Graphic Interrogation in Psychosocial Research: Deleuze AND Comics AND Middle-aged Men

Thesis

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Graphic Interrogation in Psychosocial Research: Deleuze AND Comics AND Middle-aged Men

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

Department of Social Sciences, The Open University
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The assemblage of comics, Deleuzian metaphysics and middle-aged men in the context of psychosocial research is an experiment in the sense that Deleuze advocates for the furtherance of thought. The works of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari can allow us, it is suggested, to bring together theoretical problems in comics theory with theoretical problems in psychosocial research and provide us with new insights as to how we might look at visual data qualitatively from participants who agreed to recount episodes of their relationships in graphic narrative form.

Both psychosocial qualitative research and comics theory are new and fast moving fields which offer scope for creative thinking. It is argued in this thesis that the ‘affective’ and ‘visual’ turns, which are having an important impact in the social sciences, corresponds to the expressive function of comics, specially in the autobiographical, memoir and confessional genre.

Having set the theoretical lens with the work of Deleuze and Guattari and some of their commentators, examples from commercially published works are examined in order to relate theory to empirical examination, prior to considering the work submitted by participants.

Lastly, interspersed throughout the text and together as an appendix, I offer my own visual reflections in the comics mode which I believe dialogue with topics in the text, whilst remaining separate activities. That is to say I consciously avoid text or comic being an illustration of one another.
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This thesis is an assemblage of many elements, the most preponderant of which are an intellectual fascination with aspects of poststructuralist philosophy, as they relate to the social sciences; a passion for graphic narrative as an emerging art form; and an interest in the under-explored experiences of middle-aged men in long-term relationships in the early decades of the 21st century. The intersection of these elements is the ‘becoming’ of this research and the disjunction which forces creative thought. As the quotation and the opening words above indicate, this project is strongly informed by the philosophy of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari. The choice of these thinkers is not arbitrary nor, I hope, the consequence of an ineradicable remnant of cultural chauvinism on my part, but rather because I share Alain Badiou’s (2012) assessment of the importance of French thought in the last half century. These authors mark a moment in the intellectual history of Western thought which has, and is having, a potentially transformative impact on the social sciences, and I add with Anne Sauvagnargues (2005), on the philosophical function of art and politics.

The AND in the title is the ‘and’ of the assemblage. It also marks the rejection of causal explanation as well as being the creative act of making unexpected links between diverse elements. While wishing to explore the rather silent world of middle-aged men, especially in the context of long-term relationships, it occurred to me to explore whether graphic narrative, rather than the more usual interview, might at once further explore the boundaries of the graphic narrative’s application and provide a new tool for psychosocial research. To achieve this, the thesis required a theoretical approach that might bring comics theory and psychosocial theory (both...
Introduction

new and hybrid disciplines) to connect and respond to shared problems. After exploring the problems of each discipline it seemed that the notion of affect was central to graphic narrative in the autobiographical genre (El Refaie, 2012), and was the site of much debate in psychosocial research (Wetherell, 2012; Woodward, 2015). Yet neither literary theory nor psychoanalytically inflected psychosocial theory seemed to offer a satisfactory theory of affect that might serve both disciplines and provide the basis of a research methodology for a psychosocial inquiry with drawing as its medium. The work of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari seemed to offer the necessary intellectual and conceptual breadth that might allow an inquiry into the subjective experiences of middle-aged men as explored through artistic productions. In turn, the results might prove an innovative way to explore the processes of affect as derived from and shaping social discourse through individual narratives: in other words, to explore the spaces between the psychic and the social through a metaphysical lens of becoming and immanence, a philosophy of process and creativity. The attempt is the content of this thesis. In this I was also encouraged by the increasing influence, in some quarters of psychosocial research, of the work of Deleuze and Guattari (Jackson and Mazzei (2012); Coleman and Ringrose (2013)). I was keen to see it used more prominently in comics theory, where only occasional references have appeared as of yet.

1. Postmodernism, poststructuralism and the idea of a subject

Badiou (2012, p.2) reads the history of philosophy as a set of “exceptional moments” of “great philosophical intensities”. France in the second half of the 20th century is the location of one of these moments. Gathering all the ‘isms’ of that period—existentialism, structuralism, deconstruction(ism), postmodernism, speculative realism—he asks if they have common ground. Their central point of commonality, he finds, is in “stating the new subject” (“dire le nouveau sujet”, p.18). And this, he argues, takes place within a broader philosophical programme which includes reconciling concept and existence, (creating thought is the process of conscious
existence) in a move to oppose the Kantian paradigm of knowledge and reason as divided by theory and practice. This reunification entails a reinvention of the role and place of philosophy in order to bring it back into modern life: “sex, art, politics, science, society. Philosophy must talk and be part of all that” (p.22). Most importantly, philosophy must “re-take” the subject by abandoning the “conscious reflexive model” of the subject and emptying it of its psychologism, and by challenging, and offering an alternative to, psychoanalysis. Lastly, in order to accomplish this project, it must find a new style of expression “to act and be in the world”; philosophy must be refashioned into “a committed writer, an artist of the subject and a lover of creativity” (p.23).

One aspect of boundary breaking between disciplines—say sociology, psychology, anthropology and geography in the social sciences—has arguably been facilitated by the inroads that continental philosophical thought of that mid-century-onward period has made in the Anglo-Saxon academic world. Continental philosophy has always been less categoric in the division between the concerns of philosophy and those of social inquiry. Indeed, the philosophical analytic tradition referred to its continental opposite as ‘philosophical anthropology’, indicating philosophising on the nature of man rather than dealing with the technicalities of logical arguments and the truth value of statements. That there has been an increase in both the quantity and rapidity of intellectual exchange is evident through the production of commentaries on, and translations of, major continental texts into English over the last 20 years. The University of Edinburgh Press alone has published 22 commentaries devoted to the works of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari. This process, which we might term ‘intellectual globalisation’, is not restricted to philosophy alone. Miller (2010), referring to the nascent field of graphic narrative theory, where the Franco-Belgian tradition began a couple of decades earlier, points to the fact that Groensteen’s (1999) Système de la bande dessinée, a major work in the theorisation of the graphic narrative, took nine years to appear in English translation. His latest work Bande Dessinée et Narration (2011) was translated and on the shelves within two years.
The importance of this incursion is to stress the challenge around the understanding of the 'subject' which continental thinkers of the second half of the 20th century have set for the social sciences. I will argue in particular for the impact the texts of Deleuze and Guattari have had and are having on qualitative research in the field of psychosocial research. Embraced by some for enabling greater insights into the complexity of experience (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012; Coleman and Ringrose, 2013), they have been rejected by others for dispensing with the very notion of a subject, as Wetherell (2011) argues. Deleuze and Guattari’s influence has generated debates in theory and new possibilities for research methods. This thesis lies within this field of argument.

Questions of epistemology and ontology underpin any research project. Indeed, declaring one’s position on these subjects is a requirement for entering the research field in qualitative research (Mason, 2013 [2002], p.14). Such ‘positions’ on these central philosophical subjects steer the questions to be examined, shape the analysis of the data and orientate the conclusions. Claire Colebrook (2005 [1999]) sums up Heidegger’s argument to the effect that “the way we question the world gives us our world and gives us who we are” (p.137).

Whereas in the Anglo-Saxon context analytic philosophy had once seen itself as the ‘licensing authority’ of empirical questions to be researched in the social sciences (Winch, 1975; Hollis, 1977), that role is now to be undertaken by the social science practitioners themselves. Delanty and Strydom (2010 [2003]) offer three models of social sciences based on their degree of resistance to philosophical reflexivity. The most recent and influential model in the social sciences and the one more accommodating of philosophy is that in which “the practice[s] of social science and philosophical reflection are not separate activities” so that the practitioner of whichever discipline, sociology, history, anthropology etc. “is at the same time a philosopher of social science” (p.2).

The advantage of this is that it connects ways of doing research to deeper philosophical questions, but the disadvantage can be a simplification of these complex issues, reducing key problems, say ontology and epistemology, to
pre-packaged formulas little connected to the developed arguments of the research and its method. This separation between professed philosophical approach and data analysis has been noted by several researchers (Coleman and Ringrose, 2014), and making sense of the data remains the most challenging problem of any qualitative research project (Holloway, 1989; Aboim, 2011; Brown, 2006). The difficulties are usually embedded in the problem of structure and agency, that is of having autonomous social actors operating in a determined social context. Deleuze and Guattari’s decentering of the subject and their emphasis on understanding the forces that shape life bypass the insoluble problems of nature/nurture, freedom/determinism and structure/agency. What they offer is a continuation and prolongation of a tradition of vitalist philosophy, which runs through Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson, and stands in opposition to Cartesian dualism and Kantian transcendental categories. It offers an approach to language that gives an account of its importance as a determinant of meaning and creative force, without the implication of universal structures found within Chomsky’s Cartesian rationalist foundations of transformational grammar, and correspondingly sheds the notion of ‘langue’ to the exclusivity of ‘parole’; that is between the formal properties of a language as an abstract—‘langue’—and the uses it is put to—‘parole’. Further, it refutes the foundations of psychoanalysis by offering another understanding of how the unconscious is constituted. These broad brushstrokes form the framework of the ‘the new subject’. Holland (2013) sums up the shift: “Kant replaced God with man, Deleuze replaced man with Life” (p.21).

2. Graphic interrogation: Drawing out the subject

Graphic narrative had originally been proposed as a method for disseminating the results of a research project into participants’ experiences of long-term relationships. I began to consider whether this might not be used as a research method in itself. Searching through the literature, I found only one example using graphic narrative (Galman, 2009), two examples using drawing (Ganesh, 2011; Mitchell, 2011), and one using cartoons (Bartlett, 2012). This appeared an
under-examined area of possibilities. The uses, limitations and lessons drawn from
these few existing examples are dealt with in the opening section of Chapter 4. The
research tool I term ‘graphic interrogation’ has two aspects and two functions. It is a
method of gathering data which consists of asking participants to relate something
about themselves in the form of a drawn account. That is to say to present the
researcher with a ‘graphic narrative’ of what they wish to ‘show and tell’. In this
case the request was for something relating to a significant episode in the context of
a long-term relationship. Secondly, it is also an exploration of how graphic
narrative can contribute in a more general sense to psychosocial research and
theory. In order to validate the graphic narrative both as a data-gathering tool and as
a conceptual tool for making sense of the data, we must reach an understanding of
what it does, and how it connects its productions, as content and expression, to the
individual in his social context.

Graphic narrative is often hailed as the postmodernist art form par excellence (Murray,
2011; Miller, 2007; El Refai, 2011; Versaci, 2000) because of its versatility in playing
with multiple notions of ‘subject’ as narrative strategies, both visual and textual.
While Deleuze and Guattari examined various forms of art—literature, painting,
cinema, music, humour—neither explored the world of comics/graphic narrative.
However the process of art production is the same for all art forms. Deleuze in Francis
Bacon: The Logic of Sensation (1981) speaks of the “communality of art” and from there
and in other writings we can deduce the position they might have taken up. It
remains to answer critics who might still question whether comics are art. The short
answer, on Deleuze’s terms, would be ‘yes’ when comics conform to the function of
art: to capture the unseen forces—the lines between the elements of an assemblages,
the relational vectors of which we are composed—and make them visible.

3. Middle-aged men in long-term relationships: Subjects of experience

If the original motivator for this thesis had been an inquiry into the subjectivity of
middle-aged men in long-term relationships, during the course of the research it
Introduction

became clear that this interest shifted to more theoretical questions about subjectivity, identity and the very idea of ‘self’. It follows that areas of academic writing which initially seemed relevant—such as gender, masculinity, emotion, intimacy and love, all of which are important elements of any long-term relationship—became themselves topics to be probed theoretically before proceeding. The emphasis of the research thus steered progressively away from a more conventional empirical inquiry toward problems of theory and methodology with which to frame any enquiry in the field of qualitative psychosocial research.

This underscores much of Pini and Pease’s (2013) argument and is the justification for their edited book, *Men, Masculinities and Methodologies*, in which they identify a lack of theoretical and methodological engagement within current research on men and masculinities. Feminist research on women, on the other hand, has made far greater strides in integrating research methods with theory. More recently it has found both a challenge and an inspiration in poststructuralism and particularly through the philosophy of Deleuze (as evidenced by Coleman and Ringrose, 2013). Queer and intersectional theory provide a new theoretical impetus through poststructuralism, as Pini and Pease (2013, p.12) go on to argue. The conceptual language of multiplicities, difference and fragmented selves is forcing new positions in epistemology and ontology, but, in spite of new research methods often associated with these theoretical perspectives (visual, creative writing, video, etc.), these have not been properly integrated within the theories. The result is an “ongoing fissure”, particularly between “critical gender theory and methodology” (p.13).

Men’s studies remains the legacy of the critical impact second wave feminism has had on the social sciences (Segal, 1987; Connell, 1995; Hearn, 2010; Seidler, 1996). As Hearn and Morgan (1990, p.8) put it: “Much sociology and sociological theory has been implicitly about men without explicitly saying so.” It can perhaps be argued that this legacy has impeded engagement with new theorising. What is wrong with masculinity studies, to amplify Pini and Pease’s critique, is its failure to properly engage with poststructuralism.
Introduction

Feminist research politicised the notions of epistemology and ontology and argued for its own methods, leading to much reflexive searching as to the role of the researcher and to questions about the desirability (or otherwise) of men studying women and vice versa. Men’s studies became framed by four main concerns: to reveal men through research (i.e. the ethnographic moment); to analyse men’s power as a political project (i.e. hegemonic masculinity); to change men as a therapeutic/liberationist project (i.e. to trace the degree of shift in men’s attitudes and behaviour); and to promote equality as a moral imperative, a precondition of academic research in that field. These constraints arguably channelled, if not inhibited, theoretical and methodological innovations in men’s studies. This thesis seeks to explore—mainly through the work of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, read as poststructuralist theory—aspects of men’s experience expressed through the medium of the drawn narrative, and thus to engage in a response to this perceived lack.

