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The maddening in Hornbacher's *Wasted*: Digression as a performance of the eating disordered body

Abstract:

Through their seemingly exaggerated attention to the most mundane details of embodied experience – the body's unavoidable need for food as well as its feel in the varying circumstances of living – eating disorders remind us of that which most exceeds the totalising promise of a constructed, written presence. In this paper I will be arguing that, in autobiographical writing about these issues, the unsettled eating disordered body is performed by the digressive features of the text, and that this takes place in a manner in which the binary of 'disordered', and its implied opposite, 'ordered', eating experience is disturbed.

Since Ross Chambers's *Loiterature*, there has been considerable interest in the role and features of narrative digression. Most recently, Samuel Frederick has questioned the long assumed equivalence of narrative and plot. He states that far from working counter narrative, digression, as the effect of the desire to tell, 'rescues the insignificant' – all that is 'small, silly, maddening, or monotonous' and therefore 'incompatible with the plotted whole' – from 'being forgotten'. Through an analysis of the digressive aspects of Marya Hornbacher's memoir *Wasted*, I will be investigating the way digression performs the unsettled eating disordered body through its provocative engagement with eating, purging and denying food in a text that resists closure, as well as how the notion of the whole is affected by this performance. Finally, in view of Merav Shohet's findings about the way more open-ended and 'multiply interpretable' narrative practices, as evident in *Wasted*, might seem to impede the full recovery of the eating disordered subject, I will be discussing what Hornbacher's subsequent memoir, *Madness*, further suggests about the work of digression in the context of widespread expectations about the beneficial features of a unified plot.

Biographical note:

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Keywords:

Narrative Digression – Loiterature – Memoir – Bodies – Eating Disorders

Autobiographical writings about eating disorders are troubling pieces. With eating disorders now estimated to be affecting nearly a million Australians (Butterfly Foundation 2012), and clinical studies pointing to a worldwide increase in their incidence (Becker et al. 2004), such writings provide textual witness to an increasingly commonplace mode of being. In fact, details about the lived experience of eating disorders – the when and how of vomiting, laxative use or starvation, as well as the dissembling – are often feared for their mimetic influence on the vulnerable (Dias 2003: 39; Mead 1998). It is clear, however, from the reception of an autobiographical work like *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* (1998),ⁱ that there is something in excess of these how-to details that most crucially unsettles the reader.

The spectrum of eating disorders in the updated DSM,ⁱⁱ now widened to include Binge Eating Disorder, profoundly challenges our notion of an easy relationship between ourselves as bodies and our constructed and potentially utopian existence online and, at its most technologically basic level, in the written text itself. In autobiographical writing about eating disorders, this uneasy relationship, I will be arguing, is most clearly apparent in its digressive features. I will be demonstrating, through an analysis of Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted*, that by working to resist the unified whole of a teleological plot, digression performs the eating disordered body in a way which disturbs the binary of 'ordered' and 'disordered' eating, and that this occurs through its fundamental re-evaluation of the often overlooked material details of embodied experience that this kind of memoir pushes, provocatively, to the fore.

For contemporary newspaper reviewers of *Wasted* the lack of a definitive ending was disturbing (MacDonald 1998; Knapp 1998; Zitin 1998). Even more disturbing, perhaps, was the great gap where the climax of the book might have been – the narrator's near death – and any significant detail about her recovery (MacDonald 1998; Knapp 1998; Zitin 1998; Wagner 1998). A number of reviewers noted the strong presence of narcissism in the book – a narcissism that was seen to have seeped, through the eating disordered narrator, into the very form of the text itself (McGurk 1999; Smith 1998; Fix 1998; Brownrigg 1998; Scott 1998; Mead 1998). The voice of the memoir, too, was considered to be attention seeking (Smith 1998), confused (Wagner 1998), strident (Knapp 1998), eerily 'hollow' (Ruebsaat 1998), and 'diluted' (Knapp 1998). As for sensory matter: reviewers noted the 'horror' of the book, as well as the strength of its 'vile' (Brownrigg 1998) and 'lurid' (Zitin 1998) detail. Psychologists Goldsmith and Widseth comment on the way the focus on such detail 'gives the reader a feel for what it is like to live in an anorexic client's head' (2000: 32). They also remark on how difficult it was for their discussion group to empathise with the writer (32). Significantly, one newspaper reviewer wrote that the book was '[m]addening': '[m]addening and desperately sad' (Fix 1998: 7). In fact, 'maddening' is a word that Hornbacher herself uses three times in *Wasted*, and on close examination it becomes clear that she describes this odd, very awkward sensation as arising not only from the emotional hiatuses and frustrations, between sufferer and family, and between the disease and the sufferer, but also, as if in anticipation of the critical responses that I have outlined above, from the very resistance of the memoir material to any representation of it as a whole, resolved experience.

