelling into “things” we can perceive the presence of the divinities in those things: we call the divinities forth, in dwelling, by cultivating and building. The “mortals” are human beings: mortal because only we can die and know that we will die, “to die means to be capable of death as death.” The Care of dwelling, in Heidegger’s thinking, lies in a thoughtful and poetic relationship to these four mythic fundamentals, which are brought into unity in human dwelling.

The fourfold is a poetics of dwelling, where mortals’ role is to “preserve” and “spare” earth, the sky, the divinities and themselves in their own nature, “in (their) essential being.” This “preserving of” (Caring for) the fourfold has implications for a spiritual/ecological Care both in a sustainable architecture in its relation to “earth,” “mortals,” “sky” and “divinities” and for the contemporary arts in general that have come to be characterized by this sensibility toward Care of the ecology of humankind and nature – its “preservation,” that is, in seeing things in themselves, for themselves, not as disposable commodities: to see the earth as earth, arriving at its presence through building and dwelling; “to receive the sky as sky”; and to prepare ourselves

---

18 Heidegger, ibid. p.102.
19 Heidegger, op cit. p.103.
for death through the Care of dwelling. In Heidegger’s thinking “preservation” is not simply maintaining the status quo, but rather a “setting things free” to return to their own active “becoming.” Through “preserving,” the “presencing of things” is “let be.” “Sparing” and “preserving” are, in Heidegger’s thought, a “positive” thing, something active, a movement, a gesture of “returning” something to its natural realm. In dwelling this means the fourfold is installed, protected and preserved under the aegis of Care.

The fourfold, returned to its authentic being, inheres and is preserved “in things” (“Dinge”). Heidegger writes of this: “Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things.” “Thing” in Heidegger’s lexicon, “by an ancient word of our language,” means “gathering or assembly.” A bridge or a building is thus “a gathering or assembly.” Heidegger gives his famous example of the bridge, which “gathers to itself in its own way earth and sky, divinities and mortals,” bringing the banks of the river into relationship with human dwelling. As a “thing” it “gathers” the fourfold. In the image of “gathering” and “assembly” is already a dynamic, an inner movement: we see that “a thing” is not static, but a site of metamorphoses or evolution, a site of “becoming” and in its capacity to “preserve,” and “keep,” is also a site which generates Care. We will see in the section on the architectural work of Burgess, in the example of Brambuk, how “preservation,” “keeping” (or its absence) underpin Care, in a negative example associated with a derelict Aboriginal “Keeping Place,” and in a positive instance, in the processes and building of Brambuk Aboriginal Living Cultural Centre. We also make application

---

21 Wolfgang Laib, a contemporary German artist, is a notable example of an artist working within a “poetics of ecology” in the way outlined here. He seasonally gathers pollen, beeswax and other natural materials to make artworks which express a spiritual and aesthetic harmony with nature as well as bringing to attention a necessary engagement with the natural world.
22 Heidegger, ibid. p.103.
24 In the fourth study of Care in this section, the filmmaking of Paul Cox, we will look at how “things” inform and are informed by Care, the Care of intimacy, transience and memory.
25 It is interesting to note that in Greenland’s prehistory the ancient term for the first “parliament,” an open air gathering of tribal elders was “Althing”: meaning a “gathering or assembly.” The built national parliament now stands on that ancient site. This would seem to be a concrete example of Heidegger’s archaically sourced linguistics of place.
26 A “Keeping Place” is a term used to designate an archive or small museum of Australian Aboriginal cultural artifacts. We note that Heidegger uses the term “to keep” as an essential part of his language of Care.
of this expanded concept of “things” in the section on the filmmaking of Paul Cox in the following Chapter 2.4.

The relationship between dwelling, architecture and the fourfold is “a simple unity” in Heidegger’s philosophy. He writes of this oneness in these terms: “Dwelling, insofar as it keeps or secures the fourfold in things, is, as this “keeping,” a building.” Heidegger sees architecture “gathered” and “gathering” as the “guardian” of the fourfold. He writes of this “keeping,” “saving,” “preserving” role of architecture:

The edifices guard the fourfold. They are things that in their own way preserve the fourfold. To preserve the fourfold, to save the earth, to receive the sky, to await the divinities, to escort mortals – this fourfold preserving is the simple nature, the presencing, of dwelling. In this way, then, do genuine buildings give form to dwelling in its presencing and house this presence.

There are also images of the “Care of death.” The bridge, for example, is not “merely” a bridge. If it is a “genuine” bridge, that is, it admits the fourfold, it is also the liminal bridge, which metaphorically escorts and gives passage to mortals on their “final journey.” Heidegger describes it in these words: “Always and ever differently the bridge escorts…men to and fro, so that they may get to other banks and in the end, as mortals, to the other side.” And again, as a memento mori aspect inscribed in the bridge, the reminder of the necessity to prepare for death: “Now in a high arch, now in a low…- whether mortals keep in mind this vaulting of the bridge’s course or forget that they, always themselves on their way to the last bridge, are actually striving to surmount all that is common and unsound in them in order to bring themselves before the haleness of the divinities.” Heidegger also evokes the “cradle to death” house of the agrarian Schwarzwald peasants: “it made room in its chamber for the hallowed places of childbirth and the ‘tree of the dead’ – for that is what they call a coffin there: the Totenbaum.”

27 Heidegger, ibid. p.103.
30 Heidegger, op cit, p.104. My emphasis.
31 Heidegger, op cit, p.108.
Buildings, “genuine buildings,” according to Heidegger, *take care* of the fundamentals that both allow humankind to dwell and in turn give rise to the dwelling that allows building. Care, manifested as protection and preservation permeates the whole of this process. Heidegger reveals this manifestation of Care through his “language of Care.”

Words and their etymologies are Heidegger’s means of revealing his poetics of dwelling. He says, “It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing.” In the spirit of Heidegger’s linguistics of Care – his “Verhältnis” of naming, it is illuminating to gather up the words of Care that carry his discourse. Under the etymologies of “bauen” we have: “to cherish,” “to protect,” “to preserve,” “to care for,” “to take under our care,” “to save,” “to spare,” “to keep,” “to keep safe,” “to look after,” “to secure,” “to safeguard,” “to guard,” “to free,” “to respond,” “to nurse,” “to nurture,” “to cultivate,” “to set at peace,” “to stay with things.” These are words of a loving “looking after things,” of abiding Care and protection offered toward something infinitely valued. There is also an emphasis in these words of Care, on guarding, “securing from” and “warding off” possible danger: in this thinking something needs protection.

Heidegger’s Care of “Dwelling,” then, is characterized by a “concern and solicitude” for death within the transformational journey, the “*perfectio,*” of our dwelling on earth as mortals. This Care for death, as mourning, and its transformative production of consolation and healing are built upon as “Care of the Other,” in the following writers of Care.

**Emmanuel Levinas – “The Call and the Response”: An Ethics of the Other**

Since Heidegger evolved his phenomenological understanding of Being and its primal relationship to the “Care” of existence, philosophies of Care have been developed and extended. Care has emerged as an *ethics* of the Other, particularly in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas. As we have seen, Heidegger positions Care primarily as a “concernful” relation of the *self to the self,* preserving our relation to Being. Levinas

---

32 Heidegger, op cit, p.100.
makes personal ethical responsibility to others the source and primary focus of his thinking about Care. His is an ethics of intimacy: the ethics and intimacy of the “face-to-face” encounter.

Bettina Bergo emphasizes Levinas’s concept of “the lived immediacy” of this encounter: “no event is as affectively disruptive for a consciousness holding sway in its world than the encounter with another person. In this encounter…, the ‘I’ first experiences itself as called and liable to account for itself. It responds.” For Levinas “response” is the origin of language as dialogue: response to the “summons” of the other. This affective encounter, inscribed with intimacy and human sensibility as “responsiveness,” as “dialogue” and “conversation”- is a concept that I find useful in discussing the collaborative art practices of Derek Jarman, Gregory Burgess, Elizabeth Presa and Paul Cox. It is encountered in the art work not only as collaboration (a sharing of process and/or production) but also as a sensitive receptivity to, and exchange of Care, embodied in the material art work itself and produced by it. The artist “responds” to the “summons” of Care.

Levinas employs an interpretive, phenomenological approach to this encounter with “the Other,” describing the experience in terms of human emotion and sensibility. While Heidegger perceives “Care” as the primal anxiety of the self brought before the self, a withdrawing and illusive gap between Being and “being-in-the-world,” Levinas grounds being in continuous presence, in the embodied present, in the “lived moods” of existence. Levinas extends Heidegger’s concept of Care (“the anxiety of existence”) to a positive humanistic ethics of encounter. Care is extended as non-reciprocal responsibility for the Other; something which “calls” to us: something to which we “respond.” Ricoeur summarizes Levinas’ position as, “no self without another who summons it to responsibility.” Levinas’ “ethics of intimacy” reminds one of Martin Buber’s I and Thou. It is an interpretation of Care with an underlying religious resonance: radical alterity of the kind that can “summons” us echoes with the

---

authoritative voice of the Old Testament God. In Levinas we hear the “call” of the Holy.

Levinas’s understanding of Care has implications for an art practice in its positioning of Care as a “response” to a “call” that is perceived from the world; the “response” to something which “matters,” in Düttmann’s terms. The artwork (like a person) is also responsible: it responds to Care - it answers Care’s “call” - as well as being receptive to Care’s response. What is theorized as “the call and the response” in Levinas’ “ethics of encounter,” articulates concerns of the artwork. We will find “responsiveness” grounded in the material object in the practice and processes of the four art works that are the subject of this thesis. The abstraction of an ethics of “responsibility” for the Other, is given concrete expression by artists as “concern and solicitude” for their subject, for their materials, for process. The artist’s “response,” as we shall explore, locates Care’s “call” not only in the human “Other,” but also in nature, animals, architecture, “things”: the “Other” for the artist may be the radical “Other” of the sacred in the world incarnate.

I carry these thoughts from Levinas concerning the encounter with the Other, inscribed with intimacy, to apply to the art work as some thing which, in the first place, “responds” to the “call” of Care.

Paul Ricoeur and Solicitude

In his book, Oneself as Another, Ricoeur moves a step further than Levinas developing the concept of solicitude. Ricoeur grounds Levinas’ “call and response” in his concept of a relational “solicitude.” Solicitude is defined by Ricoeur as “regard for others” in a context of mutually “giving and receiving.” Heidegger had defined Care as “concern and solicitude,” a term that denotes consideration, attention, inscribed with an anxious exertion. Ricoeur restores the pleasure of human sociability and “fellow feeling” to Care, which after the Latin philosophers and with the advent of prescribed Christian caritas, as moral dictum, had become increasingly

---

36 Ricoeur, Oneself, op cit. p.188.
37 Ricoeur, Oneself, op cit. p.189.
disassociated from “benevolent spontaneity.” Ricoeur critiques Levinas’ “injunction” to respond to the appearing “of the Other in the face of the Other” as “irrelation.” He asks, “whose face is it?” and concludes that what appears as the “Other’s face” is, “a master who instructs and who does so only in the ethical mode: this face forbids murder and commands justice,” leaving the ‘I’ passive.” Ricoeur sees this as “merely” a moral injunction. He argues the dissymmetry of the “command” of the Other and passive response of the “I” breaks off the exchange of giving and receiving and would exclude any instruction by the face within the field of solicitude.

Ricoeur develops Care as relational solicitude around the *reciprocity of friendship* based on “esteem” of self: *self* esteem and esteem for the Other: ideas which confer inter-subjectivity: *Oneself as Another.* He ascribes a motivating “goodness” to the solicitude of friendship. Referring to solicitude he says, “This is why it is so important to us to give solicitude a more fundamental status than obedience to duty. Its status is that of benevolent spontaneity, intimately related to self-esteem within the frame work of the aim of the “good life.” Levinas’ “summons to responsibility,” then, is balanced in Ricoeur by “benevolent spontaneity” between reciprocating equals. The “to and fro” of this reciprocation, inscribed with Ricoeur’s “solicitude” (as friendship), and Levinas’s “intimacy,” articulates a model of exchange, of “conversation,” “dialogue” which we will reference in the collaborative modes of the art practices studied in Chapter 2, Making Care.

Aware of the potential inequality of the relationship between the one “giving” sympathy and the suffering “receiver,” Ricoeur writes, “in the case of sympathy that comes from the self and extends to the other, equality is re established only through the shared admission of fragility and, finally, of mortality.” In the following studies of Care in art practice, I find it is into this interstice of solicitude characterized by friendship, sympathy, compassion, and a shared sense of mortality that the art work, as a work of Care, arises. As we shall see, the “shared admission of fragility and,

---

38 Ricoeur, ibid. p.189.
39 Solicitous, L, showing consideration, concern, attention. 2. Keenly anxious or willing. Solicitude: n. anxiety or concern. L., sollicitus: anxious
finally, of mortality,” is expressed in all four practices in the use (and re use) of damaged, discarded or fragile materials, that address “poor,” modest or neglected subjects, creating works of mourning which in turn produce consolation and healing. Ricoeur’s “solicitude,” with its reciprocal nature - suggests a model for the reflexive nature of Care in the arts: art work is both produced by the Care of solicitude and, in turn, produces solicitude. Ricoeur’s caring solicitude with its “shared admission of mortality” opens out onto Derrida’s elaboration of this central aspect of Care: the Care of death through mourning.

**Derrida and Mourning – The Care of Death**

We have seen that “solicitude,” defined by Heidegger as Care, was inscribed with a concern and responsibility for the Other by Levinas and enriched in Ricouer’s philosophy with human sensibility, with kindness, compassion and friendship (“solicitude”) and is given a specific application in the thought of Derrida on death and mourning. Derrida reveals mourning as a main typology of Care. That is, all other categories of Care unfold from mourning. Derrida’s upholding of mourning as central to an understanding of Care is vital to my project of unveiling the movement of art producing and being produced by Care in my four studies of artworks in Chapter 2, as each work has a death inscribed into its very fabric and fabrication and the Care of mourning is its production.

In “Faith and Knowledge,” Derrida asserts the overarching importance of mourning as the foundation for human value: “Life has absolute value only if it is worth more than life. And hence only in so far as it mourns, becoming itself in the labour of infinite mourning.”

We see that this nuancing of Care as mourning is Derrida’s way of asserting the essential nature of Care: that life not only requires Care of the Other as we found in Levinas and Ricoeur, but must also be solicitous of our own and the Other’s death. The Care of mourning emerges in this thesis as the major characteristic of Care in the arts and the art works themselves reveal a reciprocal relationship between mourning and transformation, consolation and healing.

---

In *The Gift of Death*, Derrida identifies mourning with Care, specifically the Care of death. Derrida comments on the famous passage of the *Phaedo*, where Plato describes the departing “soul,” allegorizing it as “philosophy.” Plato speaks of the soul “gathered in herself, and making such abstraction her perpetual study… this means she has been a true disciple of philosophy; and therefore has in fact been always practising how to die without complaint. For is not such a life the practice of death?” Derrida draws out of this passage a “Care” for death, where the soul is her own midwife and mourner to the realm of the soul. Derrida notes, “it is indeed a matter of care, a ‘keeping-vigil-for’, a solici
date for death.” And again, “it is nothing other than this concern for dying as a relation to self and an assembling of self. It only returns to itself, in both senses of assembling itself and waking itself, becoming conscious (s'ëveiller), in the sense of consciousness of self in general, through this concern for death.” Derrida identifies this Care for death, this “recalling itself to itself” of the soul, this “gathering” and “remembering,” with philosophy. Derrida states that “philosophy … is nothing other than this vigil over death that watches over death, as if over the very life of the soul.” The centrality of mourning death to philosophy is, as we shall see in the research, also true for art: art mourns death and “watches over death.” We find this relationship to Care and mourning in all four case studies of art practice, particularly expressed as Care of transience, absence and loss and the preparation for death. We will discover that the artwork that responds to mourning Care, produces the Care of mourning, as consolation and transformation.

Derrida specifically associates this Care for death with Heidegger’s Care. In his interpretation of Plato’s *Phaedo*, Derrida speaks of “the care brought to bear on dying,” writing, “That very idea, namely, this *meletē* or *epimeleia* that one can rightly translate by ‘care’ or ‘solicitude’, opens the vein – and begins the vigil – within which will be inscribed the *Sorge* (Care) in the sense Heidegger confers on it in *Being and Time*.”

47 Derrida, ibid. p.15.
48 This following quote from Derrida builds on Heidegger’s initial definition of Care; “Care is always concern and solicitude”. Derrida enriches Heidegger’s “solicitude,” drawing out “mourning” as a central characteristic.
The “anxious concern,” (Angst) of the self bought before the self, which Heidegger proposed as the originary source of Care, (and which Düttmann brings to the artist’s practice as “the burden that must be expressed”) is humanly enriched by Derrida as a Care inscribed with mourning. Derrida concludes by drawing together the mirror faces of life and death: “the psyche as life, as breath of life, as pneuma, only appears out of this concerned anticipation of dying. The anticipation of this vigil already resembles a provisional mourning.”

We see that “mourning for mourning,” with its philosophical affirmation of the value of life, belongs to an understanding of Care.

This form of Care, the Care of mourning, which places Care in relation to mortality, articulates concerns found in the artworks studied in the following chapter. In the four studies of arts practice, Derrida’s concepts of “mourning” and “provisional mourning” are found to articulate and describe themes and materials, processes and practices marking transience and loss, remembrance and witness producing transformation, consolation and healing in and by the art work.

Archiving the Language of Care

In the spirit of Heidegger’s naming of things, I add words to the gathering lexicon of Care as a resource and an archive of nuanced meanings of Care. The poetics of Care that creates this thesis arises out of my own art practice and finds its material expression there: words are part of this “material expression” in my art work – letters, texts from poets and contemporary writers are integrated into the artworks and given material embodiment there. The “keeping” of these words of Care parallels this same archiving and represents a thread, the thread of a “poetics of Care” in my own art practice: a caring for Care, where words and texts that are important to me are “sheltered,” “preserved,” “kept,” and embodied within the art work. In a parallel act,

---

50 Derrida, op cit. p.15.
51 The exhibition of my work, Goethe’s Garden, 1995, incorporated words and texts from Goethe’s book, Metamorphoses of Plants. In Hymn to the Night, a painting exhibition in 1999, the paintings were inscribed with poems and texts by Novalis and Rilke; Memento Mori, 2001, used the texts of contemporary writer, Paul Carter as “niches” within the works and on the walls of the installation. Reading Arcadia, 2003, incorporated the texts of Paul Carter as the material “ground” out of which paper fans and scrolls were made; Metamorphoses: Dresses my Mother Wore, an installation, 2006, used my mother’s letters dipped in beeswax and hung by thread from the ceiling as part of the work. My 2010 installation, A Shrine for Orpheus, has poems by Paul Carter inscribed into wax tablets and given to the bees to create their honeycomb in a “collaboration” with the beehive.
this literary archive represents a “safe-keeping,” “preserving,” and “cultivating” of words, within this thesis.\textsuperscript{52} This Care for Care, Care for the \textit{writing} of Care, enacts art producing and being produced by Care.

The language of this discourse echoes, reiterates and enriches as I read the literature. A lexicon on which we can build a poetics of Care emerges: “mourning,” “solicitude,” “consolation,” “consideration,” “devotion,” “compassion,” “pity,” “sympathy”: abstract nouns that point to a language of meditation and the interiority of reflection; a reflection that belongs first to the self before it can be made available to the world.

There are also the words which connote active subjective “states of being,” such as “attention,” “concern,” “anxiety,” “sorrow,” “worry,” “burden”; these belong already to our relationship with the Other. And the externalizing words of “doing”: “to cultivate,” “to tend to” (\textit{Fürsorgen}), “to attend,” “to preserve,” “to hold,” “to remember,” “to witness,” words which belong to ethics, (caring) justice and the Care of “memory and mourning”: Care engaged in the world. One feels other words, like “love,” “goodness,” “self-sacrifice,” “nurture,” “connectedness,” “the maternal,” would seem to belong to this “language of Care.” Who dares speak the feminine words? Intuitively one feels these belong in the folds of the Madonna’s cloak.

\textbf{Kristeva: Feminine Care}

Levinas’ conception of the encounter with the Other inscribed with human sensibility and felt emotion, exists within “the feminine” as we shall find it defined by Kristeva: his “face-to-face” encounter is characterized by intimacy and communion similar to Kristeva’s understanding of “connectedness”; Ricoeur’s “pity,” “sympathy,” “kindness” and “friendship” evoke feminine “identification” with the Other, named by Kristeva; Derrida has deepened our understanding of Care by drawing out and developing “mourning” as an aspect of Heidegger’s “solicitude” – a primary typology of Care – but what of love, \textit{the Care of love}? Kristeva enables one to introduce “love” to the lexicon of Care, and in a feminine form with a feminine language.

In the final chapter of her biography \textit{Colette}, Julia Kristeva, analyses the “irreducible subjectivity” of the “individual feminine,” looking for the psychological aspects that

\textsuperscript{52} Heidegger, op cit. these are “words of Care” used by Heidegger in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.”
differentiate “the feminine” (Kristeva’s term) as a Caring and connected disposition toward the Other from previous psycho-analytic thinkers such as Freud and Lacan. Kristeva’s formulation of “feminine individuality” also differentiates itself from the feminist position which has, since Simone de Beauvoir, addressed women as a collective designated as “the feminine condition.” Kristeva, by contrast, points to “feminine specificity that is declined differently in each sex (the feminine of woman, the feminine of man) and in a singular manner for each subject.” I would like to follow Kristeva’s thinking in some detail; following her thread of the constitutive psychological makeup of “the feminine” and its unique and seemingly innate relation to Care, because the maternal example of selfless love would seem to be a fundamental source of Care and also a possible mode of Care in the arts, where artists have notably sacrificed themselves to “what matters”- to something that “goes beyond” them, as Düttmann framed Care in art practice. Kristeva establishes this form of love, “Agape,” as the form of Care that is given by the mother to her infant.

Kristeva opens with the question, “What is the feminine?” To answer this question, she goes back to the primal female psychosexual organization described by Freud. She uncovers illuminating speculations in both Freud and Lacan, which lie buried beneath their overarching position of the “primacy of the phallus.” Kristeva writes, “in his last writings Freud discovered a particular relation between the little girl and her mother, adhesive and intense, not easily accessible in analysis because encysted in preverbal sensorial experience.” Kristeva also records that Lacan, “remarks, without insisting on it, that the ‘maternal instinct’ may be a part of female sexuality irreducible to analysis because it escapes the influence of phallic primacy.” Kristeva identifies the primal relationship between mother and daughter as the mechanism

51 Kristeva, op cit. p.407.
Freud and Lacan maintain “the primacy of the phallus” in their psycho-sexual analyses and throw doubt on the capacity to love the other in the spirit of Agape that Kristeva claims for the feminine.
52 Kristeva, op cit. p.408.
53 Agape, Ancient Greek for “love.”
54 Kristeva, op cit. p.408.
55 Kristeva, op cit. p.409.
Expanding on this thought, Kristeva writes: “In other words, for the psyche, the child is originally masculine, whatever its anatomical sex- ‘the little girl is a little man.’ That axiom, initially considered characteristic of infantile (and not adult) sexuality, or a fantasy, in the end took root in Freud’s writings as a given sine qua non of all sexuality.” It is a finding that Kristeva refutes.
56 Kristeva, ibid. p.409.
57 Kristeva, ibid. p.409.
which sets in place “an interactive subjectivity.” Kristeva finds the girl elaborates, “a relationship of introjection/identification with the loving-and-intrusive object, the mother,” creating “an interiority” in the little girl. Kristeva describes this subtle, psychological internalizing in this way:

Through introjection, the girl installs the loving object within: the excited cavity of the internal body is transmuted into an internal representation. Thus begins a slow and lasting work of psychization, in which one finds the female tendency to privilege the psychic and the hypersensitive representation/idealization of love.

Kristeva draws several defining psychological characteristics out of this process of “interiorization”: “an early psychization of the object of love,” “the creation of a real relationship of possession of and dependence on that same object,” requiring, because of the “sensorial reality of the object,” “the mother’s (and later, the lover’s) real presence,” and coming out of that the “real need for connection.” Kristeva states that “the daughter/mother identification, transforms that maternal Other into an indispensable object, as the vital co-presence of a connection to others, experienced like a need, always already there, a stand-in for desire, to be cultivated and maintained in external reality.” The concreteness of this presence of the Other adds an additional nuance to our understanding of Care, in that the material, “sensory,” embodied feminine connectedness to the Other finds expression in the “real presence” of the other – this is a concrete form of Care that has application to the arts, in terms of establishing the feminine urge to create relationships of empathy and “identification” that go beyond oneself and are embodied in the concrete world. The artist, as we will see in the four studies of Chapter 2, extends this love and connectedness to the art object, embodying it in material metaphor, which, in turn produces this same love and connectedness as Care for the Other- endowing an “interactive subjectivity” in the face of the “real presence” of the Other. A Care that

---

60 Kristeva, op cit. p.411.
61 Kristeva, ibid. p.411.
63 Kristeva, ibid. p.412.
64 Kristeva, op cit. p.413.
65 Kristeva, ibid. p.413, my emphasis.
66 Kristeva, op cit. p.412, my emphasis.
produces Care. Kristeva summarizes her findings in terms of feminine connectedness, love and sociality.\textsuperscript{67} This insistence on the feminine “subjective” finding expression in sociality and connectedness, in “real relationship,” differentiates and extends our understanding of Care so far, giving a more fundamental status to Care as it exists in relationship with the “\textit{real presence of the other}.”

Parallel impulses of Care are found in the concrete examples of all four art works that I research: inscribed as love in the form of materialized poems and memory objects of affection in the garden of Derek Jarman as well as in the “connectedness” of his relationship to the land in need of restoration; as healing love in the embracing forms of the architecture of Burgess’ building and the solicitude expressed materially for “the suffering Other” in that built form; as solicitous compassion for people, “things” and for mortality in the narratives and images of Cox’s filmmaking. In the section on Elizabeth Presa’s work, Material Conversation, (2.3) an aspect of Care as mourning love is given concrete example. Kristeva’s valuing of the embodiment of feminine love in the physical, articulates the emphasis placed on the material object as a metaphor of Care in all four art practices: Care producing and being produced through “connectedness,” “identification” and “love.”

\textbf{Iris Murdoch: The Care of “Attention.”}

Iris Murdoch also addresses love in her moral philosophy, \textit{The Sovereignty of Good}.\textsuperscript{68} Murdoch enables us to add a dimension to our central thesis, that articulates Care in the arts, with her interpretation of Care as an ethics of “seeing.” Murdoch’s thinking reveals a morally informed aesthetics of Care which can be directly applied to the artist’s interaction with their own practice and production. Following Simone Weil, she formulates this aspect of Care as “Attention” which she defines as, “a just

\textsuperscript{67} Kristeva, ibid. p.413, “Beyond the pitfalls of narcissism and passivating masochism, the complexity of Oedipus prime therefore constitutes the little girl as a psychic being of connectedness. The emergence of the little girl’s sexuality marks the dawn of love and sociality.”

and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality.” Her form of Care is of some particular interest in the context of this thesis which attempts to find a reciprocal and reciprocating relationship between Care in the arts and philosophies of Care. It is of interest because her metaphors of Care are visually base. “Attention” is a focused and morally informed objective “looking,” not requiring reciprocity or “intersubjectivity,” encountered in Kristeva. Murdoch informs the idea of Care with an aspect of ethically based detachment both in the artist’s gaze and embodied in the work of art as moral rigor and discipline, and therefore expands the concept of Care we can apply to examples of art in the following Chapter. I reference Murdoch’s language of Care to articulate concerns found in the work of Elizabeth Presa, whose work manifests aspects of an “ethics of seeing” and, in turn, “builds up structures of value round about us,” as Murdoch anticipates, in a movement in which Care cultivates Care.

Murdoch’s detached form of Care, “Attention,” resonates with Levinas’ “summons to responsibility,” a form of Care which does not require reciprocity. According to Murdoch, in the artist’s moral vision, “detachment” and “objectivity” direct this kind of looking away from the self, so that “reality” can be perceived without the distortions of “fantasy” and “falseness” that she attributes to the undisciplined selfish eye. She states, “Attention is the effort to counteract such states of illusion.” She writes, “The work of attention builds up structures of value round about us.” And in this objective “attention,” this “clear-eyed contemplation,” Murdoch perceives the possibility of truth and justice toward the Other, finding its epitome in “great art.” Murdoch asserts that “great art” acts as the “reveler” of “truth and justice” indicating Murdoch’s understanding of Care making and being made in the arts. “Attention” is

---

69 Murdoch, op cit, p.33. Murdoch writes in this context, “I have used the word attention, which I borrow from Simone Weil, to express the idea of a just and loving Gaze directed upon an individual reality. p.33. It is worth noting that translated from Simone Weil’s native French the word attente (attention) is, in English, sometimes translated as “waiting.” Her translator and biographer in English, Dr Jacques Cabaud comments on this, “… attente’ is more closely related to ‘attention’, than is the English word ‘waiting.’ And ‘attention’ is synonymous with ‘contemplation.’ For Simone, all the various kinds of attention are merely degraded forms of religious attention.” Dr Jacques Cabaud, interviewed by Lynn Gallacher on “Encounter,” ABC Radio National, 7/05/00.

70 Murdoch, op cit, p.22.

71 Murdoch, op cit, see, p.84. “Art” (unlike nature) “… is a human product and virtues as well as talents are required of the artist. The good artist, in relation to his art, is brave, truthful, patient, humble …”

72 Murdoch, op cit, p.36.

73 Murdoch, ibid.
an ethics of Care in the arts without the “reciprocity” endowed by Ricoeur, or the “responsiveness” of Levinas, however, “Attention” places importance on the objective “otherness” and difference of the thing or person being “looked at,” thus ensuring the integrity and objective “reality” of that phenomenon. This is an important aspect of the discourse that has evolved surrounding “the Other.”

In discussing the philosophies of Care of Heidegger, Levinas, Ricoeur, Derrida and Kristeva a picture of Care emerged as a reciprocal movement of empathy and identification between the self and the Other, arising from a shared sense of “fragility…and…mortality” and, in Kristeva, revealed a more primary aspect of Care, the “God-given” communion between mother and child; a pure, self-sacrificing form of attached Care. As we have seen, the philosophy of “Attention” is, by contrast, characterized as a detached ethics of seeing and as a result can be applied equally to “art,” to “nature,” to objects,” or to “others.” This presents a contrasting perspective on feminine Care. “The loving gaze,” which Murdoch refers to, is the outcome of a training in austere saintly “obedience” to the moral good, according to Murdoch. This “obedience” to the “moral good” is an ethical response similar to Levinas’ “call” and “response,” which is an unconditional responsibility for the Other. Like Kristeva Murdoch upholds Agape, unselfish love, associated with the maternal impulse in Kristeva’s discourse, and named by her as “connectedness,” but which in Murdoch’s philosophy is associated with detachment and objectivity. Her philosophy of Care as “Attention” differs from Kristeva’s insistence on the primacy of “interactive-subjectivity.” Murdoch’s demand for “objectivity” places the artist at a distance from the material object giving no place to the empathy and intimacy that interfaces Care in other discourses of Care. This is not a mode of Care that articulates concerns commonly found in contemporary art practices of Care such as processes of collaboration (which find articulation in Ricouer’s “to and fro”- a mode of “friendship” and sociality), nor does Murdoch’s theory of “Attention” easily translate into a compassionate concern for “ordinary,” “poor” or marginal subjects and materials, as we find constitutive in all four art practices of Care. The theory of

---

74 Murdoch, op cit, p.39, Murdoch writes of this, “the ideal situation..., is rather to be represented as a kind of ‘necessity.’ The idea of a patient, loving regard, directed upon a person, a thing, a situation, presents the will not as unimpeded movement but as something very much more like ‘obedience.’
“Attention” places little emphasis on a critical aspect of Care endowed by Heidegger, as the “burden” (the “anxiety” of Being) and developed by Derrida as mourning: a Care for death.

As a metaphor for “looking”: to see, to gaze, to focus, to regard- “Attention” is intrinsic to visual practice. The ethical Care that Murdoch inscribes in this area of perception is of particular relevance to Care as it manifests in the arts, however, one would have to ask the question: what category of Care is “Attention”? “Solicitude,” (anxiety, concern for self and the Other) has been at the heart of Care since the Greek philosophers addressed the subject as a form of friendship. Derived from the Latin, sollicitus, meaning “anxious,” etymologically the term also indicates “consideration,” “concern,” “attention.” It would seem that Care must always contain “attention” and the etymologically connected word, “attend” (one of Heidegger’s expressions of Care) would suggest that too. One must give attention and “attend” in order to Care, however, one could suggest that while Care must contain attention, attention might not always contain Care. The etymologies of the term “attention” are not confined to “detached looking” as Murdoch would have it, it is also a term that connotes “listening” (contained within the etymologies of “attention”/ “attentive”/ “attend”- “to listen”). While Murdoch’s “Attention” is directed away from the self, “listening” takes the sensory perception into the self. If “listening” were restored to the “looking” of Murdoch’s visual theory, “Attention” would take on the full human dimensionality of Care: its reciprocity and fellow feeling as inscribed by Ricoeur. As is found in the discussion of the “responsive” architecture of Gregory Burgess in the next chapter, “listening” is a foundational aspect of his participatory design process, because it opens up the possibility of exchange between the architect and the client community and consequently within the dynamics of the building itself.