The second persuasive reason for looking at the life experiences of middle-aged men, loosely defined as the age range from 40 to 65, is that it is a comparatively under-researched area when set against the amount of literature on men’s health and studies of youth or men in the geriatric context. Leontowitsch (2013, p. 212) refers to the lack of research on older men as one blind spot in ageing research and notes that this is despite the “lacuna being highlighted” as far back as the mid-1990s. Aspects of men’s behaviour correlated with class, economic status and ethnicity have received attention irrespective of age (men and violence, men and sexism, men as holders of power, men oppressed by other men, etc.). These studies are no doubt precipitated by the social importance and political significance within the context of an egalitarian agenda of the researched topic. The men who responded to my study, described more fully in Part 2, Section 2.3, represent a less ‘politically urgent cohort’; their lives do not contribute in any obvious way to social problems that might require policy attention and are therefore perhaps even more under researched as a result. They are men who grew up with or alongside feminism, who lived through the moment of intellectual intensity of the second half of the 20th century and, in several cases, read comics.
Introduction

Ten men volunteered for this project and completed the task of drawing and attending a follow-up interview. Their stories, relating aspects of a long-term relationship, are vastly different in content as they are in the mode of their expression. The participants were recruited as a result of chance encounters resulting in positive events that brought about their participation. The only constraint was that of age, which sought to ensure that participants had been part of or had lived through the sweeping changes in the relative positions of men and women in that same second half of the 20th century. They had witnessed the social changes brought about by economic shifts in industrialisation and globalisation of markets, of the changing relative positions of men and women. What might constitute a long-term relationship was left to the participants themselves to decide so as not to prejudge, categorise or exclude any singular interpretation. This thesis, then, adopts an untried research method to examine an under-researched group through a philosophy which is far from universally accepted.

4. Ordering of the thesis

The thesis consists of an introduction and four parts. The first deals with theory, the second with method, the third with data, and the fourth consists of general conclusions on the project and its implications. Each part is divided into sub-topics.

Part 1 has three sub-headings. The first concentrates on how social theorists such as Giddens, Bauman, Beck and Beck-Gersheim have understood and theorised the changing self in the conditions of late capitalism and how their understanding has formed a theoretical basis for the interpretation of research findings or conversely has been thought to be at variance with the findings of empirical research. Following on from that, the interpretive frameworks of psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism are briefly explored to determine the different pictures of self and identity that each yield within their own perspectives or in various combinations with one another. This is followed by an examination of more recent areas of exploration, whose aim has been to encompass neglected fields; often referred to as
the ‘visual turn’ and the ‘affective turn’. I also look at autoethnography to see what it might offer this research project. This section concludes with reflections on the above considerations, to determine whether psychosocial research might best be served by art, science or philosophy.

The second section of Part 1 looks at the various frameworks which are used to theorise the graphic narrative. The genre of autobiography, memoir and confession is the most relevant to the research project, its place in the comics corpus having been identified as part of the more recent directions which graphic narrative is taking. A short account of the Anglo-Saxon and European theoretical traditions is followed by an examination of what are termed the formal resources of comics: visual and verbal semiotics. This section ends with a more generalised argument which argues for the power of drawing from a variety of perspectives.

The third section of Part 1 examines the case for Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari. Picking up some of the problems raised in the first two sections of Part 1, a case is made for bringing their work to the project. Their increasing influence in the field of qualitative psychosocial research is examined, followed by an observation of their almost complete absence from comics theory. Key conceptual areas of work are introduced, which will be put to work in making sense of the data generated by the project: art and language, diagrams, délire, affects and creativity as constituents of experience. This section and Part 1 close with a sample analysis of how Deleuze might have engaged with comics.

Part 2 addresses method. Standard research methods are problematised by poststructuralism. Authorship, voice, presence—which are taken as ‘givens’ in methods deriving from a humanist perspective—are all in turn challenged when the unity (if not the ontology) of the self is called into question. Indeed, the very idea of a method itself becomes problematic, as the ‘post-methodological’ approaches to qualitative research of Patti Lather (2013) and Elizabeth St Pierre (2013) demonstrate. The metaphysical system of Deleuze and Guattari can be said to be its own method given the fact that it offers a position to account for the central problems that conventional methodology sets itself to overcome.
Introduction

A description of how the inquiry proceeds and through which the research project was carried out is presented. The scarcity of research carried out using the graphic narrative as a research tool is noted together with the fact that what exists was weakened by its inability to engage with the graphic narrative at a theoretical level. The demographic and its selection are justified, and the work required from participants is explained. The ethical considerations are outlined and general remarks on recruitment and my position as researcher are defined.

Part 3 concerns the data and what emerges from it. This is divided into three sections. The first deals with identity and the different sense we get from it both by using drawing and by ‘engaging’ with the drawings through Deleuzian concepts. The second section deals with another emergent theme, that of therapy and the role it plays in some of the participants’ stories. Using Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of psychoanalysis and therapeutic projects in general, a link is established between the power and the politics of affect. Thirdly, time, space and affect make up the interplay of much of the intimacy of daily life; I examine how various participants ‘live out’ these intertwined forces, which ‘augment’ or ‘diminish’ their life in the flux. These categories are obviously porous and all the participants in one way or another touch on all the themes. The work of each participant is considered in turn with references both from the visual work and the interview transcripts.

Part 4 stands in lieu of a conclusion. It has two sections. The first pull together various threads: how the participants responded to the project; how graphic narrative fully meets Deleuze’s marker for art in that it captures the unseen forces that shape us and renders them visible. Affects indeed determine form and, more specifically, drawing oneself involves drawing how one is affected. I examine whether a theoretical contribution can be made to both comics and psychosocial research following the lines of argument put forward by this thesis. I examine how graphic narrative can be a source of rich data for psychosocial research and as such an important research tool which acknowledges the increasing cultural importance of the image in relation to the word.
The second section consists of a series of short graphic texts and stories which 'share' the concerns or arguments that develop in the text. This notion of sharing is critically important for two reasons. Firstly in order to follow Deleuze's precept—
as set out in his works on cinema—not to impose a philosophy on a discipline or an art, but to explore their communality of concerns. In other words, not to elaborate a ‘philosophy of comics’, which would make comics subservient to philosophy, and comics merely ‘illustrative’ of it, but to find how the two can interact while remaining independent activities. Secondly, and by implication in order to preserve that independence, the graphic stories are presented, irrespective of merit, as ‘standalone’ forms of graphic narrative expression which can potentially be read simply as comics. For these reasons, the comics texts are interspersed throughout the thesis where it seemed their mutual intensity draws them together and they are also included as a whole in the appendix. I offer no decoding or explanations of the graphic component; it is left entirely to the reader to make any connections.

*The drawn texts of the participants are included as an appendix.*
Part 1 Theory

Section 1 The psychosocial toolkit: New hope for old problems

The psychosocial is a relatively new and hybrid area of inquiry whose methods of research and theorising are at once eclectic and rapidly developing. The aim is not to stitch together a social theory to a psychological one, but rather to explore the relational areas and the processes that take place between the two. However, exploring this relationality has meant embracing philosophical positions drawn from social theory and theories of psychology. The results have usually led to an impasse of binary oppositions, individual/society, which in turn yields social actors either as passive recipients of social stimuli or as self-generating autonomous agents who can override their social environment by acts of will. Conversely, social forces are either all-determining—whether found in economic relations, language or the politics derived from the two—boundaries from which groups of individuals with common interest must liberate themselves; or necessary structures which give the individual an ordered context of possibilities in which to find freedom. In all cases, picking one’s way through these various theoretical strands leads us to a philosophical problem. What is asserted ontologically leads to problems in epistemology and vice versa. To enter the psychosocial field, this thesis will argue, is to take up philosophical positions in underpinnings of the varying theories that are brought into play and, as Kath Woodward (2015, p.55) states, “In psychosocial studies theories and methods are inextricably interconnected.” The strategy of this thesis is to explore the psychosocial terrain with a philosophy of process, a metaphysic of vitalism and creativity—more precisely that articulated by Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari—in order to see anew that area of intersection between self and society. My thesis allies itself with this new emerging theoretical development in psychosocial research, which emphasises the fragmented self, the decentering of voice, the
problems of data and interpretation as expressed in the edited volumes of Jackson
and Mazzei (2012) and Coleman and Ringrose (2013). In reference to method, this
thesis seeks to introduce the graphic narrative, understood through the same phi-
losophy, as a productive tool of research.

1.1 The self of social theorists

The idea of a ‘self’ is one pole of psychosocial theory and the one which has most
altered in the second half of the 20th century. Here I consider how some influential
social theorists have understood that shifting notion. Bronta and Protevi (2004)
note at the onset of their work that the problem of structure and agency “continues
to haunt the social sciences” (p.3); this, they say, is the case despite Anthony
Giddens’ (1984) “brave efforts” to provide an alternative with “structuration the-
ory”. It will be argued in this thesis that Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphysical sys-
tem, by removing ‘the subject’ as an ontological reality, a process well in tune with
postmodern and poststructuralist thinking, can suggest new ways of putting old
problems in the social sciences in a new light, and of redefining the problem of
structure and agency by formulating it in a broader processual framework of inter-
secting relational forces. Further, by concentrating not on making action or behav-
ior intelligible, but on the permanence of becoming, we can better grasp how the
social processes of conformity and the creative process of individual escape inter-
play. The cultural advent of the graphic narrative will offer interesting insights into
these processes.

The economic, social and political shifts of the last 50 years have altered the social
understanding of the self, as have intellectual shifts such as postmodernism. De-
industrialisation, globalisation, the decentering of key social structures—such as
traditional family networks, the institution of marriage, sexual identities, geo-
graphically fixed communities—women entering the labour market, feminist poli-
tics and legal reforms, etc. have all had a huge impact on how we now conceptualise
the self and matters of identity. Debates as to the interpretation of the impact of
these changes, as determinants of new ways of being for social actors, have long
held centre stage for social theorists. Focusing both on the constraints and/or the
opportunities offered by the changing social forces, different theorists have come to
different conclusions as to how the ‘postmodernist’ self is moulded and results from
these forces and with what degree of agency this ‘self’ can operate in order to estab-
lish new relational modes. Thus for Giddens (1992) the conditions of late modernity
offer a “democratisation of personal life” (p.181). “Sexuality is separated from repro-
duction” (p.2) and relationships find fulfilment through the “emergence of the pure
relationship” (p.188). That is, a relationship marked by equality and honest self-dis-
closure and held together by the degree of self-satisfaction experienced by both par-
ties (p.58). The inequalities of power formerly embedded in the now defunct
‘romantic love complex’ are replaced with the dynamic of equality of ‘confluent
love’. The ‘self’ is now a “reflexive project” marked by continuous self-interrogation
and helped by the “cultural resources of therapy and self-help magazines” (p.30).

A slightly different emphasis is found in the writings of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim
(2002). Here the accent is on the ‘individualising’ nature of modern society. An
autonomy forced onto the individual by the changing nature of social institutions,
altering in turn the relationship of the individual to society. Once again social com-
mitments are freed from historical roles, allowing possibilities of transformation.
The fundamental change is a new ‘pact’ with capitalism, “at once an independence
from as well as a dependence on the labour market” (p.203). This pact with capital-
ism has “produced... an individualisation which is infused with ideas of cultural
democratisation” (p.205) and it is this in turn which profoundly affects how rela-
tionships are played out. “Individualisation presupposes a conscience and a reflex-
ive process of socialisation and intersubjectivity”, which can lead to a more
localised political expression more concerned with matters of quality of life (p.205).

For Bauman (2003), the same alignment of capitalist interest and the freeing of the
individual from traditional ties leads to a more pessimistic view of individuals and
their relationships. Bauman (2010) offers the metaphor of a ‘liquid’ world in which
everything is transient, from sex to shopping, and in which the individual is con-
tantly required to make choices and is in fear of making the wrong ones. In this
view, there is no benefit to cultural solace and support, as there is with Giddens.
Counselling (lumped together with popular media, agony aunts, self-help books, etc.), “elevates common practice to common knowledge and that into learned theory” (p.102). Disconnection, in Bauman’s view, takes precedence over engagement. What in Giddens and Beck and Beck-Gersheim is reflexivity is, for Bauman, anxiety-ridden self-scrutiny and doubt.

Power relations and gender form another mould in which the self can be cast, and in which capital is understood over and above financial capitalism. From the sociological and anthropological perspective, Bourdieu (2003) unmasksthe hidden power of masculine domination embedded in the social unconscious and reproduced historically through the institutions of family, church and education. Masculine domination is inscribed in the social order as a “public patriarchy” which regulates the “domestic unit” as a moral order (p.87). Accruing capital—social and financial—is the point of this relentless masculine game of domination, which holds women down but equally oppresses men. Love provides the only possibility of transcendence in this exhausting scenario by allowing a full and equal reciprocity. It suspends the pressure of domination by raising to the “highest level” the features of “the economy of symbolic exchange” (the way by which social capital is accrued) through the offer and exchange of the highest gift: “the gift of self and of one’s body” (p.110).

