

Own Worst Enemy: an original novel in poetic form that explores the boundaries between literary genres, while investigating the problematics of memory and subjectivity within traumatised family relationships.

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in English Studies at the School of Arts, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

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Own Worst Enemy

By Amy Joy Lewitt

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I am truly indebted to and thankful for my supervisor, Doctor Kobus Moolman, whose wisdom, commitment and creativity helped make this piece beautiful and real.

I would like to thank my parents Clare and Allen Lewitt for all their support in helping me get to where I am today. Mom, you are such a blessing.

Lastly I would like to thank Robert Winsper for always being on my side. You make each day better. Thank you for the years of endless encouragement and personal support.

Own Worst Enemy

.....

ANGLE ONE

35 Llan Road

09.47 pm

.....

Before the curtain opens.

This is the place where they sit. Brother and sister, once again, after eighteen years.

Seldom do those who have
been badly hurt ever
forget. Ever heal.

There in the hurt of the heart lives
a longing to feel pain anew. Perhaps
so that this time they
can stand up and
speak the thoughts of their anger.

Perhaps pain is the only
love they've ever known.

Curtain opens.

.....

ANGLE TWO

Broken Windows

.....

10.40 pm

.....

Owain stands in front of his mother's bookshelf and begins to take out all the Virginia Woolf novels. They were his mother's favourite so he thinks of packing them separately. That way he can put them in her room when he takes her to the retirement home.

This makes him feel less guilty.

Eira still cannot open the window. She forgot that her father had put locks on all the windows in the house and then hidden the key.

She stands at the window with her back to Owain who has come to find her. He watches her watching nothing.

HE

When I was younger I watched my father
with his artist's hands chisel away
at my mother's heart, my sister's, mine, and
then finally his own.

That was the day Eira promised
she would never let herself forget his mark on her skin.
I promised never to uncover the shame he left me.

Unable to watch them reassemble the broken
windows to their hearts,
I put up a wall. Mother bought me curtains.
Eira moved to the other side of the wall.

Pause.

HE

No one can explain exactly what happens within us
if the walls, behind which all our childhood traumas lurk,
are not built.

His mother understood this. She taught what Virginia Woolf wrote, "Each has his past shut in him like the leaves of a book known to him by heart, and his friends could only read the title ... and the passengers going the opposite way could read nothing at all ..."

SHE

No one can explain
exactly what happens within us if
the walls, behind which
all our childhood traumas lurk,
are built.

Eira thinks, as Virginia Woolf once did: "How unpleasant it is to be locked out ... how it is worse, perhaps, to be locked in."

Pause.

HE

The day I built my wall something
changed between us.

I sat listening to the rain leak guilt
down my walls.

Watching the strings that once connected us
stretch until worn thin on every side.

.....

ANGLE THREE

Boys and their Toys

.....

10.55 pm

.....

HE

I wanted a toy gun because

my dad had a gun.

I wanted to be tough and

strong like he said I should be.

I was eight but I already knew somewhere inside me

that I didn't really want to be like him.

But, like my dad, I too pointed it at someone.

I knew exactly how to do this because

I had looked into his gun so often.

And I knew that I was pointing mine right

when I saw in Eira's eyes what I often

felt at my dad's hand.

I didn't know why she cried,

my gun was only a toy.

.....

ANGLE FOUR

Broken Lives

.....

11.20 pm

.....

The door creaks on its hinge. Eira turns and faces Owain. She walks past him, handing him a newspaper cutting:

OBITUARY

Brynmor Jones:

May 21, 1944.

Age 59. Father of

Owain & Eira.

Service May 23,

10:00. St Cynwyd's

Church, Llangynwyd.

End.

.....

ANGLE FIVE

Stage Directions One

.....

11.32 pm

.....

Owain and Eira sit side by side as children on a pair of swings.

Pushing their legs forward and backwards, forward and

backwards, faster, faster,

higher.

Owain jumps off his swing, disappearing out of the frame.

Eira drops her legs and slowly comes to a stop.

She feels a deep pulse in her thighs,

under her thighs.

.....

FRAME ONE

.....

07.26 am

.....

Eira finds a small box filled with pages torn out of various writing pads. The pages sit on top of many ribbons.

.....

FRAME TWO

Brynmor Jones

.....

1980

.....

Snippet of a classified past.

my father was a satanist who
molested me as a child and now
he is trying to kill me it is the
only way he can be certain i
never tell

.....

ANGLE SIX

Moving Day

.....

08.00 am

.....

Owain is packing.

Eira is unpacking.

HE

Today I am packing up my memories.

Eira is packing up hers.

Mother is packing up hers.

Her gentle bundle of burdens tied up with a ribbon.

I am not sure what we will do with them.

I would rather have left mine

to the dust and the spiders' webs.

But that would be wrong, so my sister tells me.

Then I guess the fact that I am here is good,

I must have some sense of right and wrong.

I must have learnt it somehow along my way.

Pause.

I have never liked looking back on my
years spent in this unhappy house.

Back then I would wait for the day when I could leave
to be my own man.

Now I am a man and yet
I still cannot escape the surviving marks of pain
from my past that begin to surface,
revealing my secrets to the world,

that just watches
and smiles.

SHE

What we are really doing is
unpacking. Unpacking the insides of our
childhood into boxes. The things
we tried to bury so deeply, hoping
to never have to remember
them again, begin clawing their way to

the surface of our skin.

There is only so much space in
the human memory. Why is it
that our pain always gets the
biggest piece?

HE

Seeing my mother makes me afraid. She carries with her
73 years, 5 months and 3 days. I take up
35 years, 6 months and 15 days of that.

I know that in me she sees her many mistakes come
slowly scratching through to the surface.
Threatening to expose what she had buried.

In her I see my future. Growing more and more alone.
Suddenly I want to leave.
I need to leave this house that we call home.

This house that fits like a grave.

Secretly.

HE

Eira catches me walking past her bedroom door –

“Owain! Where are you going?”

I cannot answer her, so instead I run. I am

ashamed that she is stronger than me.

She runs after me, shouting.

I know she is desperate for someone to rely on.

Eira walks back inside alone.

She begins putting her mother’s left-over life into storage, alone.

End.

.....

ANGLE SEVEN

Time

.....

*They are children, they are teenagers, they are
in their thirties, they are children, they are teenagers,
they are in their thirties. They are in their thirties.
They are in their thirties.*

.....

ANGLE EIGHT

Walls

.....

08.00 am

.....

HE

is kept company by a long silence

while he tapes up the windows to

their past until: So how have you been?

SHE

Fine, I guess.

Silence.

HE

So we're ...

Silence.

So we're finally packing up this old place hey?

SHE

Mmm.

HE

And mam's in the home now.

SHE

Yes.

HE

Thanks for taking her yesterday.

Silence.

HE

I'll go and visit her soon. Take her some books maybe.

SHE

Okay.

HE

I think she'll like that.

Silence.

HE

Was she alright?

SHE

What do you mean?

HE

Was mam okay when you took her to the home?

SHE

is unable to look at him so

she shrugs: Probably not.

HE

Why do you say that?

SHE

Well, because mom is like you.

Full of anger, but

won't let anybody know it.

HE

pauses briefly as he chooses to ignore her comment.

He turns towards his boxes. But then his anger starts:

You don't think I have a right to be angry?

SHE

replies straight away. As if she has been rehearsing this conversation in her head.

Over and over. Many times before.

I think that at some point you need to let go of
your hatred for dad. You hold on to so much
bitterness and it never affected dad in any way,
only you. So what has been the
point of it all these years?

HE

For you, Dad had two sides to him.

For me he only had one.

Beat.

The side you hated so much
that you couldn't even go to his funeral
is the only side I ever saw.

Beat.

So drop your self-righteous bullshit act.

You're are angry with everybody.

He takes her crashing back, crashing back into twenty men's mouths,

thirty men's arms,

forty men bringing her pleasure, bringing her

gasping back.

Throb.

SHE

The only person I'm angry with is you!

Long silence.

Looks up: Oh look here,

mam's *My Fair Lady* soundtrack.

.....

ANGLE NINE

Stage Directions Two

.....

08.42 am

.....

The room is dimly lit by an old chandelier with missing bulbs and a fireplace holding dying flames.