Murdoch’s philosophy is referenced in the study of a work by Elizabeth Presa in the following chapter (2.3) where the objectivity, clarity, beauty and discipline of the

---


76 The Collins Concise Dictionary, (op cit.) defines the adjectival form of “attention” as “attentive,” with the definition: “listening carefully.”
artwork resonate with some aspects of an applied “Attention,” while the concerns of the work require that we seek an emotionally more nuanced language of “mourning” and “solicitude” in a modality of “listening” and “attending.”

Weaving the Cloth of Care

Care is woven with many threads. It issues forth off the loom already threadbare, patched and mended; its edges frayed and unraveled. For it is used always already. It is always shaped for “the one”: the “one-by-one,” not “the many.” It is swaddling cloth for the new-born babe, then shroud and winding cloth for the dead. It is mourning veil and veil of consolation. In the folds of the cloth of Care around mother and child is the eternal habitation of communion and intimacy.

From the Ancients we have “sollicitudo,” which Derrida tells us signifies, “care, concern, and solicitude.” This is, perhaps, the overall “stuff” of the fabric of Care, but the patterns woven into this folded fabric are complex and overlapping. The “Sorge” and “Fürsorge” conferred by Heidegger, create the shadowed folds of “anxiety,” “concern” and “burden.” We wrap ourselves in this shroud, in the face of our own mortality.

Derrida veils us with the cloth of mourning, the “provisional mourning” that “anxiously” keeps “vigil” over our own death and anticipates the death of the other solicitously. This veil has threads of “witnessing,” “remembering,” “gathering,” “holding” and “preserving.” It is through the voile of this cloth we see life most vividly.

Levinas confirms the intimacy of Care in his formula, “the face to face encounter”: Care addresses the individual, not the “mass.” The philosophers, Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor, in their book, On Kindness, (Penguin Books, London, 2009) also confirms the intimate nature of Care: stating that it arises in the “proximity” of human bodies. That is, it is not an abstract occurrence but a product of intimate association between people. Paul Cox, a subject of my research into Care in the arts in Chapter 2.4, comments on this aspect of Care in his singularity in his memoir, Reflections, (Currency Press, Sydney. 1998). p.122, “Whenever I introduce my films the inevitable question comes up: ‘For whom do you actually make your films?’ I always say: ‘For you and for you etc,’’ pointing at individual people - then - but not for the lot of you.” Care is characterized by intimacy.

Levinas weaves the winding cloth and the bandaging for the wounds of the other, in the endless task of solicitude and consolation that makes us human.

Ricoeur restores the interweave; the braiding and plaiting of the yarn, with the “mutuality” of reciprocity; the “to and fro” of sympathy and compassion. His weaving of Care lies as the textile beneath our feet, where we can stand in shared intimacy and equality with another.

Düttmann affirms the unknowing Care of the artist, blindly weaving the “matter” that will matter for the world also.

Kristeva and Murdoch restore the feminine hand to this endless work of Care.

This exploration of discourses of Care enriches and deepens my double question: Can a poetics of Care construct a theoretical and practical framework through which an art practice could be understood? And its implied converse: How does an art practice contribute to an understanding of Care? by establishing a theoretical typology of Care as mourning, nuanced with Care’s attendant aspects and applications. In the next chapter, Making Care, I discuss four artworks of different media, in which I find these various discourses of Care elucidate concerns that exist also in the artworks.
Making Care

Part 1.

Chapter 2.1

The Cultivation of Care: Derek Jarman’s Garden

“Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since Care first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives...let it be called homo, for it is made out of humus (earth)”

Heidegger

“...human-made gardens that are brought into and maintained in being by cultivation retain a signature of the human agency to which they owe their existence. Call it the mark of Cura.”

Robert Pogue Harrison

---


2 Robert Pogue Harrison. Gardens, An Essay on the Human Condition. (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2008) p.7. Harrison’s book came to my notice after writing this chapter (first written in 2007) where I addressed transformation of place through Heidegger’s “Care of cultivation.” Harrison’s book affirms my thesis that cultivation is a primary form of Care that tends to the human psyche in a transformative way as it nurtures and nurses nature. Harrison does not propose the extension of this idea – that the work of Care in turn produces Care (a transformative aspect) specifically through the work of art, as this thesis attempts to do, but does establish the relationship of the cultivation of the soil to the cultivation of self and world. I have threaded references to Harrison’s illuminating book into this section to enrich that theme.
“The old word *bauen*, which says that man is insofar as he *dwells*… means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine.”

Heidegger

Making a garden is always “in faith”: a promise to the future. It is a process that works with time as one of its dimensions, not just in the cycles and seasons of growth and decay, but also projecting beyond the life of the gardener himself, gifting nature and culture.

The cycles of return in a garden embody a kind of “afterlife” for the gardener: the trees he planted, the perennials and annuals which perpetuate as seeds, rhizomes and bulbs continue their cycles of division and multiplication and flourish to their fullness decades after the hand of the gardener has ceased to tend. A garden holds the trace of the past as well; death is everywhere. Not only in the spent white seeds, “the colour of bone,” and the tracery of winter branches, “bleach bone and skeletal,” but also by the conferring of memory on place. Transience, death and renewal are leitmotifs of this garden and in Jarman’s journal, which accompanies the making of “Prospect Cottage Garden,” we see that themes of mourning, consolation, and transformation, the substance of Care, are at the heart of this process of cultivation.

---

4 Image from *Derek Jarman’s Garden*, op cit. Photographed by Howard Sooley.
5 Derek Jarman, *Derek Jarman’s Garden*, (Thames and Hudson, UK 1995). p.16. This and all ensuing quotes from Jarman are from this gardening journal.
6 Derek Jarman, op cit. p.20.
The Site

In 1986, the British film maker, writer and artist, Derek Jarman (1942-94) bought a tarred black fisherman’s hut, “Prospect Cottage,” at Dungeness, in Kent. It was on a flat, desolate stretch of flint-shingled coast, littered with Second World War debris and the abandoned hulls of old wooden fishing boats. The land, long since abandoned by the fishermen, had been colonised by a nuclear power station which looms over the flat expanses and is visible across vast distances. A friend writing to me from the UK described the Dungeness landscape in these terms: “Across from the hut is a wide, wide shingle beach, and a road leading across it almost to the sea. All about are the rags of the fishing industry, and in the distance the specter of the nuclear power station, decommissioned in January this year (2007) and somehow shrouded in a mist, when all about, everything else, is dazzling bright and bleached.”

---

7 Photographed by the artist on visit to the garden in Oct. 2009.
8 Correspondence with artist/architect, Sonia van de Haar, June13, 2007. Since that time I have personally visited Jarman’s garden, (in October 2009) but I have left this description in as it formed the imaginative picture of the place out of which this writing grew. It was Sonia who planted the seed of interest in this garden, as a place of Care, when she gave me Jarman’s garden journal in 2005.
9 Photographed by Howard Sooley.
Jarman describes Dungeness as lying in “the fifth quarter, the end of the globe.” It is indeed remote, strange and inhospitable, reminding one of Australian desert sites like Coober Pedy where the mulloch heaps of abandoned opal mines strewn across a flat, empty landscape, evoke absence. Like Coober Pedy it is a landscape that has lost both its original, authentic nature and much of its overlay of cultural uses and habitations: a landscape stripped and emptied, where a marginal inhabitation clings on in an uncanny environment. A landscape that had been the victim of successive historic “carelessness,” as an abandoned wasteland of war used opportunistically because it was a remote (and degraded) place, to install a socially reviled nuclear reactor. However, it was the very qualities of bleakness and abandonment that first attracted Jarman. An uncultivated landscape - marginal and liminal, he responded to “the area’s otherworldly atmosphere-unlike any other place I had ever been- and the extraordinary light.” He saw beauty in the sparsely etched landscape and embraced
the “desert of Dungeness.” Jarman says in his journal that he had no thought of making a garden there, “it looked impossible: shingle with no soil supported a sparse vegetation.” Jarman’s process of making a garden started almost accidently: when beachcombing he found “a magnificent flint” and used it to replace a brick in the existing rockery made from broken bricks and concrete at his front door.

So simply began a process of transforming and re imagining a degraded and bereft landscape. Almost despite himself Jarman unfolded a creative process of the cultivation of Care that only ended when the illness that accompanied this project ended his life a decade or so later. From its beginning Jarman viewed the garden as a healing and consoling project: “I saw it as therapy and pharmacopoeia.” He healed his own spirit as he healed the small plot of his garden; in the process he inscribed the garden with what Derrida called, “a solicitude for death,” with its dual aspects of mourning and consolation. A form of Care harvested from the garden sown with Care.

---

15 Jarman’s pebble edged garden planting.
16 Cultivation is defined by Heidegger in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” as an aspect of “dwelling” which involves tilling the soil and cultivating the vine – a form of Care where the gardener is the gardener of Care.
The Making of the Garden

Gradually Jarman endowed consciousness and life on his garden: building “guardian circles” of stones, stone by stone, carried arduously up from the beach, along with the flotsam and jetsam, the driftwood and debris that he reinterprets as “the body” of his garden; giving it a “backbone,” “teeth,” a “front” and a “back” and fleshing it out with protective and benevolent aspects: stone circles, sculptural driftwood markers, flint and plant swathes of colour and texture, while honoring the “emptiness” and liminality of the landscape by leaving the garden border-less and open: “who can guess where it ends?” Jarman writes.\(^{20}\) Apart from its use of unconventional materials (that is, war debris and maritime detritus) this is one of the characteristics of the garden that differentiates it from conventional gardens: it has no centre; nor is it an enclosure of space which one can enter and find sanctuary within. Its permeability opens out onto the wider environment, out onto the world. It is no “bounded and girded garden” but remains in dialogue with its world of sea, sky, horizon- and the looming reminder of technological power –the nuclear reactor, which Jarman also takes into his world of Care, incorporating its strange and menacing beauty into his transforming sense of the place: “The nuclear power station is a wonderment. At night it looks like a great liner or a small Manhattan ablaze with a thousand lights of different colors. A mysterious shadow surrounds it that makes it possible for the stars

\(^{19}\) Shale pebble circle with old chain.

still to glow in a clear summer sky.”21 Like the war debris used as a garden material, Jarman also addresses the nuclear power station as he addresses the stones and shingles of his resistant and difficult to cultivate garden – he works with whatever it is and takes it up to be transformed and incorporated as a “given” of the harsh environment. The monstrous, artificially lit intrusion into the landscape is placed in dialogue with intimacy, repair, restoration and the modesty and limits of working with time’s (and human beings’) tides and seasons. Through the reactor’s unblinking stare of lights he sees the stars more clearly.

Figure 5. Back garden sheltered by the studio 22

---

21 Jarman, op cit. p.66.
22 Back garden.
The materials which Jarman uses to form his garden are gleaned from the beach; he re-claims and re-casts rubbish and detritus from the Second World War, which had been abandoned on his beach, as sculpture, garden structure and “collections.” He collects anti-tank fencing posts, describing them as “once war-like”: “its shaft curled into loops for threading barbed wire, with one end twisted into a giant corkscrew to penetrate the shingle.”24 Turned upside down and grouped in pyramids these menacing spikes, along with the burnt driftwood and timber ship baulks are transformed into climbing supports for plants and sculptural markers. All these join gatherings of found “totems” that create the vertical elements in this starkly horizontal landscape, forming a benevolent community, of what Jarman described as “guardians,” to watch over the garden. These totems pierce the ground through circular elements: rusted rings or perished balls of rubber floaters- sexual evocations or perhaps the geomancy of earth energy - like chakra points contacted in the body of the garden. Laid out from front of house to back, the orientation is axial; the garden is a skeletal body with backbone, ribs and joints: a stoney, boney body flayed under a huge, open sky and pierced with the marks of its “Gethsemane.”25

23 Lumber and metal “totems” in back garden, piercing various cork circles and perished rubber “floaters.”
25 Jarman, op cit. p.82.
Metaphoric Gardens of Care

The referencing of the Second World War and the evocation of the sea through its materials and themes, invites comparison with Ian Hamilton Finlay’s garden, Little Sparta, in the Border Country of Scotland. Ian Hamilton Finlay brings together rich metaphoric images in his garden, that merge realms of politics and power, philosophy and peace, through themes of seamanship, fishing and war, woven through with Arcadian and historical references, in conceptual, ironic and literary contexts. He evokes a domain of an inland sea harboured amongst the folded moors of Scotland. Jarman’s project, by comparison, is therapeutic, collaborative, materials based, ad hoc. Jarman, like Hamilton Finlay, is aware of the maritime history and its war time legacy, “Dungeness, where two seas meet, is a perilous place for ships. There are a hundred wrecks, including a German submarine,” and his garden sculptures salvaged from the beach as anti-tank fencing he describes as, “once war-like,” but he does not conceptualize or politicize this aspect. His aims are contained within the act of cultivation: to in-dwell, to materialize Care by a therapeutic act of repair, regeneration and restoration in his garden, and in so doing heal and transform both the garden and himself. This is a form of Care of self, where self-identification with the damaged and bereft land, enables Jarman to work in sympathy with its and his own “need” to transform – a transformation that readies him for death as well as for life.

27 Jarman links his Dungeness garden not to Little Sparta but to another garden he describes as, “the sister of Prospect Cottage,” that he had visited in Baku, Azerbaijan. It too is set in a degraded landscape and is inscribed with mourning. He describes it in these words: “The landscape there is pretty much like Dungeness but it is black with oil from the polluting oil fields; in the middle of the grim housing blocks is a little circular walled garden which an old power worker…, built as a memorial for his daughter.” It is a parallel of the sensibility of Care, that Paul Cox, in his memoir, Reflections, records a garden made from rubbish that he documented as a film, The Kingdom of Nek Chand, (1980) He had seen it in Chandigarh, India. Cox tells us this garden was built by a road inspector on a public wasteland that he converted with urban waste into a living work of art. Cox writes of it, “He retrieved old cycles and unusable parts from cycle shops. He collected used factory drums and broken crockery from restaurants and cafés. He collected broken bangles thrown away after festivals. Out of all this garbage he built his kingdom.” Cox reports that people are spiritually enriched by visiting the garden which became officially recognized as a public treasure in 1976. Cox, P. Reflections. (Currency Press, Sydney, 1998.) p.112 Derek Jarman’s Garden, op cit. p.43.
To compare Ian Hamilton Finlay’s garden with Jarman’s is to experience different grains of Care. Jarman is engaged in a transformative act of redeeming materials and place through a poetic re-imagining of materials and place. By comparison Ian Hamilton Finlay’s project is literary: *Little Sparta* represents a materialisation of authentic relationship to land and cultivation through archaic and contemporary literary references. Both are concerned with transience and mourning, love and death, however, Jarman’s project arises from a different viewpoint of Care. Jarman brings what has been relegated to the “outside” (i.e. discarded detritus, war junk and abandoned land) back into relationship with the human sphere, the sphere of human engagement. Extending Ricoeur’s terms of “solicitude” to the non-human sphere, Jarman “befriends” the abandoned “Other” of the natural environment (including its detritus) and brings it under the cultivation of Care. As we have suggested, the cultivation of Care, in turn, cultivates the Care of self - as we heal the soil, we heal ourselves. We see Jarman, himself an “outsider,” suffering from AIDS against the backdrop of 1980’s homophobia and social exclusion, addressing his own (contested) identity and “Otherness” as an openly gay man, attempting to protect and heal himself through a parallel act of identification and love for an abandoned, resistant and difficult to cultivate bit of ground. A metaphoric self. The social opposition that wounds his sense of self plays out therapeutically in his embracing of this abandoned place. Jarman makes of his garden a sanctuary that cultivates protection; a place in

---

29 Finlay’s garden expresses elegiac and arcadian themes of loss and absence. It has a mood of remembrance and mourning, both personal and cultural that makes it emotionally richer than I have underlined in this comparison.
which he is “safe-guarded,” to use one of Heidegger’s “words of Care”; “safe” to transform and heal.

Here at the sea’s edge
I have planted my dragon-toothed garden
To defend the porch,
Steadfast warriors
Against those who protest their impropriety
Even to the end of the world.  

Transience and the Cultivation of Time

Jarman inscribes his garden with the Care that offers safety and solace, in the face of those “who protest their impropriety.” This was not an act of passive withdrawal, although, no doubt, the garden was a sanctuary of repose and peace, (“The garden is therapeutic in its peacefulness, wrote Jarman”).  

30 Jarman, op cit. p.82.
31 Rusted chains in Jarman’s Garden.
graphic, confronting imagery and homo-erotic remaking of stories, (including Biblical themes) which seemed designed to shock society into recognition of Otherness. He continued to shock by “coming out” as HIV positive in the nineteen eighties, when this guaranteed social exclusion and lived his life openly in public as he progressively succumbed to AIDS. His garden-making decade was accompanied by a period of increasing loss and death as a generation of his gay friends and lovers died one by one in an excess of death and his own death palpably approached. The garden was a place of reflection and mourning where he witnessed these losses with modest acts of redemptive and restorative beauty of an unconventional kind, in the process “slowing time down” in the face of transience and death.

Figure 9

Jarman’s materials of transience: plant life and found materials, are modest, “poor” or ordinary. He loves the scant, nearly invisible plants which inhabit the elemental landscape such as lichens and mosses, (“a muted rainbow”)34 and finds great beauty in the indigenous Gorse bushes, Broom and cyclical Sea Kale (“crambe maritime – they come up between the boats”),35 whose hardiness and longevity he admires and carefully documents. As with the unconventional beauty of the landscape: (“This landscape is like the face you overlook,”36 Jarman writes); he celebrates the ordinary and common plants: the Hedgerow and Blackthorn, Elder and Dog Rose, renewing their status by planting them in sculptural circles and protecting them from the rabbits with salt-corroded and rusted iron “pyramids,” made from found maritime and war

---

31 Jarman, p.33.
32 Jarman, op cit. p.15.
33 Jarman, op cit. p.118.
materials. His valuing of the commonplace, the overlooked, the damaged and imperfect underpins the therapeutic impulse: the desire to repair and restore, to bring to form, to “appearance,” that the impulse of Care lends to the project of cultivation. In return the garden cultivates Jarman, himself, bringing him to a renewed and redeemed sense of his life and his impending death. This impulse of a restorative cultivation of self and nature, of materials and “things” connects this project to the other three artworks that are discussed in the next sections of this chapter, which also “cultivate Care.”

In his book, *Gardens, An Essay on the Human Condition*\(^\text{37}\), Robert Pogue Harrison writes of this analogy of the cultivation of the earth with the cultivation of self, basing his thought (co-incidentally) on the same fable which I cited in Chapter 1 and, again, at the beginning of this section: Heidegger’s retelling of the Cura myth. Harrison commentates on this:

> Once Jupiter breathed spirit into the matter out of which *homo* was composed, it became a living human substance that was as spiritual in essence as it was material. In its humic unity it lent itself to cultivation, or more precisely to self-cultivation. That is why the human spirit, like the earth that gives *homo* his body, is a garden of sorts- not an Edenic garden handed over to us for our delectation but one that owes its fruits to the provisions of human care and solicitation.\(^\text{38}\)

Jarman *writes* his garden as well as *works* his garden – both are forms of cultivation. He incantates the botanical names of all the plants in his garden journal in rhapsodic lists, weaving his “paradise” in intense detail. He names things; to hold, to remember, as Heidegger also named in order to “cherish,” “preserve” and “keep”- his *Verhältnis* of Care. Jarman names scientifically to give order, but he also names poetically, allegorically to transform and confer a lyric, contemplative intensity to his described perceptions. Processions of naming unfold virtual walks amongst his plants: “Lovage, which shoots up with its pale green leaves, iris, cistus and chicory (which with the cornflower has the bluest flowers), a verbena, rosemary,… wallflower, artemisia,

santolina… day lily, two Mrs Sinkins pinks, the whole fringed by sedum.”

His bouquet of naming is his writing of cultivation. In naming, listing and archiving his garden poetically he brings the “fleeting moods” of nature to stillness and order—transposing, like music, from one mode, the mode of the ephemeral, of transience, to another, the mode of duration. This attention to transience and the desire to transpose to permanence is, as we shall explore in all four art practices, common to artworks of Care. Care cares for time.

In Heidegger’s fable about the creation of homo from clay, “Time,” as Saturn, is the arbiter of the argument between Jupiter, Earth and Cura, bestowing the creature “man” into Care’s keeping “as long as it lives.” It is the time-bounded nature of Care’s human creature, his consciousness of his mortality, that makes him care for transience anxiously (and also gives rise to his poignant sense for the beauty of ephemeral life). Jarman’s sense for the past—his valuing of used objects and their mnemonic presence in the garden; his elegiac poems set in the garden that echo as laments of human loss and transience are given expression as the cultivation of beauty and memory, both of which fade with time, and, in turn, are made and remade in the material world of the garden. “Our life will pass away like the traces of a cloud,” he writes.

In Pogue’s book, Gardens, he describes beautifully this ever-becoming, ever—receding relationship between the garden and time:

Gardens are plunged… into time and uncertainty, openly contending with the vagaries of soil, weather, and the elements. They have a way of slowing time down—allowing its flow to gather in placid ponds, as it were— but that is part of their power of enchantment, not their power of endurance.

Jarman addresses the “endurance” of time with his writing of cultivation, his poetic garden journal, but he also structures ephemeral nature with semi-permanent fixtures that give his garden enduring “bones” as well as transient “flesh.” Traces of the ephemeral, of memory and absence, are given concrete place in the image of empty

40 Harrison, op cit. p.20.
41 Jarman, op cit. p.77.
wooden chairs left to weather in the garden, like traces of the presence of absent friends; discarded garden implements recast in bronze or restored with a “new” driftwood handle and placed in the garden as modest mementi of labour; or the bones and shells strung as “necklaces” to hang in the air and adorn rusted metal markers, give the garden its poignancy as a place of memory and mourning.

Building duration in the midst of the evanescence of life, the transience of beauty, requires constant cultivation – a devotional labor in a timely way. “Care at work” is central to cultivation. We see Jarman tending, attending to the tasks of preservation, keeping, protecting: cultivating time like a sun-drenched store of honey against the “day the sun would not rise.”\(^\text{42}\) His house must be maintained: “sun and driving wet westerlies flake the paint, so it has to be painted continuously to keep the timbers in shape.”\(^\text{43}\) The Helichrysum, the “backbone of the garden,” must be “‘trimmed in August.”\(^\text{44}\) The stone circle, “to the left as you stand in front of the cottage,” constructed from “dragon-toothed flints,” to retain and protect the marginal plant life against the harsh winds, “took the best part of winter to construct,” and so on: “the houres, dayes, moneths” carefully cultivated to produce a bounty of Care.

\(^{42}\) Jarman, op cit. p.77.  
\(^{43}\) Jarman, op cit. p.68.  
\(^{44}\) Jarman, op cit. p.70.
The labor of Care layers and layers, building mood, shadows, places of emergence. Jarman’s botanical cosmos weaves an environment which is eventually rich in plant, insect, bird and reptile life, protected enough from the salt-laden winds to include a beehive. Like every aspect of the garden, the beehive is carefully and tenderly observed as a marker of the seasons, of the life and death of the garden. Jarman writes of the bees in a mythological vein, “The bees of infinity, the golden swarm: it’s sad when I lock them up for the winter…, but they and the snow drops herald the Spring.”

The introduction of the beehive marks a “critical point” of biological and botanical life restored to the garden where the bees now have not only shelter from the wind and weather, but abundant nectar to sustain them in their work of honey production and pollen spreading, engendering more fruiting, and, in turn, greater biodiversity. The work of cultivation, is, as Harrison underlines, “ethically laden.”

He sums this up in the epigram; “You must give more to the soil than you take away.”

The cultivation of Care, even in small corners of the earth, such as Jarman’s “fifth quarter,” may have implications for the wider ecological Care of the environment – that its most effective reach may be in the intimate, human-scaled acts of restoration, the realm of Care, where cultivation heals both the land and the cultivator. The Care that produces Care.

---

47 Harrison, ibid. Harrison is citing the Czech writer, Karel Capek’s book, The Gardener’s Year, 1929. Harrison generalises this idea, “The disproportion between giving and taking is first and foremost a principle of life - life exists where giving exceeds taking – yet it applies equally to human culture (it is not for nothing that the word culture has its roots in the soil.)” p.33.
Cultivating Mourning

The garden is not made a moral exemplar of ecological responsibility, however, although Jarman does proudly state in his journal, “My garden is ecologically sound,” and rejects sprays and pesticides quite naturally, and staunchly protects the indigenous flora of his area.48 His primary preoccupations are his poetic engagement with the soil and the cultivation of this in his writing. The responses of suffering loss as his friends die, his mourning for them and himself, are given concrete expression in both. At the centre of Jarman’s garden journal are a series of poems, imaginatively set in his garden, which are elegies, lamentations, memorials to his lost loves and to the attrition of time. In these poems the garden grieves with him; the “stones lock up their memories,” the elements themselves shed tears. Through “identification” and “connectedness,” Kristeva’s primary, feminine forms of Care, Jarman personifies the garden: it suffers with him:

The storms have blown salt tears,
burning my garden,
Gethsemane and Eden.49

The garden is sown with loss, with sorrow: “death comes even for stones,” and the salvaged “maritime wood” is “like a gravestone.” Jarman addresses his garden as his consoling intimate:

Sweet garden of vanished pleasures,
Please come back next year.50

49 Jarman, op cit. p. 82.
50 Jarman, op cit. p.81.
These themes: time and death, abound in this garden: as the garden takes on a life of its own, Jarman’s illness diminishes him: as his friends and lovers die, he is left to mourn them.

Figure 11. 51

Love is celebrated even in loss (in the midst of “the rags of time”) in Donne’s poem, *The Sunne Rising*, materialised in black wooden lettering on the black-tarred side of the Cottage. Jarman’s use of Donne, and indeed a great many of his other “motifs” are “cultivated”: the *memento mori* motif is an homage to England’s metaphysical poets: the poets of love and death.

Like the other artifacts of the garden- texts or objects, the materialization of the poem acts to both underscore transience and shore-up against its losses: “preserving,” “cherishing,” “holding”: materialising Care, as Heidegger formulates Care’s cultivation. Carved in wood and set onto the side of the house, the text is doubly cultivated: it speaks of transience, (in the metaphor of the passage of the sun) and it also *makes permanent* as an art work: “slowing time down.” It acknowledges mourning loss and offers Care’s consolation: a “solicitude” for transience through materialisation.

Figure 12. 52

---

51 Carved text of Donne’s poem on side wall of Cottage.
52 Old French Horn on back wall of Prospect Cottage.
The community of upright driftwood totems, the “magnificent flints,” the circles of stones, the plants themselves, cycling through seasons of generation, entropy and re-generation, are laid down with the life lived, with the loss as well as the consolation that Jarman inscribed in them. His contribution to culture (apart from his films and paintings which are of a different aesthetic tenor) has been in the intimate sphere of Care as cultivation, where in a redemptive act of restoration and renewal of place, he also healed and transformed himself, preparing himself for death. At the end of his life he expressed his sense of gratitude toward the garden: “These years have been the most extraordinary, blessed with little pain and full of intimacy… I am at peace.”

Jarman’s garden, although clearly made in an elegiac mood and sown with memory, is not formalized and “finished” as a memorial or monument to the gardener and his dead friends in a retrospective mood: its very means of collaborative making ensures that it is open to the future; open to change and transformation. The salvaged materials will continue to break down and be replaced; the plants will evolve and change the overall shaping of the garden. Even as Jarman was dying, he notes his

---

54 Jarman, op cit. p.118.
56 Jarman’s journal is a social document as well as a “gardening diary.” It warmly records all his collaborating friends: co-gardeners, photographers, artists and actors, ex lovers, his partner, “H.B.” who still (as of 2009) lives in Prospect Cottage.

56
collaborating friends have projects afoot in the garden for the Spring. The Garden will continue to produce Care as long as it is cared for.

In Derek Jarman’s garden we locate Care in the redemptive act of the human imagination which re-envisages and re-invests an abandoned landscape and discarded materials with transformed human relationship through the cultivation of Care, forming a new accord with place, a new accord with self. The garden cultivated with Care has, in time, cultivated Care.

---

57 I visited Jarman’s garden on October 5th this year (2009) and attach my diary entry in the appendices of this thesis.
Chapter 2.2

Care of Place: The Architecture of Gregory Burgess

*Poetically Man Dwells...*  
Hölderlin

The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving.  
Heidegger

In a way our buildings are ourselves. Their gestures to the world reflect our human responsiveness and our capacity to dwell and transform ourselves.  
Burgess

Gregory Burgess and the Practice of Care

Gregory Burgess is the principal and design architect in a medium sized architecture studio practice of some twenty architects, including, at different times, Indigenous, Islander and Maori architects. The practice has an international reputation established around its participatory design process and its collaborative process within the arts.
The practice is renowned for its community, educational and Indigenous projects. Burgess describes his architectural approach as “responsive architecture” and views himself as a “social artist” with a clear intention to engage in a socially transformative journey in the participatory design process. In the A.S. Hook Address, he speaks about this in terms that clearly enunciate a program of Care. “The idea of the artist as social artist suggests that the architecture has some responsibility for social health. It suggests that the architecture works with the ecology of groups and communities, effecting change – working beyond the narrow confines of the individual into the future of humankind. The process is a dance of constant negotiations. At the end, the trace of the dance is seen in the building. In this process the architect leads a complex collaboration that folds culture, place and people into a new relationship with each other, effecting transformation.” This is the language of repair and healing: of “response” to Care’s “call.”

In Part 1, Chapter 1, we found that Heidegger identified Care with being human *per se* and that Care maintained a “concernful” relationship between humankind and “Being.” In “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” we also found that Heidegger added many dimensions to our understanding of Care in relation to architecture as “dwelling,” which needs to be brought to bear on the next part of this research where Brambuk Aboriginal Living Cultural Center is discussed. Heidegger’s philosophical treatise gives a philosophical model for an architecture of Care in the form of a poetic cosmology of “dwelling,” articulating a language and a framework for viewing architecture’s unique capacity to both endow and engender Care. Heidegger’s Care for death, as mourning, and its transformative production of consolation and healing provide insights into the architecture discussed in the next section, where I use Heidegger’s fourfold cosmography, “earth, sky, divinities and mortals” as epigraphs to introduce four aspects of materialized Care in Brambuk Aboriginal Living Cultural Centre.

1 Brambuk and Uluru-Kata-Tjuta, Indigenous centres by Burgess have been given high recognition both in Australia and Internationally. Brambuk has been nominated as one of the most significant buildings of the twentieth century. *The Australian*, Financial Review Magazine, “Building A Nation,” Graham Jahn, My 1995, p.37. Burgess has also been nominated along with Foster, Piano. Gehry, Erskine and a few others as of world significance to architecture. See, Peter Davey, Editor of Architecture Review, UK. Quoted in Architekture Muraotr (Poland), A Step into the 21st Century, Dec. 1997.

2 Burgess. A.S. Hook Address, delivered by Burgess at the University of Melbourne on the occasion of Burgess receiving the Gold Medal for Architecture (2004). The address was published in *Architecture Australia*, (November/December, 2004. pp.82-95,) with a selection of work and tributes from architects and writers.
2.2. (a) Earth

Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal. When we say earth, we are already thinking of the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

Heidegger

As one approaches Brambuk it recedes, hunkered down in shadow behind the sheltering berms of earth. It reappears intermittently like an elusive, mythic creature, something both striped and winged; something that gazes out warily. One is watched from beneath a shadowing brow. It moves among the sheltering forest. It cannot be approached frontally, for it has turned its back. The sinuous path through groves of trees is an unfolding of its hidden aspects revealed - its drawn skin a mottled pelt; the protruding skeleton sweeping down over a crouching haunch; a darkened wing tipped upward ready for flight. It waits in shadow to gather its people, to guard and preserve.

3 All images are from the archive of the architect.
In 1985, after a 10 year preparation period fraught with beaurocratic resistance and obstruction by local authorities to their plans for a “Keeping Place” (later, a cultural centre), the Brambuk Aboriginal Co-operative invited architect, Gregory Burgess, to spend a night out camping in the Gariwerd Mountains with representatives of the five remaining clans of Koori Indigenous from the South Western districts of Victoria. They wanted to tell him their stories and hopes for the future from the authority of their traditional lands, as a way of briefing the architect for the unique task of designing a building which would re-embody their culture and remember their stories, recent and remote. In a public lecture, Burgess recounts the night through the perspective of his collaborative working process. In this paper he proposed six germinal words, “of a poetic order,” out of which unfold the seminal aspects of his architectural approach. Under the metaphoric title, “Dance,” which he describes as “The alchemy of connection,” Burgess wrote in reference to this particular night:

The dance might begin around a camp fire, in a clearing in the bush, storytelling, drinking, laughing, feasting. A gathering for a purpose. To reclaim lost land, culture and dignity through imagining and building a living cultural center for five Koori communities of ancient origin. As the fire dies, I overhear, through the darkness of the tent, in the middle of the cold night, men weeping. Whispered stories of unbearable suffering and self-doubt, of courageous and good humored enduring together. In dreams that night, the broken pieces begin to tremble and flicker with new life, new hope, a new form. They begin to slowly circle with purpose and beauty, mirroring the rehearsal of dance in the movement of the stars.