The word 'maddening' occurs once near the very beginning of Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted* and twice at the end. At the beginning, this word is used almost apologetically:

An eating disorder is not usually a phase, and it is not necessarily indicative of madness. It is quite maddening, granted, not only for the loved ones of the eating disordered person but also for the eating disordered person herself. (Hornbacher 1998: 6)

Here 'maddening' suggests a kind of indulgent tolerance of what must seem inexplicable as well as annoying. It both points towards the feared vortex of madness and at the same time smudges our awareness of where its borders might be.ⁱⁱⁱ The text continues, however, to describe another aspect of this 'maddening', where it states that an eating disorder 'is, at the most basic level, a bundle of deadly contradictions: a desire for power that strips you of all power. A gesture of strength that divests you of all strength.' (6) The maddening, here, could then be that spurt of desperation that defeats itself, the intense glow of an oxymoron.

In the Afterword, this association with textual friction becomes more explicit when we learn that the 'maddening' arises from a confrontation with the instability of meaning inherent in resonant positive-sounding words: 'The maddening ambiguity of "progress," the intangible goal of "health."' (276) Hornbacher's final reference to the 'maddening' occurs in a grappling with the limitations of the whole endeavour of writing this memoir: both the desire for a final solution and the impossibility of providing one. Here the tension between this desire and its restriction becomes most apparent:

I want to write about how to Get Well, but I can't do that either. I want to do a sidebar here with little pie charts breaking health down into statistical slices, showing the necessary percentages of therapy, food, books, baths, work, sleep, tears, fits, trials, and errors, and I can't. I find this maddening. If I were to describe the path between point A and point B, I would have to detail a convoluted, crisscrossed, almost blind stumble through a briar patch: the doublings-back, the stumbles into different, smaller rabbit holes, the sudden plunking down and howling with rage. In the end, I will have to point out that my stumble is specific to me. Your stumble will be different. You will avoid potholes I fell headlong into and find yourself tripping into quicksand I missed.

It is not a sudden leap from sick to well. It is a slow, strange meander from sick to mostly well. (Hornbacher 1998: 284)

While the maddening in this section initially refers to the narrator's frustration with what resists her desire to support her account with coherent empirical data, it soon becomes clear that it is the writing itself – the trajectory of the 'path between point A and point B' and, in addition, the very undecided end status of point B, that is most problematic and, hence, maddening. This 'convoluted' trajectory describes a narrative that defies in any way that it can an orderly progression towards a definitive end, with the maddening in the earlier sentence lingering in our reading of all the 'doublings-back' and 'stumbles', as well as the inexplicable narrative arrests of each 'sudden plunking down'. Thus, from a textual point of view, the maddening suggests itself as

the most confounding aspect of this frenetic movement between unstable points, and as such we begin to understand that it comprises the most radical and apparently perverse aspect of any digression from the wished-for narrative whole.

Samuel Frederick, whose analyses of digression challenge hitherto widely held assumptions about its subordinate narrative role, states that theories of digression tend to 'fall in one of two moulds, each of which is shaped by a tenaciously plot-centred notion of narrativity' (Frederick 2011: 15). The first, he writes, sees digression as a supplement – a suspension, an interruption, in excess of and even an impedance or source of destruction – to the 'plotted whole' (16).^{iv} He then attributes a second theory of digression – one that, on the surface, seems to celebrate it – to Peter Brooks's *Reading for the Plot* (1984), which draws on Freud's theories of desire and the death instinct, and Roland Barthes's notion of narrative's '*espace dilatoire*', to formulate a theory of narrative that puts digression to work in the service of a firmly end- and now desire-driven plot whose outcome is rendered all the more satisfying by the titillating diversions of digression. Although Frederick critically engages with the teleological aspects of Brooks's take on desire (Frederick 2012), it is important to note that he is here building on earlier critiques of Brooks's extraordinary, phallogocentric way of figuring desire in terms of tumescence and release.^v From the perspective of the eating disordered person, who is still far more likely to be female than male (Butterfly Foundation 2012), this notion of plot as a dynamic that is figured by masculine consummation-driven desire and its corresponding model of consumption is highly problematic.