A three-piece lounge suite pushes up against the walls. The coffee table lies on its side to make space while cushions pile up in one corner. Father and mother are dancing to

"I Could Have

Danced All Night" from My Fair Lady.

Mother

is laughing and unties her hair. The children take turns watching through the keyhole.

.....

ANGLE TEN

Watching

.....

09.26 am

.....

Quietly.

HE

I watch Eira collecting her sad stories,

remembering things that

I will never know.

She opens the secrecy of her childhood,

but only for her to see.

I want to make sure she remembers the love –

there was love!

But I have forgotten how to talk to her,

how to speak more than just my hollow words.

SHE

I have watched my
mother over the years act as if
nothing happened. She
has gotten good at pretending her
bundle isn't tied up with anger.

She did not shout and scream when
dad left her. She did not cry when
he died and his memory went
on someone else's mantelpiece. She did
not even flinch when the home
we suggested was for the aged –
instead of our own.

I know why she pretends. It is
more possible than forgetting.

His eyes are still on his father.

Eira never liked watching.

HE

I will always remember dad's backup
getting out of his new
1992 bottle green MG RV8 and
sitting on the polished bonnet.

She wore her dirty smile with matching
fishnets and cleavage,
while dad and mom fought again.
He was supposed to fetch us the day before.

We stood by with our weekend bags ready
and we watched.

That day Owain's eyes stopped following.

SHE

We watched the lies
choke his eyes until we could no
longer recognise him in them.
That was the last time we would see
our father for the next two years.

HE

You remember too much.

Why do you hold on to all that pain?

SHE

Where am I supposed to put it?

.....

ANGLE ELEVEN

Missing Pieces

.....

10.45 am

.....

Eira holds a letter. It is old and creased which makes it soft. It looks like it has been read too many times.

End.

.....

ANGLE TWELVE

The Old Days

.....

10.55 am

.....

How Owain remembers it.

HE

On good evenings we would walk up to the hills not far from our house,

where mom picked daffodils and dad would smile at her

and tell her that he would paint them for her on the weekend.

I remember her being happy, happily picking flowers,

not minding the dry mud on my shins or

that Eira was collecting small, smooth river stones in her dress pockets.

Mom wore her hair down on days like these.

Eira says she doesn't ever remember mom wearing her hair down.

I told her that it was before dad's worst days.

She said that was before her memory began.

He hesitates.

HE

My first memory of dad is also my first memory of you.

He held me up to the small, square window

on mam's hospital room door.

Mam blew kisses.

You were in an incubator

already looking empty.

Years later dad would say,

"That is why you always kept mam in the background –

for six weeks you were in that incubator when

you should have been beside your mother's heart."

How Eira remembers it.

SHE

Sometimes it is easier to forget our

Friday night's fish and chips, Sunday's

roast dinners and croquet in the yard,

singing while dad played the old piano, or

our afternoon walks to the hills. Sometimes

it's easier to remember my pain because
this makes me hate you. And the
person who cares less, is
always stronger.

Intake of breath.

SHE

I still remember mother's words,
"I've come to realise what your problem is –
you have rejection issues." My weakness
hung in the air and I struggled to grab it,
own it. I stood there in front of her, reading
every word she said, all the while thinking she
must be right.

From that day on I remembered
my issue when dad left and again when
he died, when Owain forgot how to love, and
each time mother put up her hair.

I wonder what I would have been if

I was never told about my issue.

She still remembers that at that moment she felt it on her neck, in

her breasts, between

her thighs.

That's when she thought of moving it to her wrists.

.....

FRAME THREE

.....

01.13 pm

.....

Eira begins to draw an outline of her father's life.

.....

FRAME FOUR

Brynmor Jones

.....

1942-1943

.....

Collections of historical importance.

10/08/1942

i am guilty and now

i am being punished

i am guilty of many things

i cannot remember

and now i cannot write

i cannot paint

i have forgotten if i can still think

my medication is trying to kill me

it tells me that it wants to

kill my son too

i would stop it but

i cannot love

so now i am killing us both

.....

24/12/1942

i have decided i cannot
live much longer and that
this will be the year of my
death and i know you will
think i am selfish but you are
lucky not to know pain's
simple truth

.....

01/05/1943

i will etch a dotted line
across my wrist and i
will have my scissors ready

.....

Taken by depression, Virginia Woolf wrote before her suicide:

"I feel certain now that I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices and I can't concentrate so I am doing what seems the best thing to do."

.....

ANGLE THIRTEEN

Pink and Blue

.....

One boy pulled her hair

One boy wrote her a love letter

One boy held her hand

One boy touched her cheek

One boy kissed her mouth

One boy bit her neck

One boy bit her ear

One boy slid his hand inside her shirt

One boy slid his hand up her skirt

One hundred mouths

One hundred fingers

.....

ANGLE FOURTEEN

War Record

.....

02.56 pm

.....

Military Personnel Records at the National Archives at 35 Llan Road.

SHE

sits in her childhood bedroom listening to the storm outside the window

she cannot open. All the furniture is still the same,

in all the same places, even her sheets are still the same.

Once a week her mother would wash all the linen even though no one ever came to stay over.

The storm reminds her of the first time she started worrying about her father.

He ran into my room shouting: "Someone outside is trying to kill us!"

He said it was his father.

He told me to get under my bed while he frantically checked my windows.

His fear rolled into me.

He had his gun. Mom came running, not knowing her husband.

She reached for his gun and

I tried not to watch them struggle from under my bed until

a shot of dark glistened

across the room. He started, seeking shelter from his storm.

The rain fell down our windows

and cheeks.

She feels it move deep inside her.

SHE

As a child father held

a gun to your head to

make you do your homework. Memories

stain our minds, leaving no

space for a different story.

He shot himself when you were seventeen, and

as his mind and body

slowly submerged in darkness, finally

he was weaker.

Mother rang – Your father

isn't going to live,

visit him tonight!

We didn't.

You didn't go to the funeral. Twenty years
later, you still won't talk about him. And now
you try to love, you fail. You
are your father's son.

HE

*He sits on the staircase. Eira walks down past him. He remembers her smell of second hand
cigarette smoke, wine and cheap perfume.
The night their father died.*

Father is dead.

SHE

Yes.

HE

I suppose we hurt him not visiting.

SHE

I suppose.

HE

He knew it was his fault though.

Silence.

But that doesn't make it right.

Eira begins to cry.

HE

How are you?

SHE

shrugs.

HE

Are you happy?

.....

FRAME FIVE

Brynmor Jones

.....

26/07/1983

.....

Observations on normality.

A cloak of the outside world
covers over me someone is
watching me a vacant face
staring blankly i must not be
seen so i stay inside all day if
i hide it will never get to me

.....

FRAME SIX

Dylan Jones

Document of historical importance.

0152882

HD

CERTIFIED COPY of

Copi Dilys O

Pursuant to the Births and

an ENTRY OF DEATH

GOFNOD MARWOLAETH

Deaths Registration Act 1953

Registration District

Dosbarth Cofrestru

Death in the Sub-district of

Marwolaeth yn Is-ddosbarth

in the

Glamorgan

yn

1

1937

Columns:-

Cofnodau:-

1

When and where

Pryd a lle y bu

Rhiw

2

Name and surname

Ew a chyfenw

3

Sex

Rhyw

4

Age

Oed

5

Occupation

Gwaith

6

Cause of death

Achos marwolaeth

7

Signature, description and

residence of informant

Llofnod, disgrifiad a

chylfeirnod yr ffrwydd

8

When registered

Pryd y

cofrestrwyd

9

Signature of

registrar

Llofnod y

cofrestrwyd

82

07 June 1937

No 10 Heol Cynnydd

Llangynnydd

Measteg

Dylan Brynmor Jones

M

40

Accountant

Contact perforating shot gun wound

to head

Certificate received from

David Thomas

Coroner for South West

Glamorgan

Inquest held 08 June 1937

10 June 1937

D. A. Davies

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.

Tystiolaethwyd ei fod yn gopi cywir o gofnod mewn cofrestr a gedwir gennyf i.