The next morning Burgess made some intuitive sketches of a spreading zoomorphic form, in a pentagonal geometry, somewhat like a moth or bird in plan. The designs were embraced as evoking a totemic figure, the “White Cockatoo,” later

---

4 Gariwerd, means ‘THE mountain’, in local Indigenous language. Since 1991 the name Gariwerd has co-existed with the colonial name, “Grampians.”
5 Brambuk commenced officially as a project in 1987 and was completed in 1991.
7 “Six seed or creation points”: they were described by Burgess in these ways: 1. The Other-negotiating the space between, 2. Dance- The Alchemy of Connection. 3. Care – The Gift, 4. Presencing – the Art of Becoming, 5. Shadow – Shelter for the Soul, 6. Mystery – living with questions.
8 The Multiplicity of the Whole. The A.S.Hook Address, op cit.
metamorphosing into, or inclusive of, “Bunjil,” the eagle protector. This night was described by the Indigenous community as their “mutual Dreaming.”

![Figure 2.](image)

The five Indigenous communities represented at that gathering were the Teelak, the Gunditjmara, Coolum Coolum, Wida Mara and Kirrae Whurrong. Five language groups, surviving from 30 major language groups and an estimated original population of 60,000 Victorian indigenous inhabitants before European colonization. This represented at least 40,000 years of unbroken occupation. By 1860, after decades of resistance, the Aboriginals were decimated. Their social and cultural cohesion had completely collapsed due to dispossession and disease and the survivors were removed from their traditional lands and placed in purpose-made missions: Ebenezer Mission in the West, Framlingham and Lake Condah to the South. Language and culture were systematically erased. Genocide was undertaken as an economic strategy in some areas by the white pastoralists and “cultural genocide” was institutionalised.\(^9\)

A hundred years later the traces of this culture, were fragile and largely “unreadable”: there are the enigmatic shelter paintings which are prolific at Gariwerd, but their cultural knowledge is obscured. Prior to the time Brambuk was proposed, remnants of

---

unique stone dwellings at Lake Condah were uncovered, confirming an ancient semi-permanent inhabitation in “beehive” structures of stone base with branch covering. These were in the vicinity of stone eel-trap constructions, which had traditionally occasioned seasonal gatherings of many clans from different parts of the country when the eels were plentiful. The cultural memory was sparse, but the totemic “Dreaming” had endured as a trace: “the Eel” and “the Whale” from the Warrnambool coast, the “Forest of Framlingham,” “the White Cockatoo,” and “Bunjil,” the “Great Eagle Creator and Protector” of the region were still remembered.

![Lake Condah “beehive” dwelling](image)

What was known was that the original inhabitants of Victoria had dwelled deeply into the land, spiritually, culturally, socially. However that dwelling had not resulted in monumental building as we know it. As hunter-gatherers on a fragile land, sustainably preserved by them for millennia through constant movement across vast distances, and careful seasonal use, their “dwelling” was invested in the land itself. Out of this deep identification with the land arose a “cultivation” of culture, not “building”: the culture that “preserves” life and community under the harshest conditions. Identity, kinship, “law,” and every aspect of life, were laid down in the land as stories and legends, continually renewed in ceremony. To be torn away from the land of one’s identity and belonging, was to be separated from dwelling irrevocably. It is significant that “cultivation” in this sense of cultivating culture falls under Heidegger’s etymological understanding of “dwelling” as Care: cultivation “of the vine,” not literally, as we saw in the previous section on Derek Jarman’s Garden,

---

10 The lack of a monumental architecture was one of the legitimizing reasons given for both the white invasion and the declaration of terra nullius.

11 Heidegger uses the terms “cultivation” and “construction” in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” under the etymologies of “bauen” (building). He writes of “cultivation”: “Both modes of building – building as cultivating, Latin colera, cultura, and building as the raising up of edifices, aedificare – are comprised within genuine building, that is, dwelling.” Op cit. p.101.
where Jarman “worked the soil,” but spiritual/cultural cultivation through an in-dwelling into the land through ceremony and law, through a spirit–filled, living perception of, and with, the land. The Indigenous were hunter/gatherers who did not “cultivate the soil,” (or buildings) but, instead, cultivated *themselves* within the context of a geo-cosmography as social/spiritual beings. An extremely subtle, complex and non-material form of dwelling that has its “being” in the land, not in building, fell below the perceptual radar of white colonizers, perhaps in part, because their own capacity “to dwell” had also been disrupted by transport or migration to an unfamiliar and perceivedly hostile land.12

The brief specified “curvilinear forms and the use of natural materials,” however given the complexity and extremity of the past history (and its erasure) an architectural solution was a complex challenge. The immediate question facing the architect was how to make the Koori’s former *invisible* in-dwelling into “country,” *visible*. A process of recovering and reimagining “dwelling” needed to be slowly disclosed through “listening” carefully to the communities gathering around the project; to being “responsive” to their “call” through conversation: through full collaboration at every stage of the process. Heidegger discusses the role of “responding” to the call of the fourfold in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” saying, “Building thus characterized is a distinctive letting-dwell. Whenever it *is* such in fact, building already has responded to the summons of the fourfold. All planning remains grounded on this responding, and planning in turn opens up to the designer the precincts suitable for his designs.”13 “Responding” in Heidegger’s lexicon is to do with admitting and installing the fourfold. As we have seen in the discussion of Levinas, “response” is also the origin of language as *dialogue* and it is inscribed with intimacy and human sensibility. Unlike Heidegger’s more abstract or transcendental formulation which addresses “being,” Levinas grounds “responsiveness” in actual human encounter, in “becoming”; in this context within the processes of the Brambuk project, this responsiveness to the “call” of the Other is engaged with as active collaboration, as conversation, as listening. The architect needed to “respond” to the “call” of a forgotten form of dwelling requiring both *restoration* and *preservation* in a form that had to be collectively re-imagined.

---

12 There are many Colonial era letters sent back to England, that support the claim that “new-comers” to Australia felt the land to be hostile, ugly or inhospitable. The early letters of Fanny Macleay of Elizabeth Bay House in Sydney are an example of this sense of alienation from the land.
Over the next months Burgess journeyed around Victoria meeting with Elders who had a stake in the project of renewal. I traveled with him documenting and photographing the Elders and their works. Burgess was particularly interested in the recovery of the communities’ arts and crafts as well as artisan skills and knowledge of traditional plants, foods and medicines that could be employed collaboratively in this project. This interest in incorporating the traditional skills and knowledge of the communities revealed an insight on the part of the architect into the nature of the “dwelling” needed: the physical building was only one dimension - the rebuilding of cultural identity, the “cultivation of culture” was just as vital to re-instating “dwelling.” The following notes document three of the many research visits Burgess made at that time.

At one meeting in 1986, Burgess arranged to meet Grace Cooper-Sailor, one of the few remaining Indigenous master basket-weavers. She was warmly hospitable in

---

14 I documented these encounters for a collaborative exhibition (with Burgess and the other collaborating artists) at the Meat Market in Melbourne exhibiting the Koori and non-indigenous craft and artisan productions intended for Brambuk, along with Burgess’ preliminary models and designs. The exhibition was entitled, Collaborative Designs: Working Together in Architecture. 1986. The photos shown here are taken by me in the course of Burgess’ field trips.

15 This section of the thesis has more documentation of the processes back-grounding the “gathering” in preparation for the project than the other sections. This is, in part, my “writing of Care” – the desire to “keep,” “preserve” and “restore” information, names, dates and places that were associated with this project which have not been carefully archived elsewhere. As we shall see the “keeping” of cultural information in this part of the Indigenous landscape has been very meagre.

16 Cooper-Sailor, born Cumergunja on the Murray, 1939. Photograph by the artist.
her small suburban dwelling in Hamilton on the South-West of Gariwerd. It seemed that every corner of her house was her studio: grasses hung from the ceiling in vast hanks in various stages of readiness for weaving and baskets overflowed with prepared grasses that had been processed by her into fibrous yarn or sorted into muted colour strands. The colours were the colours of the river’s edge in high Summer and the soft endless blur of the bleached plains of the Western district. It was as though a very large landscape had wafted into the tight little boxes of her rooms, on an aromatic breeze.

She talked for some time about the persistence of memory handed down through the women of her clan: how she had been shown her craft by Connie Hart, an Elder of the Gunditjmara people who had learnt secretly from her mother, Frances Alberts. She had been taught which native grasses and reeds to use for weaving and basketry, in which season, how to gain different colorings by using them at different stages of the growth cycle, how to split them, and how to chew out the ends to flatten the grasses for knotting and “tying off” or to make “string.” She was an expert weaver of eel baskets, large ground mats and gathering baskets. She told us she was teaching these skills to, and being helped in turn, by her sisters Rita Ellis and Annette Austin and Annette’s daughter Lynette. Sailor-Cooper’s work was to be displayed at Brambuk and her skills disseminated to other Indigenous women in workshops there. For the collaborative exhibition she was creating a screen prototype to be developed for the interior of the proposed building. Burgess was deeply moved by the dignity and beauty of her work. These artifacts were sensuous echoes of a much larger cultural landscape lost: Sailor-Cooper was weaving a world back into being, through “preserving” and “keeping” her craft. By conserving and disseminating her traditional skills she was “cultivating” the culture that produces Care.

17 The handing on of cultural knowledge, skills as well as language, had been repressed.
18 The grasses and reeds commonly used were *Puung’ort* grass (*carex tereticaulis*), *Lomandra Longifolia* and *Lepidosperma Laterale*. See “Koorie Plants, Koorie People, Traditional Aboriginal Food, Fibre and Healing Plants of Victoria.” Zola, N. and Gott, B. (McPherson’s Printing Group, Koorie Heritage Trust, Swanston St, Melbourne, 1992).
Another of the research trips took Burgess to view the only existing Indigenous “Keeping Place” for this region: a place, one would anticipate, (sited as it is in the centre of historic genocide) be dedicated to the memory and mourning of a dispossessed and largely erased people. It had a sad, small collection of undocumented and uncurated, dusty artifacts, randomly and thinly placed around the dim room, reflecting the “scattering” and loss that characterized the culture and the lack of Care that had been given to conservation and preservation of this ancient culture in general. It was housed in what looked like a disused nineteenth century Georgian bank. Burgess noticed a poem casually pinned to a notice board which became an important seed of understanding and inspiration for him in his work at Brambuk. It was misattributed to a local Indigenous man, Charlie Lovett, and dated 1981, but Burgess researched later that it had in fact been written by an Indigenous woman from east of Melbourne, around Healsville, called Hyllas Miras. The hymnal uplifted tone, animist imagery and proud assertion of belonging, owning and “dwelling” are unique.

---

19 A prototype screen for Brambuk made by Cooper-Sailor.
Spiritual Song of the Aborigines

I am a child of the Dreamtime People
Part of the land like the gnarled gum tree
I am the river softly singing
Chanting our song on the way to the sea
My spirit is the dust clouds
Mirages that dance on the plains
I am the snow and the wind and the falling rain
I’m part of the rocks and the desert earth
Red as the blood that flows in my veins
I am the eagle arrow and snake that glides
Through the rainforest that clings to the
Mountain side
I awakened here when the earth was new
There was emu, wombat and kangaroo
No other man of different hue

I am this land
And this land is mine

I am Australia
Burgess copied the poem out by hand and incorporated it into the exhibition at the Melbourne arts venue, the “Meat Market.” The architect’s Care lifted this poem out of its neglect and obscurity in the “Keeping Place” and it was later used in public exhibitions, becoming known at last. It is a sad irony that “keep” is one of Heidegger’s defining words of Care, meaning, in his lexicon, “to cherish and preserve.” “Keep”: - “to take care of; to remain or cause to remain in a specified state or condition; to look after or maintain; to preserve or admit of preservation; to maintain in existence,” according to the dictionary. The “Keeping Place” was a dismal example of the absence of Care in an institutionalized setting and its total inability to “cultivate culture” for the people it ostensibly represented.

The Brambuk project had evolved out of the need to have an updated “Keeping Place” (incorporating this poor example in Hamilton) and this idea had been gradually replaced by the more positive concept of “a living cultural center,” as a mark of renewal and resurgence of Koori culture in South-Western Victoria. Brambuk would be firstly about re-embodying community: the collecting of artifacts in a museum capacity has remained secondary, perhaps because, historically, so little Care has been taken to “keep” and “preserve” Indigenous artifacts of the area that there is alarmingly little left “to keep.”

This “thinning out,” “emptying,” “forgetting” and “scattering” of culture- in this case in relation to Indigenous culture, seems to be generally characteristic where Care is absent –particularly the Care of mourning, which, as Derrida underlines, always watches over, the “absolute value” of human life. “Life has absolute value,” writes Derrida, “only if it is worth more than life. And hence only in so far as it mourns, becoming itself in the labour of infinite mourning.” “Infinite mourning” would ensure, through attention to life’s (and death’s) singularity, that solicitous Care will be taken of cultural memory: a cultural memory represented here in the untended Indigenous artifacts of the “Keeping Place.” “Mourning,” Derrida reminds us in, The Work of Mourning, is also singular: in “each death” there is “an end of the world.”

---

This requires that we constantly, (singularly) mourn each death. Without mourning Care the “Keeping Place” is a place of absence: a place that cannot “keep,” and therefore cannot produce Care. For these reasons, “mourning,” “infinite mourning,” had to be inscribed into the very foundations of Brambuk.

Another of these documented research trips took Burgess to meet Les Griggs, the contemporary painter. The dimly lit interior of Grigg’s bungalow in Northcote, a suburb of Melbourne, was no place to decipher his paintings: no matter which way he moved them they seemed not to want to be seen. But you could hear them. They were loud. They were ground-shakingly angry. He moved around them smoking. It was hard to get a fix on him. He didn’t want to be seen either - but he wanted to be heard. The pain was immense. It filled the whole cottage. Gun imagery seem to emerge out of self-destructing borders on the large canvases: wounds, words, grog, petrol in cans, like exploding and explosive missiles. The paintings were firing off broken glass, barbed wire and debris. Blood seemed to seep from the ragged edges. They just couldn’t hold it all in. There was no tidy narrative… just fractured pieces… taken away, brought up by strangers… drugs, alcohol...

---

Griggs showed his paintings in the collaborative exhibition, “Working Together in Architecture,” which presented and interpreted the “upbuilding” and gathering that pre-cursed the building of Brambuk. Griggs, an urban Gunditj mara man, committed suicide before Brambuk came to fruition. His life and work is laid into the building’s memory and mourning. The work of Care, unlike the “Keeping Place” of Hamilton, can “cherish and preserve” memory and make place to mourn, as well as offer consolation, through its specifics of “dwelling,” which we will examine in concrete form in the next three sub-sections.

These research trips were vital to informing an architecture of Care: the fragile threads of memory needed to be woven into the weave; the loss and mourning needed to be witnessed and made visible. To address a future, the past had to be incorporated, so that it had living “roots” in culture that could be “cultivated,” “tended,” (“like the vine”) - toward Dwelling.

Figure 7. The Community building team
Entering into the other’s space, across the culture of the land – across the wounds of dispossession and colonialism – one listens, sensing out resonances, shadows, fleeting openings. Burgess

The field trips led into participatory workshops over the next eighteen months. These were consultative meetings, discussions, briefings with Burgess and the working group representing the Communities. The workshops represent an important aspect of an architectural practice of Care, not only through briefing the architect about the concerns of the community, but also through engaging the community in its own healing: to cultivate the ground of Care by materially involving the community in a transformative participatory process.

Burgess recalls the workshops where the vision for the project was evolving as “inspiring” and “poetic.” He says the group were initially “coming from a long way behind,” their “self-confidence and capacity to contribute was fragile,” but over time Burgess says they began “to speak poetry.” Burgess particularly recalls the discussion where the form of the building in the landscape was being discussed and one of the Elders, Lenny Lovett, said with a wide, undulating gesture of his hands, “the building should flow with the mountains.” The building came to echo that bird’s wing form. These workshops formed up the architecture as they formed up the group and the initial “leading” of workshops by Burgess melted into collaboration, so that eventually the project was fully “owned” by the Community. It was a process of Care, allowing place and space for an emergence in the form of Ricoeur’s “to and fro” with the Other: the sociable, generous aspect of “solicitude”. This process reinstated the dignity of “being heard,” and, in turn, “having something to say.” The “listening conversation” of Care.

Burgess listened and responded to the needs of the communities and their vision during these months. He says that he put himself “at the service of their project” and “opened himself spiritually and emotionally to what was needed there.” What Burgess says of this time resonates with Levinas’ description of “the call” of the Other, that “summons a response.” In “the call” Burgess deciphered the inexpressible sense of pain and loss of “home” and the need to mourn, but also a dawning sense of resurgence and hope for the future. In the philosopher, Düttmann’s terms, the architect was responding to “the burden,” “the burden that must be expressed.” Düttmann’s injunction to attend to “what matters” – could not be more clear in the work of “re-housing dwelling,” where a people have been dispossessed and stripped of cultural identity. “What matters” is to begin the fragile tasks of healing, self-healing and transformation, in this case through participating in an architecture where Care figures materially and spiritually, as we will explore in the following sub-sections.

25 Conversation with Burgess, ibid.
2.2. (b) Sky

The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year’s seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of the day, the gloom and glow of the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

Heidegger

Figure 9. The “mourning log” placed in front of a window in the interior.

Walking through trees, the trees also approach the building, forming an escort to the footsteps. They carry one across the unspeakable threshold and move inside too. One could not bear it if they were not there, sheltering. Outside becomes inside, a veiled landscape. The earth, the forest floor breathes beneath - and above, the canopy spreads in a majestic up-pouring of rock. The trees process and carry our carriage into the cavernous grotto, like proud warriors unbowed, they point to the one who blocks the way; the one who stands against the light, vast as the logs for the dead, but upright still, the Mourner.

---

26 Heidegger, op cit. p.102.
Burgess wanted to make a place that would be a refuge for the fragile “folk soul,” and hold tragedy in a way that allowed for healing and transformation. He described the making of the design as a “draping,” and a “buckling and bending,” where he took his model-making materials, in this case thin, pliable card and folded it down as though covering the form of a human body with its undulations. His impulse from the first gestures of design was one of “protection” and “holding” on the one hand, and an expression of pressure and stress on the other – giving rise to an upward movement which became the flight-like movement of “wind under the wings” in the final form. He wanted the building “to hold tragedy and mourning,” but also to be a place of energy, dynamism: a re gathering towards “strength and healing.” Much of the expression of both mourning and healing was expressed in the building as a struggle between light and shadow.

The rocky escarpments of the site rise nearly vertically on both sides, one blocking the morning, the other blocking the evening, holding the valley in a filtering penumbra, echoed in the protective earth berms which partly conceal the building and reiterated in the long slow, low wave of Brambuk’s roof. All act to hold shadow. It is a building gathered up out of shadow; its very being is defined in shadow. In the Hook Address Burgess writes of shadow as though it were alive with being: “Shadow gathers… welling up…in thick sheltering silence- …to whisper and remember, like a voice in the recesses of the dark verandah – shadow lies receptive, patient, consoling; waiting

---

27 A term used by Burgess in the Hook Address and elsewhere.
28 All quotes from a conversation with Burgess, 26 August, 2007.
for our return, our homecoming.” And he endows his shadowed forms with a healing aspect of mourning and remembrance, “Places of shadow can engender healing by allowing for mourning, making place sufficiently nuanced to act as a receptacle of loss and absence: to be a refuge for a strengthening and rejuvenation followed by re-emergence into the light and the world.” Burgess remembers that in the final stages of the documentation of Brambuk, he was surprised to realize that parts of the already dim interior were “over-lit,” he says, “a more cave-like interior was needed… to hold and nurture the fragile and damaged folk soul of these communities. Sometimes architecture is asked to express tragedy…to support the mourning of loss…From this need, a difficult and poignant beauty can be born.” Shadow is, for Burgess, an orientation toward interiority that “makes space” for the “burden” of Care. He also felt it had a unique rightness in the context of a building for the indigenous. He wrote in this context, “Shadow in traditional Aboriginal understanding is simultaneously shelter, soul and “the dead,” evoking its liminality, its in-between ness. It is both the shadow within and the shadow we cast.”

Figure 10. Brambuk interior

29 This and the following quotes are taken from the A.S. Hook Address. Published in Architecture Australia, op cit. Nov. Dec. 2004.
30 Burgess, A.S. Hook Address.
The importance of shadow, the sheltering penumbra in Brambuk, is underlined by the building’s qualities of liminality, which, like shadow, allows for death, mourning and transformation to be inscribed metaphorically into space. Brambuk is all limen. The threshold brings the trees from the surrounding groves across the entrance step and they continue as forest within; a forest of trunks rising from an earthen floor, unsealed although laid with local sandstone, breathing, in touch still with the forests of Framlingham, the Teetak, protecting and offering shelter. The trunks rise through both storeys, providing the ribbed canopy, the branching, screening and shadowing. Endowing silence, the trees pass into the cavernous “Gathering Place,” and guide the gaze to the vertical slit of window which gathers the whole room’s focus to an opening which is blocked. In front of this single opening a vast trunk of a tree stands contre jour, a dark presence, with the light spilling thinly around its massive curve. It is witness and mourner to the tragedies held and remembered in the building. Brambuk appears to be all limen, as the edge to a world - or an altar: edge to another world, yet its liminality is really the “boundary” of a coming to be. As Heidegger wrote, “A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing. That is why the concept is that of horismos that is, the horizon, the boundary.”31 The “presencing” that begins at the boundary is the space of becoming, of potentiality, of the future: a future inscribed with Care.

In Brambuk Care figures, playing out in material and metaphoric configurations of “restless becoming.” Michael Tawa, architectural theorist,32 references this philosophical framing in his “Notes” toward a monograph on the architecture of Burgess, writing of the “restlessness” of its interminable “becoming” - as a birth. He writes in note form:

… building: the movement of something advancing, its appearance at the limit and border of its advent. In this it comes and opens as arriving appearance, as

32 Professor Michael Tawa, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Tawa is an authoritative writer on the work and practice of Greg Burgess. He has written on Burgess’ oeuvre for Australian and international publications for 20 years. This and following quotes taken from unpublished Preliminary Notes for a Monograph. Dec.2002. Later note: Tawa’s latest book, Agencies of The Frame, Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. 2010) includes some of this text in revised and published form. I have stayed with the original text as it was what was available to me when I first wrote this section.
eventuation, as provenance proceeding and passing in gradual, continuous stages – the gradation of its birth, its coming to be.

Characterized by the instability of phenomena in the limen, this building seems to waver even as it arrives; it withdraws as it appears. Its screening arborium, the medicinal plant, trees and Indigenous edible flora gardens surrounding it, offer this appearance of a shadowy interweaving between place and building: a protective interim zone between it and the wider landscape, extending the location of dwelling, by extending its cultivation of Care to the land. Brumbuk, itself, is a sheltered landscape. The building does not attempt “to conclude” or “finish” itself as a discrete object separate from “country,” rather it “gathers up” a site out of shadow and out of the raw elementals: earth, air, fire and water, to “hold,” “preserve” and offer refuge for a people whose traditional culture was entirely “cultivated” in the land.

Tawa writes of this hortus conclusus aspect of Burgess’ work:

Place – always a garden, an orchard, a space girt and measured, cordoned-off, an enclosure, a courtyard woven of yarns…guarded…fastened bounded and bounden. Above all, contested ground of gathering and refuge.

Out of the etymologies of the word, “garden,” Tawa derives, amongst many others, “to hold” and, “that which covers, shades, protects”: in other words, it evokes sanctuary, “refuge,” a place of Care. But he also draws out that these same “garden like” qualities, “connect to other places, other worlds.” Heidegger also draws out how places can connect by “extension” to other places near and far. This interior “forest” of Brumbuk, the ironbark poles, extends as connectivity, as relation, to the Forests of Framlingham, a hundred kilometers away, from where the wood was sourced. The building “by extension” “persists through the distance” to the remote communities it represents on the coast and through the vast Western District by “holding” the totems of those places and carving out place for the Ancestors and the living.

---

31 Heidegger, op cit. Heidegger speaks of this extension of Care’s realm: “Spaces open up by the fact they are let in to the dwelling of man.” p.107.
32 Tawa, op cit. (unpublished Notes)
33 Heidegger, op cit. p.106.
34 Heidegger, ibid.
Heidegger describes “extension” in this way: “Even when we relate ourselves to those things that are not in our immediate reach, we are staying with the things themselves.”

When the Anangu of Central Australia and the Indigenous of remote Arnhem Land visited Brambuk to make ceremony just prior to its official opening in 1990, Burgess was told by these traditional Aboriginals that this was the first building in which they had ever felt “at home.” Heidegger maintains that in a building where dwelling has been “installed” and is protected and safeguarded by Care, “a staying with things” becomes possible, a staying with place (even across space) that is perhaps, what humankind calls “home,” even in the midst of homelessness. Although this was not the Anangus’ home, their response to Brambuk would indicate a renewed sense of relation with themselves, with their cultural world, with a sense of belonging that we call “home.” As we found in the exploration of Heidegger’s writings on the nature of “dwelling” in Chapter 1, “dwelling,” in Heidegger’s thought indicates a form of Care, that is, in the first place, located in humans, not buildings. Humankinds’ capacity to “dwell” is at the core of the caring, transformative journey on earth prescribed by our origins as creatures of “Cura.” Out of this Care arises the cultivation of “dwelling”: the “dwelling” that produces Care.

Figure 11. East facing entry.

37 Heidegger, ibid.
38 The Anangu (the “Mutitjulu”) live in purpose built houses clustered like a little suburbia at the base of Uluru in Central Australia. They are on their Traditional Lands but were forced out of a traditional way of life and put in Christian missions in the Colonial period.
2.2. (c) Divinities

The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out of the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment. When we speak of the divinities, we are already thinking of the other three along with them, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

Heidegger

_Bleeding sepia stains like leaves drowning in tanin waters, the ancestors line the walls: a nineteenth century museum of dark spectres, gazing out in disbelief - white ruffs and crinolines hiding their respectability- and here, a photo of Anthony Anderson wearing a metal neckplate, pronouncing him ‘King of Birchip’ - feels the scoring of chain and neck ring that binds the ring-barked men._

![Anthony Anderson](image.png)

Figure 12. Anthony Anderson.

The building acknowledges absence, in its shadowy, cavernous hollows; in the details of structure and material which speak of a suffering Care: the Care of mourning, the Care of death. The materials themselves and their relationships in form-making are sites of memory, mourning and consolation. The Care they are inscribed with offers up the solicitude of Care. Burgess describes the detail of the interior ironbark poles, themselves a kind of ghostly absence, taken from the remnant “Framlingham Forest,” a former ancestral ground. He describes the trunks being held in “an almost feminine embrace” where they meet the earth render: the earthen “mud” wraps around the

---

39 This is a description of the archival photographs of Aboriginal mission people in “English” dress, which line the walls of the ascending ramp in Brambuk.
tree’s form adjusting in a neighbourly hollow to the meeting, like a small communion between the materials. The “forest” of ironbark trunks evoking a mourning loss, in turn, is offered “consolation” by the earth of the building itself. The hundred year old bricks which fold around the entry threshold are taken from the old Ebenezer Mission, a site of enforced relocation, where their tragic “memory” is witnessed and transformed in this renewed memory of the community. The materials used in Brambuk are all materials of Care, that is, they are endowed with the human significance that witnesses, remembers, ‘holds’ and “preserves” the histories of the people of Brambuk. The materials are “poor,” recycled, recovered materials inscribed with the memory of other places.

Figure 13. Ironbark trunk and the earth “meet” in the building

Burgess writes about the potential in the materials and their gestures to embody “a spiritual condition.” He quotes Jean-Luc Nancy saying, “presence is the thing itself, as it comes plastically to the world…it is in itself…all coming to its presence.” Burgess asks the question, “What is this ‘birth to presence’ in architecture?” He locates this “presence” in the materials themselves:
We find it firstly in a poetics of materials – of materials given full range of expression, when the radiance of handwork bestows care and creativity on them, when materials are able to give voice to their…primeval origins. Stone invokes fire and lava or the trace of patient oceans laying down shelly sediment and holding the memory of a dawning solid silence; of forests breathing and dying; of wood engrained with nature’s biography. Memory, inherent in materials (even when transformed to the outer limits of technology), speaks to us bodily. It is a sensual transmission that…reminds us of our own organic nature – affirming the deep rhythms of that nature – but, through techne or making, the making of architecture also embodies our culture and our spiritual condition.\(^40\)

The capacity of materials “to remember” both their own origins and their cultural history, as well as to signify conditions of loss, death or displacement in their symbolic arrangement, means that the materials of the building, as with every element of the building, contribute to weaving the Care of transformative dwelling. Qualities, as well as materials, render up consolation and sympathy: the Care that art and architecture mediates. One of these qualities of Care is silence: Burgess particularly values “silence” as one of the healing and meditative qualities potential in architecture: the massive earth-anchoring stone foundations of Brambuk remember the “beehive” dwellings of prehistory Lake Condah, and stabilize the restless becoming of the building, offering it strength and stability, so that it can “hold” and “keep safe” what it has “taken under its care.”\(^41\) As Heidegger suggests it must. The massive flagstones laid over the unsealed floor of the earth, likewise, offer up the stability of well anchored ground, while allowing permeability, consoling contact, with the original earth beneath: a contact that is of utmost importance traditionally to the Indigenous, because, as we have noted, their lives were cultivated in the land.

There is a counterpoint between “silence” and “restlessness,” of absence and presence played out in Brimbuk through its forms and spaces as well. A “return” is embodied in the building, a transformative journey in its inner labyrinth of unfolding axial ascension and descension, where the inner ramp, unfurling upward through the

\(^{40}\) Burgess, The Hook Address, op cit.
\(^{41}\) Heidegger. These are expressions used in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.” op cit.
canopy and screenings of the inner “woods” turns one around to face one’s beginning and holds one there to receive the light that filters in through the upward lifted gesture of the clerestory aperture. There is a gathering up and a release toward this light source before a re-turning and descension into the consoling dark. The building gestures toward transformation in its movement between polarities of inside and outside, dark and light and horizontal to vertical but also in the gathering in of spaces, their containment and release, repeated throughout the whole building.

The “spiritual condition” made place for in Brambuk is a difficult and complex one: this is not a utopian or paradisial “garden” as Tawa argues. Tawa commentates on the interminable striving of Burgess’ architecture “to become” and the “struggle” of the designer, firstly, to find the work, and, secondly, “it presents the work itself, seeking itself.” Tawa identifies this as a kind of “undergoing.” “In both cases,” he writes, “a kind of desire and longing, expressed as suffering and undergoing an interminable seeking, questioning and enquiry.”

Tawa, Notes, op cit.

The traces of this “suffering enquiry,” which is “the burden of Care,” become the work. “Undergoing” implies suffering. The artwork is the site of suffering: we see in Brambuk that it states and re-states the suffering of its Community, through its materials of sorrowful heritage; its shadowy recessiveness; its formal gestures of withdrawal. It affirms suffering and allows its inhabitants to mourn. The building, in its gesture of withdrawal, mourns with them: allowing the healing process to begin.

In the artwork of Care we find that the “burden” of Care is transformed through material embodiment: what was “unbearable” becomes “lighter” through this transposition. This transformative Care is the gift of the artwork.

42 Tawa, Notes, op cit.
2. 2. (d) Mortals

The mortals are the human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies, and indeed continually, as long as he remains on earth, under the sky, before the divinities. When we speak of mortals, we are already thinking of the other three along with them, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

Heidegger

Making place for mourning, the Care of mourning, is the preparation for transformation and renewal. In Brambuk spaces of loss and absence, the “burden” of Care, as well as qualities of engagement, reciprocity and empathy, the sympathetic “response” of Care, make an architectural “clearing” for the communities to deeply experience and acknowledge their almost continuous grief and mourning and to begin to heal. Burgess designed a building that embodies the community into a habitation of consolation and solicitude. The building has a womb-like feminine embrace; the earth as mother- and at its center the fire hearth as protective shelter, as “home.” It is designed to “preserve,” “keep” and “protect” a culture that had become extremely fragile and under duress from within and without. Burgess was also aware that the building should offer “separation,” and a way forward toward re-engagement with the world and a future. There are strong “masculine” elements within the building’s design, particularly in its interior vertical elements that collect one up toward the sharp beak-like upper storey window that slices the undulations of the flowing roof with a crystalline gesture and creates a relationship with the sun and the top of the mountain range lifting one beyond the shadowy interiority of the main “body” of the building.

