

Flesh and the text:  
Poststructural theory  
and  
writing research

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Thesis submitted by

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Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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## Acknowledgements

This thesis is my love song to hundreds of women (and a few men)  
who have contributed to this thesis and my thinking  
including...

the women of the Internationale Frauenuniversität, Hanover,  
Germany;

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the wild women writers;

numerous beautiful and generous friends in diverse locations;

my supervisor Professor Bronwyn Davies;

my beloved family...

## Abstract

This thesis is an analysis and practice of writing otherwise in academia. It takes off from Barthes' claim that "Science will become literature" (1989, p. 10) into a labyrinth of writing in different contexts and genres. In local and specific writing contexts, the author contrasts (social) scientific analytical writing with poetic, dramatic and autoethnographic writing to begin to generate theories about how different types of writing might work differently to construct different knowledges. Data from collective biography projects is re-presented as poetry and as a theatre script. Data from a professional development context becomes the launch pad for autoethnography. Sections of "creative" or "literary" writing are interspersed with theoretical and methodological analysis. The research methodologies of collective biography/ memorywork and autoethnography are interrogated in the light of poststructural theories on language. Poetry and drama are analysed as poststructural research and writing methodologies. The thesis is a risky journey into transgressive writing research. The linear narratives of research are disrupted as the thesis is organized as a series of detours into writing towards a conclusion that stresses the (im)possibilities of conclusions.

Particular lines of flight through this thesis are the subject, the body and the other in writing. Poststructural perspectives on subjects emphasise their positionality (Foucault, 1972) and their mobility (Ferguson, 1993). Subjects are produced in particular spaces, places and times (Probyn, 2003) and this thesis attends to subjects-in-process in particular writing (con)texts. Writing is both the site and the practice of research. The body is pivotal in this thesis. All the texts produced in this thesis attend explicitly to the (female) body. The methodologies of collective biography/ memorywork (Davies et al., 2001; Haug, 1987), which provoked the poetic and dramatic writing in this thesis, begin with the body as the locus of knowledge. The particular research sites and texts of this thesis have given an overtly feminist cast to this textual body. My research colleagues have almost all been women and it is women's embodied experiences that have been of interest to us. Research sites have ranged from Germany (where I was part of Project Area Body of the *Internationale Frauenuniversität* in 2000), to a community theatre

company in my town, to a writing group around my kitchen table. The “other” is the third line of flight in this thesis and I use the concept of the other to trace how the writing in this thesis has been a collaborative practice, and an ethical practice where writing the other (otherwise) might be seen as a practice of love (Cixous, 1991; Somerville, 1999).

Chapter 1	Introduction(s)	pp. 1 - 35
Chapter 2	Collective biography/ memorywork	pp. 36 - 71
Chapter 3	Poetic in(ter)ventions	pp. 72 - 105
Chapter 4	Poetic in(...)ventions	pp. 106 - 135
Chapter 5	Writing "The Breast Project"	pp. 136 -161
Chapter 6	(Re)Writing "The Breast Project"	pp. 162 - 180
Chapter 7	"The Breast Project" Script	pp. 181 - 254
Chapter 8	Writing the self writing – auto/ethnography	pp. 255 - 281
Chapter 9	The (im)possibilities of poststructural auto/ethnography	pp. 282 - 301
Chapter 10	Blackmore Avenue, 1960...Autoethnographic fragments	pp. 302 - 322
Chapter 11	Conclusion	pp. 323 - 340
	References	pp. 341 - 367