Superintendent Registrar

Cofrestryydd Arolygol

D. Davies

10/06/1937

Date

Dyddiad

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. ©CROWN COPYRIGHT

GOFAL: MAE YNA DROSEDDAU YN YMWNEUD A FFUGIO NEU ADDASU TYSTYSGRIF NEU DDEFNYDDIO TYSTYSGRIF FFUG NEU WRTH FOD AG UN YN EICH MEDDIANT. ©HAWLFRAINT Y GORON

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

RHYBUDD: NID YW TYSTYSGRIF YN PROFI PWY YDYCH CHI.

40

(Between the Acts)

Woolf, Virginia. 1941. "Between The Acts". London: The Hogarth Press.

.....

Something begins to stir inside both of them where they once felt empty and silent.

"Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent. The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence."

Curtain closes.

.....

.....

Intermission: A String Quartet, as played while their mother walked down the aisle to their father.

96

No. 10 I Could Have Danced All Night

Cue: MRS. PEARCE: You've all been working much too hard. I think the strain is beginning to show. Eliza, I don't care what Mr. Higgins says, you must put down your books and go to bed.

Allegro molto

ELIZA:

Bed! Bed! I

Piano

mf (Str., W.W.)

p sempre staccato

(W.W.)

(Str.)

could- n't go to bed! My head's too light to try to set it down!

⑥

Sleep! Sleep! I

(Harp Solo)

(W.W.)

(Str.)

could- n't sleep to- night! Not for all the jew- els in the

(+Bs. pizz.)

(Hn.)

14

crown! _____ I could have danced all

(Fl., Cls.)

(Bsn., Cello)

p (Str.)
(cued in Ob., Bsn.)

night! _____ I could have danced all night! And

etc.

still have begged for more.

Curtain opens again.

.....

ANGLE FIFTEEN

Fear

.....

05.02 pm

.....

Owain wonders how to keep himself from disappearing.

Disappearing like his father did before him and

(since he never knew him)

he imagines like his grandfather did before that.

HE

The only time I believed in God

was at night because I was afraid of the dark.

SHE

You used to climb into my bed.

HE

It was the only time I ever prayed.

SHE

I used to wait for you.

HE

I would listen to your breathing,

waiting until you were asleep

then I tried to match your breath,

until my mind filled with sleep.

SHE

When I woke you were never there.

HE

The sound of the milk man at dawn always woke me,

taking my fears with him in the empty bottles

mammy left on the front door steps.

I would sneak back to my room so that dad would never know,

and so that maybe he would stop calling me a coward.

They sit together in silence for a long time

HE

Do you know why he stopped taking his medicine?

SHE

He said his medicine affected his creativity. He said it made him forget how to paint objectively. He said he became distracted by the way he saw things and that was all he was able to show in his art. He said no one else would ever be able to love it because no one else would ever be able to see what he saw. He said I had the most beautiful skin he'd ever painted.

Silence.

When we were younger, dad both revered and feared his father. His words never stumbled over the awful things our grandfather did to him as a child and wanted to do to him as an adult. Dad said it was from granddad that he was protecting us. Granddad died when our father was two.

Silence.

I remember Dad always used to give one piece of advice –

HE

Guard your heart.

Eira looks at her brother.

.....

ANGLE SIXTEEN

Generational Curses

07.37 pm

.....

Her father's death links her thoughts to her brother.

SHE

Dad bought himself a little revolver.

He could not curse

his demons. In his

will he left it to you. Maybe

you can break the pattern.

HE

You looked for love in

the only places and ways you knew.

You wouldn't recognise the

warning signs because it's all you've ever known.

Who is to blame?

You've always wanted a man just like your "daddy".

He feels his anger building.

HE

Why do you cut yourself?

Silence.

Does it bring you relief?

Silence.

Do you do it for attention?

Silence.

Do you do it because it feels good?

Does it feel good to watch yourself bleed?

Why did you cut your arm?

Silence.

Tell me why!

You're getting your attention so take it and tell me!

Exhale.

SHE

Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you.

Throb.

She feels it again, burning hard between her thighs.

.....

ANGLE SEVENTEEN

Eira

.....

08.00 am

.....

He looks into the photograph.

She dresses for her Debutante's Ball.

HE

Here you are sixteen.

Ready to be introduced to society in your
white dress, and then dance with your father.

But your father is not there.

So instead you walked downstairs dressed
in knee-length boots and a black dress
that looked two sizes too small.

Oozing sex and sin, a child of the fatherless generation,
you were ready to introduce yourself.

Finished with everything you knew,
in a house whose skin had grown too tight. Wanting to be loved,

needed, wanted.

You went looking for it the only way you knew how.

He looks at the photograph.

She leans out of it.

HE

Do you ever think about having children?

SHE

Yes.

But then I remember being a child

and I change my mind.

HE

What hurts you the most?

Silence.

Is it that mom couldn't love you?

Time passes the window.

SHE

looks out the window:

Dad wouldn't have left a note,
we knew all along.

HE

Why didn't you go to his funeral?

SHE

You didn't go because he never loved you,
but he loved me. He was supposed to love me. And
then one day he left us and all of a sudden he didn't
want me anymore. But I still tried, I visited and I called and
I wrote. Then one day he disappeared for good and there
was no way for me to keep trying. That
day I knew he didn't love me.

.....

ANGLE EIGHTEEN

.....

09.35 am

.....

Eira picks up the phone. She looks at the receiver, not wanting to dial.

When she finally does and it is answered she distracts herself by neatening up the room.

It rings, six, seven, eight —

SHE

Mammy, hi. Um, how are you?

I'm fi —

The packing is coming along fine.

Yes, he's been helping me.

Silence.

Um, anyway, I was thinking of coming over.

— It wouldn't be any trouble.

Well, there's actually something I wanted to ask you.

A — about a letter of yours I found from dad.

Um, he's saying he's sorry for leaving and wants to come back home.

No, I haven't shown him yet, wh —

Don't worry about the phone bill.

Mam please, I —

Mam plea —

Mam? Hello?

Hello?

.....

ANGLE NINETEEN

.....

Dial tone...

.....

FRAME SEVEN

Brynmor Jones

.....

10.17 am

.....

Notes of documented importance.

Case Study: Brynmor Jones.

Date of Birth: 18 August 1935.

Age: 51.

Sex: Male.

Symptoms: Sudden anger, fearfulness, suspicion, delusions, paranoia, depression, suicidal thoughts.

Diagnosis: Paranoid schizophrenia.

Extra Information: Patient continuously hears babies crying. Collects ribbons to tie up the babies' cries.

.....

ANGLE TWENTY

.....

Eventually the phone goes dead.

.....

FRAME EIGHT

Brynmor Jones

.....

18/09/1982

.....

Final notes of documented importance.

Case Study: Brynmor Jones.

Date of Birth: 18 August 1935.

Age: 47.

Sex: Male.

Joined Royal Air Force: Tuesday 01 September 1953.

Qualified: 31 July 1956.

Station Name: RAF Valley.

Location: Anglesey, Wales.

Initial training piston-engine Provost T15 began Friday 03 September 1956, completed Monday 25 March 1957.

Advanced Training Vampire T11 began Monday 01 April, completed Friday 11 October 1957.

Wings awarded Friday 11 October 1957.

Royal Air Force Flight Instructor: 01 November 1957- 31 December 1961.

Operational and Rescue Mission Pilot: 01 January 1962- 31 December 1967.

Advanced Training Flight Instructor: 01 January 1968- 17 September 1980.

Grounded 18 September 1980: Failed medical examination.

Grounded 18 September 1981: Failed medical examination.

Medically discharged 18 September 1982.

.....

ANGLE TWENTY ONE

Cracks

.....

10.55 am

.....

Slowly being drowned by the child in their hearts.

HE

This house was much too big for us.

The many rooms whose doors
were kept closed became keyholes
through which I would look onto another
life I wished was mine.

Reaching for something I could not remember.

SHE

Hot rage burned right to the
tips of his fingers, willing him to hurt
our father in some way. Any way.
Such were the extremes of emotion

that even our father's mere presence
now brought. He looked at our father
standing in the doorway with that
jagged look he now wore in his eyes and
sarcastic smile that took pleasure in ridiculing his son.

"Please don't hit him, Dad, it wasn't his fault. It was my fault –"

It was too late. I knew my pleas were
wasted the moment I saw
the secret conceit in my father's face.

HE

When I think of dad I am torn into pieces
of resentment and regret.