Burgess has “left” the building in a state of porous, breathing opening: its joining and detail “are only as much as is required to express each gesture.”43 He has not resolved and polished each detail in a way that would “set it,” close it and “finish it.” The lack of finish in this sense leaves the building in a state of perpetual becoming, as though it could yet become something quite other, as though, like the tree it is, it might metamorphose from its juvenile “round leaf foliage” into a mature slender-leaved stage with a higher more airy canopy and a dry warm sunlight might pass through a more open-limbed structure. Burgess says of this building, “It was what was needed

43 Conversation with Gregory Burgess 27, August. 2007.
then to gain a hold on fragile soil…at any other point I would have made a different building.” 44 This is part of its caring “responsiveness.”

Like the other projects of Care discussed in this thesis, the building of Brambuk uses and reuses modest materials and slender means to reconcile and transform complex human needs and aspirations into built form: it does not aspire to “style” or “perfection,” in fact, it sets itself outside most currencies of contemporary fashion, and instead weaves the “always- already used, threadbare and partially unraveled cloth of Care.” 45 46

It is a building which watches over a “gathering up” and “holding,” “preserving” and “safeguarding”; simultaneously it tends to a loss and absence, an unraveling and “un-making”: a mourning departure. It laments a death and anticipates a birth.

Figure 14. Interior, upper floor.

In “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” Heidegger makes clear that he is not proposing a return to a universally prescribed traditional past where people would build with the

45 The budget for Brambuk was $1 million after cuts were made. Little more than for a domestic house. The architect subsidized this “slender budget” by giving vastly more time and service than could have been paid for.
46 It is interesting to note that Heidegger’s thoughts on “dwelling” were unfashionable and heavily contested in Germany’s burgeoning Modernist era rebuilding program in the wake of World War Two. Burgess also set himself apart from prevailing fashion in the “Po-Mo” eighties in order to make this “work of Care.”
same immemorial “rightness” that he found in the mountainous Schwarzwald Bauenhaus, rather he is proposing that we, “ever search anew for the nature of dwelling.” And “dwelling” for Heidegger means “Care,” with all its permutations of “protection,” “cultivation” and “mourning.” As we have previously uncovered in this research, Care is not a universalising impulse, but is for the “one-by-one”: it exists in the “face to face encounter” and is therefore always particular, singular, always intimate. Care does not lend itself to dominant power structures as a tool of oppression; a criticism that has been addressed at Brambuk.

The creation of an architecture for Aborigines has been problematised in postcolonial theory where aspects of the representation of Aboriginality are critiqued as typecasting the Indigenous by identification with nature and therefore with all that is “primitive.” Kim Dovey, in over viewing some of this discourse, wrote an article entitled “Architecture about Aborigines.”

The building (Brambuk) is said to reinforce a construction of Aboriginal people as primitive, natural and irregular. This critique has sources in postcolonial theory which suggest that in such a power structure, the native ‘other’ finds a voice only within the framework of a dominant discourse. And the State has an interest in seeing Aboriginal identity ‘fixed’ in built form; its dangerous, amorphous power ‘arrested’.

In summarizing his judgment of Brambuk’s position in this debate, Kim Dovey writes:

My own view is that the value of this building hinges on questions of Aboriginal agency…. The question of whether it meets the formal expectation for an architecture of liberation has to be preceded by that of whether the building embodies forms of liberating practice. And I would maintain that it does.

---

48 Kim Dovey. Professor of Architecture, University of Melbourne. (Article published in Architecture Australia, July/August, 1996.) p.102.
49 Dovey, ibid.
50 Dovey, ibid.
Brambuk acknowledges the problematic aspect of representing Aboriginality in the “struggle” that Tawa described in its very fabric; in its ongoing struggle of “becoming.” It makes no attempt to paste over ongoing non-reconciliation between black and white Australians with a facile architectural “reconciliation.” The building itself gives expression to the pain of “non-reconciliation”: this is an expression of the architect’s ethical Care. Tawa describes the building in non-utopian terms, “… it doesn’t seek to deliver a seamless world, an idealized aesthetic paradise. Rather, it shows the difficult and untidy process of transformation and completion in its very undergoing.”51 While showing a consciousness of the difficult task of re imagining an architectural representation of Aboriginality, (in the building’s “struggle to become”) the building itself addresses the more fundamental and urgent question invoked by Düttmann concerning “what matters.” Burgess addresses “what matters” in the Hook Address:

Offering refuge for the folk soul is not a retreat into primitivism, but a reconstellating of the forms, materials, spaces and energies necessary for healing and human wellbeing at its deepest level. What is brought to surface, to composition, to style … may not scratch the surface of the deep physical, emotional and spiritual needs of individuals and communities who have been dislocated. 52

In the building of Brambuk, Care figures materially and metaphorically, attending to “what matters” as its primary concern, and “what matters” in this cultural building is the Care of mourning. Brambuk establishes mourning Care as a fundamental form of Care: the Care that enables people to transform, heal, “dwell,” through having their losses materially addressed. In Brambuk we can also decipher the processes of Care: that Care “calls” and “summons a response” in the form of a collaborative conversation that “listens” more than it “speaks.” In Brambuk we discern, too, an extension of the “cultivation of Care,” that we discussed in relation to Derek Jarman’s Garden. Brambuk shows us that “cultivation” is not only a form of agriculture but is always, even when it is a full engagement with the soil, a way of cultivating the soul:

51 Tawa, op cit.
52 Burgess, The Hook Address, op cit.
in Brambuk “cultivation,” as a form of Care, addresses the “tending” and “attending” (“as to the vine”) of identity, culture, and place for a dispossessed people through an intertwining of Care as a practice of participatory making with Care as a motivation of the client/community and Care as the theme of the place.

Figure 15. The hearth of Brambuk
Chapter 2.3

The Care of Mourning in the Work of Elizabeth Presa

“The installation is a cultivation of things- silkworms, mulberry trees, and language –that dwell between the liminal spaces of culture and nature.”

“Images to mediate my longing not to be parted, not to be weaned.”

Elizabeth Presa

“Whoever works at mourning learns the impossible… that mourning is interminable. Inconsolable. Irreconcilable. Right up until death – that is what whoever works at mourning knows.”

Derrida

Introduction

Elizabeth Presa’s art practice has evolved a poetics of the book, which materially addresses themes of textuality in the work of continental philosophers, including Jacques Derrida, Maurice Blanchot, Edmond Jabes, Jean-luc Nancy and the German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke. Presa’s sculpture transforms the text into material images that interpret it through discourses surrounding the text as a living organism. The artist has been particularly interested in anatomies of the text: metaphors of corporeality, which embody the text in images of breathing, folding, stretching,
wounding, veiling; images which Presa “translates” through a choreography of gestural making in her work. Gestures of accretion and cultivation: of crushing, washing, dipping, threading, stitching, binding, bundling, knotting: gestures of the body enacting the physical and tangible metaphors of the text. A transposition from the abstract to the concrete, in which reading becomes making: words and images become materials.

A substantial body of Presa’s work has addressed texts by Derrida. Derrida’s texts, *Fichus* and *Papier Machine*, for example, initiate the works, Milk River Fichus (2002) and Papier Machine, (2005). Other sculptures which “read” Derrida’s work or respond to Derrida’s thinking and correspondence are a performance entitled, A Small Penance, (2002) a mixed media installation, The Letter, (2001), and the paper work, The Four Horizons of the Page (2000). These are all works which incorporate or respond to specific texts by Derrida. This section of my thesis commences with a description of the general methodology and material themes of Presa’s practice and then focuses on the installation, A Silkroom of One’s Own, (2007) which responds, in Presa’s material language to a text by Derrida, “A Silkworm of One’s Own.” I have selected this work of Presa’s, because it offers the opportunity to deepen our study of Care in a work of mourning self-Care. As we shall explore, A Silkroom of One’s Own, is a work of Care that cultivates mourning even as it cultivates Nature. Cultivation is the form of Care that “works into things”: – the soil, materials, or the self, in order to produce Care.

A Silkroom of One’s Own, provides us with an example of Care that, like Jarman’s Garden, shows us that Care can *curate* “self-Care”- the “inward gesture” of Care. This “inward gesture” of Care, as in the Jarman example, does not preclude the idea of sociability in the form of “collaboration,” “conversation,” “connectedness,” but, as Foucault reveals, Care of self priviledges “technologies of the self,” which, “by their

---

1 A Silkroom of One’s Own, mixed media installation. Linden Gallery, Melbourne, 28 September- 11 November, 2007.
3 Self Care is defined by Michel Foucault as: “this ‘cultivation of the self’ (that) can be briefly characterised by the fact that one must ‘take care of oneself.’ It is this principle of the care of the self that establishes its necessity, presides over its development, and organises its practice.” Michel Foucault, “The Care of The Self,” in *The History of Sexuality*:3, (trans. Robert Hurley. Penguin Books. London.1986), p.43.
own means or with the help of others, effect operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.” A form of Care that Foucault instances with an example of an “austere community, devoted to reading, to healing meditation, to individual and collective prayer, and to meeting for a spiritual banquet (agape, “feast”). These practices stemmed from the principle task, concern for oneself.” Foucault notes this community was called, “The Therapeutae,” linking them to healing. He insists that “care of self” “constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice.”

As we shall discuss, Presa’s work, invites and incorporates particular forms of conceptual collaboration from others which is filtered and transformed into the material forms of the artist’s work where the artist “cultivates” a “material conversation” within the work. We will explore how the work collaborates and “converses” while maintaining the protective veil of Care of the self. Both Jarman and Presa make “ending” a kind of shelter, a reserve, an enclosing of the temporal against forced extension, offering, perhaps, the consolation of the refusal of consolation.

Presa’s installations, to date, materialize Care through their gesture of “inward turning,” a gesture we will find is in keeping with Derrida’s “mourning for mourning,” that is a mourning that is maintained precautionarily to transience, loss and death.

---

4 Michel Foucault. *Technologies of the Self*, from “A Seminar with Michel Foucault, London, Tavistock, pp. 16-49. SCRIJBD.COM United States, 180 East End Ave. NY


6 Presa’s current proposed work (for 2010), provisionally titled Interior Castle, addresses the writing of the Spanish mystic, Teresa of Avila. In the proposal for this installation at Linden –Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne -Presa spells out an overt socially engaged form of Care, which, to date, has not been observable in her oeuvre. She states, “the rooms of Linden will also function as cells, chapels or laboratories for personal and social healing, contemplation, mediation and transformation. Indeed, this project poses questions as to what constitutes personal and social transformation in a contemporary secular society. It responds to broader questions of how art and architecture may help provide conditions that facilitate a deeper engagement with the self and others.” This is the lexicon of Care that we have encountered to date, articulated by Ricoeur, Levinas and Kristeva- Care of the Other that also transforms the self.
“Mourning for mourning”

Presida’s sculptural work responds to and “translates” into her material language, texts from poets, philosophers and historic naturalists, drawing out abiding themes of Care: transience, mourning and melancholia. Intricately (intimately) embroidered through these themes are threads of love, transformation and the persistence of beauty as a sensuous virtue.

Her work pays close attention to what normally falls beneath or outside attention: quite literally what is “below our feet”: garden snails, jellyfish (the obscure shadow beneath the sea’s surface), or the silkworm scrolled inside a mulberry leaf utterly engaged in its own productions of metamorphoses. As we have seen in our other studies, this territory of neglect is Care’s terrain. Likewise, Presa’s materials, these “poor,” found and rescued materials: her daughters’ hair tangled in a hairbrush, the lining of an old frayed summer dress, a discarded bed sheet, stained by use, torn into strips or bandages… these poignant fragments (shreds of transient daily life) are lovingly restored to beauty, meaning and permanence as they are wound, bound and knotted, (gestures of the hand and mouth) as votives and prayers against loss and separation.

This use of marginal and overlooked subjects and modest means is apparent in all four of the studies that form this chapter and come to be one of the markers I find generally characteristic of Care in the arts, accompanied by an impulse to restore, repair,

---

7 Bennington, Geoffrey, 24 October 2007. Presa invited philosophers Geoffrey Bennington, Jean-Luc Nancy and Alexander Düttmann to email daily correspondence to the silkworms, to be incorporated into her installation, A Silkroom of One’s Own, (Linden Gallery for Contemporary Arts, St Kilda, Melbourne, 28 September-11 November, 2007) which the artist inscribed around the walls of the Gallery in pencil. This term is a quote from an email from Bennington and is citing one of Derrida’s terms of Care for the philosophically nuanced condition of mourning, from Derrida’s text, The Work of Mourning, ed. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michel Naas. (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2001).
8 Distribution of Organic Beings: Snail House, an installation by Elizabeth Presa. 2007, Manningham Sculpture Prize. This installation created a habitat for a colony of living snails in a walnut cabinet engraved with literary and philosophical texts and required the daily care of the artist to clean, water and feed the snails.
9 Moon Water, an installation by Elizabeth Presa, which comprised hundreds of gauze and plaster moulds of dead jellyfish collected from the artist’s local Bayside beaches. MARS Gallery, Melbourne, 2006.
11 “…images to mediate my longing not to be parted, not to be weaned,” Presa referring to her own work, (in Parallax, Routledge Journals. Oxon. UK.2003, vol.3.) pp.73,78.
preserve and transform.\textsuperscript{12} This acute sensitivity to the preservation and “re creation” of damaged, worn, discarded animate and inanimate things is also one of the traits I connect to a Care of mourning and transience. The repair, restitution and restoration of these materials produces \textit{therapeutic Care} and solicitude for mourning and loss through the act of creative transformation from the abstract to the concrete.

\textbf{A Material Conversation}

Pres’a’s work is framed dialogically, “in conversation,” with texts from philosophers whose theories of language, of reading and writing, converge with her own preoccupations, with a “\textit{poetics of the book},”\textsuperscript{13} but more intimately, with the artist’s sensibilities surrounding language and form coinciding in art as an embodiment, a habitation, where the cultivation (the \textit{Care}) of mourning and transformation can take place materially.

Pres’a’s work is the setting and the space for a material conversation. The conversation is hermetic: sealed behind glass, under lock and key as an archive; concealed in a drawer or within a fold or scroll, not so much a secret as a mnemonic. Or held in the mouth as a mute paper message, processed within the body itself (like language) - for safe-keeping and to prolong the process of absolute bodily intimacy.\textsuperscript{14} It can be the trace of a conversation, casting absence, as forensic impression on skin or membrane. Within the work the desire to begin the conversation first expresses itself in the tendril- like unfurling of thread, filament, line or antennae- or the spill of water, milk, honey, saliva or silvery snail- trail, trailing a delicate line which can configure as a word, a text, or reconfigure as the massing fibers of a nest (speaking, in absence, the language of the rounding graph of a bird’s breast) and return again to

\textsuperscript{12} In “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” (op. cit.) Heidegger unfolds the etymology of “\textit{bauen}” – to dwell/to Care- and includes these words of “nurturing” and “safe-keeping” as aspects of Care. These “words of Care” are listed in “Care of Place: Heidegger and the architecture of Gregory Burgess,” in Section 2.2 of this, Part 1, of the thesis.


\textsuperscript{14} On 10 January, 2002, Presa gave a performance at the Nanyang Academy of Art, Singapore, entitled, \textit{A Small Penance}. In this work, which references the liturgical sacrament of Confession, with its ritualized stages of confession, penance, contrition and absolution. The artist tore a paper text into 100 pieces and chewed the fragments, until the words were partly dissolved with saliva and then formed these each into “a small pearl,” which when threaded onto a strand became a paper necklace to replace her pearls in an act of personal humility.
undifferentiated matter in a loose knot of unsorted silk thread or tangle of human hair. The thread is the beginning of a language, both natural and cultural, delineating, inscribing, engraving- or weaving, braiding, stitching and embroidering; it is also the beginning of a production which weaves “writing and making, philosophy and art”¹⁵ into a space of material “conversation.”

One of the paradoxes of this conversation is that while Presa’s work convenes the salon for such an exchange, it (in itself) is silent; its very quality is a focused silence; a form of acutely responsive listening. “Listening,” is the reciprocal aspect of “Attention,” (“the just and loving gaze,”) a word theorized by Iris Murdoch to contain aspects of Care such as “love” and its ethical corollary, “justice.” The “response” to this listening “Attention” is embodied in the work, as we shall discuss.

The language of Presa’s “conversation” is matter, body, process: it produces what underlies conversation as a sensitive skin or tissue, that can enfold, hold, embody (resonating with Heidegger’s Care as “safe-keeping”). It can give material form, take an impression- as well as translate, interpret, transpose - like music- from one idiom to another. In this case, “translated” from the abstract written word into the embodied materiality of sculpture. The artist refers to this material “membrane” or support which underlies “speech” in a statement accompanying the work, Papier Machine.¹⁶ The artist writes:

Both Watteau and Derrida were attentive to the ‘subjectile’ that porous and permeable substrate “between the beneath and the above” into which meaning and representation fold. The subjectile includes the breath, paper, skin, textiles and canvas, and all that is at once the support and substance of spoken, written or painted speech.¹⁷

¹⁵ Elizabeth Presa. Artist’s statement accompanying the installation A Silkroom of One’s Own. She writes, “A Silkroom of One’s Own’ is my way of tracing writing and making, philosophy and art, back into a domain from which everything comes – an originary space of childhood where imagination and biology intersect.”


¹⁷ Elizabeth Presa. Artist’s statement accompanying the installation, Papier Machine.
In her PhD dissertation Presa commentates on the “vocable,” a linguistic form theorized by Jabès: “the vocable is not merely the written word but the spoken word as it exists within the interior of a text. The vocable is not only read but is heard.”\(^\text{18}\) In describing her exhibition, The Four Horizons of the Page,\(^\text{19}\) a series of suspended, folded paper kimonos, Presa gives an example of the making of the “vocable,” she writes:

Derrida gave me part of the original text,\(^\text{20}\) saved on a computer disc. …I opened a file on the disc, the file called 10 August, and printed many copies. …This paper formed an undergarment for one of the paper kimonos I was to construct…\(^\text{21}\)

The “undergarment,” inscribed with the text becomes the supporting structure, “the subjectile,” for the text and its meanings; holding it (“holding” as an expression of Care), as breath “holds” the voice. Presa creates the “membrane” “between the beneath and the above” as a “fold” and a physical place of intimacy where the conversation can dwell and in Heidegger’s sense, be “cultivated,” that is, “tended,” (fürsorgen) “grown” (“as the grape vine”), “nurtured”: – in this case the cultivation of a material conversation is also a cultivation of Care.\(^\text{22}\) \(^\text{23}\)

---

\(^\text{19}\) Elizabeth Presa, The Four Horizons of the Page. Linden Gallery, St Kilda, Melbourne. 28 July to 17 August, 2000.
\(^\text{20}\) The text was Le Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy. The installation was The Four Horizons of the Page, Linden Gallery, St Kilda, Melbourne. 28July-17August, 2000.
\(^\text{22}\) Heidegger cites “cultivation” as one of the aspects of Care, and unfolds the other words used here in quotation marks out of the etymology of bauen – “to dwell” – an originary source of Care. “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” op cit. see Chapter 1: Writing Care.
\(^\text{23}\) In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” (Basic Writings, rev. ed. David Farrell Krell, London, Routledge, 2000). Heidegger refers to “matter” as the “substrate” of the work of art: Matter is the substrate and field for the artist’s formative action. (p.152). Elsewhere he proposes a “substructure,” which he views as the “thingly feature” of the work of art. (p.146). Heidegger asserts that the “thingly substructure” in the work supposes a “superstructure” to which adheres the “aesthetic value.” (p.164) Although he does not refute this “thingly feature” in the art work, he finally proposes a more primal origin for the work of art (“Art is truth setting itself to work,” p.165) and resolves the apparent duality between “substrate” and “superstructure” in the metaphysical unity of the “unconcealment of beings.” (p.198. Contemporary art theory and philosophy has placed a greater emphasis on the phenomenological, the embodied and material aspect of the art work, as demonstrated in Derrida and Jabès theorizing a “subjectile” and a “vocable,” interpreted by the artist as “an undergarment” in her work, playing doubly with the paper of her work which is already the “subjectile” holding Derrida’s text.
The “listening” to the “spoken word” as it arises within the body, mouth, tongue and lips of the text, is an aspect of the “Attention” (Care) that this artist’s work offers the text- and in listening so acutely, transforms it through her act of “cultivation.” In the preceding chapter, Gregory Burgess described his work process as “responsive” and ties this to “listening” as part of creating the social space in which Care can be “held,” “nurtured” and “cultivated” in a collaborative way. In the work of Presa there is a different dynamic of Care, where the “listening” becomes incarnated not into a social space of conversation and direct collaboration, but into an intimate, inward sphere- where the conversation can be “protected,” “nurtured” and “cultivated,” within the “body” of the artwork itself, producing Care of self; transforming the “burden” of Care through materialization, into the “lightness” of the artwork. A form of the artwork of Care that, paradoxically, through materialization, lessens the “burden.” As we described it in the introduction to this thesis, this is the “gift” of the artwork.

Text: Texture: Textile

The texts which Presa both uses (as material substance) and invites (as conceptual content) into the listening space of her work illuminate her interest in “a poetics of the book,” its physical embodiment as an object of print and page, black ink and white paper, but also its theorizing of the text in metaphor, alliterations, etymologies and tropes- played out as membrane, fold and textile in the imagery of “veil,” “skin,” “scroll,” “wing,” “fan” and the myriad permutations of the weave metaphor: the woof and the weft, and its spinning, fringing, hemming, fraying, binding and sewing. She gives material expression to the aesthetic sensibility of writers such as Edmond Jabès who theorized language as both bodily site (“a wound”): the wound as fertile lesion that becomes writing- and landscape (a desert), a space where reading and writing intersect as a kind of meandering journey, making reading a co-creative act with writing. The artist responds materially to the imagery of Jabès’ metaphoric writings; images which are also materials: such as “salt, sea, sand, paper, ink, blood and honey.”

24 “Care of Place: Heidegger and the Architecture of Gregory Burgess.” (Ch.2.2)
25 “Mark the first page of every book with a red marker, for, in the beginning the wound is invisible.” Edmond Jabès, The Book of Questions, quoted by Presa in her thesis, “Poetics of the Book.”
Derrida’s conception of language as corporeal, an erotic feminine – a feminine body, to be both coaxed and seduced into language that is both intimately “of its self but also speaks for him alone,” is poeticized in the work of the artist as feminine dress and folded fan: “an archive of the feminine” and a habitation within the intimate feminine realm.

The Making of Intimacy

Levinas describes Care of the Other in terms of intimacy – the intimacy of “the face to face” encounter. He inscribes Care in this intimate interface with “solicitude” – “human emotion,” “sensibility,” “responsiveness”- the traits of close communion at close quarters. This intimate space of Care and communion that Levinas has described between the self and the other, articulates also a relationship between the artist and the material object, which, in Presa’s work often involves using her body as part of its substance and gesture and is set in intimate spaces.

Presa’s work creates the setting and the occasion for her conversation with philosophers and poets in an intimate space- part boudoir, part salon. Domestic “furniture” (virtually an extension of the feminine body) can evoke a small shrine; sometimes a site of production or habitation, always an archive. The artist’s installations are furnished at different times, (and here I collapse them into one mise en scene) with intimate and evocative symbols. I gather together a list, an archive, of the artist’s “furnishings” of her combined installation spaces to demonstrate the uniquely intimate domestic settings that she deploys in her work; objects that would create a room both dream- like and surreal, but retaining the ordinary provenance of “things”:

27 Presa, Artist’s statement accompanying Papier Machine, op cit.
28 Presa, Artist’s statement accompanying Papier Machine, op cit. Presa writes: “For Derrida language was corporeal, and “pure French” a feminine presence, a presence of the other. … He wrote of his desire to seduce language, to make something happen that language (herself) cannot protest but “comes to take pleasure in it.” … He desired to get language into a position where (she) acts and speaks by herself, but for him, keeping in her body the “ineffaceable archive of this event…concealed under garments in which blood mixes with ink to reveal all its colours to sight.”
The inventory:

*a beeswax cast of the virginal seat,* traditionally placed at the foot of the marriage bed; a walnut cabinet inlaid with veneer, glass and mirrors with turned legs in the 18th style and engraved with text (to house the wandering snails); gilded empty snail shells: simultaneously, habitat and sepulchre; a ceremonial bed of sewn and scrolled papers- gilded prayer papers with a handwritten litany of love, laid upon rice; tarnished mirror (gazing into its own interior sea) for the disembodied jellyfish; engraved crystal glasses to refract Spinoza’s light; a lucent screen of raw cocoon silk; a coil rug braided from children’s clothing moulded with white plaster (to make permanent the binding); an olive tree with its roots bound in torn strips of bed linen- and the apparitional costumes that inhabit such a space: – ceremonial kimono (paper) and the Spanish Infanta’s wedding dress folded from a thousand sheets of folded, tissued text; an 18th century dress inlaid with a philosopher’s words, and a garment of rags, flayed; in the silence, a silent piano restrung with knotted and spun cotton cords: a loom for the unborn; a letter and a fragile, folded, fanned white plaster cast, trace of an absence- lie meditatively in the light, confirming the silence.

And what are the aesthetic sources of this “feminine habitation?” A refined and sensuous femininity (touching on the artifice and feminisation of 18th century Rococo salon society: the salon culture that “cultivated” conversation as an art form) is hybridized with a poetics of the East expressed in its restrained aesthetic and material vocabulary of paper, rice, silk (and the cross fertilization of East to West in the Orientalizing forms of fan, scroll and screen). The East is referenced in the intimacy of scale, poetics of nature, telluric materials and the inherent transience symbolized by these. It is noticeable in this hybrid exchange of influences that one culture is marked by traditions of speech and conversation (represented in its paintings, too, as exemplified by Watteau and referenced by Presa); the other is marked by traditions of silence and contemplation. Both aspects are expressed in Presa’s work as the listening and creative responding of her “conversation.”
In this domestic room, this feminine habitation, the texts are transposed to texture and through processes derived from sewing, spinning and weaving- a fabric, a textile emerges to house and hold (in its folds) the embodiment of a material conversation.

In the next section I address a work of transience and mourning that “cultivates” Care of the self, Care of mourning, as it “cultivates” silkworms and text.

Figure 1. A Silkroom of One’s Own, installation by Presa, detail of colony of silkworms. All images courtesy the artist.
**A Silkroom of One’s Own: the Installation**

Sero te amaui  
So late have I loved thee

1.

This exhibition is staged as a fable about fabrication, making, production and cultivation in a factory of minutiæ, part nature, part culture. It is a factory of weaving and spinning; its loom weaves Care in veils of mourning, transformation and consolation, threading time and transience through folds of continuity.

For the installation Presa cultivated a colony of silkworms (*bombyx mori*) and made a habitat for them in response to Jacques Derrida’s essay, “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” in the last pages of which he gives a meditative account of his own childhood cultivation of silkworms. In a very close observation of the silkworm’s cycle of production and metamorphoses Derrida spins an extended literary and philosophical metaphor of the philosopher’s work – his “secretion” of work and its major themes of love, time, language, religion, death and mourning. In an artist’s text accompanying the work, Presa quotes from Derrida’s childhood memories of sericulture:

In the four corners of a shoe box, then, I’d been shown how, I kept and fed silkworms… Several times a day, the same liturgy, you had to offer them mulberry leaves, these little indifferent idols. As the silkworms grew he ‘could not believe what he was seeing, he was already telling himself a story, … like a philosophy of nature for a shoe box.

The silkworm as “secreter” of itself, veiling and unveiling, weaving its own shroud, rising in resurrection above its self-made sarcophagus, prefigures “the operation” of

---

29 *A Silkroom of One’s Own*, an installation by Elizabeth Presa, Linden Gallery, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne, 28 September - 11 November, 2007.  
30 Epigraph quoting Augustine, used by Derrida at the beginning of “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” op cit. p.19.  
the philosopher as he secretes his life’s work, spinning out the endless line that becomes text.\textsuperscript{33} The artist invited philosophers Geoffrey Bennington, Jean-Luc Nancy and Alexander Garcia Düttmann, to “secrete” daily writings for the silkworms in the spirit of a site of literary and philosophical production paralleling the “sleepless insatiability”\textsuperscript{34} of the silkworms own productions as they transform “the mulberry into silk.”\textsuperscript{35} Their writings, received as emails, became the thread, “this milk become thread, this filament…”\textsuperscript{36} that initiated a weaving of text around the walls of the room in the artist’s penciled handwriting, unfolding its accreting meanings over time.

Figure 2. The installation cabinet

Installed in an ornate, polished, glazed and mirrored cabinet (at once shrine, archive and habitation), the silkworms, silently, ineluctably ate their way through the \textit{Vanitas} still life boughs of fresh mulberry leaves, replenished daily, on crushed white tissue, continuing to drop their droppings, cleaned daily, and molt whole bodies in order to grow from microscopic squiggle to large soft white powdery caterpillar and begin

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} Derrida, op cit. p.89.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Geoffrey Bennington. Email to the artist on October 11, 2007.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Derrida, “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” op cit. p.88.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Derrida, ibid. p.88.
\end{itemize}
nearly invisibly to secrete a luminous halo of white silk in which to conceal themselves in their miracle of transformation. To provide for their needs the artist grew and tended daily (an accreting form of *the work* of Care as “cultivation”) a small copse of mulberry trees in the light filled room and filtered the new spring light with a luminous screen of raw silk, hand stretched to tensile fineness; a weaving to luminesce the light.

The silk-hung nowhere
Dedicates its duration to the ray,
here I can
see you.  

37 Paul Celan, quoted by Derrida in “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” part 3, p.73.
“… “late” evaluates, desires, regrets, accuses, complains …, so late, very late, late, quite simply…, always comes the time for loving.” 38

Figure 3. Hand written text on walls of gallery

Temporal themes of transience and death, of rebirth and regeneration unfolded over the six weeks of this installation’s duration as the little creatures ate and grew, cocooned themselves, metamorphosed into moths, laid eggs, died and the whole cycle renewed. Against this background of patient cyclical life, the writings of philosophers, Alexander Garcia Düttmann, Geoffrey Bennington (translator of “A Silkworm of One’s Own”) and Jean-Luc Nancy daily unfurled their filament, their thread as text on the walls. Their texts, in part, address the themes in Derrida’s “Silkworm,” its theme of mourning, and this overlaid with the mourning for Derrida himself (who died three years previously) who is mourned in this artwork by these philosophers, this artist, who were his friends. “Mourning for mourning,” says Bennington; time is passing; “life will have been so short,”39 writes Derrida against the background of the forces of growth in the silkworms which precipitate their death: “Growth and multiplication or decrease and diminution: death both ways,” writes Bennington, “…growth brings death with it, there’s no growth without dying too, there’s no escape, sustainable growth is not sustainable. Life is growth but growth also dies…: lifedeath, as JD was

38 Derrida, ibid. p.33.
39 Derrida, ibid. p.33.
saying already in the 70s.”

Bennington notes this double overlay in the configuration of a death upon a death implicit in the installation, which, with its material picture of the fragility of life, itself mourns:

How to conjugate the specific futurity of where we are today, waiting for them to grow and molt and secrete? And all this in a kind of commemorative and monumentalizing re-enactment of what happened in a shoebox in Algeria in the early 1940s?

Düttmann refuses the speculated question of “monumentalizing” and “commemorating.” He responds to Derrida’s text, “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” and the “invitation” to “secrete” daily writings for the installation, playfully, irreverently, concealing as much as he reveals. He takes the major themes of Derrida’s text: death, rebirth, religion, time, being, language, beauty, truth, love, mourning, sex, touch and seeing (philosophy itself) and redeploy tangentially with “scenes” from the events of his everyday life and surrounds. For example, the vast complex meditation in “A Silkworm of One’s Own” about the symbolic material composition of the Tallith, is referenced lightly, laterally in an unlikely comparison with what Düttmann likes about the rhythm of films: “the feeling and juxtaposing (of) pathetic scenes and ironical scenes…like if you have silk and wool coming together.” He touches on the main themes of Derrida’s text but “de-rails” them with personal reminiscences of a sexual, personal or contingent nature. ("I remember that my friend Louis used a lubricant called Liquid Silk.")

On October 7, Düttmann writes:

I have just read a very good essay on the fact that objectivity, or nature, should be conceived of independently of the subject. Elizabeth’s silkworms would be doing what they are doing even if I were not there to witness their activity or to redouble it by scribbling these notes. To them, it does not matter at all that I don’t like to wear silk.

---

40 Bennington, email to the artist, October 22, 2007.
41 Bennington, email to the artist, Friday 19, October, 2007.
42 AG Düttmann, email to the artist, October 9, 2007.
Derrida had also noted the *objective* life and culture of the silkworm in his text:

> The living, tiny but still divisible formula of absolute knowledge. Absolute nature and culture. Sericulture was not a man’s thing, not a thing belonging to the man raising his silkworms. It was the culture of the silkworm qua silkworm.⁴³

There is a conversation unfolding – between the texts, between the philosophers, between the living and the dead, between the artist’s making and the philosophers’ thought. The artist’s conversation is a collaboration of voices, and beneath that (the “subjectile” that underlies representation, the “vocable” that supports speech) is the collaboration across species with the silkworms who embody and exemplify this material conversation of spinning and weaving, “at the infinite distance of the animal…” ⁴⁴

---

⁴³ Derrida, “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” op cit. p.89. We note that, in fact, silkworms have been “cultivated” for so many thousands of years within human culture that they are no longer independent of that culture and cannot survive outside it.