To step away from desire – to digress, as it were – while Frederick concedes that Ross Chambers's *Loiterature* is an admirable study of digression *per se*, he also points out that Chambers is in fact unable to consider digression as a narrative feature independent of plot (Frederick 2012: 4). Common to both Chambers and Frederick is the realisation that a crucial aspect of digression is the way it is able to do something unique with the trivial aspects of existence (Frederick 2012: 97; Chambers 1999: 32, 35). In Chambers's study, however, the theoretical dots do not join. Samuel Frederick's analysis of the role of narrative digression – and even, or, I would say, especially what he calls 'radical digression', in which digression ruptures or ultimately resists the unified plot – takes Chambers's observations about digression's engagement with the trivial and develops a sophisticated argument which no longer simply makes a generous allowance for it, as does Chambers in *Loiterature*, but argues for the way it plays a critical, irreplaceable role in how we are able to figure certain aspects of reality, such as the unbearable and excessive as well as the pointless, in a narrative, which a Brooksonian understanding of narrative desire ignores.^{vi} Frederick argues that narrative is not identical to plot and, further, that digression is expressive of a paramount desire to tell and that, through this telling, it 'rescues the insignificant' – all that is 'small, silly, maddening, or monotonous' and therefore 'incompatible with the plotted whole' – from 'being forgotten' (174). So, even though *loiterature*, as Chambers might put it, needs digression, we can see that digression is not limited to the tame, wonderfully idle afternoons of *loiterature*.^{vii} This understanding of narrative digression, I would argue, has significant implications for our reading of such seemingly maddening narratives as Hornbacher's *Wasted*.

Frederick's description of Robert Walser's play with the expression 'circling the hot porridge', which is the literal translation of the German equivalent to 'beating around the bush' (Frederick 2012: 55), is extremely poignant from the point of view of the eating disordered narrator. As Hornbacher points out, contrary to popular understanding, not only do anorexics eat, but they spend most of their time focussed on the easily overlooked aspects of life that are common, and indeed essential, to all of us: food and the act of eating or expelling it (Hornbacher 1998: 245-246). In describing her experience of bulimia, particularly, the reader of *Wasted* becomes aware of the sheer weight and quantity of food – as well as its colours and textures – that variously course through, clog or are repulsed from the narrator's body. We are not allowed to forget any of this matter, which, after all, courses through our own bodies, whether eating disordered or not.

The landscape of Hornbacher's *Wasted*, in fact, is no mere background to this experience: it is the charged site of the body's troubling encounters with food. The memoir begins: 'It was a landmark event: We were having lunch. We were playing normal. After years in the underworld, we'd risen to the surface and were glancing around surreptitiously, taking tentative breaths of air.' (1) This 'underworld', we soon learn, is a place of confined spaces: dorm rooms, hospital corridors, toilet cubicles, cupboards. Chapter one circles 'in a surreal haze' from the image of 'your average nine-year-old, shorts and a T-shirt and long brown braids, sitting in the yellow kitchen, watching Brady Bunch reruns, munching on a bag of Fritos, scratching the dog with [her] foot', to the toilet where she purges until she spits blood, to other kitchens full of food, past, or is it through, a series of mirrors (14), and her 'little Russian Petrushka dolls' (31) – back to the same memory of the Fritos and the dog. All through the chapter, the narrative voice is unsettled. Her childhood wasn't unhappy, she writes: it was 'uneasy' (18). Significantly, her first memory is one of 'running away from home for no particular reason' (13). The narrator hunts ceaselessly for definitive moments, going forwards and backwards in time, apparently at random, but always searching for the decisive event, the definitive cause or at least beginning of her eating disorders: on page 10 we first learn that, at age nine, she first 'went through the looking glass', and then six pages later, we read about how she 'first fell into the mirror' at age four – an age at which she, also, first learned that she was 'too much'. Hence, even as there is no narrative closure to her experience of the disorders, there is no clear beginning to them. As the book progresses, there are more seemingly definitive, foundational crises – more 'it' moments – with the narrative constantly circling, agitated by the urgency of the attempt, in a way that suggests the continually agitated eating disordered body which propels itself towards the 'it', the porridge, and either eats it only to purge it immediately or circles it frenetically.