Four different readings of the self emerge from the social theorists considered here, each with different political implications for defining the relationship of the individual to the state and the relationships of individuals to each other. Thus, for Giddens (1992), autonomy and its concomitant relationship should be mirrored in the polity, circumscribing both individual rights and state authority (p.186). Modernity is an emancipatory force shaping personal lives and thus political institutions. For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), the emancipatory impact of the ‘second modernity’ requires a new interpretation of the political, social and cultural fields in order to be fully understood. Individualisation, globalisation, new economic, sociological and cultural conditions and the ecological crisis are altering (or have fundamentally altered) key relationships through a different form of capitalism, a new global order and “a different type of everyday life” (p.205). These new
relationships replace and make redundant the fundamental categories of the ‘first modernity’, that is: the nation-state, collective identities, class, family, ethnicity, or what Beck terms “zombie categories” (p.203). For Bauman, the rationale of modernity has less emancipatory potential. The anchors of moral authority which sanctioned choice in the traditional order have been dissolved and replaced with the seductions of a permanent consumerism which defines, makes and unmakes uncertain identities. This leaves a legacy of inequality, favouring only those with greater access to resources (p.113). The structures of power relations are embedded in capitalism while, for Bourdieu (2003), the structure of power resides in the supremacy of male domination, hardwired into the collective and individual psyche, and capitalism becomes a symptomatic consequence of this gendered asymmetry.

Social theory and empirical sociological enquiry need each other in order to validate each other’s positions, yet they can also misunderstand each other’s accounts and purpose. Political orientation and philosophical positioning and moral evaluation at once inform, dictate or shape a particular line of enquiry. While each of the writers considered sought backing for their arguments by quoting empirical research (Bourdieu carried out his own), their detractors have called on empirical research to demonstrate that the models put forward have little empirical evidence to support them and plenty of evidence to demonstrate that the everyday relational world exists in a different way. This is the case with Jamieson’s (1998) reply to Giddens (1992), which questions the latter’s notion of the ‘pure relationship’ by pointing to contrary empirical evidence as experienced in the daily lives of many. What lay at the basis of Giddens and Jamieson’s difference was a theoretical divergence and its political expression. Giddens’ deductive schema of the self-constructed individual relies on the context of new economic conditions and loss of traditional constraints, and is seemingly incompatible with Jamieson’s pointing to the empirical reality of persistent structural forces which impede people (and especially women) from realising that aim.

Quite what is at issue is best expressed by Branaman (2010) in her contribution to Bauman’s work. Branaman asks whether Bauman (and I would extend the
questions to the work of Giddens and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim) should be read as “empirical reality or cultural logic” (p.134). She concludes that Bauman’s ‘liquid modernity’ should be interpreted more “as a logic or a tendency” evidenced “in some spheres of life, in some stages in life, in some geographical locations and in certain social classes more than in others” (p.134). The more fundamental issue and the one at odds with aspects of feminist theory is that Bauman takes capitalism as the fundamental structure of power. Summing up his position, Branaman reflects that “The deregulation of gender and sexuality and choice represent no threat to global capitalist power. This minimises the significance of gender as a system of inequality” (p.132). Bourdieu (2003), in extrapolating his theory of domination from his empirical study of the Khabyle, places himself in the camp of gendered power relations of which capitalism is a consequence. Even though many factors have brought change to the ‘domination’ to make it more visible, inequalities and male resistance still persist (p.88). For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), the self is now the determiner of choice; this at once opens up possibilities while also carrying risks. They quote Giddens (1991): “Identity is less an ascribed fate than dependent on decisions risky and reflexive” (p.105). However, there is an ambivalence as to what exists as aspiration and how relationships are played out in the everyday. Even though, for Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, “institutions and their practices lag behind” (p.204), the empirical evidence on relationships reveals deeply gendered divisions, from the division of labour in the home to the understanding of expressions of love. It is mostly women who have taken up the challenge of this new identity, that is of the possibility of new choices and relational patterns (p.105), and both Giddens (1992, p.57) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p.103) note that men have been slow to respond to the challenge of late modernity, the rise of feminism and the new ethos of equality. This slowness has been reflected culturally and academically in initial concerns about, and as evidence of, a ‘masculinity in crisis’ (Seidler, 2006; Connell, 1985; Morgan, 1992; MacInnes, 1992; and many others).

How different theorists reach their conclusions is a matter of how they evaluate the observable social shifts, and draw on existing political positions and
moral philosophies to articulate an overall framework. From the examples above, different models of social agents, as shaped by social change and the breakdown of traditional structures, emerge. Inherent in these arguments, in the ‘cultural logic’ of these social theories and in the interpretation of data which support them, are moral evaluations, implicit or explicit, which deduce the ‘ought’ from the ‘is’. They are in a sense deductive models extrapolated from generalised observations and ethico/political aspirations. These divergences beg deeper philosophical arguments down to the very concept of the ‘self’, and have implications for how social inquiries might proceed as a ‘science’ in the social world. The social scientist cannot operate like his/her counterpart in the natural sciences. S/he cannot create experiments to isolate variables in order to determine causal connections. Theory can never be divorced from politics and neither can it be separated from prescriptive recipes that might create fair societies and fulfilled individuals. Deleuze and Guattari can be of assistance in pushing back the boundaries of moral judgement and prescriptive recipes for the good of society.

Psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism have, in turn, been in alliance or at odds with each other, offered diagnoses and political prescriptions for what ought to be. The impulse to give an account of the workings of the social world has always been driven by a motivation to find solutions to the ills of society, and to alleviate individual suffering and collective misery. In a secular society knowledge is telos, culturally constructed as rational science; politics as moral imperative, or hermeneutic initiation as a revealer of the psyche’s secrets. All three strands of thought linger in the theoretical perspectives of the psychosocial field in carefully constructed combinations, but they also live in wider society, perhaps in more diluted form, in agreement or disagreement and less rigorous combinations and alongside older forms of ideas such as religion or political ideology, which are treated as discursive pools or layers of discourse from which individuals articulate the narratives of their lives. These echo the findings of this research project.

It is for psychoanalysis that Deleuze and Guattari (AO, 1972) reserve their most severe criticisms, to the effect that psychoanalysis is complicit with and serves the
interests of capitalism by reducing troubled mental states to the private theatre of the Oedipal complex and thereby negating the social dimension. Marxism stood for a long time as its polar opposite, understanding class conflict and revolution as the means to individual freedom. Reconciling Marxism and psychoanalysis was for some time at the core of social thought before the advent of the psychosocial. Marcuse (1955, 1960) is still instructive in this respect and re-reading his texts reveals shared areas of interest and intellectual influence on Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, not least in the political function of art and aesthetics, which is developed in Section 3. Feminism, which began as political demands for equality, has propelled its arguments to theory. It is the most recent influential body of thought, and has made its way through both the political and the therapeutic, the personal as the political and the politics of the therapeutic.

Undoubtedly, feminism has had a profound impact on the social sciences. Firstly, by broadening its field of study to include gender as a central conceptual element of study, giving an added dimension to questions of identity and power. Secondly, by giving political urgency to social theorising by linking critique to change. Thirdly, by further destabilising the already delicate foundations of the social sciences by redefining epistemology as positional and recasting it in the name of feminism. Reconciling the individual and society, however, remained problematic and feminism has had to make allies of either Marx or Freud (more usually Klein) until recent times when continental poststructuralist thinking (among others, Deleuze and Guattari) seems to have spearheaded new ways of working through the intractable problem. Feminist academics lead the field in re-configuring methodology in psychosocial research and in formulating its avant-garde (Lather, 2009; St Pierre, 2009) to a position of ‘post methodology’.

1.2 The psychosocial self: Problems in the coherence of theory
Joanne Brown (2006, p.16) explains the beginnings of the psychosocial discipline at her university as being the result of a concern by a sociology student to enter ‘welfare’ work and of her institution’s close academic ties with the Tavistock. But, philosophically speaking, individual/society, structure/agency, nature/nurture, passive/
active social actors and freedom/determinism have proved to be enduring paradoxes made up of irreconcilable binaries. Perhaps the last ‘scientific’ model was the promise structuralism held with its emphasis on language, as something which could be studied independently of social specifics and which might explain how ‘meaning’ is established in social relations: the moment of language and the text. In turn, what became important was not simply the contents of the text, but what lay beyond it. An inversion of Wittgenstein’s famous conclusion that “what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence” (Wittgenstein, 1971 [1921], p. 151) into something like ‘we must bring to the fore that which is passed over in silence’.

Poststructuralism is concerned with the inter-relation between things, people and organisations, not with what they might be in themselves hence not about power, capitalism, gender, but the ethical quality of their relation. The limits of logic and language are of interest in leading us to the processes of creativity that lie beyond them. To bring the focus nearer to our concerns with the psychosocial, the problem of the unification of the individual and society is an important part of any research. Wendy Hollway (1989) offers a good account of the struggle both in finding a framework with which to make sense of the data as well as positioning the researcher vis-à-vis her research. Central to her concerns was the integration of a notion of subjectivity, revealed through free association, and a (Foucauldian) analysis of power and discourse which revealed the social. This approach, while veering towards process, leaves as problematic the question of meaning. The conditions for understanding an action (in the broadest sense to include what postmodernism defines as a ‘text’) is to understand the reasons (social) and the motives (unconscious and individual) which underpin the action. This brings us back to an earlier engagement of philosophy with the social sciences. Winch’s (1958) text is still fresh in teasing out philosophical problems from the endeavours of social science. If the ‘motive’ component is prompted by unconscious forces, only properly interpretable by the analyst, then the ‘reasons’ component is severely undermined in the sense that there is a deeper reality which trumps, so to speak, the social one. If motives are a subset of further reasons, i.e. ‘real’ reasons for action which are masked by ‘professed’ reasons; the result is a means to ends concatenation
involving a possible infinite regress of concealment and/or deceit. The resulting model of social actors would be one in which moral purpose is at best be blurred by the ‘regress’ of reasons, or it is a Hobbesian model of ‘the war of all against all’, requiring some form of ‘social contract’ to stabilise human organisation. Winch (1958) and Hollis (1977) are, of course, in their slightly different ways, humanist philosophers defending rationality as both the essence and potential of free action, but the rational/humanist model ends in an empirical impasse, i.e social actors do not always behave rationally and social organisations do not always lead to the general good.

Deleuze and Guattari replace reason and motive as determiners of action with the notion of ‘assemblage’, that is to say a selection from the variety of factors both personal and social that have shaped our lives, which in turn guide our choice through the multiplicity of choices at every moment. Free action, for Deleuze and Guattari, involves experimenting and creativity: a pragmatic approach in which we make new connections and see if they work for us and for others (the ethical dimension). The means of expression are socially coded in language and power relations, the various semiotic chains that compose them, but within these constraints the individual, animated by the forces of desire, can enter (or not) the chaos of the unsaid, of the as-yet unexpressed relations which have affected him or her. The creative act is the articulation, the making visible, of these relational forces, and that creative act has both an ethical and a political function.

Both Marx and Freud believed they were working in the field of science by the criteria of their day, and the validation of their work was legitimated by its being ‘scientific’: Marx because of the philosophical materialist foundations of his system; and Freud because psychoanalysis was an offshoot of medicine and could be empirically demonstrated to work. The deduced political content, very explicit in Marx and more tacit in Freud (hence Deleuze and Guattari’s criticism of its complicity with capitalism), turns to revolutionary action (mass therapy) in one and individual ‘cure’ to ensure conformity in the other. The joining up of Marx and Freud has remained the holy grail of social theory for some time. If Deleuze and Guattari
remained Marxist (albeit in a philosophical sense), they sacked Freud in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983 [1972]) and replaced him with Nietzsche in order to retrieve individual power, release desire and redefine madness. If the hopes of the enlightenment’s application of reason proved insufficient, the revolutionary politics of materialism impracticable, and the psyche’s dark forces interpretable only by the trained analyst for a price, Deleuze and Guattari offered a new way in recombining materialism with the forces of desire to create a new ‘practical philosophy’. As of yet, this has not filtered down to the popular imagination in the way that Freud and, through psychoanalysis’s various schools, the notion of a ‘talking cure’ have become the therapeutic discourse through which many understand their lives.

1.3 The therapeutic self: A subject to cure

The advent of psychoanalysis heralded the age of psychotherapy in all its various schools. It remains the most widely articulated system of understanding the individual psyche and the necessarily repressive nature of society in controlling the flows of desire. In our time, the permanent admonition of therapy culture ‘to be ourselves’ chimes with the demands for individualism required by capitalism, as discussed by the social theorists considered above.

The arena of therapy as a site of intellectual, social, personal and political experimentation was prominent in the 1960s and 1970s and helped new voices to come to the fore, if at times by questionable means. It is instructive to look back at some of the early concerns surrounding and challenges to the development of the therapeutic as mass culture. Phil Brown’s (1973) *Radical Psychology* can now be read as a piece of social history documenting the challenges the anti-psychiatry movement and feminism brought to the psychiatric and therapeutic establishment in general. In Deleuzian terms, these challenges are a clear example of ‘nomadic science’ versus ‘royal science’ (i.e. establishment versus radical science); these challenges are accompanied by corresponding modes of thinking. The nomadic sciences’ progress through the ‘schizophrenic’ mode of thought, the term taken from medical diagnosis, transformed in meaning and fed back to language in order to better subvert the established status quo. *Radical Psychology* documents and challenges the
medicalisation of mental illness; it refers to possible social dimensions not taken into consideration by the profession. The anti-psychiatry movement, led by R. D. Laing and David Cooper, experimented in the treatment of schizophrenia. This had overlaps with the experiments in treatment that Guattari was carrying out in the experimental unit at La Borde. Both were attempting to break down institutional barriers. But Guattari, who apparently met Laing and Cooper in 1967, was critical of anti-psychiatry for not moving beyond the “Oedipal schema” (Dosse, 2007, p.332).

Brown’s collection of papers also documents the natural tensions, given their antithetical premises, between the Marxist and Freudian approaches. It is, however, in the two final chapters that the changed polarity of therapeutic discourse can be identified. The penultimate chapter, ‘The Therapy Rip-off’, contains accounts by ‘therapy victims’, overwhelmingly female or non-heterosexual, treated by a therapeutic profession largely made up of white heterosexual males. Accounts of sexual predation and patriarchal assumptions about sexual orientation and the position of women paint the therapeutic professions in an exploitative light.