⁴⁴ Derrida, ibid. p.89.
“… so late, too late, sero” (life will have been so short),…”

In Freud’s essay, “Transience” (1916) he tells of walking through a summer landscape with two companions and was surprised at their melancholic response to natural beauty.

---

47 For an authoritative analyses of the clinical differences and similarities between mourning and melancholia see Freud’s essay, “Mourning and Melancholia,” (1917), pp.201-218. In this essay, Freud refers to “normal mourning and “the work of mourning” in contrast to the pathology of melancholy, stating; “…melancholia…contains more than normal mourning does. In melancholia, the relationship with the object is not a simple one, it is complicated by the conflict of ambivalence.” (p.216) (Freud defines “ambivalence” as “…an opposition of love and hate…”), (p.211).

He defines the major difference between mourning and melancholy in this way: In mourning, the world has become poor and empty, in melancholy it is the ego that has become so (p.206). Freud clarifies the purpose of mourning with the question: “So what is the work that mourning performs?” (p.204) And answers: “…reality-testing has revealed that the beloved object no longer exists, and demands that the libido as a whole sever its bonds with that object… people are reluctant to abandon a libido position.”(pp.204,205) Melancholia, according to Freud, has a more complex relation to the unconscious than mourning, absorbing uneconomic amounts of energy in its “self-torment,” “self punishment” and denial of reality. Freud says mourning, by contrast, knows consciously what it mourns (p.211). The unconscious aspect of melancholia could be seen to bring it into a relationship with the sometimes obsessive and apparently irrational processes of art production, where “rites and rituals,” the fetishizing of materials, or use of “taboo” materials, (such as body fluids) and the ascribing to these of “protective,” or talismanic properties, as well as acts of apparent masochism and self-harm can be seen, however I am not prepared to infer a psychopathology to artists who give expression to this area of human experience in their art. Within the parameters of my research into a poetics of Care, I would argue that both mourning and melancholia are clear examples of “Care,” (Heidegger’s “sorgen” and “fürsorgen,” for example, which express the “burden” and sorrow, the “grief,” of “tending” in Care would cover this) where apparently “masochistic” behaviours and “obsessiveness,” can be held within rituals of art making (as they can be in certain religious and tribal practices) to indicate liminal, transformative passages from one state to another. (Artists who works in some of these ways are Louise Bourgeois, b.1911-2010 and Joseph Beuys, 1921-1986). Some aspects of Presa’s practice could also be viewed in these ways. I reference this discussion of mourning/melancholia in the section on filmmaker, Paul Cox. Bennington’s references an alternative understanding of mourning in Derrida’s discourse. Bennington writes of “mourning mourning” as “… doing something other than the ‘normal’ work or labour of mourning, something that will always look a little like melancholia… quite, no simple ‘getting on with one’s life.’” (Bennington, 2 Oct.) This view both builds on Freud’s work and critiques it; bringing “melancholia” into a closer relation with “normal mourning.”
He writes:

Some time ago I took a walk through a blossoming summer landscape in the company of a silent friend and a young and already well-known poet. The poet admired the beauty of the nature around us, but it did not delight him. He was disturbed by the idea that all this beauty was bound to fade, that it would vanish through the winter, like all human beauty and everything beautiful and noble that people have created and could create.  

Freud argues that his friend should not be pessimistic because of life’s “susceptibility to decay,” but rather that transience adds value: “the value of transience... over time.” The fragile evanescence of a blossom is all the more precious for its brevity. Freud analyses that the “two sensitive characters” were suffering from “a foretaste of grief” as they contemplated the transience of beauty. Freud summarizes their condition:

I believe that those who think this way and who seem prepared for lasting renunciation because that which is precious has not been proved to be enduring, are only in a state of mourning over their loss.

48 Freud, Sigmund. Ibid, p.197.
49 Freud, Sigmund. Ibid, p.197.
50 Freud, Sigmund. Ibid, p.197.
51 Freud, Sigmund, op cit. p.198.
52 Freud, Sigmund, op cit. p.199, my emphasis.
The “foretaste of grief” that Freud equates with mourning, which he says should come to “a natural end,” has been repositioned by Derrida, as an ongoing (and necessary) condition of the human being of Care. He proposes “provisional mourning” as a primary form of care of life and existential meaning— a Care for Care, writing, “Life has absolute value only if it is worth more than life. And hence only in as far as it mourns, becoming itself in the labour of infinite mourning…”53 And, in the same text, he describes mourning specifically in Heidegger’s term, Sorge (“Care”): “That very idea… that one can rightly translate by ‘care’ or ‘solicitude’, opens the vein – and begins the vigil – within which will be inscribed the Sorge (‘Care’) in the sense Heidegger confers on it in Being and Time.”54 Derrida invokes Heidegger’s Care specifically, which as we have seen, is inscribed with the “burden” of Care. Derrida would seem to be inferring that as human beings we are required to carry this “burden” of Care, this “mourning for mourning,” not just at times of loss and death, but as a constant, vigilant “watching over,” a state of preparedness, that requires mourning in advance. As Rilke writes in his Sonnets to Orpheus, “Be ahead of all parting as though it already were / behind you.”
An email from Bennington on October 24 invokes this perspective:

…maybe here a different way with death and therefore truth and all the rest…, and of a much earlier thought, in ‘Ja ou son faux –bond’ and ever since, about demi-deuil, half –mourning…, doing one’s mourning for mourning, mourning mourning, doing something that will always look a little like melancholia, a not-getting-over-it, a not-quite-return-to-self, no ‘closure’, quite, no simple ‘getting on with one’s life.’

A sense for the transience of things, as “provisional mourning,” “mourning for mourning,” holds open the ethical dimension of Care through its aspects of memory, remembrance, witness - and simultaneously reflects a tender regard for life in the moment. “Mourning mourning,” is not about personal loss (although it can be), it is more a disposition to invest infinite value, love, attention, Care, into a thing, into life, as though one had already lost it: as though one had the perspective of the not-yet-born or the already dead.

Mourning in its interwoven relation to the transience of existence is, as we see, the aspect of Care that sustains “…the psyche as life, as breath of life, as pneuma…” in its solicitous attention to death. In the following section we see how a mourning attention to time and transience produce the artwork’s Care.

---

55 Geoffrey Bennington, email to the artist on October 24, 2007.
56 Jacques Derrida, op cit. p.15.
Elizabeth Presa speaks of “slowing things down” and “holding onto things.” Her installation, A Silkroom of One’s Own, cultivates that imagined place, that pace, where things can be restored and held for long enough to endow them with real “attention,” in Murdoch’s sense of bestowing “…the just and loving gaze,” the “gaze” of the artist inscribed with Care. To lift the nearly invisible process of material and organic nature into sight and consciousness and restore it to itself, to its own unique beauty, also restoring to the sacred dimension (that is to itself) what is usually disregarded as unimportant (useless) or simply com modified (as useful): acts of “preservation,” “cherishing” and “safe-keeping” articulated within Heidegger’s discourse on Care.

While the silkworms weave their transformative weaving, Presa unweaves the strands so that we can see the constitutive threads, both natural and metaphoric. The stages of the silkworms’ metamorphoses and the production of silk are archived in separate drawers and compartments of the cabinet: The poppy seed sized eggs, the hatching larva, the slow-motion silkworm eating the mulberry and preparing to cocoon itself and the still, silent, shrouded cocoons, like a drawer full of clouds, and then, in another compartment, the raw silk, and the processed spun silk thread spilling out, incandescent with reflected light.

* Cultivation, in Heidegger’s double sense “to dwell” and “to plant,” is a concept which combines Care of the world with Care of one’s own soul, as we have seen in the cultivating of a garden by Derek Jarmen who cultivates and heals a neglected landscape even as he cultivates and heals himself. Presa’s cultivation represents an inseparable collaboration between the culture of the animal itself (which cannot survive without human “tending,” human Care) and the culture of the sericultivator.

---

57 Derrida, Silkworm, op cit. p.33.
58 Conversation with Presa on May 2, 2008, recorded in note form.
59 Iris Murdoch, Sovereignty, op cit. p.33.
60 The silkworm through thousands of years of adaption to human cultivation is unable to provide for itself in nature.
who, like the silk worm, is also a natural “maker.”\textsuperscript{61} The “dwelling” is a habitation, in this case, and the planting and cultivating a growth and a tending of “production.” The weaving of the silkworms, the “spinning” of the philosopher’s texts, become the weaving of the sericultivator, (the artist in this case) who, like Penelope weaving and unweaving, slowing time down to a standstill, also understands (as Derrida reiterates) that the cloth that emerges from this loom will be a shroud.\textsuperscript{62}

![Image](image.png)  

Figure 5. The raw cocoon silkscreen.

While the text frays out onto the walls, unfolding its line as screen and screed, the artist pulls out delicate nests, wombs of silk cocoon, from one large raw silk pouch, unlining each lining, by extruding each one out of itself, like the extrusions of the silkworm itself, who turns itself inside out in order to eventually transform into itself. This veil, spun out to fragile transparency, is the veil that Derrida names as nameless:

\textsuperscript{61} Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.” Heidegger draws out the etymologies of “\textit{bauen}” – “to dwell,” “to build,” as well as “to care for.” “\textit{Bauen}” also means “to cultivate” (as in growing and tending to planting) and “construct” (buildings). He writes of “cultivation”: “The old ‘buan’ not only tells us that bauen, to build, is really to dwell. The old word ‘bauen’, which says that man is insofar as he dwells, this word bauen however also means \textit{at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine.}” (my emphases) These words all fall within Heidegger’s etymologies of “\textit{bauen}” – to Care. And, as regards the relationship between building (dwelling) and cultivating, he writes: “Both modes of building- building as cultivating, Latin, colera, cultura, and building as the raising up of edifices, aedificare – are comprised within genuine building, that is, dwelling.” (p.101). For a discussion of the relationship between “dwelling” and “cultivating” (as forms of Care) see the previous section, addressing the work of Gregory Burgess, “The Care of Place.”

\textsuperscript{62} Derrida, “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” op cit. p.90.
The great Savoir, one might say then, is this: not to name la voile, reticence and modesty...know how not to go too far, how to hold in reserve what would be too visible, and keep it silent, another way of veiling...

The silk “voile” that Presa has suffered to stretch and extend to its tensile limit, pulling the silk fibers to their thinnest film, to a fragile point of tearing, or the substance no longer able to cohere but disappearing into liminal light: joint production and fabrication of the artist and the silkworms- could be named as luminous winding cloth, a textile that might attend a transfiguration or resurrection; simultaneously, a textile with pockets, pouches, wombs of receptivity; receptacles, to hold and preserve, but also to engender and produce. Either way (both ways) a space of feminine love and transformation.

Figure 6. Elizabeth Presa writing texts on the wall of the gallery

---

63 Derrida, op cit. p.63. “The veil” is a central metaphor for philosophy and the philosophical project in Derrida’s writing. In “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” he refers to it in a kind of Old Testament prophet’s lament: “You poor thing: finishing with the veil will always have been the very movement of the veil: un-veiling, unveiling oneself, reaffirming the veil in unveiling. …Finishing with the veil is finishing with self.” “Silkworm” (op cit. pp. 25 and 28). And later: “Save that something else already really had to be at work, something else than this old so old history of veils, that tiresome, tireless, tired out history which I’m leaving behind me and which is running after me, a history that I knew, that I will have known too well how to do. Do too well, there’s the fault, begin to do too well.” (“Silkworm,” op cit. p.40.) Bennington also points to the centrality of Derrida’s discourse on the veil in “Silkworm”: “…what’s at stake in A Silkworm of One’s Own? Veils, veiling and unveiling: nothing less than the truth or the Truth.” Bennington, email to Presa, October 12, ’07, my emphasis.
Conclusion

…in the keeping silence of reticence, that is, that figure of rhetoric that consists in saying more through silence than eloquence itself.64

There is a silent conversation...a material conversation about love and loss, a “mourning for mourning” that slows the transitory by giving it material form and permanence; there is the solicitude of physical touch and gesture of Care embodied in the artwork, which communes and communicates Care through its materiality.

Transience, the fragile and ephemeral nature of things, is underlined in this work through metaphors of the silkworms’ organic processes: the moltings and sheddings of skins; the “end-game” of exponential growth; the liminal “death” of metamorphoses, the self-veiling and shrouding of the silkworms. In the midst of these “diminutions”65 there is the consolation of the cycles of life: in the midst of change, continuity; in death, a re-birth. The work reveals transformation and duration in the midst of change, in the natural unfolding of the organic cycle presented but also in the metaphoric and material qualities invested in the art work itself and everything that surrounds it: qualities of patience, reticence, attention, love; a sensibility for refinement and beauty and the inherent and enduring affirmation of the artist’s touch. While the work’s “inward gesture” of Care represents, perhaps, what Foucault describes as a “return to oneself,”66 the physical object is imbued through its qualities of “making” with “concern and solicitude,” for its own mourning-and ours: the art work of self-Care, that cultivates Care.

65 Derrida, op cit. p.21.
Figure 7. Silk cocoon screen and text inscribed on the wall.

Figure 9. Gallery walls with text transcribed from emails
Chapter 2.4

The Care of Intimacy: Interiors and ‘Things’ in the filmmaking of Paul Cox. *A Woman’s Tale* and other films

“…they (the films)...ask another question: what does it mean to be human?”

“Art is a mixture of vision and kindness.”

“…kindness brings us closer to the child, closer to the gods.”

1 “Kindness,” is one of the aspects of Care proposed by Ricoeur, discussed in Chapter 1, Writing Care. Ricoeur cites “kindness,” “pity,” “sympathy” as words of “solicitude.” “Kindness” is one of the terms that Cox uses consistently in talking about “what matters” to him in filmmaking and in life. Adam Phillips, in his book *On Kindness*, (op cit, p.29) discusses kindness as a form of interpersonal subjectivity, an innate form of sociability, whose origins lie in, the concept of sympathy. “Phillips writes of kindness: “Kindness’s original meaning of kinship or sameness has stretched over time to encompass sentiments that today go by a wide variety of names – sympathy, generosity, altruism, benevolence, humanity, compassion, pity, empathy – and that in the past were known by other terms as well, notably philanthropia (love of mankind) and caritas (neighbourly or brotherly love). Phillips suggests that without the mutual belonging that kindness signifies, (“We mutually belong to each other”), we are lonely and alienated and our humanity cannot be fulfilled (p.4). In the film, *A Woman’s Tale* (1991), “Martha,” the main protagonist, who lives a life of “kind solicitude” for self and others, reflects peoples’ “unkindness” back on them, saying, “unfriendliness kills you.” In her character Cox’s themes of isolation, loneliness and human frailty are played out against the redemptive possibilities of love and kindness. The final words of the dying woman are, “Keep love alive.”

Introduction

In nearly four decades of practice, Paul Cox has distinguished himself as an independent filmmaker of, “little films about ordinary, forgotten people.” In these deeply personal films Cox has established enduring themes of Care that address the fragility of love and intimacy, home and homelessness and the pervasive loneliness of the human condition. In 1975 he made a 22 minute film, *We Are All Alone, My Dears*, which established his narratives of Care very early on- along with his enduring interest in neglected subjects, such as old age and dying, and at this time, too, establishing a working methodology of ensemble collaboration, which continues today.

*We Are All Alone, My Dears*, is a compassionate, clear-eyed study of the lives of elderly women in an “aged care” facility – a “home” for the elderly, where segregated by gender, and exiled as the dying, the women live out an apparently empty existence, a life where the absence of Care could be characterized, in the terms of this thesis, as Care *without mourning*: the “Care” that does *not* nurture the dying inhabitants toward transformation and a “good death.” The documentary is viewed through the eyes of one of the elderly residents, Jean Campbell, a former actor of Cox’s, who describes the institution as a “waiting room for death,” a concept that Cox explores later in *A Woman’s Tale* (1991). The film carefully documents the mind-numbing routine and lack of sensory, social or intellectual stimulation thought necessary for the very elderly in an impersonal institutional setting, shown cinematographically in the film through the re-occurring image of a nylon curtain blowing listlessly in and out of a featureless window, in a room devoid of personal “things.” The film establishes a critique of this “care” of the elderly as *bereft* of Care. Later films, such as *A Woman’s Tale*, (1991) and *Innocence*, (2000) develop some of these concerns and, by contrast, assert a positive view of the elderly and the dying as full, imaginative and humorous human beings with complex social and emotional needs.

We have discussed concepts of the sheltering nature of “dwelling” in the section on the work of Gregory Burgess, where we have seen that dwelling is the originary

---

source of Care, that both derives from Care and produces Care. It carries notions of “in-dwelling,” of “being at home” and in its mythic beginnings, narrated by Heidegger, we have also seen that Care as dwelling on the earth is identical with being human. If the human is alienated from their dwelling, the capacity to live a fulfilled human existence is disrupted, as we saw in the section on Burgess and the making of the Cultural Centre, Brambuk, for a dispossessed Indigenous people. Themes of displacement are common to the practices of Burgess, Jarman and Cox. In each of these studies of art practice we see the impulse to heal this “break” by re-endowing shelter and belonging as “dwelling.” Themes of war and the response of the artist to war are present in these three artists. Burgess characterizes his birth date saying, “I was born between the dropping of the two bombs.” He speaks of his awareness of the trauma of the returned soldiers in his early years. Two young uncles suffering from “war neurosis,” one of whom died “in deep sleep treatment,” are present as formative childhood memories. Burgess has identified closely with the trauma and dispossession of the Australian Indigenous and chosen to make a practice that has as its main focus “what matters”: the Care generated where there is real need. Jarman, similarly, chose to make his transformative garden on the degraded coast of Dungeness, the very place where the last stand of the Second World War on European soil had taken place – and his materials of healing place-making were, as we have seen, the materials abandoned as war debris at that time. Cox immigrated from Holland in 1965, having been born in Venlo, on the Dutch/German border in 1940. He describes his childhood in these terms: “In the first five years of my life I witnessed nothing but death and destruction… everything …turned into rubble. For the next five years I walked through the ruins of our town…” He writes of, “That continuous sense of loss.” Cox’s childhood memories of war and destruction are shown as flashback memories connected to Martha (Shiela Florance) in A Woman’s Tale. In the film the inhuman destruction (the “care-lessness”) of war is played out as a secondary anti-war theme, contrasted with Martha’s leitmotiv, “Keep love alive.”

Both Cox and Burgess are artists who endow dwelling where it has been lost and make place within that dwelling for mourning and transformation: the work of Care. While dwelling is a more tangible concept in architecture, we will discuss how

---

4 Burgess in conversation with the writer. 10/6/10. He is referring to the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Burgess’ birth date is, 8/8/45.
5 Cox, Reflections, op cit. p.16.
dwelling is also a matter of inhabitation (with all the attendant aspects of Care) in the work of Cox, too; where the intimate “things” and interiors of his films are cultivated with the Care of dwelling, in turn, producing human intimacy, connectedness and belonging. Intimacy, we have seen in the writing of Levinas and Ricoeur, resides in the interface of human Care. As we have already suggested, artists extend the realm of Care’s cultivation to a wider sphere – to nature and animals, to places and materials, to “things,” as well as to people - and in a concrete form.

Given that Cox is interested in narratives of Care (and is a renowned raconteur), one must ask the question why he makes films rather than writes stories. Apart from the fact that he is someone who was already expressing himself through images – as a successful stills photographer, prior to becoming a filmmaker, we see that he, like the other artists of Care, is impelled to embody and make concrete his images of Care into the space/time of the material world. He provides an insight into this himself, when he writes about the consoling power of memory and dream as they interact with a daily reality which he finds, by contrast, “empty,” and marked by a “continuous sense of loss.” He writes: “… through film I could explore the remote horizons of my dreams. Dreams would become reality in the absolute.” He continues, “That vast emptiness that surrounded and threatened me became habitable.” And again, “Flashbacks” (a temporal insertion in a film) “are memories, frozen in an eternal solid form, so concentrated that no distortion is possible.” The medium of cinematic imagery enables Cox to manifest his evanescent dreams into the material and temporal stability of film, offering the consolation of a more fully inhabited world, a world of duration, where “permanence” can be endowed on the ephemeral. We will discuss the power of “things” in the film Golden Braid (1990) to evoke time, transience and duration, something we have discussed previously in the context of the art work of Care’s response to the mourning of transience through the creation of enduring material objects.

6 Cox, Reflections, op cit. p.76.
7 Cox, Reflections, op cit. p.19.
8 Illuminations – moments of insight and revelation – come as interventions into the everyday, naturalistic world in Cox’s films, with the force of displaced dreams. Richly associative image patterns and symbols are woven through naturalistic narrative. This poetics of cinematography suggests other dimensions of reality – the journey through life in the transformational sense, toward a home in a “universal absolute,” and sometimes, inversely, the search for a half remembered place that may be home, a place where love may have been. We see both these forms of pure cinematic imagery in A Woman’s Tale.
If it is the “materializing” of dreams and stories into light, sound and temporal reality, that makes Cox a filmmaker rather than a writer of books, another powerful aspect of this incarnational aspect of his practice is the collaborative work method, a productive form of sociability and friendship. Similarly to Burgess’ collaborative practice, the craft of filmmaking enables (and demands) Cox to work in collaborative modes that give expression to his desire to nurture intimacy and solicitude with his actor friends over a lifetime: many of his ensemble, and technical crew who started with him in the ‘sixties and ‘seventies are still working with him today. That is another entire study in Care and solicitude of itself, characterized by extraordinary depths of friendship, trust and Care in the arts. Having made an extensive study of Burgess’ collaborative mode and in the interest of uncovering something additional about the cultivation of Care, we will focus in on just a fragment of the vast project of Cox’s filmmaking, but note in passing that collaboration (as with other art practices of Care, particularly architecture and filmmaking) is the very matrix out of which the work arises.

In the next section of this study of Care in Cox’s filmmaking, we will focus on A Woman’s Tale, which enables us to explore one of the means by which Cox cultivates Care within his narratives and fictive settings through his intimate treatment of the “things” that make up the world of his subjects, as images of Care. As we shall see, it is, in part, the cultivation of “things” in Cox’s film world that communicates Care as intimacy and dwelling.

---

9 In his book, *Agencies of the Frame, Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture*, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2010), Michael Tawa writes of the “materiality” of cinema as inseparable from its technical “materialities,” describing it in terms of, “the character, weight, presence and transition of the image; the conditions of light and sound, but also the means and know-how which produce a film, including the apparatuses, materials and technologies of film and filmmaking.” p.38.

It is interesting to note that Cox’s work methodologies, described by him as productions of his “rubber band factory” (Reflections, p.189), are low-tech, low-budget, with no “special effects” or complicated camera work. His whole approach tends to eliminate or elide technology- the focus is elsewhere, the skills are other, and it is the people themselves and their stories who are put before us, showing us what it is that he cares about. Until his most recent film, Salvation, (2009) (shot digitally) Cox used 16 and 35 mm film, with its grainy “materiality,” interspersed with archival footage from his hand-held video footage, hand edited. We note that this “low-tech” approach and use of “poor,” ordinary and overlooked materials, means and subjects is common to all four of these studies in art practices of Care.

10 At the conference, *Paul Cox: Miracle Maker*, held at the Centre for Ideas at the Victorian College of the Arts and Music (6,7 August, 2009), crew and actors gathered together to talk about forty years of working with the filmmaker and showed the audience early footage of the film crew making experimental videos as extremely young people in the ‘sixties and ‘seventies.
A Woman’s Tale and Other films.

“Things.
When I say the word, it grows silent; the silence that surrounds things. All motion subsides and becomes contour, and something permanent is formed from the past and the future…”

Rainer Maria Rilke

“I love my things.
They’re my friends and fragments.”

Martha, A Woman’s Tale

“These characters are agglomerations of past and present cultures, scraps from books and newspapers, torn shreds of one’s fine clothing that has become rags, in just the way that a human soul is patched together.”

August Strindberg. Quoted by Cox in Reflections

“What happens to all that hair on the floor?’
“A little Greek man comes and stuffs it into pillow cases.”
“Strange, all that hair on the floor
It’s sad in a way.”

Bernard, Golden Braid

Friedrich Gorenstein wrote in a script that the room smelt of dust, dead flowers and dried ink. I like that very much because I can begin to picture how that interior looks, feel its soul…

Tarkovsky

Figure 1. Martha, in A Woman’s Tale, returns home to her flat.
In the final pages of his memoir, *Reflections*, Cox recounts a visit to his unhappy childhood home in Holland, listing the evocative, memory-laden things that remain in the house:

There is my mother’s worn-out chair and the couch on which she died. Some faded photographs on the dresser. A picture my mother always treasured is falling out of its frame. Her children, three years into the war, clutching at their dolls… The badly-stained carpet with markings of a lifetime. All those years, all those dreams, all that pain and confusion.¹²

These “things” connect Cox to the past, to people, to memories both precious and painful. His sensitivity to the power of ordinary things to evoke loss and transience, but also to console and re tether him to an inhabited, fully presenced world is given expression in his films. Cox’s fictive interiors and their “things” are sites of dwelling and cultivation, of mourning, consolation and intimacy, of secrets and enigmas: sites of Care. As we see from Cox’s own relationship to the familial “things” of his childhood, loss, transience and decay are intimately associated with belonging and the lack of it: to a sense of home and existential homelessness. Heidegger, in writing of the Care-bound nature of dwelling, identifies dwelling with, “a staying with things.” The “things” are receptacles of the Care of dwelling, both holding dwelling and endowing dwelling.

---

In the first scene of *A Woman’s Tale*, (1991), we see Martha, (Shiela Florance) frail, elderly and terminally ill, entering her flat. (Figure1) The atmosphere of her home is domestically European -warmly intimate, *gemütlich*, set in Cox’s own apartment in Melbourne. It is carpeted, deep windowed, padded with cushions, lace curtains, potted ferns, sofas and chairs placed closely, adjacently, for gathering. The camera, (our eye and hand,) slowly pans over (looks at and touches) the object- laden bookcases: their ornaments, clocks, books, photographs, paintings, flowers, bric-a-brac - and the walls hung with framed works and mirrors. We see that every surface is inscribed with Martha’s memories and affections. The objects are arranged with her personal *touch* of Care: a framed photo- a memento beside it: a music box which plays a worn-out tune she remembers- and dispenses the cigarettes that accompany her reveries.

Martha’s things are not *objet d’art*, valued because they are valuable, on the contrary, they are commonplace, ordinary things: “cultured” only in that Martha has attended to them, cultivated them. In the course of the film we see her handle her things individually - pick them up and reflect on them, speak of them as “friends,” recount their memories, feel their absence when she is removed to hospital: she maintains her relationship with them. She cultivates them with her solicitous attention. She endows them with Care. Her collected objects are layered, shadowed, sheltering: inhabited with a life fully lived and the memories held properly in them as part of life – not empty decoration or nostalgia. “I’m not into souvenirs,” declares Martha. “Things” of Care in Martha’s world are not commodities of a consumerist society: they cannot be

---

13 The images used throughout this chapter are taken from the moving image, as there are not suitable “stills” available from Cox’s archive that show the interior and “things” of Martha’s flat in the particularity I require. The poor quality of definition is not completely out of character with the film which is shot in very dark and grainy images.
disposed of and replaced with new things. It is the “singleness” of things; their mnemonic presence, their quality of ensoulment that she addresses. They are represented as inhabitations of her Care. Martha’s personal traits of connectedness and love extend to her objects of memory– she endows them with an interactive subjectivity: “I like the things of my life…I can’t live without them…They’re friends and fragments…Shreds of once fine clothing that have become rags,” she says. In return the things of her personal world “hold” and “preserve” her indwelling, inscribing it with Care and intimacy. A cultivation of Care that cultivates Care.

Similarly the interiors she inhabits are imbued with the qualities of Care: shadowed and endowed with mood, they offer her a protective place of refuge and solicitude, a place of mourning, as she dies. The light filters through layered curtains – in contrast with the glare of the “outside world” where trams noisily arrive and depart, screeching on their metal tracks, ringing penetrating bells. Martha, at these times, peers out through the framing window into the streetscape, anxiously, as though the tram were death itself arriving, departing. Martha gazes bleakly out of her darkened window; with her we gaze into an obscure outer space. Her interior space protects, holds and nurtures her. What Martha has invested in the interior and its things, as tending and attending, is returned to her as a form of solicitude. We come to know Martha’s soul life partly through this interior world of cared for and caring things and spaces.

15 Figure 3. Martha plays her music box which also dispenses her cigarettes.
By contrast, her dying, incontinent neighbor, Billy (Norman Kaye), whom she cares for with the unorthodox camaraderie of the dying, lives in a flat that is devoid of intimacy or the personal: it has no sign of Care- that is, Billy has no mutuality; no friendship or connectedness with his things and surrounds: he does not Care for them and they do not Care for him. His “things” are what Martha describes as “war junk”: insignias and war memorabilia – emptied out signs of his long-gone profession. To Martha they do not carry the personal or the intimate as an emotional resonance because he cares neither for them or himself. His “things” of the past signify only that: that he is captured by the past. His empty, over-lit flat seems to Martha, “like a waiting room,” signaling the life unlived: a waiting room for death. Billy is not consoled or supported by his surrounds; he remains isolated and lonely even in the midst of his own “dwelling.” His interior with its sad, few “things” pictures the “Carelessness” of living without proper “dwelling.” Martha is intimately connected to her things – “I love my things,” she repeats twice to Anna, her district nurse and best friend in the course of the film. We are reminded of Cox’s recounting of the initial prompt for this story: seeing (in real life) an old woman standing in the midst of her burnt-out home collecting her “charred things,” “…putting blackened objects that were dear to her in a plastic bag.”

A pitiful picture of the human Care invested in “things” outlasting the physical permanence of those “things,” like ash traces of dwelling where dwelling has been vaporised. As we saw from Cox’s own relationship to the familial “things” of his childhood, loss, transience and decay are intimately associated with belonging and the lack of it: to a sense of home and existential homelessness.

---

17 In Reflections, Cox writes about the loneliness of the migrant experience and his sense of being bereft of “dwelling.” “My first months in Australia were terrible; I walked the deserted streets in the greatest despair. Where was the village square? Where were the people? What sort of life was this?” Reflections op cit. p.56
And about homesickness: (Reflections. op cit.) p.82, “Australia …helped me define that question, where is home? I was always homesick, but not for Holland or Europe. The space and vastness of this land has helped me to accept that I have no home. Homesickness is a strange disease. The Germans call this particular brand of homesickness fernweh.” The search for dwelling, for “home,” is an ongoing theme in Cox’s oeuvre, represented in part, in the solicitous Care he endows on objects and interiors as “subjects” of communion and belonging, of “dwelling,” in his films.
In Cox’s films, interiors and “things” are laden with memory; they “preserve,” “protect” and “cherish” the past (as Heidegger insists Care should) as well as sustain the present with a sense of continuity: they mediate the unfolding of time, “Life is chaos but there’s something logical and humane in memories,” Cox writes in Reflections. Well-loved things connect the generations; connect the individual life to time: weaving the threads of the past and the future together and helping people dwell deeply into their lives in the present. In a documentary about Cox, Cox talks about clocks and watches, describing his attachment to them:

I collected clocks. I like the actual mechanism. I felt...you can care for these things. I wanted to take them home, fix them and protect them. All these mechanical things were made by people who love what they are doing. The watch used to be part of a family and that was passed over to mother and mother passed it to the daughter. And if anything went wrong with it you went to the watchmaker on the corner and had a conversation about life and death. All of that has been taken out of our lives.

This statement by Cox contains the main themes of Care in relation to “things”: self-identification with the “thing,” as relationship, connectedness; the desire to repair and restore (the therapeutic impulse); the sensibility toward time materialized in the “thing,” as transience and death, and as the continuity of life and generations; the “thing” as a site of Care: producing and being produced by Care.

---

18 Figure 4. Martha picks up, handles and tells the stories of many of her “things” in the course of the film.
19 Cox, Reflections, op cit. p.207.
In Cox’s *oeuvre* there are stories of obsession where objects of memory take over from life and the past contests the present. In the film, *Golden Braid* (1990) the protagonist, Bernard, (Christopher Haywood) is an orologist and collector of *objets d’art*. His collected *objets* speak of love and death, absence and longing to him. When he finds a blond plait of a woman’s hair in the concealed drawer of a Venetian cabinet he has acquired, it comes to signify a fantasy woman he has loved and lost, who is present to him again through the fetishised braid, while his living lover sleeps beside him. He forms an erotic relationship to the braid, which gradually displaces his real-life lover, Terese, (Gosia Dubrowolska). “Things” for Bernard are troublingly emotionally imminent. They disturb his sense of being present; make claims on his soul, his heart. His acute sensitivity to the past, to memory and to transience, virtually unhinges his sense of reality. His *objets* are memory ghosts that intrude on him and haunt him, displacing all possibility of love and sensuous engagement with the world. His “things” disable him with melancholia.