There are constant essayistic asides in *Wasted*. The narrative is interspersed with statistics about Hornbacher's own eating disordered history that she had only been able to discover after a hunt among 'piles of paper and scrolls of microfiche scattered over this city in basement-level records rooms, guarded by suspicious-looking women' (3). Here the digressive aspect of the text discovers, beyond the broad 'underworld' of the eating disorders, further subterranean spaces that contain residues of Hornbacher's illness in gothic proportions: in addition to these basement-level

archival spaces, there are various domestic basements, especially the basement of her parents' house, which is first a heady place of sexual experimentation that prompts a torrent of what her parents call "sewer words" (39-40), and later flooded with literal sewerage when the pipes burst after an extensive binge and purge (223). Between the confined upper spaces of dormitories, rooms and bathrooms, and these basements, the 'I' seems to move with furtive haste. Occasionally she escapes onto the streets where, wandering lost, she becomes a haunting presence (173); one winter she develops an obsession with running up and down the hall at her school at five am, and sprouts fine fur all over her translucent white skin – 'like a small bear', she writes, although the reader could well be reminded of a more ghoulish creature (109); in one moment of horrifying self-awareness, she realises that she 'looked like a monster, most of [her] hair gone, [her] skin the gray color of rotten meat' (266). She writes that the 'worst night of [her] entire life' was spent with 'the old familiar adrenaline rush pumping through [her].... running through the town, stopping here and there and eating and throwing up in alleyways and eating and blacking out and standing up and running and eating as [she] walked, impervious to the cold, hand to mouth and hand to mouth' (273).

This frantic, food-obsessed movement around an empty landscape is a noticeable feature of eating disorder memoirs. There is an extraordinary sequence in Portia de Rossi's *Unbearable Lightness* when the narrator runs, in response to a rush of anxiety and a binge, to the point of disorientation and confusion (de Rossi 2010: 185-191). A similar episode – also prompted by a 'wave of anxiety' – occurs in Elizabeth Best's memoir, *Eli's Wings* (Best 2002: 80). This kind of agitated, irrational movement reminds us of the way Hornbacher sees her eating disorders as little more than 'a convoluted, crisscrossed, almost blind stumble...' (284) Unlike de Rossi's and Best's narratives, which reach resolution,^{viii} Hornbacher's search through subterranean chambers, with their horrifying visceral contents, and the exaggeratedly empty, haunted outside, fails to enlighten us or her with an ultimate cause or beginning, let alone to conclude. 'I do not have a happy ending for this book,' she reminds us (283). Indeed there is no ending, no resolution; no confirmation of a narrative whole. The last two sections in the Afterword and the various short, unsettling, digressive references to 'now' in the rest of the text, where the 'I' is still clearly suffering from vestiges of her eating disorders, all testify to this lack of finality, even though there is also, perhaps surprisingly, a 'letting go' (287).

Significantly, by these last pages of the memoir, behind the understated release, the notion of the whole – the 'it' – has undergone a transformation or at least a radical disturbance. Now eating disorders themselves are seen to comprise the very tempting, grand but chimerical whole, which was earlier occupied by notions of the ultimate explanation or recovery:

Life is essentially trivial. You either decide you will take the trite business of life and give yourself the option of doing something really cool, or you decide you will opt for the Grand Epic of eating disorders and dedicate your life to being *seriously* trivial. (Hornbacher 1998: 284, emphasis in the original)

This is an understanding of the value of the trivial for the way it essentially resists the grand gesture that is far closer to Frederick's conception of 'the pointless and insignificant minutiae of everyday life' that digression reveals in plotless narratives (Frederick 2012: 172), than Chambers's view where, since it is ultimately subject to a narrative whole, 'the trivial, in entering the domain of [his] attention, gets transvalued and ceases to be trivial at all' as, through this attention, it has become the focus of the philosophical gaze (Chambers 1999: 55).^{ix} Further, by hinging this statement on the word 'trivial', Hornbacher suggests that she might never have come to this understanding without the very porridge-obsessed performance of her eating disordered body in the text she has just written, and she addresses all of us here, whether 'ordered' or 'disordered' eaters, because the epic-resistant aspects of embodied living, where there 'are movies to see and scrambled eggs to eat' – even if they fail to be seen or eaten in the end – evade such a binary (284).