There have, of course, been major changes in therapeutic practice since then—including better training, specialisation in services and rigorous accreditation—but one factor, which perhaps remains to be fully explained, has been the change in the gender of its practitioners. A survey by the American Psychological Association (2011) raised concerns about the diminishing number of men being recruited in psychological fields. Women outnumber men in all areas besides cognitive psychology, and also in holding higher degrees in those fields. In counselling and psychotherapy, the percentage is 75/80% women practitioners (APA, 2011). The interest here is twofold: the shift in theory as a result of feminism’s challenges to the profession; and the shift in the gender of its practitioners. The first reason for noting this is that experiences of therapy was a theme which came up in my research project. Of the 10 participants, five had undergone some form of therapy; two had been seen by a male therapist, and their experiences were positive. The other three had experienced couple’s counselling with a female therapist and all three, in varying ways, reported experiencing a sense of bias in favour of their partner and felt their side of the story had not been properly heard. This seemingly
anecdotal evidence is strengthened from within the profession itself. Reporting on a recent conference for clinicians, Amy Sohn (2015) quotes Dr Nelson, herself a well-established and published couple’s therapist: “Couples therapy is very feminized. It’s all about teaching men to be more like women. He should pay attention to her feelings and if she’s upset, there’s something wrong.”

The second reason is that the genre of graphic narrative under consideration can be seen to spring from the same therapeutic culture which urges the externalisation of pain, trauma and personal expression and is considered by many to be very beneficial to the cause of women (Chute, 2010; El Refaie, 2012). To what extent do these ‘graphic’ life accounts provide either acceptance of or an escape (a line of flight to speak with Deleuze) from the dominant social therapeutic narratives that shape their experience? That the act of creating something is therapeutic in itself is not in question, but what is the process of reconfiguring these experiences through drawing, if this is indeed what graphic narrative enables? Deleuze’s view on the function of art and of the artist as ‘social diagnostician’ is discussed in Section 3.

1.4 New turns in research: Visual, affective and autoethnography
In tandem with the changing self that postmodernism posits, the researcher, as well as their methods, has been under challenge. Writing in the 1970s, Alvin Gouldner (1973), pessimistic of the objective possibility of the social sciences, warned of the importance of considering sociology, in his case, as a personal practice, not simply as a set of skills to be applied mechanically from the theory. The safeguard for Gouldner lay in the practice of reflexivity. That is in the permanent reflexive attitude demanded of the researcher in order to maintain a check on his/her subjective influence in research. If the plurality of divergent approaches on the theoretical field of the social sciences make progress at best difficult, attention has turned to new and formerly neglected areas of research within those disciplines. The visual and the affective turns offer new ways of extending research in breadth, rather than reaching for ungraspable in depths of interpretation. In terms of ‘doing’ social research, new forms of practice have emerged. Among them is autoethnography, a vast field, but here understood as an interpretive method as stated by Denzin (2014)
to be used in social research with checks and balances to include the researcher’s position. At first glance this seems to overcome the problems of positioning the researcher and offer ways to reintegrate the ‘subject’ researcher with the ‘subject’ researched. It has a resonance with postmodernism and graphic narrative.

The new visual turn in the social sciences seems at first promising in its recognition of the increased dominance of the image. It has opened up to academic considerations the array of visual stimuli we encounter daily and it has also harnessed the very technologies that produce these images—video, photography and image-making equipment in general—as tools for its own research. But it is as yet disappointing in its lack of recognition of the graphic narrative both as something to research and as something to research with. This could be because of a lingering cultural association of the graphic narrative with children’s entertainment, or perhaps because of the lack of precedent for its academic use. Whatever the case, resistance to their inclusion will break down under the sheer importance of the rise of comics as a means of expression in the cultural field. This point is developed in subsequent sections. The further contention made in this thesis holds that Deleuzian concepts can potentially be a useful way of engaging with comics, and the production of graphic narrative as a whole, given the predominantly postmodernist expressive content of the latter. The further contention is that Deleuze and Guattari potentially offer a way of looking at both comics’ production and psychosocial research through the same lens.

Autoethnography set out to embrace the challenges to research set by postmodernism. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) summarise its manifesto. Rather than trying to eliminate personal experience as a possible contaminant of ‘data’, autoethnography embraces it, and uses it as a resource of reflexivity in order to develop greater sensitivity towards research participants. The process, the ‘doing’ of autoethnography, really reduces to noting the reciprocity of affect in an encounter, privileging emotion and emphasising an ethic of the relational. Where I part company, however, is in relation to what Ellis et al. term ‘the product’ of autoethnography, that is to say the method and content of its ‘writing up’. If the original impulse “to consider
what social sciences would become if they were closer to literature than to physics” (no pagination) seemed promising, the results sail too close to standard autobiographical narratology. The ‘show’ and ‘tell’ elements have obvious resonance with graphic narrative, as does the alteration of authorial voice, so readily available to the comics genre. But the conscious adaptation of narrative techniques in order to produce texts that are engaging as well as aesthetic seems to miss the opportunity of proper engagement with postmodernism by developing an approach to affect. Deleuze and Guattari offer a more promising direction. They neither take the side of physics or that of literature, but bring the two together via an understanding of affect which, as we shall see, is at once an ethic and the physics of the encounter, where style, as Claire Colebrook (2005 [1999], p. 229) sums it up, “is not a matter of aesthetics, but a mode of being”.

The affective turn in the social sciences has been understood either as an extension of the social field of inquiry or, more cautiously, as an inevitable encounter with poststructuralist thought. The first circumscribes affect to emotion and very strongly attaches emotion to gender; emotions are studied as part of the neglected subjectivity of men (Roper, 2005) or as the exigencies of the capitalist labour market (Hochchild, 2003 [1993]). Influenced by the reforming spirit of feminism, there has been a tendency to study emotion in order to determine the coefficient of change in men’s emotional register (Robinson and Hockey, 2011). If gender studies were opened up by feminist critique, studies of emotion have been opened up by gender critiques of men in the context of power relations and the perpetuation of inequality (Bourdieu, 2003; Horrocks, 1994; Lupton, 1998; Connell, 1995). The notion of change (in men’s emotional behaviour) has been interpreted from the start as the “feminisation” of masculine emotionality (Lupton, 1998, p. 131). Giddens (1992, p. 54) notes that “feminine modes of expression seem preferable to masculine ones”. Robinson and Hockey (2011, p. 143) question “why despite the ‘feminisation of men’ (a desirable thing) gender relations appear resistant to change?” In my view, the problem of much of these debates has been an overemphasis on the power dynamics of gender at the expense of theorising emotion. What we start with is a ‘pink and blue’ common understanding of emotion and the object of the observations is to spot the blue turning pink. And in comics it does,
as consideration of David Mazzucchelli’s *Asterios Polyp* will demonstrate in Section 3.3; but with a Deleuzian lens we will see that something quite different is going on, with implications for the social sciences.

The other branch picks up the challenge of embracing the wider notion of affect and trying to make sense of it in terms of subjectivity in a social context. Here we are thrown back not onto a binary of pink and blue coding, but onto flows of desire and an ethic based on the effects of affect. Affect understood in a wider context than the specificity of emotion. It joins us to the other branch of 17th century thought, moving away from Cartesian dualism to a philosophy of immanence from Spinoza to Deleuze via Bergson and Whitehead. The steps from Spinoza to Deleuze in relation to affect are considered in Section 3.2.

Margaret Wetherell (2012) gives a panoramic review of the various theoretical approaches to affect and emotion in the context of the social sciences. She sees affect as the primary source of engagement with life, hence the importance of its study. In order to do so she wants a method that is at once empirical, and “a way of thinking and a line of argument”, which will allow her to account for affect from “psychobiology to social analysis” (p.4) while preserving a degree of subjective autonomy for her social actors. She alights on the notion of “affective practice”, which, as “relational patterns”, provides the “most coherent unit of analysis”, focusing on what people actually do, and, importantly, how they ascribe meaning. Following Burkitt (2002), discourse completes feeling: “Affect is never wholly owned, always intersecting and interacting” (p.24). There is little in this which is incompatible with Spinozist’s view of affect, but without going beyond, social actors remain passive; trapped in the habitus, the sedimentation of meaning and repeated action, of received ideas, political or religious, of the prejudices of doxa and self-deception in which our power is accrued or diminished through an ever-ongoing set of encounters in which we affect and are affected by in turn. Layder (2010) comes close to the description of that process with his notion of perpetual power games, but his notion of power remains essentially one of competitive struggle rather than one of with any emancipatory function.
Problems arise when we try to unpack the epistemological and ontological implications of Wetherell’s aim or when we ask what exactly it is we learn about affect from such an approach. There is a sense in which Wetherell rejects either too much or not enough in her quest for foundations that will deliver her an empirical programme, a philosophical position and a social analysis of affect. She rejects essentialist positions which take specific emotions as universal; the empirically unverifiable accounts of the unconscious found in psychoanalysis; evolutionary accounts because they are too simplistic; and (poststructuralist) philosophical approaches because of their difficult translatability into the “register of social research” (p.2). Because of wanting to remain ‘empirical’ and ‘pragmatic’, Wetherell is faced with the problem of having to secure foundations because of her desire to embrace elements of the understanding of affect which lie beyond her ordinary sense of an empirical epistemology. She at once does not want to lose what the unconscious might have to offer, because so much of our emotional life “is not consciously arrived at”. The ‘unbidden’ needs to be accounted for.

Wetherell agrees with Billig (1999) in purifying the unconscious of unprovable Freudian notions by reducing it to “discursive practice” (p.135). Repression becomes part of social skills learning, in the dual sense of both learning to select what is appropriate to the situation as well as learning how to ‘navigate’ the selection to increase one’s social capital. The socially constructed and the unconscious offer two levels of social reality and to join them is to resolve the psychosocial conundrum. The problem is that to get from one to the other requires a change of epistemological track. This is where Deleuze has more to offer by placing both the unconscious and the social field in the same constructivist camp.

Wetherell’s foundational ‘shoring up’ is through an appeal to biology. Having rejected Damasio’s (2003) neurobiological account of affect, which is framed in a reading of Spinoza as a “proto-biologist” (p.14) and discoverer of the mechanics of emotion (p.28) (Brown and Stenner (2009) reject him as a poor Spinozist), Wetherell seeks in new neuroscience research a validation of her “patterning” approach to affect. She concludes that new research does indeed support the idea of forms of patterning.
Rather than seeking the location of a particular emotion in the brain, the new research is more molecular in its approach, locating different aspects of emotional processing in different brain circuits (p.45). More problematic is Wetherell’s rejection of the emerging poststructuralist philosophical discussion on affect, which has the potential to overcome the impasse of her aims. Her reason for rejecting that line of thought is mainly because she follows the Spinozist legacy through a particular reading. What she rejects is a whole line of thought based on a Deleuzian (though not Deleuze’s) reading of Spinoza developed through the work of Massumi (1996, 2002), Thrift (2008) and Williams (2010). What she terms “affect without a subject” (p.23) derives from Massumi’s 1996 paper *The Autonomy of Affect*. In this approach, the emphasis is on the relational as a process of affect. Because affect is a permanent flux of affecting and being affected, to the enhancement or detriment of our power, affect “circulates and vacillates” (Deleuze, quoted in Williams, 2010, p.247) as a force *beyond* the individual. Two consequences follow: firstly, the Spinozist ‘conatus’, something equivalent to a life force or the flows of desire, is therefore also a “fractal force” and is “conflict ridden” (Williams, 2010, p.247) through which affect operates. Secondly, the “imagination”, is no longer a subjective property of individuals, through which the construction and deconstruction of encounters play themselves out, but becomes “an impersonal conductor of affects” (p.247). Affect, as such, de-subjectifies the individual, who becomes “a shared centre for action” (p.247). This reworking of key concepts in Spinoza’s system offers us “a conceptual resource to reconfigure the composition of affective subjectivity as a transindividual bond and unconscious dynamic of ethico-political existence” (Williams, 2010, p.254). Unfortunately, Wetherell reads the whole Deleuzian inflected approach as a step too far in eradicating the subject, thus rejecting an approach that might have the potential to deliver the unity of her aim. But this is a common misunderstanding of Deleuze’s philosophy. The notion of de-subjection is often understood as the eradication of individuals from the inquiry in an empirical sense. There is, of course, a process of individuation, though not in the psychological sense of personal development, as we shall see in the section on ‘haecceities’. What Deleuze is arguing is that the subject is the ‘residue’ of interacting forces, not the generator of them, a position which would push us back to the Cartesian cogito.
1.5 Art or science or philosophy?

“Who is I? It is always a third person.” (Deleuze, QQP, p.66)

Always provocative in order to make us think, Deleuze here perhaps best sums up the ‘self’ of postmodernism. Here he is emphasising the psychosocial nature of the ‘utterance’ in order to distinguish it from the ‘conceptual’ utterances that philosophy produces. The first always refers back to a social actor in a specific role (I speak as a student, father, neighbour, etc.), whereas the second relates to the becoming of ideas, intersections of various planes that pass and are carried through (in this case) the philosopher. There is no ontology of the self in Deleuze and Guattari, or, put another way, the self is the residue of the cumulation of events over time. There is only the ‘socius’ on the one hand and the capture of forces or ideas as becomings, as creative events, on the other, of which the individual is but the “envelope” (QQP, p.68). And, as always with Deleuze and Guattari, the distinction is made in the absolute in order to better disinter the formal distinction; in reality there is always an enmeshing of the two. But the point cuts deeper and plays into the theoretical concerns of the psychosocial and that of postmodernism/poststructuralism. Deleuze goes on, it first appears, to call Descartes (and his intellectual descendants) ‘idiots’. The seemingly crude insult is made to illustrate (with humour) the key philosophical difference on the very notion of the self. ‘Idiot’ here is a play on the etymology of the word which points to the self-definition of the isolated, the idiolect, the belief ‘that-it-all-comes-from-me’, in other words the ‘cogito’. And it is from that very ‘cogito’, and its consequential mind/body dualism that the social sciences and notably the psychosocial branch in its poststructuralist direction, needs to disentangle itself from in order to accommodate the pluralistic multiplicity of a socially constructed self without falling into the reductionism of language/discourse.