Resentment.

Because we suffered at his hand.

Regret.

Because it could have been so different.

Because I banished him from my heart
and never got the chance to let him back in.

SHE

How will you feel when you remember

me and mammy?

Something comes unwound, some stitch somewhere inside of him.

.....

ANGLE TWENTY TWO

.....

12.30 pm

.....

The strain begins to show.

SHE

You could have saved me so much pain, if
you just loved me.

HE

You're just like him, always blaming me.

It wasn't my job to look after you.

You wanted to look for love in countless men

because your father stopped loving you,

not me.

SHE

Is there a difference?

Silence.

He cringes. Like father like son.

He thinks: Everything my father did to me, I took to her.

.....

ANGLE TWENTY THREE

Healing?

.....

02.13 pm

.....

She sits for a long time at the bottom of the staircase and thinks about love.

He sits for a long time in the study at his father's old bureau, so old that the wood is turning soft.

The rest of the room is now empty.

He thinks about disappearing.

HE

When I forget how to remember,

when I disappear from this earth, will there be something to

remind people that I was here?

When my name is lost to death, will it be alive

in someone else's memory somewhere?

Later.

HE

How am I still here?

Your voice in darkness

not quite reaching me.

Yet still I answer.

Polite, detached, automatic,

I match your words.

Then suddenly there begins

beneath the broken flow

a growl I did not know

I had the courage to carry off.

Snap.

HE

takes out a pad of paper and writes.

Restart.

HE

The page was black when I had finished.

Black with hard words

smudged onto the side of my clenched hand.

When the words stopped, the black marks
and then the outline of the hard words still remained on
the white pages as I continued to turn
one after the other until eventually there was nothing
but whiteness.

SHE

She stares out of the window and into her childhood.

She is once again sitting at the bottom of the stairs, but this time with her mother.

She remembers that she was crying, trying to understand what her father did.

She remembers her mother's words, "If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people." Her mother loved Virginia Woolf.

She smiles.

She walks upstairs to find her brother.

The wooden floors give her away, bringing him back.

He turns to look at her face and she walks to stand next to him.

SHE

I've never seen this desk unlocked before.

HE

I found the key under the windowsill while I was packing.

He didn't leave anything in it except some of his sketches,
do you want them?

SHE

picks up the few sketches and looks through them.

Here, you have the one of the house.

HE

Thank you.

Pause.

Before he got sick he used to make me laugh all the time.

I loved his laugh –

It was a strong, honest laugh.

But over time it became hollow and conceited and I hated the sound.

You still laughed with him though; you were too young to notice the change.

But I recognised the same strength and truth in you and I hated you for it.

I hated you for reminding me of him.

For being that innocent part of him.

I hated you because he loved you.

SHE

He did love you. His illness just got the better of it.

It got the better of his love for all of us.

HE

I know.

Pause.

I'm sorry I let it get the better of me too.

SHE

It's okay.

HE

No, it's not. I knew you needed to feel loved after dad left.

I was pleased that mam wasn't bothered with you.

I was pleased you weren't his "little girl anymore".

I was happy he finally hurt you too.

He cries for the first time since he was a child.

SHE

Our house was always divided. We
could never have stood together.

They sit together in silence for a long time.

SHE

Can I see the key?

*She takes it from him then walks to the window,
fits it in the small lock and
turns it open.*

.....

ANGLE TWENTY FOUR

Stage Directions Three

.....

06.22 pm

.....

*Owain and Eira sit by side by side as adults on their
old childhood swing. It is summer and the sun is still out.
Eira's hair falls down onto her shoulders. Owain moves
his legs forward, backwards, forward, backwards, forward,
higher, higher, higher. Eira follows Owain, higher, higher. Owain
jumps off the swing and exits the frame. Eira follows him and
disappears out of the frame.
She laughs off.*

.....

The Writing Process: Reflections and Influences

Introduction

In his introduction to Anne Carson's *Glass, Irony and God* Guy Davenport writes:

In Anne Carson's poetry we are everywhere looking into depths, through transparencies of time and place. As with Virginia Woolf, she gives us scenes—moors, rooms, orchards, deserts—in which vivid action holds our attention. (1995:viii)

In my piece, *Own Worst Enemy*, (Lewitt 2012) I draw on Carson's influence as I explore the problematics of place, time and memory, and the way in which Carson fuses diverse thematic concerns into one entity, as well as merging a range of literary elements.

My writing process originally began in my Honours creative writing class. Always unable to commit to a single genre I decided to experiment with combinations of different literary forms. As the writer Ernest Hemingway once said, "My aim is to put down on paper what I see and what I feel in the best and simplest way" (Hemingway 2012:np). For me this was to be done by borrowing literary elements from different genres in the hope of creating effective writing through understatement and innovation. It was also in this Honours class that I was first introduced to Anne Carson who subsequently became a significant influence on my writing, not only with her unique use of genre but also with the original manner in which she united a range of themes. After completing my Honours degree in English Studies I decided to continue onto my Masters in the field of creative writing where what I learnt and wrote the previous year has now grown and developed from short separate narrative pieces into an extended narrative in a combination of poetic and dramatic forms.

One of the first pieces of writing advice I was told was to write what I know. I was reminded of the importance of observation. As I writer I am interested in lived experience, things that happen to different people every day, all over the world. I wanted to capture the joys, fears, anger, pain, loss and love that make up the essence of being alive. My third piece of very important advice was to read. Amy Sage Webb wrote:

...students of writing must learn to appreciate the work of other authors and to appreciate their techniques; we must learn how to read for *how a piece of writing works* rather than for what it means. (in McCaw 2011:26)

Through reading Carson, I could clearly identify how her writing works in the way Will Aitken describes as, “insistent and groundbreaking” (2003:2). Through a study of Carson’s blending of genres and styles I also began to learn what would add value to my own writing. The way in which she invests her words with boldness showed me how a piece of writing can work successfully with observation and invention. Carson’s distinguishing way of writing is what I hoped to bring about in my own piece, *Own Worst Enemy*. This essay serves as an analysis of Carson in relation to *Own Worst Enemy* and a reflection upon my writing process.

I will begin by exploring Carson’s use of genre in “The Glass Essay” in *Glass, Irony and God* (1995), *Autobiography of Red* (1998) and *Nox* (2010) in relation to the combination of genres used in my piece. Here I will also discuss the influence of Harold Pinter’s play *Silence* (1982) and Sarah Kane’s play *4.48 Psychosis* (2001). Thereafter I will discuss the subject matter and themes of my piece, specifically past and memory, all in relation to Carson’s three works mentioned above and once again in connection to Pinter’s *Silence* as well as Elizabeth Bachinsky’s *God of Missed Connections* (2009). Finally I will discuss the complexities of time and place in Carson’s writing as well as W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2001) in relation to *Own Worst Enemy*.

Genre

When questioned in an interview with John D'Agata about her use of form Carson responded:

...it arises out of the thing itself. They aren't forms that are from somewhere, they're just in there. You have to mess around until you find your form at the beginning, and once you find it you just follow it. (1997:12)

Carson's poetic exploration and experimentation with structure creates an innovative form in most of her writing which, in general, sets her apart from many writers today. Her daring originality seems effortless and the possibilities of her writing endless as she re-imagines and contemplates how people such as Emily Brontë and Virginia Woolf or mythological characters might have lived in relation to current life experiences. This creates a hybrid poem in terms of content and form as she turns genres such as the essay and novel into verse.

In his introduction to the collection of long poems, *Glass, Irony and God* Davenport writes the following on the long poem "The Glass Essay":

The test of poetry, however, is easy. Read 'The Glass Essay,' a poem richer than most novels nowadays. This is a boldly new kind of poem, but neither its boldness nor its novelty make it good. It is good because of its truth and the sensibility of its telling. These qualities maintain from poem to poem, though no two poems are alike. Anne Carson's powers of invention are infinite. The range of her interests is from horizon to horizon. (1995:ix)

The way in which Carson is able to link different genres and create a brave new mix of style and form enables the readers to enter into the action of the poem where they are continually kept aware of its originality. She covers a wide range of ideas and makes unpredictable links that most writers would never have thought to put together. Historical facts and myths become backgrounds and notes for new contexts in her writing. Her poetry contains a strong narrative element and she often invents genres such as in *Autobiography of Red* which is both a poem

and a novel, and *Nox*, a fold out collage-type book, which both commemorates her deceased brother and seeks an explanation for his life which she no longer knows. Will Aitken, in his interview with Carson, makes an accurate definition of the hybridity of Carson's writing when describing her novel in verse, *Autobiography of Red*: "I realized it's a story from all these different angles and interviews, and as the reader you have to keep shifting perspective. So it's like architecture more than a conventional novel" (2004:9).