---

Figure 5. The opening images of *Golden Braid* are all set on the face of a clock. The film abounds in clock imagery and clock sounds. Time, as the signifier of transience and death, is the theme of the film. All images are taken by the artist, from DVD, with the permission of Cox. The image shows Terese, (Gosia Dobrowolska), imaged on a clock face in the opening credits.
In the chapter on the work of Elizabeth Presa, we discussed Freud’s differentiation between melancholy and mourning. As mourning is a central aspect of Care this is important to our understanding of its relation to both melancholy and Cox’s Care of mourning. Freud believed that mourning, “the work of mourning,” was the healthy resolution of grief and loss, whereas melancholy was an unresolved mourning that has a pathological effect of depression. Freud states, “In melancholia, the relationship to the object is not a simple one, it is complicated by the conflict of ambivalence.” This would appear to describe Bernard’s state of mind, in particular his fetishization of the braid of hair, but his relationship to his objet d’art suggests that he is also someone with an heightened sensitivity to transience and loss and this is mediated and eventually healed by his therapeutic cultivation of these “things.” As with artists of Care, Bernard’s “objects” are also “subjects” and he can transform through his melancholy identification with them: melancholy leading to revelation and transformation.

---

22 Figure 6. The “Golden Braid” found by Bernard in a secret compartment of the Venetian cabinet.
Bernard gives Terese a one hundred year old watch and comments, “It’s never stopped ticking.” He ties that to loss, death and regret- a melancholic, morbid regret, saying, “She’s dead – the woman who owned that watch.” “Beauty, youth, hope and smiles – shouldn’t these be eternal things?” he laments. Somehow (perversely he thinks) objects endure, but humans are transient. Bernard refuses transience, and is overwhelmed by melancholia. Time, the theme of the film, is to him the great devourer. He states “I regret all from the past, and I weep for those that have lived – the hours slip by, constantly stealing from my life.” In the film clocks strike, clang, chime and shimmer as the constant reminder of time’s passage. Death and memory, memory and death. The objects themselves have mysterious lives and memories. In Bernard’s reverie, a dream sequence presents the Venetian cabinet’s conjured images of Venice to us – a dark watery dream of Venice with its scintillating lights reflected in a deep penumbra. Bernard wants to restore life to the memories by restoring the piece, “it’s like winding life backwards,” he says, “you make new time when it’s fixed. You make new links between the living and the dead.” The impulse to repair and restore has been encountered in the previous sections as a healing aspect of Care in the arts: in Cox’s films it is inscribed as the restoration, not only of “things” but also of time in the face of transience.

Figure 7.  

---

23 In Reflections, Cox recounts his own relationship to death and decay. The description reminds one of the melancholic poets with whom Freud had his walk and conversation about transience, recounted in Chapter 2.3, “When I was about 15, it suddenly occurred to me that I was going to die, that my mother was going to die, my father, my sisters, my brother. Behind every face there was a skull. During my whole life I’ve never been able to forget the total horror that struck me… It seemed so useless to keep going – to keep going to school, to eat and sleep, to laugh and cry. Why live and love, only to be wasted in the end? This fact presented itself with such totality that a terrible sense of doom pervaded my being.” These themes of a melancholic sensitivity to transience and death weave through the whole of Cox’s oeuvre. (Reflections, op cit.) p.43. see also, (Reflections, op cit.) p.199.

24 Figure7. Hand held video sequence inserted as the “memories” of the Venetian cabinet. These memories haunt Bernard.
The claims of his objects and their memories strand him in the past, until one of them, a painting of women at their Vespers, reveals its truth to him. It is an old Dutch oil, hanging among the clocks, that the camera has meditatively scanned and contemplated several times during the film. Bernard studies the painting again; the camera moves slowly over its serene surface. It shows the women in their Dutch caps leaning inward in prayer; the muted blues and browns softened with time to a quiet pink-grey. He stays with it, interrogating its calm surfaces. It reveals duration to him – it connects him to time as something fully presenced, so that the vertigo of transience can be borne. It consoles his melancholy by confirming it. He says, addressing the absent Terese, “I see you now. I hold you in this life. I understand the gift you gave me. You accepted me. I want to love you. All of you. Is that possible?” The Care of time and transience, materialized as the artwork, produces the consolation of duration, of continuity. Within the frame of the film, Cox demonstrates the very mechanism of the artwork to communicate Care: the image of the painting presences duration and the inhabitation of self in the present (in this case with an image of meditative daily prayer).

Rilke, the German poet of “things” writes of this potential in the “thing,” the “art-thing,” to endow duration. He states “The thing is definite. The art thing (Kunst-Ding) must be even more definite; removed from all accident, torn away from all accident, lifted out of time and given to space, it has become enduring, capable of eternity.”

Figure 8. The Dutch oil painting of women attending Vespers.

---

26 Figure 8. The Dutch oil painting of women attending Vespers.
In *A Woman’s Tale*, the mysterious, mystical *inner* life of objects is also revealed, when Anna, Martha’s nurse and close friend, returns alone to Martha’s flat to collect Martha’s pet canary. She enters the dark flat and, devoid of Martha’s vivid presence, the shadowy dwelling expresses absence as the camera slowly scans the familiar walls and shelves with their intimate associations with Martha’s suffering and her impending death. The shadows have engulfed the objects and furnishings and an obscurity veils the space, a blankness. Without Martha’s loving presence, the objects have fallen silent; they have fallen out of communion. (We notice how “things” fall back into being merely “inanimate objects” if they are not “cultivated” in the human sphere of Care.) Anna pauses to dwell reflectively, mournfully in the space. She is overtaken by an image from Martha’s memories, a private *leitmotif* of Martha’s secret reverie: the walk in the “white forest” with her father. This is a consoling childhood memory of deep significance to Martha, previously only encountered by us, the viewer, in Martha’s moments of anguished aloneness.²⁷ Somehow as Anna communes in sorrowful mourning with Martha’s beloved dwelling, a transfer takes place, as though the objects had rendered up their stored memory to the younger woman. In this dream/memory flashback Anna (and we, the viewer) are immersed in Martha’s memories which have been encoded into her surroundings; imbued in her “things.” In a mystical transference, this primal memory becomes available to Martha’s most beloved friend as though the things and spaces occupied with Care could *impert* Care, the Care of Martha’s soul life. It is at this moment of insight and revelation that we see Anna resolve to bring Martha back to her home, from hospital, to die and (if necessary) to protect Martha’s right, and *need*, to die in her own dwelling – by committing euthanasia in that place.

²⁷ Cox recounts this story as a personal memory in *Reflections.*

“One day my father found the time to take me for a walk. For some reason we went on our own. Not far from the house were the woods with small farms scattered all around. My father warned me that the further we went, the longer the trip home, so I had to be tough and stand up to it. At the edge of the town we found a small creek with many fishes and large dragon flies. A tiny bridge with peeling paint. Then we entered the forest. How soft that carpet of green on which we walked. How dark those large, mysterious trees. My father kept explaining things to me. Every bird, every tree had a name. I wanted him to be silent. I remember the soft wind, the birds, the clouds and especially the light. Everything so dark, so mysterious. Then suddenly, a strong shaft of light when the sun burned through the clouds. It illuminated the forest, penetrated the soil, took my breath away. Deep down I felt that I was witnessing something very special that would never leave me.” The final monologue Martha speaks in *A Woman’s Tale* are taken from this memory. (*Reflections.* op cit.) p.20.
Martha opens *A Woman’s Tale* with a soliloquy about death, “How old we all are.” Her soliloquy—a meditation on how to die with courage—continues throughout the film, in the midst of other conversation.  

Martha gazes into her mirror, sharing this reflective frame with Anna, musing on transience, “Gone, like the smoke on your last cigarette.” Sometimes she gazes into the shadowed windows, frames, doorways of her interior spaces, continuing her meditation on death, “Beauty in death,” she reflects, “you have to fall back on character.” Martha is someone “prepared for death”: “I’ve been prepared for seventy-eight years,” while embracing whatever she can of life even as she dies. Martha’s subjective “interior” world—her values, dreams, attachments, her memories and hopes, show us a character who (unlike Bernard) can mourn without collapsing into melancholy.

The film investigates this delicate state of mourning cinematographically. There are long hours of lonely solitude, of sorrowful contemplation of life’s losses—expressed visually in images of the increasingly crepuscular interior: the slow, shadowy unfurling of Martha’s cigarette smoke in the dusk, the deep penumbra—dissolving her isolated form in the surrounding nocturnal interior; the painful starkness of her wasted figure in the bath dissolving into darkness, (Figure 10). Envelopment in the shadowed interior’s atmosphere expresses intimacy: *we, the viewer,* are intimately included in her mourning. There is no sharp-lit edge to the image frame to distance us: the darkness of the cinema space merges with the darkness of the cinematic space. We observe Martha’s pensive moments of solitude and suffering. In silence she lies in the bath in the dark. We experience her interiority; her deepening mood. We dwell with

---

28 The “white wood,” the waterfall and the windswept treetops. Three of what Cox calls his “crucial images” from nature, representing Martha’s memories, which are, at one point, transferred to her “carer,” Anna.

29 The Care of death is a major theme in this film—preparation for the “good death” and questions about what makes up the “good life,” underpin the philosophical intention of the film.
her reflectiveness, in intimacy, in shared mourning. Brought in close to suffering we are invited to feel empathy. In the cinematographic image of Care engendered by Care, Care is engendered in us, the viewer. This empathetic communication is achieved cinematographically, in images of Care – most poignantly in the tender caress of the camera’s “touch” as it compassionately follows Martha’s hand over her own naked, withered body immersed in the bath: the camera lingering, without horror, on the sunken breast and protruding skeleton of her shrunken frame. The light swims across her body in the bath’s water, not turning away from the shocking physical

---

30 Figure 10. Martha sits alone in her flat, smoking in the dark.
31 Figure 11. Martha, near death, in the bath, in one of the “images of Care” that characterize this film.
reductions of the human body at the end of life, the camera records the shriveled skin and hollow forms with a compassionate gaze that includes the subjectivity of the old woman – her own sense of loss - her own sense that her life is diminishing. Mourning for her physical losses, her emotional losses, is held in the deep shadows of the imagery, almost obscuring her form. We mourn with her. Care is engendered.32 (Figure11).

The film does not deny Martha this mourning, nor ours. The interior of her flat mirrors her moods. It is an extension of her, like an embodied “Other” –responsive, embracing, loving, it mourns with her. It is the place she insists on returning to die because this is where she has incarnated Care, the Care of death and dying, into her material world, her “things” and interiors. In return, this world offers her consolation, solicitude and the “good death” she had prepared in that space.33

The Care of “things” and interiors, we see, is intertwined with memory, mourning, and preserving the past as well as with the solicitude of connectedness to our things in the present. In Cox’s work we see too, the concealed life of things and interiors –their capacity to “hold” and “preserve” dreams as well as to console human loneliness by affirming belonging and dwelling: “in that with which mortals stay: in things.”34 Cox throws light on the capacity of “things,” when cultivated with Care, to deepen and extend the communication of Care in the arts.

32 In an article by Alexander Garcia Düttmann, Idiosyncracy and Film, written for the 2009 conference, Paul Cox: Miracle Maker, Düttmann explores the relevance of cinematographic “touch” in Cox’s films, saying, “Cox teaches me that the intensity of a feeling is physical as much as spiritual. Hence the relevance of touch. Here, between the somatic and the intelligible… which belongs neither to the body nor to the mind.” (p.1). And again, “… a seeing that is a way of touching and being touched,…” (p.2).

33 The “good death” has been philosophized as the aim of “the good life” from the Ancients to Heidegger, Derrida and the contemporary philosophers, and is intrinsic to the artwork of Care. Andrei Tarkovsky writes in Sculpting Time, (trans. Kitty hunter-Blair, University of Texas Press Austin. 1986), p. 43, “The aim of art is to prepare a person for death, to plough and harrow his soul, rendering it capable of turning to the good.”

When Martha returns to her flat for the last time, she stands in the doorway of her living room and surveys the interior and all its “things” for a long, last meditative gaze. The camera takes a 360 degree pan of the entire dwelling, as through Martha’s eyes, and with a lingering “touch.” These images are taken from that all inclusive last “look” at Martha’s flat.
Conclusion to Part 1.

This thesis poses two questions: Can a poetics of Care construct a theoretical and practical framework through which an art practice can be understood? and How does an art practice contribute to an understanding of (the poetics of) Care? Chapter 1 responds to the first question through a review of the relevant philosophical literature. Chapter 2 approaches the second question through the critical analysis of the work of four artists, Derek Jarman, Gregory Burgess, Elizabeth Presa and Paul Cox.

As the questions implied, it was expected that a productive dialogue would emerge between a theory of Care and certain art practices that place Care at the heart of their poetics. It emerges that this is the case. Partly this is because the philosophers of Care themselves turn to the artwork to deepen their understanding of Care (as we have seen, both Düttmann and Derrida interact with the work of Elizabeth Presa and Michael Tawa and Paul Carter find reflection on Burgess’ work fruitful). The qualities ascribed to the artwork (materiality in its different sensory manifestations) have a stimulating effect on the philosophical discourse of Care. This is exemplified in the resistance of the artwork to discursive paraphrase. Because it carries weight, for example, the artwork can articulate aspects of Care that matter but are not matters of taste. Düttmann's awareness of the double bind of the artwork, that it both solicits our Care and is a burden, a source of anxiety, illustrates the productive gain to
philosophical discourse of engagement with the artwork. Equally, the attention the artwork asks for provides Iris Murdoch with a concrete call to build ethical values.

One valuable discovery of bringing a variety of art practices into dialogue with a range of thinkers about Care is to elucidate the variousness of Care's connotations. While Heidegger, for example, focuses primarily on the relationship of self to self (or Being) - a formulation that is notably abstract, despite his emphasis on nearness - the gardening of Jarman, the shelters produced by Burgess or the contract between actor and film-maker integral to Cox's work ask for a far more active and inter-active conception of Care. Levinas's ethics of intimacy answers to this need, although it is Ricoeur's nuancing of Levinas's thought to focus on friendship that best captures the thematic concerns - as well as technical demands - of Cox's film-making and Burgess' “responsive” and “reciprocal” processes.

The case is made in Chapter 1 that some of the key attributes of Care point to its distinctively feminine character. Kristeva's account of the constitutive psychological makeup of the feminine argues for a unique and seemingly innate relation to Care. The maternal example of selfless love seems to be a fundamental model of Care and also a possible mode of Care in the arts, where artists have notably “sacrificed” themselves to “what matters.” In this sense when Düttmann speaks of Care in an art practice as something that “goes beyond” the artist, he may be speaking of “Agape” as the typology of Care that is given by the mother to her infant.

But the object of this thesis is not to re inscribe inhibiting binaries: just as the dialogue between thinking about and working through associated respectively with philosopher and artist produces new figures of speech and new negotiations of matter, so the gathering of Care produced in this way allows for differences to be cared for. This figure of weaving, traditionally regarded as a woman's craft but skillfully deployed by the male philosophers in our discussion serves to make this point. Derrida understands most poignantly the realm of discretion over which Care presides when he veils us with the cloth of mourning, the “provisional mourning” that “anxiously” keeps “vigil” over our own death and anticipates the death of the other. This veil has threads of “remembering,” “gathering,” “holding” and “preserving.” It is through the voile of this cloth we see life most vividly.
Evidently, the descriptions of Care discussed in Chapter 1 apply in a special way to the relationship the artist has with his/her materials. Concern for the Other, both as empathetic “solicitude” and as an ethics of just relationship, have their counterparts in the judgement and respect that the artist uses in relation to the human and non-human participants in the artmaking process. Mourning, theoretically inscribed at the centre of Care as Heidegger’s “burden,” and developed by Derrida as “mourning for mourning,” the mourning that must have no end, has, it emerges, a particular resonance in the context of the artist's engagement with the non human world where the office of cultivation can be understood as a reflexive process in which Care is materialised as an abiding concern with that which must die and be renewed.

If theories of Care help unfold the motivation and meaning of the artworks under discussion, the reverse is also true. The evidence of Chapter 2 is that the multisensory materialisation of Care in the artwork not only renders concrete the abstract formulations of philosophy - it also brings into question the adequacy of supposing that Care can be thought abstractly. The evidence for this finding can be summarised under the following headings: the extension of Care to the non-human world; the identification of Care with transiency - and its counterpart, the work Care does in causing things to endure; and, most importantly, the discovery of Care's transactional nature, the fact that the “cultivation” of Care involves not simply the application of an ethical category but the production of it as a site of caring through the integrity of the art practice itself. In this regard it is not only human Others that the artwork solicits but the non-human world of plants, animals, the land with all its eco- systems and the realm of “things,” as well as the radical Other of the sacred. These non-human “Others” can also be cultivated by the artist as loci of habitation, resonant with memory, mourning, human sensibility and fellow feeling.

The fact that the artwork can enfold within it time in its double aspect - of what passes and what remains - is especially helpful in understanding the dynamics of Care, for Care would not arise except in the context of a concern for that passage. The material art object is able to address the “burden” of mourning through its Care of transience and mortality, (the “time-bound” nature of humankind), expressed in its “poor,” ordinary or ephemeral materials, as well as in subject matter which addresses neglect. The transformed and transformative aspects of the materials, processes and content in
the work of Elizabeth Presa show this; likewise, the contingent, “make-do” and *ad hoc* means, which we documented in the work processes and found materials of Jarman. A similar attention to the recuperation and shelter of the overlooked and disregarded is evident in the projects of Burgess and Cox.

At the same time, by materialising their concerns to recuperate the “ordinary” or “poor,” these artists endow what is in danger of disappearance with a quality of duration. Their works serve to stabilize time, and, against the attrition of the fleeting nature of worldly existence, cultivate permanence. *Through* these materials of transience, that speak of suffering and loss, of mourning Care, a *redemptive hope* is inscribed into the artwork of Care. Materials are transformed into “things” of restoration, repair and healing. This materializing of the “burden” of Care is part of the paradoxical gift of the artwork of Care: that through the transformations of materialization, the incarnating of the abstract into the concrete, the “burden” is “lightened.”

“A Poetics of Care” clarifies the role Care plays in “making,” and one of the key findings of this exploration of the Care of making is that this is achieved through the “cultivation” of materials, subjects and processes by the artist. As we described, Heidegger used the term “cultivation” as part of his etymological unfolding of Care’s origins in “dwelling.” Heidegger tells us it is a word that has its roots in both “the soil” (“growing things”) and “culture”: it is a term that enables us to express a relationship between “soil” and “soul,” between nature and culture. In Heidegger’s retelling of the *Cura* myth, (Ch.1) we saw that Heidegger makes clear that humankind, made from clay is *named* for this material: “let it be called ‘*homo*’, for it is made out of *humus* (earth).”¹ As we cultivate the materiality of the world, we cultivate ourselves.

Without overstating it, this thesis has observed a subtle “eco-spirituality”: artworks of Care include *nature* as part of their own nature: they cultivate nature. This cultivation of nature was the entire subject in Jarman’s Garden, at one in Burgess’ place making of building as a “sheltered garden”; cultivated in Presa’s “Silkroom” as a colony of silkworms with its themes of metamorphoses, and in the installation’s materials

---

sourced from nature; and in Cox’s filmmaking, although we only explored a fragment of his vast work, this connectedness to nature is always present in what he calls his “crucial metaphors.” In *A Woman’s Tale* this leitmotif of nature was a waterfall image and “the white forest” memories that intervene into the narrative as dream sequences, expressing profound impulses of the human psyche. Cox incorporates nature imagery into his urban narratives in the form of fragmentary video imagery—dreams, visions, of migratory birds, treetops blown in strong wind, grasses swept, water courses and light dappled water, animals, (the suckling calf in *Golden Braid*), and skies of vast racing clouds: images of longing and yearning.

In all four artworks we see a cultivation of metaphors that re inscribes the incidentals of nature with immense human significance, folding nature into culture through a cultivation of metaphors. In all four artworks the cultivation of nature is inextricably bound up with the cultivation of culture: cultivating memory, mourning, transformation, as images of Care, simultaneously endowing nature with the attention and solicitude of the artwork’s Care through a “poetics,” a making and re-making of nature into art. This is one of the ways artists of Care make a sustained material contribution to a growing ecological awareness where it has become increasingly clear that the “careless” degradation of nature cannot be addressed simply through technology or through discourse alone. The term “cultivation” enables us to elucidate this (inextricable) connection between Care of nature as Care of self, Care of the Other, in art.

In other words - and this will be another benefit of bringing discursive and symbolic texts into dialogue with one another – “cultivation” is not only a goal of hermeneutics - the kind of textual interpretation found in the philosophies of Care - it also signifies “doing”- a verb- “to cultivate.” It communicates “Care at work,” leading us toward an understanding of how the artist works into the matter of our world, (as the gardener works into soil). “Cultivation” communicates that Care at work in art is not something static but something ever becoming. As in the analogy of gardening, the soil that has been “cultivated,” is taken in under the human realm of “culture”: a site of ongoing production.
In this context, we found that the artwork cultivated with Care, *cultivates Care* and goes on cultivating Care (even when the artwork is ephemeral). This thesis found “cultivation” operates not only in the nurturing, the tending and attending (“as to the vine”) of the artist transforming her/his “ordinary” materials through time and labor intensive engagement, but also that the artwork of Care extends Care’s domain by the cultivation of all that surrounds the artwork: its processes, production, means and manner, leaving its legacy of Care as *transformation* in the people experiencing the artwork. As we have seen through the four studies of works of Care, it is the transformative act of “making,” through the cultivation of matter and process that uniquely recasts these elements into something therapeutic, something which can, in turn, cultivate Care.

What are the implications of this work? Writing as a practitioner, it is evident that a more fully articulated understanding of the concerns of Care exercises a critical influence on the evolution of the artwork. Care, its architecture, dynamics, its responsiveness and its capacity to go beyond the self become key aspects of the cultivation of the materials. This finding is embodied in the next section of the thesis in which the practice-based portion of the thesis is narrated. Here, though, the discovery of different permutations of a careful cultivation in the work of four distinguished artists invites the speculation that a poetics of Care can be generalized, or at least that it has broader implications for a contemporary art practice, and perhaps for the critical evaluation of contemporary art production.

The fact that artworks of Care arise *in the margins* of their art discipline and in the margins of society and of critical discourse, is not accidental, and occurs, in part, because the artworks of Care address subjects neglected and marginalized in the “carelessness” of late Capitalism which promotes only its own productions. We have documented the modest subjects, low tech methods and use of ordinary and “poor” materials that characterize these projects but it is also emerges in our research that mainstream critical discourse does not develop a language that articulates the concerns of these works of Care. The language of *solicitude* is needed to articulate these works and bring them into view. It is a language, though, conspicuously absent from the evaluative language of art criticism and even art pedagogy, both of which continue to perpetuate a stand alone ideal of the realized artwork.
In the course of this thesis a “Verhältnis,” a “gathering” and “holding” of naming
“words of Care” has been archived and developed: words such as “friendship,”
“kindness,” “sympathy,” “consolation,” “connectedness,” “love,” reground critical
discourse in fellow feeling, in “kind-ness.” Other terms from this lexicon of Care such
as “pity,” “concern,” “generosity,” and accompanying words of agency: “to mourn,”
“to cherish,” “safe-keeping,” “preserving,” “remembering,” and “cultivating,” not
only denote the necessity to re-engage with the “Others” of the human world but also
with those of the non-human world. As they are mediated, and worked, through the
Careful encounter with the non-human materials to hand, they reintegrate aesthetics
into ethics, re-grounding art practice in an act of cultivation that is open, generous and
vulnerable.

Equipped with a language that can communicate the concerns of the artwork of Care,
a different future is framed. If critical discourse included the language of a poetics of
Care it could ask questions such as, “What would an architecture of “connectedness”
and “kindness” be?” Or, “what would an art practice of “love” and “mourning” bring
to the world?” We could ask, “Can a film offer “infinite solicitude” and “consolation”
to its viewers?” Perhaps briefs for public place and garden design could specify
“healing” as part of their requirement and mediate “communion” and “intimacy” with
nature as part of that caring ethos. These are the sort of questions and considerations
that could produce different outcomes from those conceived under current discourse,
which acts to perpetuate “dis-connectedness,” and “carelessness” through its limited
understanding of Care in the arts. The four art works within this section of the thesis,
and the two art works from my own practice which make up Part 2 of this thesis, exist
within this frame of Care.

Why should a poetics of Care matter to us?

In the Introduction we explored the problem that my thesis, “A Poetics of Care”
addresses: the problem of “carelessness” in the world. That problem is a social,
spiritual and ecological one. My thesis demonstrates that the artwork of Care is
uniquely able to contribute therapeutically to the healing needed in these spheres,
through its responsiveness to Care’s “call,” and proposes a language of Care to
communicate this potential. In this more profound understanding we see that art of
Care is a form of pedagogy (communicative precisely because it is material) that materializes a scheme for good living and good dying. This understanding of the facility of art to heal and transform would be of value to artists, art educators and their students and other readers concerned about their and our world and its design. By bringing the work of philosophy and the work of material making into a dialogue a new synthesis is produced that enables us to communicate Care in the arts through “a poetics of Care.”
Practising Care

Part 2. Chapter 1.

Metamorphoses: Dresses My Mother Wore

This chapter is a brief introduction to a solo exhibition held in the first year of this PhD, in 2006; one of five exhibitions that I have had as a solo practitioner, or participated in, in the course of this study. The other exhibitions were, Reclaiming,
a group show around the theme of ecology;\(^1\) Shelter: On Kindness, a collaborative work with Gregory Burgess, which addressed a text referenced in this thesis, as a work on Care, *On Kindness*, by philosopher, Adam Phillips.\(^2\)\(^3\) Currently Gregory Burgess and I have a collaborative work in *Duetto*, a group exhibition/event on the theme of collaborating artists at the Australian Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide.\(^4\) The fifth exhibition, A Shrine for Orpheus, is fully documented in the second part of this chapter and represents my PhD examination exhibition. Metamorphoses: Dresses My Mother Wore, is briefly introduced to deepen the background knowledge of my art practice as a practice of Care, where the content, materials and making arise out of “concern and solicitude.”\(^5\)

---

5 This exhibition, in documented form, and an accompanying chapter from my thesis on this subject, were selected for presentation at an international conference in Salzburg, Austria: “Probing The Boundaries: Persons, Intimacy, Love.” March 10 – March 13, 2008. It was also presented, in a different form, at the “Out of Bounds”: “Art, Faith and Religiosity” Conference, as a paper and visual documentation. Monash University, Faculty of Art and Design. Aug.20 – Aug. 23, 2008.
The Installation

There is a death, and the awareness of an impending death. The disembodied garments are the trace, their threadbareness mark this evanescence, a kind of unraveling, body and soul. ... this is a nurturing, but maybe in a tragic sense, not of safekeeping and guaranteeing perdurance, but of waking and watching over a perilous going-into oblivion.

This installation comprised three feminine “garments”; empty skin and bone–like structures evoking an absence, a disembodiment. They were installed in a small gallery space, a single room, 3m by about 6m, white painted, internal with no natural light and only one narrow door for entry and exit. The two freestanding “dresses,” Metamorphoses and Rose Thorn Dress (a cast bronze), (fig.2) were hung from the high rafters; their suspension about 250mm from the floor underlying their “ungroundedness”; their floating, apparitional quality. The third work, Arcadian Dress, (fig.1) lay furthest from the entry door against the end wall and was laid out horizontally on old, partially dimmed mirror which rested on an invisible plinth 250mm off the floor. Five copies of a letter, (fig.9) creased and obscured by beeswax,

6 All images by Gregory Burgess unless otherwise acknowledged.
7 Michael Tawa’s email correspondence with the artist during the making of this work, June 25, 2006.
8 Metamorphoses, Dresses my Mother Wore. Span Galleries, Melbourne, 26 September-7 October, 2006.
hung from the ceiling rafters on single white cotton threads between these garments and in a shadowed corner of the room lay an old Globite suitcase, covered in ash, partially open to reveal its emptiness.

Figure 3.

Metamorphoses: drift wood, bound in cocoon silk with torn tulle and silk thread, immersed in beeswax. Waxed letters suspended. 1.5 m. approximately (dimensions vary).

These works were placed intentionally densely; suffocatingly close by each other in an overly small space, creating obstacles to progress through the space and a visual “tangling” in discerning one work from another. Letters floated at eye level, yet one could not steady their movement to read them, as they slowly revolved with the slightest shift of air or breath. This overcrowding of the small space meant that people viewing the work would have to be very careful manoeuvering their way around the fragile natural materials of the work; they would have to move in and out of a labyrinth of twigs, thorns and bees waxed paper, tulle and feathers, making way for others entering or stopped, pausing to read a few words of the letter. As well as preventing a “quick look,” the gaze that takes all at once, the visual “tangle” suggests an irrational psychological landscape of difficulty, obstacles and agoraphobia.

---

9 This work is a larger scaled re-envisioning of a work made in 2004 for the exhibition, Reading Arcadia, shown in the annual installation, Elizabeth Bay House, Sydney.
The final formal element of the installation was the extremely low light levels in the room; barely moonlight. I had baffles put over yellow filtered lights, directed onto the works, like the gentle halos and penumbra of candlelight, casting intricate wavering shadows and reflections on floor and walls, leaving the rest of the room in darkness: a twiggy Arcadian bower of insubstantial shadows and forms.

Figure 4.a,b.
Figure 5. Rose Thorn Dress.
Figure 6.a,b.

Details, Rose Thorn Dress, cast bronze rose boughs (above). Detail, folded silk, beeswaxed (below).
Figure 7.a,b,c. Installation images.
Figure 9. Letter obscured with beeswax.

A Shrine for Orpheus
11 May/ 5 June 2010. fortyfivedownstairs, Melbourne

“We are the bees of the invisible
We frantically plunder the visible of its honey
To accumulate it in the great golden hive
Of the invisible”

Rainer Maria Rilke. Sonnets to Orpheus

“If everything visible must become invisible, if this metamorphosis is our purpose, … the metamorphosis will occur quite naturally on its own, for everything is transitory and what is transitory always sinks into profound existence.”

Maurice Blanchot, The Siren’s Song

“In mythology, honey was regarded as a spiritual substance and the bees were godly…This belief was… influenced by the whole process of honey production as constituting a link between earthly and heavenly levels. The influx of a substance from the whole environment – plants, minerals and sun – was the essence of the bee-cult… The whole builds a unity, in a humane warm way, through principles of cooperation and brotherhood.”

Joseph Beuys
Introduction

Over the last decade my artwork has become increasingly focused on materials from the beehive. The honey, pollen and beeswax, used previously as materials to transform and preserve paper, fabric and objects – adjuncts to a process – have become metaphors in their own right and the life of the bees themselves has become of independent ecological interest. The finding of materials and conceptualizing the work are often one process in my work: the materials have their own voice and speak to one of their world of being and becoming. In the documentation of this installation, A Shrine for Orpheus, I trace this growing involvement with the materials of the beehive as they manifest more intensively in this work culminating in an interspecies collaboration with the bees.

The Work

This work is a meditation on transience and death. Its materials speak of time and loss, of mysterious other places, of transformation and renewal- the substance of Care.
Over the past year I have collaborated with a living beehive, placing votive offerings associated with poetry into the hive; objects such as books, cast wax pages engraved by writer, Paul Carter with aphoristic poems to the bees, as well as bones, textiles and vessels: objects which evoke transience, death and duration beyond death. The bees have transformed the objects with their natural wax cell building processes. The processes of transforming ordinary things into votive offerings for the beehive will be discussed in a following section which documents process.

In Classical mythology the beehive and its productions of honey, pollen and wax were associated with poetry and the poet; but also with transitional, liminal states as in the religious rites and rituals surrounding initiation, birth and death. As we shall explore in a following section, Virgil brings the two themes of beekeeping and Orphic poetry together in his retelling of the Orpheus myth. The themes of the beehive in this connection to poetry, death and renewal are explored in the materials and structures of this installation.

The warm, sweet smelling wax of the bees has been cast into hundreds of hollow blocks to build the shrine for Orpheus. The shrine is accompanied by two beeswax mausoleums, raised, nearly square “graves,” constructed from the same cast wax blocks. The larger mausoleum has a void space which contains burnt books and scorched and indeterminate photos of people and places: “shades” and shadows of an underworld. In the second beeswax mausoleum the two voids contain, in the one, a

---

1 Figure 1. Wax tablet inscribed by Paul Carter. This particular tablet was not given to the beehive, but kept for exhibition as an independent object.

2 The larger mausoleum was approx. 200cm x 200cm and the smaller, 150cm x 150cm.
honeycomb bound and waxed facsimile of Keats’ poetry in his own handwriting and in the second, a wax dipped book of insect morphology, bringing together metaphorically the two spheres of culture and nature.