Poststructuralism can perhaps be summed up in the dissolution of the unified subject, which in turn decentres voice; “the subject is the effect of voice” Colebrook (2005[1999], p.230) voice becomes unlocated, embracing a multiplicity of positions: the Deleuzian assemblage.

Arguing the new ‘self’, that is the self in its multiplicity, polyvocality, or its self-composing nature, runs through much recent psychosocial writing. Whether
through affect and emotion (Wetherell, 2012), gender research (Aboim, 2011; Reeser, 2010), or male sexuality (Anderson, 2012), the justification is derived from the rejection of essentialist models and the evidence of data, rather than articulation of the self or subject from a philosophical standpoint. But there is a definite shift identifiable in the literature of the psychosocial, away from earlier associations of the psychosocial with one or other school of psychoanalysis, as both methodology and explanatory framework (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000; Joanne Brown, 2006). The shift is towards a more radical philosophical reconsideration of the psychosocial (more broadly the social sciences) from a questioning and elimination of the essentialist foundations of the disciplines (Brown and Stenner, 2009) and research methods (Ringrose and Coleman, 2013; Jackson and Mazzei, 2009, 2011); all of this is conducted against a philosophical background of posthumanism, poststructuralism, postanthropomorphism, postanthropologism (Colebrook, 2005), culminating in the idea of “life beyond the self”: the posthuman (Braidotti, 2013). The reengagement of this branch of the social sciences with philosophy has implications for all others, of course, and is breathing new possibilities into research. All of these works are strongly inflected with Deleuzian metaphysics, which provides not a new foundation for the discipline, but a new approach to research. What Deleuze and Guattari offer, in what they insist is a practical philosophy, is a new way of experimenting with our understanding of the social and indeed of ourselves, guided by the ethology of affect. There is no deductive prescription of what ‘ought’ or what ‘must necessarily be’, but a process of questioning: ‘what does it do?’, ‘how does it function?’, ‘what are its conditions of production?’ It is at once a philosophy, an art in its practice and amenable to science through its stakes in materialism.

The borders between art, philosophy and science are labile; the fields permanently intersect. Creativity is what unites them even though they proceed in different ways to different functions (Deleuze, QQP, 1990). Lecercle (1985, p.113) says “With Deleuze you always start with philosophy and end in literature.” The point emphasises the difficulty in placing Deleuze and Guattari in the philosophical corpus. Philosophers, especially those of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, remain cautious in admitting them to their rank. Marx rejected philosophical speculation with an
analogy of a certain sexual practice: “the purpose is not to interpret the world but to change it” (Marx, 1845). By changing the practice of philosophy, by rejecting interpretation, Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari offer a potential new way of conducting qualitative psychosocial research. The method is not a pastiche of the hard sciences or a pseudo-scientific methodology, but a way of looking at the world, of being in the world and of engaging with it at a conceptual level, as well as in practice. All three forms—art, science and philosophy—should blend in a practice. A practice that is at once rigorous, not in a method derived from a scientific model, but from an ethic of practice involving critique and creativity, that is to say of testing out new connections between things.

Deleuzian philosophy, which is both concerned with the social fields and as expression of postmodernist thought, allows us to move from moral concern to ethical practice by the very affective ethology which lies at its heart. This is an important shift that allows us to avoid quarrels over the prescribed recipes for remedies of all ills that Marxism, psychoanalysis and feminism have so disagreed on. In the past moral authority has been invested in the theory: class conflict to eradicate inequality or in the power invested in the therapist (in his priestly functions, as Deleuze and Guattari (AO, 1972) argue). Going from the ‘is’ to the ‘ought’ has always been one of the traps for social theory and the giving of moral direction has been borne all too readily as social science’s burden. For instance, Bauman (2000), in his concluding paragraph, sends a spirited reminder to the sociologist of their moral mission to promote individual autonomy and freedom.
Section 2 Graphic narrative: theoretical frameworks

‘Comics’ or ‘comix’ or ‘commix’ (a neologism that some academics favour in order to emphasise the ‘mix’ of word and image) is a generic name for all Anglophone types of graphic narrative, be they children’s entertainment or bound books aimed at an adult market. ‘Bande dessinée’, referred to as ‘BD’ in the Francophone world, is the counterpart definition. ‘Roman graphique’ is creeping into the vocabulary to refer more specifically to a book length, book formatted and ‘auteur’ written/drawn publication, as opposed to the standardised album more associated with BD. Manga is the corresponding generic term for productions emanating from South East Asia. Originally denoting comics from Japan, in their various genres, the term is currently in use throughout South East Asia to denote comics produced in the region. Interesting developments are also emerging from Africa and fall into either BD or comics, depending on the inherited European tradition.

My own preferred use is to refer to ‘comics’ to denote cultural production in the English-speaking world; BD for those of continental Europe. I use ‘graphic narrative’ when referring to the production of short comic strips and short graphic stories and graphic novel for full-length texts, even when these, referring to the genre of autobiography, memory and confessions, may clash with the idea of a ‘novel’. ‘Autography’ and ‘auto fiction’ are terms preferred by other writers for this genre of comics. Debates around the nomenclature, as Chaney (2011, p.6) reminds us, serve to underscore the problem of the multiplicity of the authorial self in graphic texts and the problem of the veracity of the stories recounted, which blurs the distinction between autobiography and fiction. Ultimately, as Chris Murray (2011) puts it, the only difference between ‘comics’ and ‘graphic novel’ is one of format, length of narrative and quality of paper.

2.1 Autobiographies, memoirs and confessions: Their rise and place in the ‘comics’ corpus

“No one can fail to be aware that the exploration of inner lives has become the subject matter of contemporary comics.” (Groensteen, 2011, p.129)

Leaving aside the superhero, science fiction and children’s comics which still form the economic backbone of the comics industry, there has been over the last 30 years
a veritable explosion of genres that have emanated from within the medium of graphic narrative. The rapid expansion of the graphic novel ("faster than a speeding bullet", as Weiner (2003) humorously entitles his book on the subject), and more specifically the development of the autobiographical, memoir and confessional genre, often referred to as the "memoir boom publishing phenomenon" of the 1990s (Chaney, 2011, p.8). It seems there is no area of human endeavour or experience that has not been rendered in a comics form. The genre of greatest interest to this thesis is that of autobiography, memoir and confession. The reason being that it deals with the expression of subjectivities and articulation of the self. Quite what gave rise to this genre (let us simplify it to autobiography) is open to debate. The therapeutic culture’s encouragement to externalise trauma, pain, to ‘show and tell’ the miseries of the age, perhaps provides a receptive climate. As far as the specificities of the particular form of graphic narrative are concerned, El Refaie (2012) suggests that the longstanding cultural “marginality of comics” (a point to note in relation to Deleuze’s concept that all worthwhile art is ‘minoritarian’), together with the “more recent promise of greater legitimisation” (p.7), has enlivened the genre. Certainly that promise is forthcoming, if judged by rising academic interest and its accruing cultural capital.

While autobiography constitutes, in terms of market share, probably the smallest percentage, it receives proportionally the greatest amount of ‘high’ cultural recognition as measured by serious reviews and literary prizes (Bryan and Mary Talbot’s Costa prize, 2014) and academic attention (El Refaie, 2013; Chute, 2005). Increasing attention is also paid to the graphic narrative as an art form on par with its literary counterpart (Versaci, 2007). As a consequence of or in tandem with this, the art market has not been slow to exploit the commercial value of its productions. I will return to this point in relation to Chris Ware in Section 3.3.2.

More widely we can perhaps attribute the current success of the autobiographical form to several factors. First, it is part of an ever-dominant visual culture, which for Barthes and Simondon started with the plates of Diderot’s Encyclopédie; as semiology for Barthes and “The watershed moment” for Simondon: the instant in history
when “the civilisation of the word retreats and the civilisation of the image comes on the scene” (Zdebik, 2013, p.69). I return to the significance of this when considering the notion of the diagram in Deleuze in Section 3.2.3. Secondly, we can also see it as part of a broader ‘therapy culture’; the ‘show and tell’ narcissistic obsessions of a materially sated culture which manipulates our subjectivity as, say, Furedi might well argue; or a liberating form which allows individual pain and collective oppression to be articulated and through which the hitherto hidden is revealed, as feminist commentators argue (Chute, 2010; Miller, 2007). At a higher level of generality we can see it as an aspect of a democratic evolution of art, with political significance at its centre as part of a broader theory of culture, as Anne Sauvagnargues’ (2005) reading of Deleuze would point towards. All of these approaches deal in one way or another with the formulation of selves and therefore have something to interest the psychosocial researcher. To this must be added the rapidly changing technology. It is difficult to quantify internet publication of comics, growing exponentially as it is and with very probably a far greater readership than that of works published in book form. If technology is transforming the readership, it is also transforming the possibilities of narrative strategies and thus the relationship of the reader to the text will open up new areas of discussion on the relationship of technology and art, technology and the reader and its political implications. Making stories, nonlinear or interactive, and publishing them daily or weekly online makes for new experiences, and different affective engagements whose value and use time will determine. The impact of technology, the ease of self-publication, the access to markets via innumerable comics conventions etc., further blurs the distinction between amateur and professional. El Refaie’s (2012) study of the genre takes us through 85 graphic novels without distinguishing between amateurs and professionals. Making such categoric classifications, I argue, would be justifiable only in the context of economic analysis or as some sort of social distinction of value. Indeed, it is a question worth posing whether future qualitative psychosocial research using graphic narrative could rely exclusively on existing material on the internet or in publications of one form or another.
Part 1 Theory

2.2 Comics theory: Anglo-Saxon and European approaches

2.2.1 The Franco-Belgian tradition

Grove (2013 [2010]) analyses the production and economic value of the industry as a whole, and offers a study of BD as cultural phenomenon, that is to say the role that BD plays as a part of contemporary French culture. He notes (p. 220) that BD provides a challenge to Bourdieu’s distinction between high and low culture (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]). Miller focuses her historical account on BD as a medium beyond children’s entertainment, reaching an adult readership from the 1960s onwards. Her analysis of the history of the art form for the next 50 years is through a Bourdian lens. It is the history of the struggles between the major publishing house to dominate production and of the independents to gain symbolic capital through recognition as artists and their work as ‘art’. Miller (2007) teases out the various factions as they break away from the major publishing houses to produce more innovative work. Publishers such as l’Association and ‘research laboratories’ such as the Oubapo group (l’ouvroir de bande déssinée potentielle) aim to test and expand the boundaries of the comics form (Kuhlman, 2009, p. 78). The widely accepted historical layering of intellectual interest in comics on the continent starts in the 1960s with a nostalgic rediscovery of childhood books among intellectuals. Groensteen (2011, 1999), in his seminal work on ‘Bandes Dessiné’, already noted the successive ‘layers’ of critical interest, following Fresnault-Deruelle’s (1989) mapping of academic interest, further developed by both Grove (2013 [2010]) and Miller (2007): the nostalgic rediscovery of BD in the 1960s; socio-historical and philological interest as well as the influence of structuralism of the 1970s, to the age of semiotic and psychoanalytic analysis of the 1980s and culminating in Groensteen’s (1999) complete ‘system’.

In the Francophone world, studying the graphic narrative is an intellectual imperative, although not an academic discipline established in universities (Groensteen, 2009) in spite of the cultural respectability it enjoys. In part because it predates its Anglo-Saxon counterpart, Francophone formal analysis of comics (from semiology to semiotics) has been very influential in the Anglo-Saxon, and especially British, context. The one approach to comic studies which does not seem to have crossed the channel is the psychoanalytic tradition, other than arguably Fingeroth and Lee (2004).
2.2.2 The Anglophone context

The United Kingdom, on the other hand, while starting its academic considerations of comics later, has done so within the academic framework, even if the subject matter is only partially recognised and not fully embedded in academic programmes. In the context of the social sciences, academic interest in graphic narrative arises on the margins of a wider interest in ‘visual culture’, itself born from the expansion of ‘cultural studies’ and reconnecting to the social sciences in its nascent poststructuralist concerns to decentre the word. Yet compared to its companionate arts—cinema, video and photography—it is slow in gaining its share of attention. If European scholarship emerged some 20 years prior to its Anglo-Saxon counterpart, arguably it has set the linguistic and semiotic agenda which prevails in the Anglo-Saxon analysis of the formal properties of comics. Slowly at first, but with increasing rapidity, these continental texts have been translated and disseminated through the Anglophone academic community, largely through French departments (Miller, 2007; Grove, 2013) and almost in parallel with the developing interest of comics scholarship in the English-speaking academic world.

Comics criticism has now gone beyond its initially intellectual task to justify the presence of comics at the academic table, as in Heer and Worcester (2004), or arguing the merits of comics as literary form (Hatfield, 2005). A literary analysis of the medium’s various genres (Versaci, 2007) and critical readings of comics from various disciplines, ranging from librarianship to philosophy, via communication studies, education, anthropology and history (Smith and Duncan, 2012), have been conducted. In fact, it is hard to think of an aspect of graphic narrative that has not been analysed and of an analytical framework that has not been applied to its study. How comics could be used as a resource has been less well examined, other than perhaps as a form of educational engagement with children (Ganesh, 2011).