Carson's *Nox*, a book-in-a-box with no page numbers, is the story of her late brother's life, but it is also based on a poem by the Roman poet Catullus whose brother died in Troy when Catullus was living in Italy in the first century BC. In *Nox* Carson refers to the poem by Catullus by placing one Latin word from the poem on each left-hand side page of her book together with its definition. She then places on the opposite right-hand side a memory of her brother that corresponds to the left-hand side of the page. In her interview with Aitken, Carson anticipates the book about her brother *Nox* when she claims: "...the left and right cohere, so that the whole thing tells the story of the translation of the poem, and also dismantles my memory of my brother's life" (2004:6). The right-hand side of the book is comprised of actual pieces of her brother's letters as well her mother's responses to some of his letters, family photographs, staples, postage stamps and other decorative details such as coffee cup stains. Carson confirms the weight these items bring to the piece by arguing:

In surfaces, perfection is less interesting. For instance, a page with a poem on it is less attractive than a page with a poem on it and some tea stains. Because the tea stains add a bit of history. It's a historical attitude. After all, texts of ancient Greeks come to us in wreckage and I admire that, the combination of layers of time... All those layers add up to more and more life. (2004:6)

When asked about the photographs in *Nox* Carson expresses the influence that photographs can have:

I found that the front of most of our family photos look completely banal, but the backgrounds were dreadful, terrifying and full of content. So I cut out the backgrounds, especially the parts

where shadows from the people in the front fell into the background in mysterious ways. The backgrounds are full of truth. (2004:7)

In this sense the photographs in *Nox* give an indication of something that has been left unfulfilled. This says so much more at times than words could. In a radio interview with Carson, Eleanor Wachtel, speaks of a look in Carson's brother's face that Carson found so troubling that she would get a "sinking feeling because of the sideways invisible look that he wore in the photo" (Carson and Wachtel 2012, interview).

Like Carson, the dominant genre of my piece is a combination of literary elements but I differ from Carson in the literary pieces I chose to use, such as the lyric poem, stage directions and dramatic script. By doing this I wanted to investigate the ways in which the form of existing literary genres might be altered by crossing boundaries to create something different but still generally within the longstanding tradition of dramatic verse. Traditional use of dramatic poetry, which extends from the Ancient Greeks to the English Renaissance period of Shakespeare, developed new methods for both poetry and the dramatic play. Although *Own Worst Enemy* is a form of dramatic verse, it differs greatly from the long-established genre as it is a more contemporary hybrid incorporating both narrative and cinematic techniques.

I have borrowed elements from dramatic writing such as stage directions, dialogue, as well as an interval and the idea of an orchestra performing during the interval. The cinematic features are evident throughout the entire piece as I split it into different "Acts" which I call "Angles" as well as "Frames". The use of "angles" and "frames" are elements I have borrowed from film making. I wanted to incorporate these cinematic elements into my poem to push it into new territories and create permeable boundaries that are not specific to a certain genre. This in turn places the reader in a position where they cannot make any judgements or predictions and are thus kept in a heightened state of awareness of what they are reading. All the varying "angles" and "frames" are connected to tell a story that has a beginning, middle and an end. I have been greatly influenced by the writing of Harold Pinter and Sarah Kane. Both Pinter and Kane have pushed the expected boundaries of theatre forward. Kane's 4.48

Psychosis consists of pieces of dialogue and monologue which extend the limits of traditional theatre. Where Pinter makes use of realist stage directions, Kane's stage directions are surreal and used in a non-realist cinematic way to create mood and effect. Instead of having all my stage directions in the realist mode they are expressive elements in their own right. The changing emphasis of stage directions enables me to express emotions and thoughts and not just action:

They are children, they are teenagers, they are
in their thirties, they are children, they are teenagers,
they are in their thirties. They are in their thirties.

They are in their thirties. (2012:15)

In Pinter's play *Silence* (1982) the characters exist outside time and space and speak in indirect speech. Pinter is drawing on postmodern theory which is evident in his non-chronological plot and his use of repetitive speech. He deliberately leaves the issue of who the characters are speaking to unclear, and focus is given to the subtext of their speech and what they choose not to say. Pinter's well-known pauses and silences influenced me in my writing to examine what happens when speech is avoided, as well as the importance of silence and what goes unsaid. What the characters do not say is as important as what they do say in my writing. This I achieve mostly through my use of stage directions:

Owain and Eira sit side by side as children on a pair of swings.
Pushing their legs forward and backwards, forward and
backwards, faster, faster,
higher.
Owain jumps off his swing, disappearing out of the frame.

Eira drops her legs and slowly comes to a stop.

She feels a deep pulse in her thighs,

under her thighs. (2012:8)

Here I use the characters' body language and actions as a form of "silence" where more is said with their actions than could be said with words. Through reading Pinter I have learnt to listen to the poignancy of silence and to the expressions on people's faces as well as little gestures and habits which at times can say something more powerful than words could.

The sections or "angles" in *Own Worst Enemy* are varied. While some are closely related to the structure of a dramatic script with stage directions, others are more obviously identified as poetry. I have borrowed elements from the lyric poem. Marjorie Perloff defines the traditional lyric poem as a literary genre in which "language expresses the private experiences, sensations, and thoughts of the individual poet" (1996:183). I use the mode of lyric poetry in my piece to express strong emotions and the personal feelings of the characters:

HE

I wanted a toy gun because

my dad had a gun.

I wanted to be tough and

strong like he said I should be.

I was eight but I already knew somewhere inside me

that I didn't really want to be like him.

But, like my dad, I too pointed it at someone.

I knew exactly how to do this because

I had looked into his gun so often.

And I knew that I was pointing mine right

when I saw in Eira's eyes what I often

felt at my dad's hand.

I didn't know why she cried,

my gun was only a toy. (2012:5)

As with lyric poetry the protagonist is directly portraying his own feelings and state of mind, however, unlike in traditional lyric poetry, Owain is simultaneously giving the reader insight into the characters' thoughts, motivations and actions.

It is important to note the form that each character speaks and thinks in because it takes on different shapes and styles. Owain's form is much more structured than that of Eira:

HE

Seeing my mother makes me afraid. She carries with her

73 years, 5 months and 3 days. I take up

35 years, 6 months and 15 days of that.

I know that in me she sees her many mistakes come

slowly scratching through the surface.

Threatening to expose what she had buried.

In her I see my future. Growing more and more alone.

Suddenly I want to leave.

I need to leave this house that we call home.

This house that fits like a grave. (2012:13)

Here we see structured stanzas of three lines, with a single-lined stanza at the very end. Each stanza contains a different thought or idea. The purpose of this is for Owain to create some form of structure in his life which his childhood lacked, but desperately needed. Eira's prose, on the other hand, was not confined to poetic measures. Rather than being divided into clear poetic paragraphs her speech and thoughts are grouped into single paragraphs with run-on lines that lack the specific formations found in poetry such as stanzas, rhyme or rhythm. This is evident especially when she referred to her own feelings:

SHE

You didn't go because he never loved you,

but he loved me. He was supposed to love me. And

then one day he left us and all of a sudden he didn't

want me anymore. But I still tried, I visited and I called and

I wrote. Then one day he disappeared for good and there

was no way for me to keep trying. That

day I knew he didn't love me. (2012:28-29)

The form of her dialogue took the shape of prose poetry which contained traces of verse and heightened emotional effects. However, when Eira spoke of her brother or mother, her poetry starts to portray more structural elements:

SHE

As a child father held

a gun to your head to

make you do your homework. Memories

stain our minds, leaving no

space for a different story.

He shot himself when you were seventeen, and

as his mind and body

slowly submerged in darkness, finally

he was weaker.

Mother rang – Your father

isn't going to live,

visit him tonight!

We didn't.