The traditional bee box in the centre of the “ruin” of the shrine is placed on old mirrors which have lost their tain and been translucently washed with plaster of Paris to further dim our view into the obscurely reflective world that lies beneath. The beeswax structure has offerings of honey, honeycomb, beeswax bound books of poetry and pages cast from wax awaiting new poems, laid at its entrance.³ The Shrine is accompanied by two beeswax mausoleums.⁴ Other elements of the installation are three archive boxes, vitrines with light tables; a “beekeeper’s costume,” accompanied by the attributes of the beekeeper, a “mourning tree” and an ossuary. The three vitrines contain metaphoric references to the overall themes of this work. The first vitrine contains salt petrified nature in shards of salt crystal and bleached, crystalized grasses from a salt lake in South Australia. On this “habitat” lies the salt-mummified and sun bleached corpse of a rabbit, replicating exactly the mineral environment in which it was found. Rabbits, an ambivalent colonizing symbol in Australia’s ecology, have been encoded in Joseph Beuys’ material language as a representation of creativity, mythic nature, fertility, imagination. Here we see that symbolism starkly inverted as a sign of nature’s demise and an eerie, apocalyptic aridity is evoked.⁵ The second vitrine, sited on the same wall, holds Paul Carter’s poems for the bees, engraved by him on beeswax tablets and transformed in the beehive with the honeycomb-building of the bees, evoking the transformations and renewals possible through art in conversation with nature.⁶ On the opposite wall is the third vitrine, accompanied by four wall pieces: honeycomb screens from the beehive which are inscribed with the calligraphic “writing” of the bees own organic processes. These disused screens have been left to weather and the golden honeycomb has turned black. The vitrine sited below these screens contains kangaroo and other animal bones which have been “cremated” in a kiln to a carbonized blackness, archived with books that

³ Figure 2. A Shrine for Orpheus, image by Emily Taylor.
⁴ Figure 3. Wax Mausoleum, image by Gregory Burgess.
⁵ Figure 4. Vitrine with mummified rabbit and salt crystal, image by Burgess.
⁶ Figure 5. Vitrine with wax tablets inscribed with the poems of Paul Carter, which have been incorporated into the honeycomb by the bees, image by Burgess.
have been burnt to ash but retain a recognizable identity as books. This wall of the gallery, with its evokations of death and loss, is echoed by an ossuary in the corner diagonally behind the “horizon” of the larger wax mausoleum. It is a collection of bones laid out, (as though in preparation for a “re-membering” or a funeral rite) archived in a rhythmic, musical arrangement. Some of the bones have been burnt to carbon black and others cremated to porcelain white. These have been installed on horizontally laid, semi-reflective mirrors and reflect further into an upright mirror to cast an ethereal after-image. These were lit to cast a delicate screen of bone imagery reflected vertically up the wall and across the ceiling.

The “beekeeper’s costume” is a garment which continues some of the material themes of this installation (and beekeeping itself): netting and beeswax. The netting, which has been torn then drenched in beeswax, is recast as a shamanic garment, densely feathered with the white feathers of the sulfur-crested cockatoo and hemmed with emu plumage and fine kangaroo and emu bones that have been cremated to ivory whiteness. Many of the bones have been bound with white silk thread. The cloak is suspended from two large kangaroo bones (long femur bones) bound in silk thread. This hanging gives the garment a formal and ceremonial aspect like priestly vestments laid out in symbolic order ready for the sacrament of Mass. The attributes of this beekeeping vestment (and the garment itself) are suspended over, and laid out on a large arched mirror which echoes and inverts the long arch of the gallery’s veiled end window, against which the cloak is hung contre jour. The attributes accompanying the cloak are a pair of beeswax slippers (Shoes for the Underworld), sitting on their own reflection; an attenuated fan of folded beeswax, tulle and feathers and an oil vessel cast in beeswax.
The final element of the installation which references Orpheus’ enchantment of nature with his song of mourning is a sinuous steel structure, a “ready-made” which makes a “mourning tree.”

It is hung with the attributes of the Orphic poet – a bough of willow (symbol of mourning in the Orphic myth), which has been bound with fine gauge copper wire; a whole pomegranite tree, (Persephone’s fruit of the underworld), bound forensically in every detail of root and twig with silk thread and hung inverted, roots upward, accompanied by a fine mesh black netting, dipped in wax and embroidered and stitched with the found feathers of red-rumped green parrots, making a bird-like presence which, (as Virgil recounts) attends to the poet’s grief.

These elements are immersed in a matrix of the sound of the bees.

---

11 Figure 11. Mourning Tree, hung with Willow bough bound in copper wire, a pomegranate tree bound in silk thread and a black net, dipped in beeswax and embroidered with parrot feathers, images by Taylor.
Figure 2.

Figure 3. Small mausoleum.

Detail of Figure 3.
Figure 4. Mummified rabbit on salt crystals.

Figure 5. Poem tablets transformed into honeycomb.
Figure 6. Two vitrines: burnt books vitrine with “writing of the bees” wall screens.

Mummified rabbit vitrine, installation view.
Figure 7. Ossuary.

Detail of Figure 7. Ossuary.
Figure 8. Feathered cloak, The Beekeeper’s Costume, and Mourning Tree in installation view.
Figure 9. Beeswax fan.

Figure 10. Beeswax shoes, Shoes for the Underworld.
Figure 11. Mourning Tree.

Details of Figure 11.
The Installation of the Work

This work was installed in the austere, sub-terrainean industrial space of an inner city gallery – far from the idyllic Biodynamic garden in the orcharded outer suburbs where the beehive had dwelled previously and the bees had communed with flowers. The installation consisted of many and various “parts,” a kind of underworld garden, through which a path had to be found.

An important aspect of “reading” the work lay in finding this path through it. As the gallery is axial, it had a potential processional or ceremonial aspect, as though the viewer were attending a ritual or rite and a prescribed pilgrimage could be laid out. More organically, a rhythmic encountering of the various aspects could be suggested through placement of structures and mirrors that would allow the viewer to “come across” details and views that offered constant changing perceptions and interpretations, indeed even a confounding and inverting of points of view. A combination of both approaches was decided on: the long straight view from the gallery entry to the window would be strengthened by the frontal hanging of the “beekeeper’s cloak” screening the veiled end window. One could walk processionally from the entry to the back of the gallery in a straight line and then visit to the left and right like the meditative side chapels of a Latin church. Simultaneously we worked at engaging the whole space in a more dynamic way based loosely on a figure of eight: a weaving that drew one in from the entry to the right to visit the smaller mausoleum placed in the centre of the corner space, back out to see the Shrine, (following mirrors on the floor, like puddles of light,) which was placed frontally to the east wall showing only a side aspect to the entrance of the gallery space, its circularity encouraging a journey round the back to see its deconstructed, “broken” anterior, from which one could see into the mirrored base on which stands the beehive. This is a moment of stillness where one can attain an overview of the structure and its “underworld” of reflections and illusions. From there one can circle out to the far corner to see the larger mausoleum. The void of this mausoleum, with burnt books, was placed at the back edge encouraging the viewer again to walk right around this object and encounter the ossuary of bones in the far corner placed on the

---

12 Figure 12. The long axial view from entry to back of Gallery, image by Taylor.
13 Figure 12, (detail). The back view of the Shrine and detail of interior, image by Taylor.
diagonal. The mirrored corner offering multiple views of the structure in front of it, the black bones now seen against the mirrored reflection(s) of radiant yellow beeswax blocks and recontextualizing its deathly image into the larger constellations of the room. From there the figure of eight swells out to embrace a walk around the beekeeper’s cloak on its pool of mirror and circumambulating that, one comes across the concealed Marquette, bandaged and beeswaxed, hidden behind. The walk returns one via the east wall (the long wall) where the vitrine of burnt bones and ashen books sits opposite the radiantly lit entrance to the Shrine with its abundance of votive offerings and vessels of honey inviting one to walk back around the circular structure to complete that experience. A walk from dark to light; from pools of radiance to shadow.

The rhythmic processional walk of overlapping circles is led by the placement of the structures but also with the engagement of the whole space as a potential dimension of the work and its meanings. While the structures lead a bodily engagement with space, the mirrors lead the gaze, not only guiding the vision from work to work (their dull shine on the floor, against the walls and within the works calls the eye to follow). The mirrors recombine the views of the work while bending and distorting the space. The convex mirror at the centre of the installation, which has been buffed back with plaster and given a dull polish, shows the entire installation and also records the presence of the people in the room, like the unconcerned eye of the god. This mirror also acts to make the visitors to the Shrine part of it: they are recorded as a trace in the mirror.

The lighting of the installation was of great importance to me. I wanted to preserve the atmosphere that I had achieved building the work in my studio, an atmosphere of shadows broken with glowing luminosity; an atmosphere that was responsive to different times of day, the weather, the light levels, the passage of people. The large luminous end window allowed a certain amount of soft grey southerly light, but we had decided early on that the space should be “closed” to protect the radiance of the work itself, so the end window was veiled translucently with parchment colored voile.

14 Figure 13. Behind the feathered cloak, the marquette, image by Taylor.
15 Figure 14. Arriving at the front of the Shrine with its threshold of votive offerings, image by Burgess.
16 Figure 15. The convex mirror, image by Taylor.
which still allows the qualities of the day to filter in. The harsh electric lights of the gallery space were abandoned altogether and filtered, baffled, low-wattage lights put up instead that were strategically placed to give side light through the wax blocks of the Shrine and to create ethereal reflections and refractions amongst the predominantly shadowy spaces. The mirrors were all subtly lit to lead the eye on the path through the works.

Inhabiting the gallery space fully through laying out paths of passage and constellating the light and shade endows an elevated atmosphere of mystery and imminence, even radiance, and supports the “burden” of the works’ content of death, loss and absence.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{17}} \text{Unfortunately we did not get this veil up for the opening night as we had been allocated an inadequate day and a half to build the installation from its raw components and the veil was prioritized down the scale of importance. It was put up in the following days and has made an important difference to the space, light and the focus on the work itself.}\]
Figure 12. a. Axial view from front of gallery to back window.

Figure 12. b. Behind the Shrine.
Figure 12. c. Interior of the Shrine, with bee box, black fishing net and mirror base.

Figure 12. d. Front of Shrine threshold with waxed books and votive offerings.
Figure 13. Cloak with bound Marquette.
Figure 14. The front of the Shrine with bowls cast from wax.

Figure 15. Convex mirror.
Process

In a domestic garden in Ivanhoe, overflowing with vegetables, flowers and espaliered fruit trees, the beekeeper leads me slowly towards the bee boxes, three austere white temples, which emit the steady thunder of forty thousand bees working ceaselessly within their dim interiors. Dressed ceremonially in white suits and heads netted and veiled, we carry the smoking pot, issuing streams of fragrant pine needle smoke, and begin calmly to “smoke” the entrance to the hive, always pausing to listen for the change of tone within the hive. Thunder muting to a hum as the bees heeding the smoke of fire, fill up with honey and sink into a contented passivity as no catastrophe eventuates and the hive “resettles.” When this quieter tone prevails we remove the heavy lid of the hive revealing the orderly vertical frames within, spines up like a shelf of books. The heady aroma of honey is overwhelmingly sweet, almost animal in its intensity. The bees crawl in and out slowly through the lingering smoke, half drunk, disregarding us. We lever out the frames in slow motion, one by one, to inspect the progress of the tablets of wax inscribed with poems that were put in there many months before. The sun strikes the surfaces of engraved words still legible beneath the hexagonal calligraphy of the bees. Honey drips across the word “Care.”

Figure 16. The artist with “smoking pot,” Kasimir Burgess making sound recordings and John Russell, beekeeper, tending the beehive.
This process had started several years before when I had become interested in the life of bees as an extension of my work with the productions of the beehive. I had read Rudolf Steiner’s “Bee Lectures” (1923) which predict the diseases and weakening of the world’s Honeybee population due to the industrialisation of the bees’ natural processes and poor husbandry practices. The artificial insemination of Queen bees was one of his concerns as he believed it not only weakened the natural selection that would otherwise take place but also eliminated the nuptial flight and mating ritual, which Maeterlinck so beautifully describes in The Life of the Bee and which, for Steiner integrates the bee into cosmic cycles which underpin the union of all the earthly and heavenly elements: a thought Joseph Beuys spent his creative life unpacking.

The sacramental nature of the bees is well documented in literature from Virgil to Rilke, Steiner to Sylvia Plath, it is also a theme taken up by twentieth and twenty first century artists. Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) made scientific and Anthroposophical studies of the bees and applied his findings in his art practice, interpreting the substances and social structures of the beehive as a model of love and co-operation for mankind. He used beeswax and honey as primary materials of “warmth” in his artworks, inscribing those materials with his particular language of social amelioration

---

18 In 2007 I had approached the Museum of Victoria who keep a transparent beehive and asked for help with my project. They allowed me to use their beehives at the Collingwood Children’s Farm, in inner suburban Melbourne, and to use the expertise of their beekeepers. For the first year and a half I continued my project there but the Summer of 2009 with its record number of days over 40 degree heat weakened and killed many of the hives there and I moved my project to the domestic garden of a friend in Ivanhoe who is an expert beekeeper. This garden offered more shade and protection against the negative effects of climate change on the bees, who require temperate climate although they can to some extent mitigate and control the inner thermal condition of the hive with continuous wing fanning to circulate the air.


20 Maeterlinck, Maurice. *The life of the Bee*, 1901, section 88. Maeterlinck describes the moment of the nuptial flight where the queen is fertilized by this one act, producing millions of progeny for the life of the hive and the male dies losing his organs in the process of mating, “for the male has given her all he possessed…” (87) “Prodigous nuptials these, the most fairylike that can be conceived, azure and tragic, raised high above life by the impetus of desire; imperishable and terrible, unique and bewildering, solitary and infinite. An admirable ecstasy, wherein death supervening in all that our sphere has of most limpid and loveliest, in virginal, limitless space, stamps the instant of happiness in the sublime transparence of the great sky; purifying in that immaculate light the something of wretchedness that always hovers around love, rendering the kiss one that can never be forgotten; and, content this time with moderate tithe, proceeding herself, with hands that are almost maternal, to introduce and unite, in one body, for a long and inseparable future, two little fragile lives.”
permanently for artists following after him. A significant example of Beuys’ use of these materials is his 1977, Kassel Documenta 6 installation, “Honey is Flowing in all Directions.” This work was installed as the “Herzstuck” (the heart core) of Beuys’ initiative, the “Free International University,” pumping honey through arterial pipe networks, simulating the heart and blood of the human body, for the one hundred days of Documenta 6. The work exemplified his expanded notion of art as something which directly engaged in public discourse with its own material language of connectedness in body and spirit. This work, installed in the middle of a university conference was to bring warmth to what Beuys thought was the overly analytical life of academia. Like the other artists of Care described in this thesis, Beuys endows his materials with aspects of healing, transformation and social building.

Figure 17. Beuys installing the “Honey Pump.”

21 This work is documented in Honey is Flowing in all Directions, a photographic documentation by Gerhard Steidl and Klaus Staeck. Edition Staeck. Germany, 1997. The image is taken from this publication.
Other contemporary artist have developed Beuys’ eco-spirituality such as Wolfgang Laib. Laib (Germany1950-), works with natural, seasonally gathered and found materials, such as pollen and beeswax; working these materials in meditative processes where the handwork, the gestures and making, is just as important as the finished object. His practice of working materially with the seasons and cycles has been influenced by mystical practices such as temple rituals and offerings in India. The artist believes that his “timeless” working of the materials endows them with spiritual energies by the refinement of their physical properties. Laib has created ziggurats of thin, flat blocks of beeswax as well as translucent “fields” of yellow pollen, endowing his materials with form and content that speaks of the warmth and transformations of soul and psyche. 22 Like Beuys his works offer a “corrective” to the technological and consumerist modes which devour modern social life. Within the terms of this thesis, Beuys’ work and pedagogy could be viewed as “Care of the Other” with its direct social engagement, while Laib represents “Care of the self,” in his modes of meditative and solitary work practice.

These sacramental interpretations of the beehive are well established in arts practice but to experience it oneself is transformative and it was only after I began (hesitantly at first) to approach the care of bees myself that I began – almost unthinkingly, to put my art practice into a relationship with the life of the bees. I began by dipping pages into beeswax and folding them into the frames to see what the bees would make of them. They seemed uninterrupted by my activity. The pages became whole books immersed page by page and “bound” in beeswax (wax “foundation sheets”) and I discovered that the bees would shred any fragments of bare paper that had not been fully covered with wax. Tiny “eaten” pieces would be piled up and neatly disposed of by the bees: an “eating of the text” which I found very interesting. The fully waxed pages would become part of the hive’s industry. I experimented with fabric, bones, vessels and other objects cast in pure beeswax. Some were ignored by the bees, others began to be incorporated into the honeycomb structure of the hive and transformed into a hybrid artifact – part nature, part culture. Extending this process, I decided to ask writer, Paul Carter, who had an abiding love of the bees from childhood, if he would write some words for the bees. He wrote several poems, while I cast pages in pure beeswax for him to engrave.23 His words speak of loss and mourning, “*Why was

23 Figures 19. a,b,c,d. “Poems for the Bees,” aphoristic engravings on cast beeswax tablets, engraved and composed by Paul Carter. These poems are reproduced in the catalogue accompanying this exhibition, see Appendix. The tablets are 50/80mm in size.
there so little honey in childhood?” and the mysterious otherness of the bees, “I
know nothing of your society/ but you, auricular intruder, / crawl through the
labyrinth of/ my waxen grooves, playing back/ their deposited summers as this - /
memory’s meaningless hum.” He showed me how he had blistered and torn his
fingers etching into the wax surfaces with an engraving tool. Death and resurrection:
themes of the hive with its processes of cocooning, metamorphoses, birth and rebirth
are invoked. Carter addresses the immortality of the hive as well, “This side of infinity
there is/ nothing closer to the numberless/ than you…” I gave these, and all the other
wax offerings, as votives to the temple of the beehive.

I had visited Bamberg Cathedral, Germany, in 2008, to see the traditional Catholic
wax offerings and thought of these now- the wax body parts, even full size effigies of
babies; wax-sculpted eyes, hearts, hands offered as votive petitions to the intercession
of the Virgin for healing and mending. It was parallel to my impulse: one brings the
damaged and the broken, the heartbroken, to the bees and they, continuing their
natural processes that are infinitely mysterious to humans, reconstellate all these bits
and pieces, these fragments, into an alchemical process of transformation in the
healing excess of their honeycomb which as Beuys says constitutes, “a link between
earthly and heavenly levels. The influx of a substance from the whole environment –
plants, minerals, and sun...”

The sacramental nature of the beehive is clear, not only in the mysterious life of the
bees themselves but also in the human rituals of managing the hives: the priestly
white vestments, the covering of head and face, the veiling – the implements and
smoking incense; the moment of suspended difference where the bees allow the
animal and the human to cooperate, like a transubstantiation, a holy mingling. The
bee box itself, a white shrine, resonating with sound and concealed movement, dark
inside with a narrow slit at the base, guarded at all times by the female bees, the
vestal virgins, is itself an image that has been sung into the human imagination by the
poets.
I read Virgil’s *Georgics*, Book Four: “*The heavenly gift of honey from the air/ is next my theme...*” We learn that Aristaeus, the Arcadian bee master was responsible for the death of Eurydice, Orpheus’ beloved. Her death and descent into Hades is punished by the loss of Aristaeus’ bees. It is Orpheus’ song—his poetic utterance and the music of his lyre, his art, that opens up the underworld; it is his song that entrances nature—the trees, the birds and creatures as he mourns the loss of Eurydice when he fails to bring her back to the dayworld from Hades. Orpheus is dismembered by the Furies for his neglect of life in his prolonged grief. His heart is kept in a beeswax box in some retellings, to ensure his future “re-membering,” a resurrection. It is a story of immense psychological insight retold with increasing intensity from the Renaissance, into the great age of opera and into the modern era, where Blanchot gives the Orpheus myth a paradoxical reading that seems, finally, to uncover its darker intent.24 He casts Orpheus as the artist, Eurydice the Muse, and the undertaking of going to Hades as the journey to death’s realm to gain the work of art. Out of his failure to achieve this, his necessary failure, with its (also necessary) breaking of the law, emerges the work of art as a trace, bearing the ash of its origin. I took these readings and literary imagery into my work, combining them with the processes I had been undertaking over the last years.

---

Figure 19. a. Wax tablet with poem.

Figure 19. b. “Care” inscribed on wax by Carter.
Figure 19. c. Poem engraved by Carter.

The text reads, “A letter from an alphabet/that cannot spell the end of being:/you pass through the keyhole/of alpha and omega/like the girl who scattered/flowers when she spoke.”

Figure 19. d. Wax tablet with engraved poem: “There is nothing closer to the numberless than you.”
Materials

The first temple was made by the bees from feathers, wax and honey.

Calasso

Making a place to hold the artifacts that emerged from the bees was the initial task of this work. I envisaged the work existing in a liminal zone – between worlds – perhaps between the world of the bees and the human, or the dayworld and underworld of Orpheus – at the lip or edge. Mirrors – reflective, liminal lakes, holding the trace of an image as transient as marks made on water- seemed to offer this “between” world that I sought. I began collecting old dilapidated mirrors that had lost their tain and made them the uncertain “ground” (a watery lake) for what would become the Shrine. I experimented with veiling them with various substances, eventually settling on a process of veiling them with plaster of Paris, allowing it to dry and then gently polishing it until it had a soft powdery patina. Some of these polished mirrors were put in the rain for a short time which gave them lachrymose stains. The beeswax itself needed to be re imagined as a building material and this process had begun in the previous year when anticipating this work, my husband Gregory Burgess and I collaborated on a work together for the Melbourne Arts Festival making a large sculptural work from beeswax blocks which would pass from that work into the new form of this installation. One of the tenets of this work is that virtually everything in it is recycled, re used or repaired. It has an ethic of Care for used, broken and discarded materials restoring them to a new life.
The beeswax, four hundred kilos, had been sourced from an apiarist, as a by-product of honey harvesting. I collaborated with a foundry to cast the blocks to a large format, six sided, hollow brick, each weighing one kilo. In my studio I built what would become the “ruin” of a temple from these blocks: the sanctuary for the votives of books, bones, vessels and other cast objects including beeswax bowls to hold honey. The two mausoleums similarly constructed from beeswax blocks are places of memory and mourning: tombs in a garden that, as for another god torn to pieces and entombed, hopefully await a resurrection. The burnt books and photographs taken from disused family archives are mnemonics, traces of the past, traces of memory.

The soundscape of the bees’ humming was made in collaboration with my son Kasimir Burgess, a filmmaker. We recorded the activity of the bees whenever we attended the hives, placing a recorder inside the hive, which records a very intense and rather menacing degree of noise and out in the garden itself, by the drinking pond, in the fruit trees, inside flowers- close and at a distance- to give a sense for the spatial environment of the garden – the world of this hive. The resulting edit of the soundscape condensed these auditory spaces into a coherent sound piece that conveys the persistent imminence and unrelenting activity of the community of bees as they convey information to each other. What in nature is a background humming that we ignore, becomes in the soundscape of this installation, an intense presence.

As noted in the introductory paragraphs of this section, netting is also a theme of this work, as it is of beekeeping as a protective veil. It is seen around the base of the Shrine – the antique black Japanese fishing net, suggesting a shadow cast by the luminous yellow beeswax and creating an image across the mirrored interior of a black tide of lapping water. I also wanted to make some kind of netting garment for this work- a mythic reworking of a beekeeper’s garb, which was traditionally made from white net. It needed to have a ritualistic, perhaps shamanic presence, like the ceremonial feathered cloaks I had seen in the National Museum, Canberra, from the

---

25 The beeswax is excreted in minute scales of wax from glands behind the bee’s head. These minute scales are dextrously wiped off with the legs and wiped onto the site of cell building where they are shaped into the hexagonal cell. Considering the labour of this production makes every piece of the wax extremely precious and this respect for the labour of the bees guides the way that I have worked with this material: with utmost care and conservation. In some respects I have attempted to imitate the labour of the bees in accumulative processes of laying down this work over a long period of time, (nearly four years), lending the process a devotional, ritualistic aspect.
Northern and Tiwi Indigenous people; the “Mimi” headdresses and cloaks. Over several years I collected parrot feathers as they fell each year and sewed them into this length of white netting which had been prepared by tearing and fraying the fabric and immersing it in beeswax. I collected fine bones from nature and along with most of the hundred bones that were incorporated into this installation, they were put through a process of kiln firing – a kind of cremation- that could be controlled to achieve either carbonized black bones (at a very high but briefer firing) or porcelain white bones which become extremely fragile, brittle and light, at a lengthier high firing. For this cloak I bound the white bones in silk thread and knotted them into the netting with silk yarn. This garment took several years to sew. Like many other aspects of the work, it has a dimension of what has been traditionally “womens’ craft”: forms of sewing and mending, attending, that take time, and sustain life’s fabric. Because many of the materials have aspects of Memento Mori, I began to regard this as a form of the “domestication” of death – bringing death into a feminine sphere. The sewing and binding, mending and patching of this work handled death intimately and made it familiar- mediated by ordinary materials and integrated by manual processes into common life: a Care for death.

Recently a young woman friend told me that when her mother had died prematurely she had had a strong impulse to take her mother’s body home to her bedroom and to wash and clothe her in a familiar setting, over a number of days, which she did. She said it gave her time to mourn and a structure of ordinary things to do that seemed deeply meaningful. She was taking up, perhaps unknowingly, the “washing and winding” of the body that women have performed for the dead (and the newborn) since time immemorial. A feminine impulse of Care, perhaps, mediating as midwife to both birth and death.

26 “The feminine” as has been documented elsewhere in this thesis, is a term used by Kristeva to bring forward particular qualities of “connectedness,” and although she states this “feminine” is more likely to be found in the female gender the concept is not gendered and exists in males too. I am reminded of this today (May 26. 2010) as I listen to a program on ABC Radio National, “360 degrees,” which documents the work taken up by two men, a civil servant and a poet, in contemporary Amsterdam, a work they call “Lonely Funerals,” in which they attend to the people of Amsterdam who die anonymously. They arrange a non-denominational church service (at which they are the sole attendants) with flowers, music, poetry and eulogy for the unknown “stranger” out of “respect” for the dead. This, (the Care of death), is a socially engaged form of what I am talking about here in the metaphoric sphere of the artwork.
Handling so many “reminders of death” in this work I also had a sense of taking time to attend to each object and “veiling” it with processes and materials that tend to suggest protection and healing as well as mourning. The boughs of willow and pomegranate tree, inverted images like so many objects in this installation, are objects of mourning and they, too, have been wrapped and bound, like the sewing passed through feminine hands. The willow is bound in copper – part of the Beuysian language of warmth, (like beeswax) as copper conducts heat quickly (unlike iron which does not easily conduct) and was considered by Beuys to be a feminine element because of this. The dead pomegranate tree, as has been described, is also veiled and “warmed” by silk binding. (See figure 11).

Another major element of materiality in the installation, already touched upon, are the books and texts in various states of transformation. In his address at the opening of this exhibition, Paul Carter said that writing is the trace of Orpheus’ music. This is paradoxically true as bardic utterance – “poetry” when scripted, derived archaically from the meter and rhythm of music and was considered by the Renaissance era to be indivisible from music, as it had been in the Ancient world. Orpheus’ music is considered in the literature as poetry. This “musical poetry” is one form of text in this installation that is represented by Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus dipped in wax and bound in fabric “written on” by the bees, as well as Maeterlinck’s Life of the Bee and Sylvia Plath’s poisonous Bee Box poems as well as sundry texts I found in a Paris flea market featuring the beloved figure of the Pierrot – again, the artist who must visit death. But there is also the writing of the bees themselves. What Novalis called “Nature’s writing.” The calligraphy of the bees is shown in the work in the screens from the hive, which have the appearance of ancient texts from a forgotten civilization- something foreign to the eye, something that descends downward and right to left, but recognizable still as script. The texts by Carter were also “overwritten” (or “crosswritten” like early Colonial letters) by the bees combining “Nature’s writing” with poetic utterance. A fusion of languages from nature and culture.

Some of the books have been ritualistically hand dipped and bound in beeswax: in my work a veiling and a transforming with the alchemical wax – a single book takes many hours to dip page by page, holding the book aloft between immersions in the
hot liquid wax so that each page dries singly and does not stick to the next page. Other books have been burnt to ash – a kind of “death of the book.” Burning books is an act of atavistic violence but has its own terrifying beauty – each book expressing its paper and its ink, its weight and quality, in an extraordinary blooming, like a flower, as fire folds and curls each page, the text becoming irradiated like an x-ray; the binding emitting a hiss and funneling smoke in a final act of poetry before dissolution. Other books were burnt with covers shut until they were charred and transformed into a more solid version of themselves, like Nietzsche’s bound manuscripts of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, burnt by his sister Elizabeth, that were, nevertheless, rendered permanent.

None of these books and pages exist in isolation, they are part of longer lines of poetry – a poetry of bones, mirrors, wax, honey, salt and ash; a poem of alchemical transformations of materials, that cultivates substances for the future, by caring for what is always passing.

---

27 Figure 20. a, b. The burning of the books and Figure1, c, the burnt books in installation.
28 These burnt, bound manuscripts are kept in a glass case in the Nietzsche House in Sils Maria, Switzerland.
Figures 20. a, b. Burning books.

Figure 20. c. Burnt books installation (in “Large Mausoleum”).
Figure 21. Installation image, by Taylor.
Bibliography


Burgess, Gregory, A.S. Hook Address, *The Multiplicity of the Whole*, given by Burgess at University of Melbourne, on the occasion of being awarded the Gold Medal for Architecture, by the Royal Institute of Architects, (RAIA), (Friday, 16 July, 2004).


Cox, P, Lecture. Wednesday,VCAM, Melbourne, April 1, 2009.


Davidson, Kate and Desmond, Michael, *Islands: Contemporary Installations*, National Gallery of Australia, Thames and Hudson, 1996.


Düttmann, Alexander Garcia, Seminar entitled, “Do artist know what they are doing?” at the Wandering with Spinoza Conference, Centre for Ideas, Victorian College of the Arts and Music, Melbourne, 2006.


Foundas, Scott, *Human Touch*. Australian Film Festival, Irish Film Institute, cached on web, 25/08/08.


Kalina, Paul. Bud Tingwell 1923-2009, Legend of Film and TV who was Admired by All. The Age, Sat. May 16, 2009.


Maeterlinck, Maurice, The Life of the Bee, 1901.


~ Appendices ~

1. Diary Notes. A Visit to Derek Jarman’s Garden.
4. Video of A Shrine for Orpheus, by photographer/video installation artist, Emily Taylor, with soundscape of bees by Kasimir Burgess.
5. CD images from A Shrine for Orpheus by Taylor.
6. CD images from A Shrine for Orpheus by Gregory Burgess.

Prospect Cottage: Derek Jarman’s Garden. Monday 5 October 2009 (travelling with Sophia, my 28 year old daughter, from Paris to Ashford, Kent, UK)

7am, wet, grainy day. Early Paris departure- Eurostar to Ashford International, UK. Heavy rain- much colder than Paris. We realize we are underdressed. Little information on how to get from Ashford in Kent to Dungeness; no one has heard of it. Taxi to Little Romney? New Romney? Small gauge train to Dungeness? Taxi 40 pounds –drops us at a tiny deserted railway station for miniature train, with miniature rails, miniature everything. No- one is there. A labyrinthine timetable in yellow, purple, green –white sections promise a train at midday on October 5th but after long wait we are told by woman in nearby bakery the trains stopped yesterday for the “off-season” and won’t start again until Christmas. On the other side we try the “Bait Shop,” (reminds us we can smell the sea nearby). Chinese woman with broad regional accent, very cheerful and helpful, offers us umbrella, which we refuse, while man sorts out the biggest worms I’ve ever seen into trays of sea water on the floor. Feel a pang for their lives as “bait.” Lady rings “Larry” who says a bus to Lydd on Sea, no.102 would be a good start. Lady asks why we are going so far, to such a remote place, on such a terrible day. I mention a garden of an artist at Dungeness and she says, “Ah! The one with writing on the side!” and she has been there (the first person in all our enquiries who has). She wishes us luck and we cross the High Street to stand in the rain at the edge of the village and wait for the bus. Wet, worried, as we have to get back by 4pm for train back to Paris. Bus comes and we cosy up on the seat together for warmth, eating the remains of our breakfast baguette from Paris. Sophia very stalwart and even. Dropped at New Romney, we wait for forty minutes in the rain for another bus on a side lane looking out to the countryside. Bus comes late and takes us into a misty sleet at an alarming speed careering through hedgerow lanes - the idyll of the landscape at odds with the violence of the speed. I feel unexpectedly emotional as we see the grey choppy forlorn sea present its horizon and the beginnings of the shale coast. Finally we are dropped at Dungeness which is nothing but a desolation of shale and abandoned up-turned fishing boats of the huge-planked, vast- bellied variety, like beached whales –more substantial than the frail, timber boxes of black-tarred fishermens’ huts scattered sparsely across the
landscape. In the distance, across a vast flat ground of treeless shale, the nuclear reactor rises up like blocks of ice – grey, luminous against a low sky.