On the formal aspects of comics theory, Miodrag (2013), in her spirited introductory review of the state of the academic field, argues that the overemphasis on attempts to justify picture against word is impeding the development of a strong theoretical engagement. “Anxiety about the value of images leads critics into dubious theoretical
2.3 The formal resources of comics: Visual and verbal semiotics

Arguably still unmatched for its scale and ambition in defining the entire working of comics, Groensteen (1999) still looms large over the theoretical landscape on both sides of the Atlantic. Proceeding in a majestically Cartesian manner from the foundational premise of ‘iconic solidarity’ (the necessary relation between images in the production of a comic) and by gradual conceptual division to the ‘arthrology’ (the various levels of relations between images) and the ‘spacio-topic’ dimension (the spatial distribution and location of images), Groensteen’s system aims to provide a universal framework with which to analyse any form of comic according to its graphic constitution, narrative techniques and the ways in which comics are read. However, he does sound a note of caution against “the trap of dogmatism” and limits the claims of his “system” to its use as an “ideal type” rather than as an absolute (1999, p.25). Groensteen (2013 [2011]) broadens his theory and widens his discussed examples of comics to reflect the international dialoguing in comics theory.

In the Anglophone world, the variety of disciplines drawn into the critical debate is in counterpoint to the European fondness for over-arching systems. In other words, the Anglophone tradition is more about finding the roots of comics analysis in more ‘established’ disciplines. Decoding the problematic relationship between language and drawing remains of enduring importance, equivalent to the problem of structure and agency in the social sciences. Attempts have been made to transpose graphic narrative onto a linguistic grammatical model to find a resolution to the language-to-image conundrum. Cohn (2013) is a good example of overlaying (essentially Chomskian) generative grammar onto comics narrative to demonstrate that the same fundamental principles exist in both. He transposes tree diagrams of sentence and semantic structure to the composition of frames in graphic narrative in order to demonstrate that rules similar to those applicable to the organisation of language apply to the visual.
organisation of sequential images. In other words, he superimposes a grammar (rules of correct legibility, which in turn include and exclude certain combinations). The attempt remains unconvincing, not least because, contrary to language, drawings have no lexicon or minimal units such as the phoneme on which to build words and sentences. At the semantic level, Chomsky’s (1957) distinction between a grammatically well-formed and meaningful sentence and a grammatically well formed but semantically meaningless one was always a contentious point in his work on generative grammar. His example was: “colourless green ideas sleep furiously”, a well formed but semantically empty sentence which, with the passage of time, has perhaps acquired meaning; for example, arguably capturing the present government’s response to environmental concerns. Chomsky’s notion that grammaticality contained meaning betrayed a simple correspondence theory of the real which left out analogy, metaphor and social context in its quest for linguistic universals. Miodrag (2013) offers a more convincing approach to that relation by understanding language and drawing as separate semiotic systems which can interact and intersect to produce ever new possibilities of expression, but remain separate systems. That is a step which accords with a Deleuzian direction.

At this point it is worth considering Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006 [1996]) work, which remains a foundational text for making sense of images. Its subheading, ‘The Grammar of Visual Design’, already indicates the broad sweep of the theoretical position adopted. It contains some very interesting observations, ranging from children’s drawing skill development to the compositions of modern art, via advertising to conceptual (diagrammatic) representations, but regrettably very little on comics or graphic narrative. The foundational premises of its theoretical approach are precisely those considered by Chomsky, those which Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari reject, namely that visual semiotics work in the same way as language and that their purpose is to ‘represent’ and ‘communicate’. Where they agree is on the social nature of semiotic systems, but they draw different conclusions from that fact, given their diametrically opposed metaphysical premises, which centre around the notion of an ‘observing subject’ contemplating a ‘knowable external world’ (for Kress and Leeuwen) and the intersection of forces in a world of virtually
unlimited potentialities, only a few of which are actualised, and the residue of which ‘events’ define the subject (for Deleuze and Guattari).

Kress and van Leeuwen offer a reductivist approach, though they acknowledge in a postscript that their ‘grammar’ does not attempt to be a “fixed set of rules or a stable system” but a resource to “illustrate and demonstrate the semiotic principles which underlie and shape human social semiosis...” (p.266). This approach illustrates much of what is problematic both in comics theory and also in more mainstream psychosocial research. Namely the attempt at stitching together what we might term ‘postmodernist critical observations’ to foundational metaphysics and shoe-horning ill-fitting data to structuralist explanations for the sake of methodological respectability. This is where Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari have much to offer both, by providing an open system of thinking pushed to the limits of any enquiry by a philosophical approach which imposes neither explanations nor interpretation but instead progresses thought in the shared concerns of each. The reason to dwell on Kress and van Leeuwen is that they, in a sense, illustrate, at a more generalised level of visual theorising, where the fundamental theoretical differences between a Deleuzian approach and more standard approaches of visual and comics theory can be highlighted. They end their work with a paragraph on affect; in other words, where Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari begin their considerations on art, ethics and life. It is clear from that short paragraph and example that Kress and Leeuwen are in want of a theory of affect which they intuitively feel ought to be there. “We feel affect has been too thin a thread in the tapestry” and that affect is there “co-present” in all aspects of visual representation, from art to diagram. Yet they are unsure what to do with it because they understand affect as emotion and place it in binary opposition to reason. They admit they have no means of “interpreting it” without resorting to conflicting psychological or psychoanalytic interpretations (pp.267–8). Deleuze and Guattari offer a much broader account of the processes of creativity than Kress and Leeuwen's coding of visual cognition can offer. Comics theory may still be similarly restrained by structuralist aspirations.
2.4 Narratology, autobiography and the reader

The multiplicity of the self has been well argued in comics literature both in terms of postmodern expression and its inevitable presence in the graphic narrative form (Versaci, 2007; Chaney, 2011). Groensteen (2013 [2011]) has theorised it as follows. He sees two levels of production in the autobiographical comic: the structuring and the enunciation. The first puts the elements of the story together, whereas the second has to do with the role of the narrator. In autobiography the creator is at once author, narrator and character (p.98). In the enunciation aspect of the autobiographical story, Groensteen speaks of the ‘the actorialised narrator’ with two modes of expression: the verbal, through which the narrator becomes the ‘reciter’; and the ‘pictorial’, in which he/she becomes ‘the monstrator’, that is to say the ‘shower’, the one who ‘objectifies’ the story through graphic encoding (i.e through the use of colour, hatching, loose or geometric form, etc.). There is also what he terms a “regime of subjectivized objectivation: we (as readers) see the characters from the outside, but in the way they themselves see the world and project themselves into it” (p.130). The possibility of such acrobatic positioning of the narrator is what sets the graphic narrative apart from other autobiographical forms and makes comics “post modernist art form par excellence” (Murray, 2011). On the other hand, it problematises the notion of the conditions under which we might name a graphic narrative an autobiographical work.

Lejeune’s (1975) autobiographical pact based on the assumed identity of author, narrator and protagonist together with an implicit ‘truthfulness’ of the event told is undermined by the postmodernist notion of the self as a multiplicity. What is left to that autobiographical pact in the context of graphic narrative, when the linearity of events is replaced by time expressed not as chronology but as varying intensities, and where the author performs several functions and the accuracy of the accounts is at best problematic? Neither is an appeal to the authors themselves helpful. Phoebe Gloeckner (2011, p.179) is endlessly quotable on this subject: “I AM AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CARTOONIST. No I’m not”. Whether or not a work is conceived of as belonging to that particular genre, authors muddy the waters by
appealing to a universal validation. Thus Feiffer’s (1979) claims in the sleeve notes that it is not his story, but “everybody’s story” in spite of his freely revealed 18 years spent in psychoanalysis. Similarly, Joe Ollman (2011) sets matters straight from the onset in the preface: “This is largely a work of fiction, except where it isn’t. See the notes for even less clarification.” Obviously, no notes are included.

The key to what might be a new pact is not a contract of veracity or even authenticity, but a new pact with the reader: one based on affectivity. I return to this point in the section on affect (3.2), but to pre-empt the argument that will link Deleuze’s writing on affect to graphic narrative and psychosocial theory, I will take a brief look at the two other aspects of autobiography: memoir and confession.

The beginning of the confessional genre is generally attributed to Justin Green’s (2009 [1972]) Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary. It is his account of the sexual and religious anxieties (not to say terrors and compulsive disorder) of growing up. His contemporary Robert Crumb’s work is arguably also one of laying bare his inner feelings, fears and desires in the extreme, which has brought him praise and condemnation in turn. As Hatfield (2005) puts it, speaking of husband Robert and wife Aline “(they) have staked out the very frontiers of self-exposure... with a frankness and insistence that amount to a howl of despair” (p. 1). This describes both works and many more from both male and female authors. The notion of the “howl of despair” leads to a number of reflections about what is going on in the production of these works. It may seem, as Hatfield’s quote might suggest, a cry for help, and a use of graphic narrative as therapy, but while no one would dispute that graphic narrative self-expression may have a ‘therapeutic effect’, no one would agree that this its function. Gloeckner (Comics Grid) again: “Therapy is about cure. Art doesn’t seek a cure it is... much larger.” Just how much larger, when it fulfils the criteria for art, is what a reading by Deleuze on that subject can provide us with. Deleuze and Guattari provide a persuasive account of what art does, whatever its discipline, and how it connects with social life and politics. Graphic artists often evade the autobiographical label in favour of claiming to expose some universality of experience.
What is meant is not that the reader will have had the same or even similar experience (identity), or that his/her capacity for empathy will draw the work to them (see El Refaie, 2019, p.199), but rather that the artist has been able to ‘show feelings’ in new relations, articulating new combinations of the forces and flows of desire. Secondly, there is something about the graphic narrative itself which facilitates that expression; to use Rugg’s (2011) phrase, which I transpose from cinema, it is the possibility of “picturing oneself as another” (p.73). This is an interesting consideration for psychosocial research. While one may be somewhat reluctant to include photographs of oneself naked as part of a research project, a representation of oneself as a naked comics character in a graphic narrative would probably seem unobjectionable to most people. Thus the distortion (of self-representation) in comics drawing and the frequent leaning towards humour mask the ‘real’ in order to better reveal the ‘true’, as we shall see, the truth about the intersection of forces. Thus graphic narrative can provide a screen against the vulnerability of self-exposure, allowing potentially greater self-revelation of feeling and with it the possibility of a cathartic experience. This is, after all, much how drawing is used with children who have suffered trauma; it lies at the basis of art therapy. The reader must also understand the influences of the work and its relationship to other texts. Lastly, the reader brings his/her understanding, which provides yet another level of transformation, to the reading of the work.

The role of the reader in graphic narrative is one area of almost universal agreement in the literature surrounding comics. A distinguishing feature between cinema and graphic narrative is the relative passivity of the viewer in the first and the active engagement of the reader in the latter. The silence of the images, the spaces between the frames and the complex interrelation between word and image require the active participation of the reader (Groensteen, 1999, p.12). The imagination of the reader must complete the narrative, that is not simply fill in the gaps or leap across time and space in the diegesis. In a certain genre of comics, for instance comics for specific campaigns, say human rights, the “readers are the projected audience... and [are] enjoined to constitute themselves by virtue of their reading as subjects...
campaign]" (Smith, 2011, p.63). The role of the reader is further being altered by the developing modalities of the avant-garde or ‘art’ comic, which is considered in the section below. Before turning to this I offer a reflection on drawing itself, which appears strangely neglected in comics theory.
2.5 \textbf{The power of drawing and the purpose of art.}

“\textit{Why do life stories told in the pictorial form of the comics have the power to trigger in us such a range of emotional reactions so effectively...}” (Chaney, 2011, p. 7)

Section 3.3 below will explore reading comics from selected authors with the help of concepts from Deleuze and Guattari. Here, I concentrate on more general remarks about drawing itself, what it does and how it has been understood in varying disciplines over time.

There is a historically consistent sense about how the act of drawing affects the artist and how these affects, we could say, ‘perform’ the drawing and convey affects to the viewer. The discussion here is in a sense about style and its relation to affective engagement. Drawing can be considered from the point of view of style, and the style can be analysed in terms of aesthetics and various schools in different historical contexts. Drawing can be understood as a cultural activity carried out from prehistory to the present, its contemporaneous meanings more difficult to decode as time recedes. Perhaps it is the psychological disciplines which have paid the closest attention to drawing, from the suggestions of inkblots, to the production of ‘outsider art’. The most prolific considerations of drawing have probably emerged from psychoanalysis.

Johannes Fabricius’s (2006) work is an example of the analytical, interpretive tradition which began with Freud’s analysis of Leonardo da Vinci’s work. Fabricius continues the da Vinci theme by analysing Leonardo’s \textit{The Virgin and the Child}. A picture of a vulture is apparently embedded in the folds of the dress and a monster’s head in gestalt lurks in the foliage. The significance of these images lies in what they reveal about the painter’s unconscious. It is not always clear whether what is being analysed is the content of the painting or the artist’s unconscious. More problematic is the correlation of such ‘interpreted discoveries’ with already known biographical details of the artist. In this case, the fact that a vulture had once landed on the infant Leonardo’s cot.