You didn't go to the funeral. Twenty years
later, you still won't talk about him. And now
you try to love, you fail. You
are your father's son. (2012:36-37)

The purpose of Eira's lack of structure is to directly reflect her past and current state; however, when she spoke of her mother or brother the accuracy and clarity of her representations of them became evident in the poetic construction shown in these poems.

The writing that is left behind and found from their deceased father, on the other hand, had no set poetic patterns. It formed a complete break from the rigidity found in traditional poetry. It was made up of short lines and contained no punctuation or capital letters:

a cloak of the outside world
covers over me someone is
watching me a vacant face
staring blankly i must not be
seen so i stay inside all day if
i hide it will never get to me (2012:39)

This totally unrestrained form of free verse lacks punctuation and is an exact representation of the father's lack of control over his own life.

By incorporating different literary structures and forms my aim was to challenge standard poetic conventions as Carson does in much of her writing. Drawing on the influence of Carson I decided to include the form of a letter, an obituary, a death certificate and sheet music as a

way of introducing an objective or factual element into my piece. By using these various forms I was also hoping to disturb the reader's expectations. This was revealed in the varying poetic forms that the brother and sister use when speaking. The continually changing forms and structures keep the reader aware of what they are reading and in a state of anticipation, since the different pieces resist the expectations of a single literary form. For example:

One boy pulled her hair

One boy wrote her a love letter

One boy held her hand

One boy touched her cheek

One boy kissed her mouth

One boy bit her neck

One boy bit her ear

One boy slid his hand inside her shirt

One boy slid his hand up her skirt

One hundred mouths

One hundred fingers (2012:34)

This is the only time in the long poem that I used the idea of a list. There is no similar shape or form used previously so that when the reader arrived at this particular piece they would be taken by surprise.

Subject Matter

Not only has Carson influenced my writing in terms of genre, but also in the way she explores and merges different thematic concerns in much of her work. She has claimed that she has always thought of her collected essays as a painting with thoughts and facts which is something that a straight narrative cannot do (1997:13). As a Classics scholar, Carson often draws on her knowledge of ancient Greek history and mythology, retelling and rewriting it in contemporary styles and settings. In this sense Carson is closing the distance between the past and the future by placing modern references next to those to ancient Greek culture. In an interview with John D'Agata Carson asserts:

Homer talks about how people are situated in time. He says they have their backs to the future, facing the past. If you have your face to the past, you just look at the stuff that's already there and take what you need. It's not the same as us, facing the future, where we have to think about that [points behind] and then turn around and get it and bring it here, bring it in front of us. (1997:8)

The past, history and mythology are therefore fundamental as a way of writing for Carson; taking facts from the past or already existing ideas and reworking and rewriting them to create something new. This is evident in her modern version of Herakles and Geryon in *Autobiography of Red*. This novel in verse is based loosely on the myth of Geryon and Herakles while simultaneously exploring themes of sexual abuse, infatuation and photography. Intense moments of love, desire and jealousy merge into a retelling of Geryon and Herakles as fleeting lovers. Here Carson takes specific historical facts and reworks them in the present day with its relevant issues.

Her long poem "The Glass Essay" deals with the past in a similar manner, but instead of basing it on ancient Greek mythology, Carson incorporates the past in the form of the life and works of Emily Brontë:

'Emily is in the parlour brushing the carpet,'

records Charlotte in 1828.

Unsociable even at home

and unable to meet the eyes of strangers when she ventured out,
Emily made her awkward way
across days and years whose bareness appals her biographers [...]

The little raw soul was caught by no one.

She didn't have friends, children sex, religion, marriage, success, a
salary
or a fear of death. (1995:5-6)

This extract paints a clear picture of Emily Brontë's life and personality. Facts about Brontë's physical and emotional life are incorporated into the poem giving the reader an understanding of her life. Carson then takes this idea of rewriting facts from the past or already existing ideas a step further as she brings Emily Brontë's past into the present of the poem's narrator:

[...] I had not been in love before.
It was like a wheel rolling downhill.
But early this morning while mother slept
and I was downstairs reading the part in *Wuthering Heights*
where Heathcliff clings to the lattice in the storm sobbing
Come in! Come in! To the ghost of his heart's darling,

I fell on my knees on the rug and sobbed too. (1995:4)

In trying to make sense of her own loneliness the woman in the poem reflects on Emily Brontë, thus using facts from the past to deal with her own present. The past is never entirely over for the woman as it keeps being relived through themes of memory, family and loss of love:

The last time I saw Law was a black night in September [...]

Not enough sin on it,
he said of our five years of love.
Inside my chest I felt my heart snap into two pieces [...]

He left in the morning. (1995:11-12)

Here we see how Carson weaves her different themes together as well as merging Emily Brontë's life with that of the woman in the poem. Davenport writes of "The Glass Essay":

See how in its utter clarity of narration it weaves and conflates one theme with another, how it works in the Brontës as daimons to preside over the poem and to haunt it, how it tells two strong stories with Tolstoyan skill, how it reflects on its themes in subtle and surprising ways. (1995:ix)

When asked about the unconventional links that she makes in her writing between the unusual rewriting of aspects from the past or ancient mythology alongside more conformist ideas, such as the coming of age story in *Autobiography of Red* or the end of a love affair in "The Glass Essay", Carson responds:

The things you think of to link are not in your own control. It's just who you are, bumping into the world. But *how* you link them is what shows the nature of your mind. Individuality resided in the way links are made. (Aitken 2004:22)

I drew on the influence of Carson in my own writing as I incorporated the life and works of Virginia Woolf. Focussing specifically on Woolf's thoughts regarding the past, I quote her in my stage directions:

His mother understood this, she once told him that Virginia Woolf wrote, 'Each has his past shut in him like the leaves of a book known to him by his heart, and his friends can only read the title.' (2012:3)

Woolf formed a thread throughout my piece as I included moments of her life and quotes from her writing throughout my long poem. Suicide is an important issue raised in my piece. Woolf

herself struggled with suicidal thoughts which resulted in her eventual death. I then related these aspects of Woolf's life to the father in my piece who also suffered from suicidal thoughts and who eventually commits suicide. The father's battle with suicide is brought to his children's attention through various snippets of his own writing and other relevant fragments of his life such as medical notes. I write in *Own Worst Enemy*:

24/12/1942

i have decided i cannot
live much longer and that
this will be the year of my
death and i know you will
think i am selfish but you are
lucky not to know pain's
simple truth

.....

01/05/1943

i will etch a dotted line
across my wrist and i
will have my scissors ready

.....

Taken by depression, Virginia Woolf wrote before her suicide:

"I feel certain now that I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices and I can't concentrate so I am doing what seems the best thing to do." (2012:33)

In *Own Worst Enemy* past and memory correlate and form one of the most significant themes in the piece. Carson's influence with regard to combining a range of themes is evident in my writing in the way I merge themes of memory, place, trauma, rejection and family relationships. I investigate the links between past and memory in relation to place, trauma, violence and suicide within the framework of family relationships. My two protagonists Owain and Eira approach their past in opposing ways. Owain deals with his past by trying to suppress his traumatic memories as a coping mechanism:

HE

No one can explain exactly what happens within us

if the walls, behind which all our childhood traumas lurk,

are not built.

His mother understood this. She taught what Virginia Woolf wrote, "Each has his past shut in him like the leaves of a book known to him by heart, and his friends could only read the title...and the passengers going the opposite way could read nothing at all..." (2012:3)

Eira, in complete contrast to Owain, is unable to suppress her painful memories mostly because she wants to be angry, as it is the easiest emotion for her to handle:

SHE

Sometimes it is easier to forget our

Friday night's fish and chips, Sunday's

roast dinners and croquet in the yard,

singing while dad played the old piano, or
our afternoon walks to the hills. Sometimes
it's easier to remember my pain because
this makes me hate you. And the
person who cares less, is
always stronger. (2012:28-29)

What I tried to achieve with these two opposing ways of approaching the past is to create a confrontation between the two protagonists, as well as a tension in the piece itself as we learn not of this difference, but also the deeper effects that the past has had on each of them. Owain internalises the violence inflicted onto him as a child by his father and then in turn re-enacts the same behaviour with his younger sister. As an adult he fears all forms of relationships because of the poor example set by his parents. Eira, as a child, looks to her brother for protection and love but is only met with rejection and as a result develops an overwhelming sexual need to fill the lack of human closeness that her family fail to provide. As an adult she begins to cut herself to feel a pain worse than the one she already feels inside. Her father's violence causes her to end up in a relationship with a violent man because it is what is normal to her, so she cannot recognise the warning signs.