To turn to the clinical writings about eating disordered narrative structures: Merav Shohet has distinguished two kinds of narratives that eating disordered persons tend to engage in: what she calls "full recovery" (FR) and "struggling to recover" (SR) genres' (Shohet 2007: 345), which she further characterises as corresponding, respectively, to narratives that favour 'coherence' and ones that favour 'authenticity' (348). She suggests that 'the moral and epistemic stances [all of the subjects of her study] take vis-à-vis their illnesses are both reflective and constitutive of the type of recovery processes they have undergone' (350). She also states that it is the more 'open-ended and multiply interpretable' aspects of the SR genre which may contribute to difficulties and therefore directly impede recovery for the narrating subject (376), while the FR genre, on the other hand, 'strives for teleological unity and aligns with feminist-psychoanalytic explanations and the preferred treatment modes and recovery outcomes for anorexia' (348).^x

Shohet lists Hornbacher's *Wasted* as an example of the SR genre (347). Like those of the subjects of the SR narratives in her study, Carolyn and Tessa, it is clear that the very readiness to narrate an unsettled point of view in Hornbacher's memoir reveals the 'heightened metaconscious awareness of...internal conflicts', which, as Shohet suggests, is characteristic of the anorectic (348). The narratives of Shohet's SR subjects and *Wasted* also share common aspects of what she considers to be 'the four features along which the FR and SR genres differ, that is, their degree of epistemic certainty, affiliation with master narratives and clinical typifications of the disorder, continuity of self through time, and overall linearity' (352). It's important to note, however, that there are significant differences of intensity and effect between Hornbacher's narrative and those of Carolyn and Tessa. Although all three perform the eating disordered experience in their digressive 'circling the hot porridge' modes of expression, which in turn align with these SR genre features, Hornbacher's overall narrative voice is sure and ultimately transformative in a way that the transcribed voices of Carolyn and Tessa, whose digressions go nowhere, are decidedly not.^{xi} Hornbacher's digressions form deliberate narrative shapes that succeed in re-evaluating her understanding of the trivial phenomena of embodied experience. It is interesting, too, that although Shohet refers to Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) work on dialogic, polyphonic narratives (Shohet 2007: 373), she does not allow for the

possibility that the very ‘unfinalizability’, in Bakhtin's terms, of a protagonist that allows for the representation of the ‘*unclosed whole* of life itself, life poised *on the threshold*’ (Bakhtin 1984: 63, emphasis in the original) might be able to confer important positive effects on an eating disordered text. Bakhtin’s notion of ‘unfinalizability’, in fact, performs the protagonist as a subject rather than as an object of narrative, and as such foregrounds the active, transformative potential of narrative voice. Shohet’s pessimistic relegation of *Wasted* to the SR genre, I would suggest, turns not only on a hurried reading of the memoir and an approach that doesn’t sufficiently take account of the agency of voice, but also on unquestioned assumptions about the necessarily beneficial contribution of the plotted whole.

Even in clinical studies of such narratives, a unified plot that aligns with expected models of understanding has been found in some cases to be problematic. Papatomas and Lavallee refer to Shohet’s paper when they write about an eating disordered athlete, Beth, whose narrative betrays a troubling absence of plot (Papatomas & Lavallee 2011: 302), and digressions whose ‘frequency and sheer scope were at times unsettling’ (298), yet they demonstrate ways in which the officially condoned accounts of eating disorders among sportspeople – which give emphasis to specific features of the sporting environment, such as dieting and training pressures – seemed only to make Beth’s attempts to narrate her experience more difficult as these accounts were seen to leak into her narrative and obscure her understanding, and therefore what Abraham and Torok would call her ‘introjection’,^{xii} of the far more significant factor of her sexual abuse by the coach (309). Here, quite contrary to Shohet’s model, which prioritises coherence over authenticity, a consistent institutionally condoned narrative is found to be inappropriately distorting and eliding key features of authentic experience in a way which, as Papatomas and Lavallee suggest, could impede recovery.^{xiii}