In relation to comics treated psychoanalytically, the French psychoanalyst, comics scholar and graphic artist Tisseron (1985) fared better. With no biographical details then available, he deduced from the close reading of two of Hergé’s albums a hidden
family secret of illegitimacy, that of Hergé’s father. Only after Hergé’s death did biographical information emerge which confirmed the analysis. It is worth adding that Tisseron (2000 [1987], p. 138) himself warns against “stigmatising” the characters (in this case Hergé’s) with labels of depth psychology. This, he says, is an abuse of analytical powers to an uninformative end. Miller (2007) says, perhaps a little ungenerously, that Tisseron “got lucky” (p. 206). She goes on to illustrate the risks of venturing into psychoanalytic waters by considering four accounts of the character of Castafiore in Hergé’s *The Castafiore Emeralds*, by four commentators, each drawing on a different psychoanalytic approach from Freud to Lacan and each producing a different picture and meaning of the character. While the advantage of psychoanalyzing comics rather than a single painting is that with comics there is a range of pictures within a narrative that form a text rather than seeing images within images as is the case with more traditional psychoanalytic considerations of artworks. But comics have also played with psychoanalysis, and one work in particular seems to show the relationship between affect and the act of drawing.

What is most striking on first encountering Jules Feiffer’s (1979) pioneering graphic novel *Tantrum* is the drawing style; a sample of his work is discussed more fully in Section 3.3, but for now suffice it to say that it is a drawn journey of regression through psychoanalysis. But there is something in the production of that work that is also a regression of a different sort: a regression through drawing. Modell (1980 [1968] and Tisseron, (2000 [1987]) point to the act of drawing as a basic impulse, arguably encoded in our genetic and psychic makeup. In these psychoanalytic accounts, drawing, whether neolithic cave paintings or a child’s first scrawls on whatever is to hand, has the same function: drawing mirrors our psychic world. It predates writing and develops alongside language. Oscillating between the inner and outer worlds of the infant, it acts, in Winnicottian terms, as a ‘transitional object’, helping the child to structure reality (Modell, 1980/1968). Following along the same lines, Tisseron, in his *Psychanalyse de la bande dessinée* (2000, [1987]), suggests that the making of comics carries within it the residues of this psychic engagement and that this is at once its “legacy, its inner logic and secondary function” (p. 60, my translation). Further, that it relates to both the production of graphic storytelling and the reading of it (pp. 91–104).
The role of drawing, Tisseron tells us, is “to offer the viewer a clear and immediate perception, and its greatest asset is to make us believe that it emanates from an instantaneous conceptualization” (p.45). He quotes the poet Baudelaire, himself an admirer of the caricaturists of his day, who, reviewing the work of Daumier, said “the artist does not seek. It is as if the idea escapes from him” (p.45, my translation). Later, of another artist, Baudelaire states that the drawing appears from him “almost without having willed it” (p.50, my translation). Elsewhere in l’Art romantique (1869), Baudelaire describes the frenetic act of creativity of another artist and, with his exalted poetic sensibilities, links, more than half a century before the appearance of psychoanalysis, the creative process of drawing to the early wonderment and intensity of childhood. He concludes with the famous quote that “genius is nothing more than childhood rediscovered at will” (p.62). That is precisely the conclusion Feiffer offers us in Tantrum as the character Leo and his wife disappear into the “redemptive” (Lambert’s word (2008, p.57)) sunset with childlike innocence and enthusiasm. But it is also the “artistic turning point” (Gravett (2007), p.407) which the creation of Tantrum brought to Feiffer: part of the same process of rediscovery. Expressed in different words, at different historical times and from different theoretical perspectives, Baudelaire, Winnicott, Tisseron, seem to be expressing the same observation in relation to drawing. Indeed Deleuze (QQP, 1988) joins the ranks in referring to the creative intensity of drawing as a ‘délire’. This key notion is examined further in Section 3.2.3. What is interesting is that what is identified as releasing the creative drawing process is what we might term ‘heightened emotional states’, the ‘frenetic’ state as described, and that this leads back to a ‘primal function’ cutting through the layers of social conditioning to a pure intensity. And further that this state has some sort of correspondence to, or is a determiner of, a drawing style (not be confused with a style of drawing). Interestingly, Galman (2009), in the only piece of ‘psychosocial’ research I am aware of having used graphic narrative as such, makes an interesting reflection in the assessment of her research. She notes: “Getting adults to draw, a task deemed childlike, opens those individuals up to feelings of similarly childlike vulnerability: this side effect should be treated with care but is not without value” (p.203, my emphasis). But going a step further we can identify what makes up this “transitional object”, of the “residue of
this initial psychic engagement” which Tisseron (2000 [1987], p.58) identifies in comics and that “vulnerability” Galman witnessed in her participants, the fevered state of the artist at work, that Baudelaire observed and the quote from Deleuze which is much in the same vein. Drawing then has been understood to reveal hidden clues as to the content of the unconscious, more specifically in the graphic narrative form, to embed family secrets. In developmental terms, to function as a process of ordering the external world, an exciting activity which precedes concerns of representation. When translated to adulthood, it can recapture that early urgency of engagement, Baudelaire’s reflection, in a way that Deleuze describes as a form of délire.

The referent in all cases is that of affective states, not as specific emotion, which of course they might contain, but as states of embodied affectivity which find expression through the lines on paper. This, I suggest, is the key to understanding the production of graphic narrative and also relates to the engagement of the reader. It relates to style as creative expression, whether fervently executed in a short space of time, or meticulously labored on over the drawing board. Deleuze’s theory of affect can be brought in to better understand the motor force of graphic narrative and determine its function through the capture of forces (the function of art), forcing the creator to the edges of chaos. This is a process examined in Section 3.2.

2.6 The avant-garde

What must also be noted is that graphic narrative is an art on the march. Its boundaries are being pushed back in both subject and form; and the exponential growth in academic interest testifies to its increasing cultural importance. This is also the case with more recent, more challenging, texts, such as those of Chris Ware (2000, 2012) and Richard McGuire (2015), which are considered below. Strictly speaking they are not categorised as autobiographical; we have seen how permeable such categories can prove to be, but they cannot be ignored because their ‘language’ has so much in common with central concepts in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. The works of Ware and McGuire, to mention only the most widely recognised of the avant-garde,
require more than a passive investment on the part of the reader. In their very different ways these works provoke the reader into thinking, for instance, about the concepts of ‘time’ and ‘space’, about identity and continuity. These new works, in their ‘provoking’ function and their conceptual concerns, dovetail with postmodernist/poststructuralist and Deleuzian metaphysics.

The avant-garde of the comics world with artists such as Chris Ware and Richard McGuire is opening up new directions beyond the inner worlds of emotion and subjectivities in order to explore new possibilities for comics by dealing with the philosophical elements constitutive of subjectivity, such as space and time as intensities. Ball and Kuhlman’s (2010) edition of academic articles dedicated to the work of Chris Ware is subtitled Drawing is a Way of Thinking. The subtitle alone has a strong Deleuzian resonance, as do several of the articles which pick up on very Deleuzian-sounding themes such as that of the diagram, time and duration and the relationship to art. These are themes I return to in subsequent sections. Deleuze (1981, p.70), in his work on Bacon, elaborates on the inevitability of art’s move towards abstraction once the figurative and representational parameters of art have been questioned. In its various directions, abstract art offered new confrontations on the borders of chaos. There seems to be a similar logic at play with the avant-garde in comics. Both Ware and McGuire abandon many of the codes and conventions of graphic narrative expression and re-confront the narrative, both visual and textual, forcing the reader into a new relationship with the text and a new ‘reader’ experience.

Chris Ware’s Building Stories (2012) in that sense breaks new ground in storytelling by making it possible for the reader to ‘create’ a number of stories, yet the format of this work, presented as it is as a box set with a variety of pictorial elements, harks back to the age of board games rather than computers. An innovation that in a sense looks backward, while making a new assemblage of story as game. Chris Ware’s work represents the postmodernist avant-garde of the comics world. His obsessively hand-crafted geometric drawings, more akin to diagrams, set a new relationship of comics to the diagram; his elaborately complex mappings of space and his
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compression or stretching of time challenge the reader to invest “intense readerly labour”, as Isaac Cates (2010, p.90) puts it. McGuire (2015) will no doubt similarly attract scholarly interest in due course with his work *Here*, which dispenses with every narrative convention and what are termed the formal properties of comics—such as speech bubbles and gutters (the basic building blocks of the traditional comics form)—in order to present what can only be called a visual treatise on time: time as Chronos and time as Aeon (Deleuze’s categories), embedded one inside the other on the page with no borders or gutters (the usual markers of time lapses), time as nonlinear, embodying time measurable and immeasurable, clock time and time as duration. “Time itself is being painted” writes Deleuze (1981, p.33) in relation to Bacon. And time, in its speed and slowness, is also the shaper of forces, the dictator of form and of ourselves. With these two authors, comics enter a new area of intellectually challenging creativity.
Section 3 Common ground for engagement: A Deleuzian turn?

3.1 Why Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari?
As stated in the introduction, the three disciplines with a bearing on this thesis are art, social science and philosophy. Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari have much to say about art, philosophy and the dialogue between the two, as well as on social science. Together, Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari’s work forms a total system of metaphysics; a system to redraw metaphysics in line with contemporary science, “a science based on non linear theory sometimes referred to as complexity theory or dynamic systems theory” (Holland, 2013, p.16). The system draws on the sciences (geology, biology and chemistry), to argue a materialist position for a vitalist philosophy in which life (in its broadest sense) is in a permanent state of flux; and it sets itself the task of determining what resources we have to use in order to make sense of it. The aim is to account for this perpetual movement of all things rather than attempt to find epistemic foundations or a logic of necessity with which to underpin a system.

Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari put forward a philosophy which considers ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’, ‘immanence’ in opposition to ‘transcendence’. Such a philosophy, at first glance, seems well suited to accommodating the new fragmented or fluid ‘self’ described by the social theorists; a ‘self’ no longer unified or comfortably anchored in a humanist ontology. But this changing concept of the self also challenges the principles by which we can carry out empirical research. Deleuze and Guattari’s radical reconsideration of ontology and epistemology commits us by implication to reshape the methodology of any social inquiry. To put it another way, what sort of social science practice does their philosophy imply? What becomes of the notion of empirical research in the fields of the psychological and/or the social with a philosophy that centres on ‘becoming’ and the ‘immanence’ of life? What sort of empiricism is compatible with an epistemology that concentrates not on determining a reality of an external world of things but on the in-betweenness of their relation?

Deleuzian philosophy asserts multiplicity rather than singularity, stresses difference as opposed to identity and its considerations always begin in the middle (i.e. in
between and now) rather than through seeking foundational principles and essences. Rethinking is required at every stage when doing social research based on such a metaphysic.

The particular challenge for this project is to establish the connection between artistic production and a project of psychosocial research. Holland’s (2013) clear guide to Deleuze Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* provides an overall map of the philosophical problems tackled in that work. These, he states, are reducible to five types of problems, each with its own attendant questions: epistemological, ontological, anthropological, ethical and political. Inevitably, one must touch on all of these issues because they are interconnected, but the focus, for the purposes of constructing the argument, which will allow one to pass from aesthetic creativity to psychosocial research, will be the ‘anthropological’ and the ‘ethical’ typology of problems outlined by Holland. The first, among other concerns, deals with the social self-organisation of the human life form manifested through the symbolic order (the differentiating factor distinguishing the human from other forms of life), made up of sign systems which include language and images as the principal ones. The second, the ethical problems, deals with the problems of how to maximise the opportunities that open up and enhance life rather than those which close it down and diminish life’s potential (the Spinozist legacy). The third, less accounted for in Holland (2013) but well drawn out by Anne Sauvagnargues (2005), is the function of art, how art creates its productions and how these productions are to be understood ‘semiotically’ as sign systems, which do not refer back to language, together with their ethical and consequential political function.

The system is comprehensive and must be grasped as a totality if one is not to end up trading, so to speak, in differing intellectual currencies with no rates of exchange. Some key concepts, such as that of ‘assemblage’, of ‘becoming’ of the ‘molar’ and the ‘molecular’, are central to an understanding of this system with obvious implications for how we make sense of the social world and its organisation. Key concepts will be explained as and when met within the text.
The justification for the use of Deleuze and Guattari’s work lies firstly in the range of material it covers, in the breadth of its philosophical considerations, which encompass all of human activity and organisation, and stretches them throughout existence itself. Secondly, it is an open system in that it has no foundational theory or teleology. As Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly stress, it is about thinking with the world rather than about the world. It is a relational philosophy which looks at the connections forever made and remade between the things that make up life in its broadest sense. Intellectually it detaches itself from the anchoring of the Cartesian ‘cogito’ and the consequential separation of mind and body; of deductive reasoning from essentialist notions and from binary categories. Instead it stresses the primacy of affect as an ethology based on desire as the primary life force. It frees us also from the confines of language, which have dominated much of postmodernist social thinking. It is also an ethic, a philosophy of creativity and potential, a practical philosophy closely linked to that of Spinoza from which central elements, such as the theory of affect, are drawn.

These points are developed in the sections below. In short, Deleuze and Guattari help circumscribe what relevant empirical questions might be in social research through an engagement with the shared problems of each. If that constitutes a new way of doing social research, it is also a new way of doing philosophy.

In their last joint work *What is Philosophy* (1990), essentially a work of recapitulation and clarification of their entire philosophical programme, Deleuze and Guattari clearly separate out the varying functions of philosophy, art and science. Philosophers, scientists and artists all have to confront chaos, that is to say life in its pre-organisational state. They must, as Deleuze and Guattari (QQP, p. 168) graphically put it, “tear open the protective umbrella of received opinion” and plunge into chaos. What each brings back from that encounter, however, is different. The differing functions of the three disciplines and their interplay is at the centre of this thesis. How can connections be made between the three functions that would allow art to be useful to social science, and, correspondingly, art to science and philosophy to both? In more
Deleuzian language and method, we need to ‘plug in’ each discipline into others and experiment. Affect, I suggest, might be the connecting lead. But affects as such are nondiscursive, so how language works and what it does must also be understood. Graphic narrative is (often) a hybrid of text and image so the semiotic of the image must also be accounted for and its relation to language understood.
**3.2 Affect and art: Language, diagrams, délire and creativity.**

### 3.2.1 Affect and affect’s relation to art

Distinctions are important in the potentially confusing language surrounding affect. Deleuze’s (1968, 1981) work on affect is derived from Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza. Spinoza distinguishes between ‘affectio’, translated as ‘affection’, and ‘affectus’, translated as ‘affect’, in accounting for how bodies affect and are affected in an encounter. Bodies are materially changed, resulting in an increase or decrease of that body’s power to act in mind and body (mind and body being two aspects of the same substance). This in turn becomes, in Spinoza’s language, ‘joy’ or ‘sadness’, whether it is an augmentation or a diminution of life’s possibilities. Following Deleuze’s (SP, 1981, p. 48) account, affections refers to “the modes of [a] substance or its attributes”. Affection designates the modifications of the mode, that is to say the what changes or the effect that one body has on the other and the images/ideas we have of these encountering bodies.