Pinter also deals with the past throughout his play *Silence* where the characters recollect various snippets of their past that the audience must try and piece together. There are three characters in this play – Ellen, Rumsey and Bates; each one having recalled various fragmented memories, which are then repeated throughout the play. It becomes clear to the audience that it is not the past that is important, but rather the effect it still has on the characters' present lives. Bates says:

My landlady asks me in for a drink. Stupid conversation. What are you doing here? Why do you live alone? Where do you come from? What do you do with yourself? What kind of life have you

had? You seem fit. A bit grumpy. You can smile, surely, at something? Surely you have smiled, at a thing in your life? At something? Has there been no pleasantness in your life? No kind of loveliness in your life? Are you nothing but a childish old man, suffocating himself?

I've had all that. I've got all that. I said. (1982:201)

This is emphasised by Ellen:

My drinking companion for the hundredth time asked me if I'd ever been married. This time I told her I had. Yes, I told her I had. Certainly. I can remember the wedding. (204)

It is further seen in Rumsey's lines:

Sometimes I see people. They walk towards me, no, not so, walk in my direction, but never reaching me, turning left, or disappearing, and then reappearing, to disappear into the wood.

So many ways to lose sight of them, then to recapture sight of them. They are sharp at first... then smudged... then lost... then glimpsed again... then gone. (198)

In *Postmodernism* Glenn Ward speaks of postmodern identity as recognising and sometimes celebrating the multiple, fragmentary and decentred self (1997:108) and this is reflected in all three of Pinter's characters. The characters struggle with being disconnected and having no control of their lives, which therefore poses the idea that they are not responsible for what happens to them. The central concern of postmodern human existence is the loss of the integral self and *Silence* questions what gives the characters their identity.

All three of Pinter's characters' pasts are defined by their present. This was interesting to me as I wanted to show that, although my two protagonists have experienced traumatic events in their past, with which they both struggle now, they are not defined by their past. I try to create this in the final "angle" of my piece where I recreate an earlier memory:

Owain and Eira sit by side by side as adults on their

old childhood swing. It is summer and the sun is still out.

Eira's hair falls down onto her shoulders. Owain moves

his legs forward, backwards, forward, backwards, forward,

higher, higher, higher. Eira follows Owain, higher, higher. Owain

jumps off the swing and exits the frame. Eira follows him and

disappears out of the frame.

She laughs off. (2012:73)

The similar piece (quoted earlier from “Angle Five”) in the beginning of *Own Worst Enemy* shows a young girl affected by her brother in a negative way. The fact that Eira stops swinging yet remains on her swing when Owain jumps off shows a desire to be accepted by her older brother. Once Owain jumps out of the frame she feels rejected by him. This rejection in turn (experienced also at the hand of her father and mother) creates a deep and long-seated sexual desire within Eira as a way of expressing her only hope of feeling needed and wanted. The final piece above (“Angle Twenty Two”) now shows a woman, having faced the pain from her past, experiencing the same action but in a completely different way. This is as a result of her choice. This time she chooses to respond to the situation differently, which frees her from her past and gives her the ability to define her future.

Elizabeth Bachinsky in *God of Missed Connections* (2009) draws on her Ukrainian ancestry and history in order to discover her place in contemporary Canada. *God of Missed Connections* made a lasting impression on me and I wanted to investigate similar issues to those in Bachinsky’s poetry. She explores individual displacement and the searching for some kind of connection. In the poem “God of Panic” she highlights a desire for human connection:

From where she was standing she could see
the boys were watching her and had been watching her
for most of the night it seemed as if there were a secret

between them which she attributed to the fact they were
boys she felt especially lovely in her polka-dotted
skirt and socks and had been sad for four days since
her father had left home to discover his personal financial
power with an even lovelier telemarketer from Winnipeg. (2009:63)

I was particularly drawn to this poem as not only were my characters searching for and confronting some kind of connection to place and people, but this poem also depicts a strong sexual desire and the need to feel sexually desired which is what Eira has experienced from a young age.

In *God of Missed Connections* Bachinsky also reflects aspects of postmodern thought by creating archive. Ward quotes Howard Fox when saying,

Far from seeking a single and complete experience, the postmodern object strives toward an encyclopaedic condition, allowing a myriad of access points, and infinitude of interpretive responses. (1997:90)

Bachinsky borrows elements of diary entries, lyric poetry biography and history:

[...] and then the land finally did appear, a

white swath of ice curving upward like the bottom of a terrible basin

From the eyes, from under the eyes,

From the nose, from under the nose,

From the mouth, from under the mouth,

[...] Wednesday, January 31.

Fine, cloudy, extremely cold. Temperature -25 Max, and -25 Min.

No prisoners of war out on park work in a.m. in p.m. 20 prisoners of

war escorted by 25 troops worked at toboggan slide from 2.p.m to 4:30

p.m. extremely cold with raw east wind. (2009:34-35)

Postmodernism asks questions about what art is and does not judge in terms of authenticity and inauthenticity. Bachinsky is testing or playing with boundaries commonly seen in postmodern texts, which results in a breath of life in a stagnant literary world. This flexibility of postmodernism arguably tests the boundaries between high culture and popular culture and no longer sees them as two distinct spheres. In doing so, the reader is made to question whether or not it is valid to present what gets called high culture and popular culture as two distinct elements.

Time, Place and Memory

Place and memory are often connected. A setting or place can act as a trigger for memory as individuals invest meaning into certain places. The connection to place in *Nox* is important for Carson on a personal level. In her interview with Aitken she says:

When I go on the train from here to Toronto I always dread that passing of Port Hope because it was a place we lived for six, seven years and my parents for about fifteen years and my brother intermittently, so the book, because it's all about him, is connected to that place in some ways. But it's a place where everyone's lives fell apart. That's too strong. It was a place where we all, my brother and I, met the end of our adolescence. (2003:5)

In *Own Worst Enemy* I wanted to use the two protagonists' childhood home as an important aspect of identity for them as children; the place that determined and shaped their childhood happened within the walls and gardens of that house. When Owain and Eira return for the first time after many years to their childhood home, they can no longer find their niche there. They struggle to form an identity outside the house that once formed a large part of their individuality.

Carson evokes time and place in a very different manner. She uses particular historical references which situate her characters and her story in a specific time and place, and this she then blurs with modern settings. In "The Glass Essay" Carson makes particular reference to Emily Brontë as well as often mentioning specific dates in Brontë's life:

'All be right and tight in which condition it is to be hoped we shall all
This day 4 years,'
she wrote in her Diary Paper of 1837. (1995:6)

The diary dates of Brontë and various other dates recording details of her life, place the novel in a specific time period. Carson then brings this time in history forward and relates it to the female protagonist's modern life. The significant location of the moors in *Wuthering Heights* is

largely referenced in “The Glass Essay” and is used to create a link between the woman and Brontë:

Also my main fear, which I mean to confront.
Whenever I visit my mother
I feel I am turning into Emily Brontë,
My lonely life around me like a moor [...] (1995:2)

The use of photographs, letters and postage stamps in *Nox* are all forms of historical locaters that situate the piece in a certain time and place. These are all items brought from the past and into the future to be remembered. *Nox* also contains the basis of the Roman poet Catallus’ poem from the first century BC. By taking an ancient historical reference from a particular time and reworking it to correspond within her modern setting, Carson blurs the boundaries of both time and place. Similarly, the same can be said for *Autobiography of Red*. It revolves around the original ancient lyric poem of Geryon (of which only fragments remain today) by Stesichor[u]s, born according to Carson in about 650 BC (1998:3). Divided into six sections, *Autobiography of Red* includes the chapters: “Red Meat: What Difference Did Stesichoros make?”, “Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros”, “Appendix A: Testimonia on the Question of Stesichoros’ Blinding by Helen”, ‘Appendix B: The Palinode of Stesichoros by Stesichoros (fragment 192 Poetae Melici Graeci)”, “Appendix C: Clearing up the Question of Stesichoros’ Blinding by Helen”, “Autobiography of Red: A Romance” and finally an interview with Stesichor[u]s called, “Interview: (Stesichoros)” (1998). Five out of the six chapters are based on Stesichor[u]s and the remaining one on his poem, thus showing the importance of this historical reference. By including a homage to as well as information and other references on Stesichor[u]s, Carson places this novel in verse within a defined era. The fact that she then rewrites the story of Geryon and Herakles obscures time and history in *Autobiography of Red*.