Ally Day writes that it is important to read *Wasted* alongside the similarly highly digressive book Hornbacher published just over ten years later: *Madness: A Bipolar Life* (2009a), where the bipolar aspects of her existence, which were only just beginning to be understood while she was writing the earlier book, give a new and important dimension to our reading of her eating disordered experience (Day 2011). By reinterpreting Hornbacher’s youth in still very open terms, *Madness* demonstrates the value of her earlier avoidance of foreclosure. Significantly, at one point in the book, one bout of ‘madness’ is described as beginning with the very writing of the book we are reading: ‘It starts simply enough: I’m working a lot. I sit at my desk for long days, doing the research and writing this book.’ (224) Without a ‘cure’ for her bipolar disorder – and certainly without an ending – the telling of her story, even if it entails or provokes the madness, which is represented in this book as those mania-induced occasions when the narrator sets off on agitated journeys, becoming involved in an overwhelming, breathless, series of projects – sometimes not even remembering what she has done or where she has been – this telling becomes the most important thing of all: ‘All I have is today, this moment, to work with’, she tells us. ‘I am writing my story as I go.’ (278)

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore what an overwhelming desire for closure might mean in the broader context of eating disorders and its aetiology,^{xiv} it is

vital to understand that the ‘maddening’ aspects of Hornbacher’s narrative are neither superfluous to the narrative nor needlessly perverse. Hornbacher’s digressions, through their determination and virtuosity, perform the eating disordered body in a manner that fundamentally alters our understanding of the material aspects of our existence even as they also resist institutionally condoned narratives of resolution that might impede engagement with authentic experience. Between the ‘trite business of life’, as Hornbacher puts it, and ‘the *seriously* trivial’ aspect of ‘the Grand Epic of eating disorders’, where the desire for the whole sets us in a frenetic circling of the porridge, there is a subtle but significant distinction, and perhaps it is only the skilful use of what Frederick would call ‘radical’ or disruptive – and Hornbacher ‘maddening’ – digression, which desires to tell against this whole, that might enable an eating disordered writer and her or his readers to learn the difference.

Endnotes

ⁱ Although Hornbacher herself calls both *Wasted* and *Madness* memoirs rather than autobiographies, (Hornbacher, 2009b: 8) for the purposes of this paper I will be using the adjectival form of the latter where appropriate.

ⁱⁱ The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association released its 5th edition in May 2013. For a discussion of the changes, see Toto-Moriarty & Mastria (2013).

ⁱⁱⁱ This is made more poignant from the perspective of her subsequent memoir, *Madness: a bipolar life* (2009a).

^{iv} Frederick (2012) refers to Paul Ricoeur’s notion of the ‘intelligible whole’ in his article ‘Narrative Time’ (1980: 171).

^v Important to this critical discussion are Jay Clayton (1989), Susan Winnett (1990) – and for Winnett’s influence on Frederick, see Frederick 2011, n. 9, p. 25 – and J. J. Long (2011).

^{vi} Despite his excellent reading of Flaubert’s *L’education Sentimentale* in terms of the Balzacian novel, Peter Brooks fails to recognise Flaubert’s singular achievement here and instead calls this way of writing ‘against’ such a tradition a kind of ‘perversity’ that only makes our need for the Balzacian novel more apparent. (Brooks 1984: 192, 215)

^{vii} Chambers likens loiterature to the well-trained house pet and defines ‘loiterature as a writing that takes the time to know the other and as the genre that transvalues the trivial...’ (Chambers 1999: 32, 35)

^{viii} Elizabeth Best describes it as a finding of ‘wings’ (Best 2002: 180) and, for Portia de Rossi, her memoir explains: ‘how [she] came to have an eating disorder and how [she] recovered from it’ (de Rossi 2010: 302).

^{ix} This is precisely what Frederick takes issue with: for Frederick, digression rescues the trivial *as* the trivial (Frederick 2012: 97).

^x It is, sadly, beyond the scope of this paper to engage with the feminist-psychoanalytic explanations that she is referring to here.

^{xi} Shohet comments: ‘Rather than narrate a quest toward self-discovery and growth, Carolyn and Tessa use these linguistic structures to narrate how they learned to become clever patients, telling as well of wasted months in which the protagonist was at best only partially enlightened, leaving the hospital still symptomatic, unhappy, and ready to resume her self-destructive behaviors.’ (361)

^{xii} For my use of this term, see Nicholas Rand’s introduction to Part IV of *The shell and the kernel: renewals of psychoanalysis* (Abraham, Torok & Rand 1994: 101).

^{xiii} In their conclusion they state that such a mismatch could 'compound existing psychological issues' and 'lead to psychological crisis' (315).

^{xiv} Onnis et al. (2007), have argued that trauma and loss tend to prompt problematic 'myths of unity' in the families of eating disordered individuals. Kai Erikson (1995: 183 ff.) suggests that a driving desire for closure may be both indicative of and driven by traumatic experience.

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