No idea where Jarman’s garden is – we just walk down the coast towards views, aspects, ground that I recognize from Jarman’s diary photographs. We hail down a driver in the rain and she points us further down the broken road. At the side of the road we slip and slide off the rounded shale stones (now a few sitting in a shallow dish of water in front of me on the table in our Paris apartment). The house is unmistakable-freshly tarred black with the chrome yellow door and trim. So tiny and the garden you could miss. Nothing to announce it – no signs. The tears just won’t stop- I can’t even see – I am sobbing. I know the place so well – have studied every detail – realize I don’t know it at all, although recognizing it like an old friend: the circles of flint stones marking out little sanctuaries where a plant can thrive –like the old rubber tyres that made the original Cottage garden at the Black Range on the other side of the world.1 The dawning of a place gathered together here with rusty old chains laid out as lace on the ground for succulents to plait their way through; the sea- worn lumber carried up from the beach far over the way –much further to walk each day than I had imagined. Derek, with his carpenter’s bag strapped around his frail waist, carrying jetsam and flotsam, chains, floaters and sinkers to create modest marks and boundaries in this endless stone desert – “the fifth quarter” of the earth. Sophia wanders around in a dream, not seeming to notice the drenching rain, quiet and intent, pointing occasionally to things I had missed – the verdigris folded copper, the patina-ed, battered French Horn hanging singly on the inner courtyard black wall; the word “Prospect” engraved minutely on a folded piece of metal in the front garden. We wander round the back where the totemic timbers stand upright in their circles of Gorse and we talk about the permeable “boundary”- no fences, no edges, but the place held by the vertical markers – the stones laid out like a boney skeleton of ribs, spine, joints –bones of a body clothed with the modest, near invisible coastal plants that can withstand the constant salt, wet,

1 This refers to my garden in a similarly remote and inhospitable landscape in Australia. First cultivated by two women 100 years ago and made in the ad hoc Australian tradition of “making do,” using whatever was to hand: rubber tyres, old wrought iron bedsteads, bits of broken household pottery, pots and pans, mended with corks and stumps of cloth, but relegated eventually as containers for succulents in the garden. This garden has been reworked by my husband and I for nearly 30 years but was completely razed 3 years ago in the Western District fires and we have since rebuilt it with some reminders of the original garden which we had been deeply attached to.
wind. We wonder aloud that anyone could have made a garden here—it just looks physically impossible with the lack of soil and formidable elements.

We glance as briefly as possible through the undraped window—the tiny interior is austere, aesthetic, simple—bare wooden floors with books, paintings, and a studio with paints and brushes as though someone had just left it. An old watering can and gardening paraphernalia the only decoration. A place to work, contemplate, remember, be silent, converse, batten down against the driving rain. I remember briefly Jarman writing about the tarred house “cracking” like rifle fire in a huge storm—and then blissful days in the sun and warmth tending the beehive—now (in Autumn) put away for the winter. I love to see the Kale and Sedum, the lichen and Gorse that Jarman so warmly documents. One deep red Rugosa Rose blooms against the protective back wall.

On the side wall I carefully read the John Donne poem to the “Sunne” and admire its orderly free cursive script cut out of wood. I photograph it in the grey light and hope it appears as graphically black on black as on the house. Forty five minutes only to explore this place. I drink it in with all my senses—take too few photos, just wanting to walk it, touch it and be there. I feel overwhelmed with gratitude for the care and love, suffering and transformation laid down into this little bit of earth. I scrawl a note of gratitude and stick it through the postal slip in the bottom of the glass front door: “To Keith”- “Two Australian artists.” To Keith Collins- (“HB”) Jarman’s lover, who inherited this place when Jarman died, to do with it whatever he pleased—“bull doze it” if he wants to. Keith moved down here from London and became a fisherman—his upturned boat lying to the ley-side of the Cottage now. And the garden turning inward for Autumn, but the plants pruned and the stone “circles” upright and strong—“kept safe,” “cherished and protected” in the spirit in which it was first made, and additions of new mementos marking the passage of time.

We turn back to the road reluctantly and trudge back to the straggly fishing village, wet and cold to the bone. We wait and wait at the bus stop. Eventually, about 50 meters away we see the miniature train steaming and hooting merrily past—we laugh—watching helplessly as it heads back to where we need to be. We decide it was not our lot to be so easily transported—we seem to have done it the way of the pilgrimage—and feel that was right too.
Appendix 2.  Catalogue: A Shrine for Orpheus.
A SHRINE FOR ORPHEUS

Pip Stokes
11 May - 5 June 2010
A Shrine for Orpheus
Lisa Jacobson

If Orpheus is guardian of the sacred arts, then it is possible that never before has there been a century so much in need of his song. This is because the world insists, on a daily basis, that we lose ourselves rather than commune with loss, to be drawn to darkness as logos rather than seek out its mythos. The myth of Orpheus has an integral role today in that it returns us and brings us back into communion with the sacred through poetry, dance, music and art.

Pip Stokes’ most recent exhibition, A Shrine for Orpheus, provides a mythic language for the story of Orpheus. It is a contemplation of myth that reflects back on itself in an endless refraction of associations and images; a visual representation of the myth itself which is never simple or linear but, rather, layered with metaphor and re-imaginings. Stokes’ installation reveals the ways in which myth enters us, but does not belong to us. Rather, we are the conduit through which myth runs and Orpheus, indeed, does run and has run through the dreams of humankind for as long as we have been able to dream.

This is in keeping with the Neo-Platonic notion, in which Orpheus plays no small part, that the figures of myth occupy not only the rooms of the psyche, but the rooms of other houses outside of us. It is not the artist who invents these figures of the psyche, of Orpheus and Eurydice, of Persephone and Hades, but they who reinvent themselves. The zeitgeist or midrash (as the Jewish mystics call the spirit of the times) summons up those gods it needs most. In Stokes’ work, it is Orpheus who answers this call.

Orpheus, playing quietly on his lyre in the middle of the forest, coaxes the animals out to listen, as Rainer Maria Rilke writes in his first sonnet to Orpheus:

...And where there had been just a makeshift hut to receive the music, a shelter nailed up out of their darkest longing, with an entryway that shuddered in the wind—you built a temple deep inside their hearing.

Summoning the animals translates, perhaps, into an ecological sensibility; to hear the call of Orpheus is to answer the ecological call, to re-sacralise nature. At a time when the world seems intent on hurtling towards its own demise, A Shrine for Orpheus inclines towards meditation and the transformation of nature, the stillness of catacombs, the quietness of wax, the purposeful industry of bees and silkworms, the potential for flight, the distillation of air, the reflective gaze, the emptying out of all colour until there are only shades of white: bleached bones, wax, ash, silk and paper, feathers in contemplation of flight as if, as the poet Pablo Neruda writes, “we lived falling out
of the skin into the soul.” Like the bees which flew in through the open window of Stokes’ studio to busy themselves on the beeswax, even the very act of art-making has summoned and sung up, in its own way, the problematic aspects of creation. As Jean Cocteau observes in his film, Orphée, “Look for a lifetime in mirrors and you will see Death at work, like bees in a hive of glass.”

The music of Orpheus, as Noel Cobb has said, is “the activity of the theologos, the one who spoke with and about the Gods.” His sanctuary also encompasses poetry and art. Orpheus’ lyre has to do with both dismemberment and re-membering, god-like attributes, as Stokes alludes to in her depiction of Orpheus’ wax heart awaiting resurrection. Orpheus’ lyre was said to be strung with human sinews, and the music he plays as he sings nature and animals into being dips, inevitably, into the underworld, into death and decay, dismemberment, a scattering of the psyche into fields not yet dreamt of, in the act of its resounding. The wax which forms the foundation of Stokes’ Shrine for Orpheus, the books on which bees have fed in order to make their own inscriptions (texts by writers from Keats to the contemporary Paul Carter) also hint at resurrection and immortality. At the centre of this ‘temple’ is the beehive, symbol of transformation.

As Virgil notes in The Georgics in a section entitled “The Peculiarly Wonderful Features of Bees”, bee stock is immortal in that the hive itself is passed on from generation to generation, the structure keeps on singing, and never really dies despite the passing of the bees who composed it. In a similar fashion, Orpheus’ own lyre is carried forth, made from the shell of a tortoise whose death made possible the music itself. The heart of Orpheus, like his own severed head in the myth, does not cease its previous musicality, the song of its rhythmic beating. So too might the artist reach down into the darkness of herself, even if she risks being torn apart, knowing that the heart remains intact and can be resurrected.

Rilke again:

Only the man who has also raised
his lyre among the darkling shades
may be allowed a sense
of infinite praise.

Inside the Orphic vision which Pip Stokes’ art immerses itself in, everything is panoramic and ornamented by mythic figures whom we cannot ever really know, but only glimpse via the language of metaphor: the hand that plunges through the earth while one is gathering flowers, the hem of a beekeeper’s shroud-like coat, the thin silken thread of a worm, the trace of words upon wax, or feathers, burnt books or ash. These are the images that translate the emotion of the myth but which remain, nevertheless, untranslatable because should they be hardened into the prosaic everyday language of the world, they would cease to be mythos.

Perhaps it is for this very reason that Eurydice cannot be brought back up to the shining world of which Rilke writes, in a different poem on Orpheus, and that Orpheus himself rises into at the very moment Hermes ushers Eurydice once again below. Eurydice is too far into death to be brought back to life. She has sunk into the “dream within the dream” in which, as Edgar Allan Poe writes, we are all participants. All Orpheus can take with him is the imprint of her, the illicit gaze, the melancholic pathology of the backward glance, that perhaps was not so much hastily stolen as executed too quickly. How long must the artist gaze into the underworld? Is it ever enough? Must she not continually turn back and gaze at what cannot be brought to the surface but that she must, even so, attempt to translate? Is it this that Rilke refers to when he writes in his sonnets, “it is in overstepping that [Orpheus] obeys”? Cocteau, speaking about his film, commented that “Poets, in order to live must often die, and shed not only the red blood of their hearts, but the white blood of their souls, that flows and leaves traces which can be followed.”

There is loss in this of course, great loss, that Stokes’ art both acknowledges and makes a place for. As Orpheus travels along “the path ascending steeply into life” towards “the shining exit-gates,” he cannot help but glance back. In the sonnets Rilke cautions, “Be ahead of all parting as though it already were / behind you.” This has echoes of Jacques Derrida’s The Work of Mourning, in which he argues that mourning begins the moment friendship begins; that we cannot enter into relationship without becoming conscious of the loss that will inevitably come with the other’s death. Indeed, the very idea of this loss precipitates the event itself, leaves us prematurely bereft and continually turning back towards the absent loved one in our grief. And if we are always turning back, is not the artist most required to do so, is not the artist most compelled to incline her head towards the darkness in order to write of what stirs beneath the shining surface of the world, of what calls to be heard? Is this not the invisible that Orpheus calls into being through poetry, music and art? Orpheus rises in Rilke’s poem, and in Pip Stokes’ work. In fact, if we dare to journey with him, he will rise in us all.
Virgil
The Georgics

Selected verses from Book 4, in which Virgil brings the
two themes of beekeeping and Orpheus’ mourning loss
of Eurydice together with the myth of Aristaeus, the
“Arcadian master” of bees.

“The heavenly gift of honey from the air
Is next my theme...."

“Some have affirmed that bees possess a share
Of the divine mind and drink ethereal draughts;
For God, they say, pervades the whole creation,
Lands and the sea’s expanse and the depths of sky.
Thence flocks and herds and men and all the beasts
Of the wild derive, each in his hour of birth,
The subtle breath of life; and surely thither
All things at last return, dissolved, restored.
There is no room for death: alive they fly
To join the stars and mount aloft to Heaven.”

... :

“Orpheus,’ she cried, ‘we are ruined, you and I!
The cruel Fates are calling me back and darkness
Falls on my swimming eyes. Goodbye forever.
I am borne away wrapped in an endless night,
Stretching to you, no longer yours, these hands,
These helpless hands.’ She finished, and suddenly
Out of his sight, like smoke into thin air,
Vanished away, unable any more
To see him as he vainly grasped at shadows
With so much more to say...”

...:

“For seven whole months on end, they say, he wept
Beneath a lofty crag beside the Strymon
Alone in the wild, under the chilly stars,
And sang his tale of woe, entrancing tigers
And drawing oak-trees; as the nightingale
Mourning beneath the shade of a poplar tree
Laments lost young ones whom a heartless ploughman
Has spied unfledged in the nest and plundered. She
Weeps all night long and perched upon a bough
Repeats her piteous plaint, and far and wide
Fills all the air with grief.”

The Gaze of Orpheus.
Maurice Blanchot

“The Greek myth says: one cannot create a work unless
the enormous experience of the depths – an experience
which the Greeks recognized as necessary to the work,
an experience in which the work is put to the test by
that enormousness – is not pursued for its own sake. The
depth does not surrender itself face to face; it only reveals
itself by concealing itself in the work. But the myth also
shows that Orpheus’ destiny is not to submit to that law
– and it is certainly true that by turning around to look at
Eurydice, Orpheus ruins the work... and Eurydice returns
to the shadows; under his gaze, the essence of the night
reveals itself to be inessential. He thus betrays the work
and Eurydice and the night. But if he did not turn around
to look at Eurydice, he still would be betraying,... the
boundless and imprudent force of his impulse, which
does not demand Eurydice in her diurnal truth and
her everyday charm, but in her nocturnal darkness, in
her distance, her body closed, her face sealed, which
wants to see her not when she is visible, but when she
is invisible, and not as the intimacy of a familiar life, but
as the strangeness of that which excludes all intimacy; it
does not want to make her live, but to have the fullness
of her death living in her.”

“The sacred night encloses Eurydice, encloses within
the song something which went beyond the song. But
it is also enclosed itself: it is bound, it is the attendant,
it is the sacred mastered by the power of ritual – that
word which means order, rectitude, law, the way of Tao
and the axis of Dharma. Orpheus gaze unties it, destroys
its limits, breaks the law which contains, which retains
the essence. Thus Orpheus’ gaze is... the moment
in which he frees himself of himself and..., gives the
sacred to itself, to the freedom of its essence...”

This essay by the literary theorist Blanchot is an important
influence in this body of work, contributing to its allegory
of art and the artist.
... the buzz of bees is turned into golden speech ...

And golden speech dissolves to noise.

Their nearness announces danger, urgent news for stamens, then reversing into the particulate breeze anointed flamens, they transmute the crucibles of pollen ...

Bearers of the hum of home a havering opposed, in fact, to the rhetoric of rooms, clues, their persistent buzz, to a puzzle whose name must not be said.

Angels also travel like this, their words their wings, the transport of messages inseparable from the vehicle of its delivery - and oratory? Just this quavering.

The family of bees is: aeroplanes scoring afternoons of boredom; the needy whine of building sites, boring holes in the infant air, the needle of nine spheres shattering.

Useless to connect you to human thought: we are in your direction as large as cathedrals who cannot read the letter-petalled tombs, black flowers, black honey.

A letter from an alphabet that cannot spell the end of being: you pass through the keyhole of alpha and omega, like the girl who scattered flowers when she spoke.

Amid the trumpets you savour silence unknown on the wing; sweetness is relief from buzzing in your ears: look Our Mother Mary hearkens to the silence oozing out of speech. Just summering in the kitchen curtains you would have said before my mother banished you back to the garden where you belonged: just summoning you would have said.

Alas! We have sided with glass!

I know nothing of your society but you, auricular intruder, crawl through the labyrinth of my waxen grooves, playing back their deposited summers as this - memory's meaningless hum.

This side of infinity there is nothing closer to the numberless than you - we know it though you visit us humbly discreetly in ones and twos.

Too tiny to identify with (without a microscope), you vanish out of poetry: how do you cope with the honey of sentiment smearing your reputation (your wings)?

Are you drowning in there: sticky, furiously shoving aft? Are there méssalliances? Flowers and bees dock as flawlessly as spacecraft.

Paul Carter, 2010

Lines from this poem were engraved on bees wax tablets by Carter and offered to the beehive for this installation. The bees have transformed the poems with their own script of honeycomb building. The wax tablets are installed in an archive of honeycomb in A Shrine for Orpheus.
A Shrine for Orpheus  Pip Stokes

This installation, constructed from beeswax, is a meditation on transience, death and renewal expressing a poetics of mourning and transformation through the metaphor of the life of the bees. The bees have been associated since antiquity with poetry and religious rites and rituals: the liminal events of birth, death and initiation. Over the past year I have collaborated with a living beehive, placing votive offerings associated with poetry into the hive. Objects such as books, dipped and bound in beeswax and cast wax pages engraved with aphoristic poems to the bees by writer Paul Carter. These have been incorporated into honeycomb through the natural processes of the bees.

The work underlines the central role the bees play in ecological and cultural contexts, bringing together the cosmic, plant and mineral worlds in a mythic metaphor. The cultural beehive functions also as a model for spiritual renewal, cooperation and love in the tradition of a Joseph Beuys “warmth sculpture.”

Biography

Pip Stokes lives and works in Melbourne where she is currently completing a PhD on ‘A Poetics of Care’ at the Centre for Ideas, VCA. Stokes is married to Gregory Burgess, architect, with whom she has collaborated artistically on many projects, including most recently, Shelter: On Kindness, RMIT, Oct. 2009, an event of the Melbourne International Art Festival. Stokes and Burgess have twins, Sophia, an architect/gardener and Kasimir, filmmaker.

Acknowledgements

Pip Stokes would like to acknowledge the artistic contributions made to this installation by Gregory Burgess, Kasimir and Sophia Burgess, Bluebottle Lighting, Paul Carter, Lisa Jacobson, Elizabeth Presa, Nicola McClelland, Catherine Riorden, John Russell, Anne Riggs and Sonia van de Haar.

Images: Details from A Shrine for Orpheus

A Shrine for Orpheus
Pip Stokes
11 May - 5 June 2010
fortyfivedownstairs
45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000

http://artblart.wordpress.com/2010/05/20/review-a-shrine-for-orpheus-by-pip-stokes-at-fortyfivedownstairs-melbourne/

Art Blart

- Art and writing blog by Dr Marcus Bunyan

20 May 10

Review: ‘A Shrine for Orpheus’ by Pip Stokes at fortyfivedownstairs, Melbourne

Exhibition dates: 11th May - 5th June 2010

Bees, books, bones… and biding (one’s) time, attaining the receptive state of being needed to contemplate this work. This is a strong, beautiful installation by Pip Stokes at fortyfivedownstairs that rewards such a process.

What is memorable about the work is the physicality, the textures: the sound of the bees; the Beuy-esque yellowness and presence of the beeswax blocks; the liquidness of the honey in the bowl atop the beehives; the incinerated bones, books and personal photographs; the tain-less mirrors, the books dipped in beeswax; the votive offering of poems placed into the beehive re-inscribed by the bees themselves – and above all the luscious, warm smell of beeswax that fills the gallery (echoing Beuys concept of warmth, to extend beyond the material to encompass what he described as ‘spiritual warmth or the beginning of an evolution’).

This alchemical installation asks the viewer to free themselves from themselves - “the moment in which he frees himself of himself and... gives the sacred to itself, to the freedom of its essence...” as Maurice Blanchot put its – a process Carl Jung called individuation, a synthesis of the Self which consists of the union of the unconscious with the conscious. Jung saw alchemy as an early form of psychoanalysis in which the alchemist tried to turn lead into gold, a metaphor for the dissolving of the Self into the prima materia and the emergence of a new Self at the end of the process, changing the mind and spirit of the Alchemist. Here the process is the same. We are invited to let go the eidetic memory of shape and form in order to approach the sacred not through ritual but through the reformation of Self.
As Pip Stokes last few paragraphs of her artist statement succinctly observes,

“Maurice Blanchot, has interpreted this myth as the descent of the artist to the realm of death to gain the work of art. Out of the failure of the artist, a necessary failure, emerges the artwork, wounded and bearing the ash of its origins.

The work of mourning, the work of healing.

Reflection, apparition, illusion: what appears as image, disappears evaporatively. As we change our place the space is already gone: the mirror holds a trace. What is veiled, enigmatic, uncertain remains as shadow that casts a light.”

The space in which we stand falls away: the mirror may hold a trace but it is only ever a trace. Our visions elude the senses, slipping between dreaming and waking, between conscious and subconscious realms. As Orpheus turns back to look so Eurydice dissolves, “falling out of the skin into the soul.” We, the viewer, are changed.

So far so good.

Unfortunately what does not facilitate this engagement with change is the combined verbiage of both the artist’s statement and the catalogue essay by Lisa Jacobson. These texts, especially the latter one, with quotations by Blanchot, Rilke, Calasso, Beuys, Cocteau, Neruda, Cobb, Virgil, Rilke again, Cocteau again, Poe and Derrida and meditations on mythos, the sacred, resurrection, mourning et al are mostly unnecessary to support what is strong work – in fact they seem to put a physical, textual wall between the viewer and the work, between the installation and the proposed dissolution of Self into the sacred. The catalogue essay is confusing and needed a judicious edit with the understanding that sometimes less is more! The work needs to speak for itself, not to be didactically spoken for and knowing when to merely suggest an idea is one of the skills of good writing. Perhaps all that was needed was the quotation by Blanchot and the two paragraphs above by Pip Stokes – nothing more.

Approaching the sacred is, I believe, an act of letting go, of aware-less-ness. As we immerse ourselves in that enigma we find that it is our fluid shadow aspect that has cast the light, with all attendant expectations, beliefs, dreams, visions, weaknesses, shortcomings, and instincts. This exhibition asks us to reconcile the journey into darkness with the hope of redemption.

Marcus Bunyan

All photographs are installation shots of the exhibition – please click on the photographs for a larger version of the image. All photographs courtesy of the artist and fortyfivedownstairs taken by Marcus Bunyan who is completing an internship at the gallery.
The Gaze of Orpheus

Maurice Blanchot

“The Greek myth says: one cannot create a work unless the enormous experience of the depths – an experience which the Greeks recognized as necessary to the work, an experience in which the work is put to the test by that enormousness- is not pursued for its own sake. The depth does not surrender itself face to face; it only reveals itself by concealing itself in the work. But the myth also shows that Orpheus’ destiny is not to submit to that law – and it is certainly true that by turning around to look at Eurydice, Orpheus ruins the work… and Eurydice returns to the shadows; under his gaze, the essence of the night reveals itself to be inessential. He thus betrays the work and Eurydice and the night. But if he did not turn around to look at Eurydice, he still would be betraying,… the boundless and imprudent force of his impulse, which does not demand Eurydice in her diurnal truth and her everyday charm, but in her nocturnal darkness, in her distance, her body closed, her face sealed, which wants to see her not when she is visible, but when she is invisible, and not as the intimacy of a familiar life, but as the strangeness of that which excludes all intimacy; it does not want to make her live, but to have the fullness of her death living in her.”

“The sacred night encloses Eurydice, encloses within the song something which went beyond the song. But it is also enclosed itself: it is bound, it is the attendant, it is the sacred mastered by the power of ritual – that word which means order, rectitude, law, the way of Tao and the axis of Dharma. Orpheus gaze unties it, destroys its limits, breaks the law which contains, which retains the essence. Thus Orpheus’ gaze is … the moment in which he frees himself of himself and…, gives the sacred to itself, to the freedom of its essence…”
A Shrine for Orpheus

Pip Stokes

The first temple was made by the bees with feathers, wax and honey.

Calasso

... it is Orpheus. His metamorphosis
In this one and this. We should not trouble
about other names. Once and for all
It’s Orpheus when there’s singing.

Rilke. Sonnets to Orpheus

We are the bees of the invisible
We frantically plunder the visible of its honey
To accumulate it in the great golden hive
Of the invisible

Rilke

In mythology, honey was regarded as a spiritual substance and the bees were godly...
This belief was... influenced by the whole process of honey production as constituting a link between earthly and heavenly levels. The influx of a substance from the whole environment – plants, minerals, and sun – was the essence of the bee-cult... The whole builds a unity, ... in a humane, warm way, through principles of cooperation and brotherhood.

Beuys

This installation, A Shrine for Orpheus, comprises four hundred hand cast beeswax blocks and a traditional beebox, in use by the bees until recently, accompanied by found objects such as old mirrors as well as ephemera collected from nature including feathers, bones and the salt mummified skeleton of a rabbit. Over the past year I have worked with the living beehive, placing votive offerings associated with poetry, death and renewal into the hive: objects such as books, cast wax pages, vessels, textiles and bones. Melbourne writer, Paul Carter has engraved wax tablets with aphoristic poems to the bees. These objects have been transformed through the bees’ processes of honeycomb-building.
The metaphors of the beehive in this connection to poetry, death and renewal are explored in the materials and structures of the installation. The warm sweet-smelling wax of the bees, cast into six-sided blocks, provides the building material for the Shrine and two mausoleums, each with a void space, a space of underworld. The void of the larger mausoleum contains, ashy, burnt books, personal photos from family albums scorched by fire, evoking ‘shades’, the shadowy dead – and porcelain-like bones which have been materially transformed by cremation in a kiln. The second beeswax ‘grave’ has two voids, one of which contains a beeswax-bound and dipped facsimile of handwritten poems by Keats and, in the other opening, a book of insect morphology, also dipped and bound in beeswax.

The traditional beebox in the centre of the ruin of the Shrine is placed on a lake of mirrors. The mirrors have lost their tain and been translucently washed with plaster of Paris to further dim our view into the obscurely reflective world that lies beneath. The Shrine is accompanied by offerings of honey, honeycomb, beeswax bound books and pages cast from beeswax awaiting new poems, laid at its entrance.

Myths of death, dismemberment, transformation and resurrection have haunted the Western imagination from Isis to Dionysus, Orpheus and Christ. In his essay, The Gaze of Orpheus, the French literary theorist, Maurice Blanchot, has interpreted this myth as the descent of the artist to the realm of death to gain the work of art. Out of the failure of the artist, a necessary failure, emerges the artwork, wounded and bearing the ash of its origins.

The work of mourning, the work of healing.

Reflection, apparition, illusion: what appears as image, disappears evaporatively. As we change our place the space is already gone: the mirror holds a trace. What is veiled, enigmatic, uncertain remains as shadow that casts a light.

The temple re admits this invisible.

Pip Stokes. May. 2010
A Shrine for Orpheus

Beeswax, beehive box, mirror. Mixed media, dimensions variable.
Original texts by Paul Carter, writer.
Sound by Kasimir Burgess, filmmaker.
A Shrine for Orpheus

Lisa Jacobson

If Orpheus is guardian of the sacred arts, then it is possible that never before has there been a century so much in need of his song. This is because the world insists, on a daily basis, that we lose ourselves rather than commune with loss, to be drawn to darkness as logos rather than seek out its mythos. The myth of Orpheus has an integral role today in that it returns us and brings us back into communion with the sacred through poetry, dance, music and art.

Pip Stokes’ most recent exhibition, *A Shrine for Orpheus,* provides a mythic language for the story of Orpheus. It is a contemplation of myth that reflects back on itself in an endless refraction of associations and images; a visual representation of the myth itself which is never simple or linear but, rather, layered with metaphor and re-imaginings. Stokes’ installation reveals the ways in which myth enters us, but does not belong to us. Rather, we are the conduit through which myth runs and Orpheus, indeed, does run and has run through the dreams of humankind for as long as we have been able to dream.

This is in keeping with the Neo-Platonic notion, in which Orpheus plays no small part, that the figures of myth occupy not only the rooms of the psyche, but the rooms of other houses outside of us. It is not the artist who invents these figures of the psyche, of Orpheus and Eurydice, of Persephone and Hades, but they who reinvent themselves. The zeitgeist or midrash (as the Jewish mystics call the spirit of the times) summons up those gods it needs most. In Stokes’ work, it is Orpheus who answers this call.

Orpheus, playing quietly on his lyre in the middle of the forest, coaxes the animals out to listen, as Rainer Maria Rilke writes in his first sonnet to Orpheus:

“...And where there had been
just a makeshift hut to receive the music,
a shelter nailed up out of their darkest longing,
with an entryway that shuddered in the wind-
you built a temple deep inside their hearing.”

Summoning the animals translates, perhaps, into an ecological sensibility; to hear the call of Orpheus is to answer the ecological call, to re-sacralise nature. At a time when the world seems intent on hurtling towards its own demise, A Shrine for Orpheus inclines towards meditation and the transformation of nature, the stillness of catacombs, the quietness of wax, the purposeful industry of bees and silkworms, the potential for flight, the distillation of air, the reflective gaze, the emptying out of all colour until there are only shades of white: bleached bones, wax, ash, silk and paper, feathers in contemplation of flight as if, as the poet Pablo Neruda writes, “we lived falling out of the skin into the soul.” Like the bees which flew in through the open window of Stokes’ studio to busy themselves on the beeswax, even the very act of art-
making has summoned and sung up, in its own way, the problematic aspects of creation. As Jean Cocteau observes in his film, Orphée, “Look for a lifetime in mirrors and you will see Death at work, like bees in a hive of glass.”

The music of Orpheus, as Noel Cobb has said, is “the activity of the theologos, the one who spoke with and about the Gods.” His sanctuary also encompasses poetry and art. Orpheus’ lyre has to do with both dismemberment and re-membering, god-like attributes, as Stokes alludes to in her depiction of Orpheus’ wax heart awaiting resurrection. Orpheus’ lyre was said to be strung with human sinews, and the music he plays as he sings nature and animals into being dips, inevitably, into the underworld, into death and decay, dismemberment, a scattering of the psyche into fields not yet dreamt of, in the act of its resounding. The wax which forms the foundation of Stokes’ Shrine for Orpheus, the books on which bees have fed in order to make their own inscriptions (texts by writers from Keats to the contemporary Paul Carter) also hint at resurrection and immortality. At the centre of this ‘temple’ is the beehive, symbol of transformation.

As Virgil notes in The Georgics in a section entitled “The Peculiarly Wonderful Features of Bees”, bee stock is immortal in that the hive itself is passed on from generation to generation, the structure keeps on singing, and never really dies despite the passing of the bees who composed it. In a similar fashion, Orpheus’ own lyre is carried forth, made from the shell of a tortoise whose death made possible the music itself. The heart of Orpheus, like his own severed head in the myth, does not cease its previous musicality, the song of its rhythmic beating. So too might the artist reach down into the darkness of herself, even if she risks being torn apart, knowing that the heart remains intact and can be resurrected.

Rilke again:

Only the man who has also raised his lyre among the darkling shades may be allowed a sense of infinite praise.

Inside the Orphic vision which Pip Stokes’ art immerses itself in, everything is panoramic and ornamented by mythic figures whom we cannot ever really know, but only glimpse via the language of metaphor: the hand that plunges through the earth while one is gathering flowers, the hem of a beekeeper’s shroud-like coat, the thin silken thread of a worm, the trace of words upon wax, or feathers, burnt books or ash. These are the images that translate the emotion of the myth but which remain, nevertheless, untranslatable because should they be hardened into the prosaic everyday language of the world, they would cease to be mythos.

Perhaps it is for this very reason that Eurydice cannot be brought back up to the shining world of which Rilke writes, in a different poem on Orpheus, and that Orpheus himself rises into at the very moment Hermes ushers Eurydice once again below. Eurydice is too far into death to be brought back to life. She has sunk into the “dream within the dream” in which, as Edgar Allan Poe writes, we are all participants. All
Orpheus can take with him is the imprint of her, the illicit gaze, the melancholic pathology of the backward glance, that perhaps was not so much hastily stolen as executed too quickly. How long must the artist gaze into the underworld? Is it ever enough? Must she not continually turn back and gaze at what cannot be brought to the surface but that she must, even so, attempt to translate? Is it this that Rilke refers to when he writes in his sonnets, “it is in overstepping that [Orpheus] obeys?” Cocteau, speaking about his film, commented that “Poets, in order to live must often die, and shed not only the red blood of their hearts, but the white blood of their souls, that flows and leaves traces which can be followed.”

There is loss in this of course, great loss, that Stokes’ art both acknowledges and makes a place for. As Orpheus travels along “the path ascending steeply into life” towards “the shining exit-gates,” he cannot help but glance back. In the sonnets Rilke cautions, “Be ahead of all parting as though it already were / behind you.” This has echoes of Jacques Derrida’s The Work of Mourning, in which he argues that mourning begins the moment friendship begins; that we cannot enter into relationship without becoming conscious of the loss that will inevitably come with the other’s death. Indeed, the very idea of this loss precipitates the event itself, leaves us prematurely bereft and continually turning back towards the absent loved one in our grief. And if we are always turning back, is not the artist most required to do so, is not the artist most compelled to incline her head towards the darkness in order to write of what stirs beneath the shining surface of the world, of what calls to be heard? Is this not the invisible that Orpheus calls into being through poetry, music and art? Orpheus rises in Rilke’s poem, and in Pip Stokes’ work. In fact, if we dare to journey with him, he will rise in us all.
Author/s: Stokes, Mary Anne Pip

Title: A poetics of care: mourning, consolation, healing

Date: 2010


Persistent Link: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/35791

File Description: A poetics of care: mourning, consolation, healing

Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.