The same can be said about place in *Autobiography of Red* which is difficult to pinpoint specifically. Carson’s novel in verse based upon Stesichor[u]s’ poem is set in contemporary America. We are told that at adolescence Geryon met Herakles when he stepped off the bus

from New Mexico (1998:39) but we are never informed of the place of arrival. At fourteen Geryon goes to Hades, Herakles' hometown, which we are told is at the other end of the island:

They painted this truth
on the long wall of the high school the night before departing for Hades.
Herakles' hometown of Hades
lay at the other end of the island [...] (46)

Geryon returns home after a seven hour trip on a local bus from "Hades" (68). The reference to Hades is more important than the specifics of place. After a short period we next find Geryon, aged twenty-two, now living on the "mainland" (76). We learn during a phone conversation with his mother that he is on his way to Buenos Aires which we are told has a three-hour time difference from his home (76). Once on the plane Geryon watches the flight map of the plane's journey on a video screen which heads from Miami to Puerto Rico, but we are never certain whether Miami is his home or not. Place is never given any importance in the novel. Reference is also made to many other places, such as Florida, Germany, California and Spain. Geryon then goes to Lima, an Andes village, with Herakles and Herakles' lover Ancash from Huaraz in Peru. While Lima and Buenos Aires are vivid in terms of place in the novel, these particular settings are never given the main focus and Carson could have made the events unfold in any other city. The only importance of Peru is the presence of the volcano which is a large interest of Geryon's. The intense love triangle between the three men overwhelms the necessity of any place in the novel.

I deal with time and place in a different way from Carson. Here I rather draw on the influence of Sebald in *Austerlitz* (2001). Sebald explores the connection between memory and place. Sebald's main character, Jacques Austerlitz, arrived in Britain at the age of five as a refugee from Nazi-threatened Czechoslovakia, after being put on a Kindertransport by his mother. Raised by his adoptive parents as their own child, he has had all knowledge of his true identity erased, and Austerlitz grows up with no conscious memory of his formative years. As an adult Austerlitz must then find a way to confront and deal with his past and his traumatic

memories. Sebald explores the struggle between reason and memory in his novel, and explores the various ways in which memory can be triggered. Through an extreme attention to detail, the study of architectural history and analysis of other characters, the reader becomes aware that the character Austerlitz is, in fact, avoiding dealing with his own past. Austerlitz claims to the narrator:

I realised...how little practice I had in using my memory, and conversely, how hard I must always have tried to recollect as little as possible, avoiding everything, which related in any way to my unknown past...I was always refining my defensive reactions, creating a kind of quarantine or immune system which...protected me from anything that could be connected in any way, however distant, with my own early history. Moreover, I had constantly been preoccupied by that accumulation of knowledge which I had pursued for decades, and which served as a substitute or compensatory memory. (2001:197-198)

This pragmatic writing and attention to detail is a common feature of post modern writing. Sebald also deals with trauma through the brutalization of World War II, the Holocaust, and the way in which the mind struggles against dealing with pain. Architecture, for Austerlitz, becomes a way of avoiding his memories but also a device for triggering his memory as we see his suppressed memories begin to surface, thus highlighting the significance of historical architecture and memory in the novel. Place also plays an important role in *Austerlitz* where the setting is as much a character as the main characters. This reflects the postmodern way of thinking where humans cannot impose their will on the environment and are rather at the mercy of it. The setting in *Austerlitz* is more than just an immutable backdrop as it is a place that forces Austerlitz's memory to surface.

In *Own Worst Enemy* I explore the different ways in which memory can be triggered through place, the senses and objects:

Eira still cannot open the window. She forgot that her father had put locks on all the windows in the house and then hidden the key. (2012:2)

Here I wanted to show how place and memory are linked through the locked windows of their childhood home, which are an important characteristic of their childhood as it shown how meaning is invested in place. The motif of the window is repeated throughout *Own Worst Enemy* and represented loneliness, isolation and entrapment. This continues into adulthood as the characters have difficulty communicating with one another. When the key was found at the end of the piece it is at the same time that the characters begin to realise their release from the stranglehold of their past and so the window forms a representation of their liberation.

Conclusion

Having completed my Masters in creative writing, the daunting task of one day writing a book with all its challenges it brings, came and went in just one year. What started out as an unnerving and uncertain task resulted in something so big different to what I ever imagined possible.

The original novel in a combination of poetic and dramatic form was conceptualised in *Own Worst Enemy* through an in-depth reading of the literary works of Anne Carson, within whose work I situate my study and writing. Carson's influence on my writing is seen in the way she merges different literary elements together. Her exploration and experimentation with form give her as a writer a sense of originality and innovation within this field. My own creative exploration overlaps with Carson as I too investigate the boundaries between different genres. I included literary elements of dramatic writing under the influence of Sarah Kane's powerful and intense prose, as well as Harold Pinter's famous notion of silence which I learnt to listen to what goes unsaid as well as to that which is being said in peoples' facial expressions and gestures. I also incorporated the use of cinematic elements such as "frames" and "angles" which helped push the boundaries of my writing into new territories.

I then relate to Carson once again through the way in which she not only merges literary forms together, but how she also fuses diverse themes into one. Through her in-depth study and knowledge of Classics, Carson often draws on mythology or other historical facts to create unusual links in her writing. The past, history and mythology become a way of writing for Carson; taking facts from the past or already existing ideas and retelling them is what makes her writing both original and successful. Through Carson's influence I decided to incorporate the life and works of Virginia Woolf which run as a thread through my entire piece. I wanted to create an authenticity in my piece by using real feelings that people experience and I achieved this through investigating the impact of past experiences on my characters' lives. I am interested in the past, as is Carson who in "The Glass Essay" shows how the woman in this long poem is still affected by her past. Pinter, in his play *Silence* depicts three characters whose past

is never entirely over for them as it still has a strong influence over their present. Here, I deviated from Carson and Pinter as in *Own Worst Enemy* my aim was rather to show that my two protagonists are not defined by their past. They have a choice out of their own free will to determine who and what they want to be.

The complexity of place, time and memory is another feature explored by Carson. Carson evokes particular historical references which situate her characters and her story in a specific time and place which she then blurs by rewriting such events in modern settings. In *Nox*, a very personal story of her deceased brother's life, the setting, based on memory, has powerful significance for Carson. However Carson then incorporates the Roman poet Catallus' poem from the first century BC. By taking an ancient historical reference from a specific time and adapting it to draw a parallel in her modern setting, Carson blurs the boundaries of time, place and memory. In a similar way, the same can be said for time and place in *Autobiography of Red* as it revolves around the original ancient lyric poem of Geryon by Stesichor[us], born around 650 BC. The notion of place in *Autobiography of Red* is not seen as a foregrounding need and Carson seems to deliberately keep this ambiguous. The reference to Emily Brontë in "The Glass Essay" as well as to moors which form a large part of the setting in *Wuthering Heights* shows how Carson conflates time, by drawing on two different eras and places, thus emphasising the influence of moors for both Brontë and the woman in the long poem. The memory of Emily Brontë created in the long poem relates to the woman's life as well as bringing in other memories of family and loss of love. I used the idea of time, place and memory in a similar manner to that of Sebald in *Austerlitz* where I explored the close connection between place and memory, showing how place can be a trigger for memory.

As a writer I am fascinated by what it means to be human and how this can be put into writing, as Anne Carson puts it: "The world is constantly giving things to you that you could be giving back" (1997:18). It seems a cold world if one is to keep everything to oneself, so even as this writing process draws to its close I am already looking forward to the next project. Although I still have so much to learn and my writing is nowhere close to what I would like it to

be, I hope with continued reading and writing, as well as all I have gained this year doing my Master's, I will be able to know when a piece of writing works so I too can give back what the world gives to me.

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