The affections imply the ideas and images we have of their external cause and as such they are ‘inadequate ideas’. Inadequate in the sense that we do not understand their real causes. Deleuze sums up the significance: these ideas are traces or signs which are neither expressive nor explanatory, but instead signal the presence of the affecting body for the time the body remains affected. Furthermore, these ideas are based on memory or habit. They are ‘imaginations’ because of their mixed and compound natures and ‘inadequate’ in Spinoza’s terms, because they do not grasp the true nature of the external body which affects them, nor its true cause, which of course is God.

Affect differs from affections in that, whereas affections refers to states and ideas/images of those states, affect refers to the passage between those states. They are “durations through which we pass to greater or lesser perfection. These continual durations or variations of perfection are called ‘affects’ or feelings (affectus)” (SPP, pp. 48–9). What they express is what we might term the differential degree of augmentation or diminution that the affections bring about. Affects in this sense are powers: intensities of ‘joy’ or ‘sadness’, depending on the effect of the composition of the encountering bodies. Crucially and at the heart of the distinction of affection and affect is that the affect follows the ‘image’ or ‘idea’ of the affection. It follows...
that when the encounter is with “other modes of existence”, i.e. external to us, the idea attached to the affection is necessarily inadequate and the affect will be termed a passion irrespective of whether it is directed towards joy or sadness. While with ‘joy’ the power capacity will be increased, the (some)body will remain passive until by incremental degree of correct reasoning he is able to “conceive of himself and his actions adequately” (SP, p.50).

Affects are feelings in the widest sense, encompassing the intensities of sensations such as light or heat as well as intensities of emotions, which are also made up of ‘inadequate ideas’ that must be properly reconstructed through an understanding of their true cause. But there are varying interpretations. For instance, Brian Massumi’s (1987) (heroic) translation of *A Thousand Plateaus* opens with notes on the translation of certain concepts. The first of these is affect/affection, acknowledged as corresponding to Spinoza’s affectus/affection, and Massumi states “Neither word denotes a personal feeling.” (p.xvii) While strictly true, this gives the impression that feelings and emotion have nothing to do with affect, despite affect encompassing emotions as productions of intensities as well as other sensations.

One further point that remains to be stressed, which is central to Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking as well as to much poststructuralist thinking, is that for Spinoza, unlike for Descartes, the adequacy of ideas is not found in “psychological consciousness” but in a logical power that surpasses consciousness and that “the material of the idea is not sought in a representative content, but in an expressive content, an epistemological material through which the idea refers to other ideas and (eventually for Spinoza, I add) to the idea of God” (SPP, pp.73–5). The progression from inadequate ideas to adequate ideas through the powers of (deductive) reasoning is the liberationist programme of Spinozist thought, which in Deleuze equates to the “becoming invisible”, Deleuze’s “cosmic formula”, as Holland (2013, p.110) quotes it from Deleuze.

Art proceeds by ‘blocs of sensation’ composed of affects and percepts. A work of art is independent of its creator. The work created preserves in itself the forces captured
therein: “a work of art exists in itself” (QQP, 1991, p.163). The material of which the work is made is inextricably bound with the sensation(s) it captures. The purpose of art, already mentioned, is to “wrench” percepts from perception—that is from the state of perceived objects and those of the perceiving subject—and affects from affections to achieve a transition from one state to another. Memory, “even in Proust and especially in Proust”, Deleuze and Guattari tell us provocatively (QQP, p.167), has nothing to do with artistic creation. What is needed instead is a complex assemblage of materials, “not found in memory, but in words, in sounds” (p.168). For Deleuze, the sensations enter the artist’s material as they are worked and become autonomous blocs of sensation which are no longer dependent on their creator: “the revealer disappears in what he reveals” (p. 184). That is the point at which a work of art “stands on its own”, which is the real challenge of art and its power. So it is not a matter of the artist’s perception or of their lived emotional experiences but of going beyond them to something more abstract. It is not a matter of ‘representation’, but of entering the zone of indiscernibility, where categories—animal, human, mineral—blur and where true art resides.

The artist creates beings of sensations by confronting percepts and affects, thus entering into their composition. “All is ‘becoming” says Deleuze; it is a matter of ‘becoming’ by contemplating. Percepts as parts of nature containing but devoid of the human. He quotes Cézanne’s paradoxical statement: “man as absent, but totally in the landscape”. It’s all a matter of vibrations of connections of molecular interaction of forces outside ourselves. “Affects are precisely these non-human becomings of man as percepts are the non-human landscapes of nature” (p.169). Deleuze gives as an example Proust’s Combray, a Combray that never was but nor was a product of Proust’s imagination, but of Combray as abstract from nature.

Anna Hickey-Moody (2013) seizes the Spinozist account of affects, which she augments with Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of the function of art. From this she develops a method of research which she terms “affective pedagogy” (p. 79). All art potentially creates affects, that is to say transformations which result from the encounter with the work of art. This has several consequences. Firstly, the change
brought about by the affect is material and embodied and is therefore in some way measurable. The passage from one state to the next has political implications both in terms of what art can do but also in terms of multiple effectivity at the level of communities. Art has a political dimension in its potential to transform by creating “new aesthetic milieus... and makes new geographies of meaning” (p.93). As Sauvagnargues (2005) puts it, “the effects of art determine its double social function that of social production and revolutionary agent” and the artist is thus for Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari “the physician of civilisation” (p. 31).

Affective pedagogy states that Hickey-Moody is at once a political agenda, a research method and its own ethic (given its Spinozist and Deleuzian metaphysical base), which challenges current methods of research in the humanities and the social sciences. We learn from art, we change with art by the way we are affected, and social research can draw rich benefits from mapping those affective changes. However, it must also be mindful of its own affects in the processes of research. This is a persuasive approach which offers much potential for the study of graphic narrative in the context of psychosocial research. This is particularly so in the context of the autobiographical and memoir genre, where the avowed aim from creators of comics and academic critics alike is to convey the how-it-feels of a particular account. “The ‘act’ of a work of art is not memory but story-telling (fabulation)” (“L’acte du monument n’est pas la mémoire mais la fabulation”, (D&G, 1991, QQP, p.168)), the ‘complex material’ of which it is made is, in this case, I would argue, found in drawing.

There is always the vexed question in comics scholarship from the literary perspective about the authenticity and authentication of autobiographical accounts (El Refaie, 2012; Chaney, 2011). This verification process seems important to some in order to determine the proper criteria for autobiography. The creators of such works often stress that what is important is to convey the ‘feelings to the reader’ by reaching a ‘universality’ in the core of the experience. The language of ‘universality’ and ‘recognition of feeling’ refers back to a conceptual language of humanist and foundationalist philosophies, and in turn testifies to the current state of language’s general philosophical content in expressing these matters. In Deleuzian terms,
what it expresses is a reaching by the creator of something beyond the creator and
his/her experience or psychic make-up. Somethings as Deleuze says that is bigger
‘than’, that overwhelms the artist, a reaching for the very forces (puissances) that
shape life, the seizing of which are the purpose of art. Phoebe Gloeckner (2011),
who is at once artist, autobiographical graphic novelist and academic, puts it thus:
“The creation is not the creator” (p.178) and again “I am not writing about myself. I
am delivering myself of myself” (p.179). In these words we can read the Deleuzian
potential of the creative act in establishing ‘lines of flight’ from the vectors of strati-
fication that define us in the social order, in short to escape social codings and cap-
ture the possibilities of making new assemblages to express the unexpressed, to
reveal the in-betweeness of social relations, creating new affects and new under-
standings and indeed new politics. It also expresses that creation is more than the
artist by detaching the artist from her creation. All creativity going beyond an
established order is as such a délire, as is considered in Section 3.2.3.

3.2.2 The problem of language

If percepts and affects are the language of art, we need to consider the relationship
of art and language (more precisely to systems of signs) and their relationship to the
notion of the diagram, which enables the construction of thought and the connec-
tion of thought to meaning.

There are two central ideas in Deleuze and Guattari which touch immediately on
art and language, yet neither is treated separately in the corpus. They are the
notions of délire and that of the diagram. I draw on the two works which have
extracted and explored these concepts—the first by Lecercle (1985) on délire and
the second by Zdebik (2012) on the diagram—and they are examined in the sections
that follow. But this section begins with a short exposé of Deleuze and Guattari’s
account of language, which will be central to the examination of the graphic nar-
rative as a semiotic system.

Deleuze and Guattari are the iconoclasts of language theory that separates language
from its social contexts and of language understood as a determiner of meaning and
reality. In the fourth plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus*, they set about a radical critique of the pillars of such linguistic theory: 1) that language is primarily about communication; 2) that language can be abstracted from context; 3) that language is a homogeneous system based on universals; and 4) that linguistics studies ‘standard’ languages. In short, they critique the notion of language understood as an independent entity that can be studied separately from its social context, as Chomsky’s ‘standard’ language or Saussure’s notion of ‘langue’ imply. For Deleuze and Guattari, there is no such separation between language and its social context, “nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, slangs and specialised languages” (D&G, TP, p.8). There is only ‘use’, and that ‘use’ is a matter of reciprocal presupposition between use and meaning. Language is a matter of ‘collective enunciation’, only intelligible through context and its proper consideration. It is therefore a matter of ‘pragmatics’, of understanding how language is used. The implication is that there is no such thing as a ‘typical’ speaker, on which Chomskian linguistics relies for its data information. As Sauvagnargues (2005, p.147) notes, “only as a theoretical construct does this dominant figure exist and primarily as a social marker of power”. Language is one semiotic system among several and art relies on a system of signs not reducible to language. The ‘real’ lies beyond language; as Patton (2000, p.22) puts it, “language (for Deleuze) is a means of intervention *in* rather than a representation *of* the world”.

There is, however, in Deleuze and Guattari a difference between a ‘major’ and ‘minor’ language. Not in the sense that Chomsky intends—as a standard language from which minor languages are deviations, with overtones of impoverishment (such as patois, dialects: the expression ‘non-standard’ sums up the position)—but in the political distinction between majoritarian and minoritarian, reflected in language. He brings to bear this distinction in his writing on literature, notably in relation to the work of Kafka.

“‘Major’ and ‘minor’ do not qualify two different languages but rather two usages or functions of language” (D&G, TP, p.115). Nor is it a matter of the number of speakers. The minoritarian is a use of language in response to the immobilisation of the
majoritarian language, that is to say to its domination of interpretative codes. This has various ramifications. In science it leads to the distinction between royal science and nomadic science; royal science being understood as the received opinion of established scientific institutions. Deleuze and Guattari, drawing on Foucault (1979), stress the examples of the workings of institutional medicine and psychiatry. They link psychoanalysis to the interests of capitalism through the former’s neglect of the social dimension and its consequent reduction of symptoms to a family drama. This forms the core of the arguments in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983 [1972]).

Implicit in this distinction between ‘major’ and ‘minor’ is also the distinction of two notions of power that accompany language in its function. That of power (puissance) as the potentialities of affect in the ethology; and power (pouvoir) as subjectivation through the social order. Power (pouvoir) is embedded in the grammar. This is what Deleuze and Guattari term, with characteristic provocation, the “order-word” (MP, p. 120). Language ‘commands’ in the double sense of the linguistic and political word ‘order’. Language in that sense operates power. Grammatical rules are rules of power; they impose categories such as “masculine-feminine, singular-plural, noun-verb” (D&G, TP, p. 84). Power (pouvoir) has no centre, Sauvagnargues (2005, p. 148) notes “it is operational” and we can add it operates through language as one among several semiotic systems.

Art as a system of signs serves political power in its ‘paranoid’ modes of thinking (as opposed to the ‘schizoid’ modes of thinking) when it repeats the social articulations of power rather than confronting them. As such, it becomes the expression of the ‘fascistic’ closing down of possibilities; the diminution of life in terms of the ethology. Language through the ‘order-word’—expressed grammatically through the use of free indirect discourse, the use of ‘one’, ‘they’ ‘it is said that...’ as well as directly through its commands—shapes received opinion and enforces social conformity while resisting personal attribution. Holland (2013, p. 78) notes that “we don’t speak language, language speaks us” was already a precept of structuralism (and one which I return to with Lecercle (1985) in the next section on délire). What Deleuze and Guattari reject is the separation of language from its wider social
context of utterance. Languages are “collective assemblages of enunciation” which form the specificities of language occurrence; the “fundamental instances of language” are time and context bound. Put another way, what is proposed by Deleuze and Guattari is a conception of language of much wider scope than that which linguistics offers by attempting to isolate variables in order to elaborate on fundamental and universal rules as a scientific enterprise. Collective assemblages of enunciation are at once “syntactic, phonological, social, political, material and concrete” (Sauvagnargues, 2005, p.153). There is no such thing as individual statements in that view. Individual statements are derived from a particular position within the collective assemblage of enunciation. Their efficacy lies in the redundancy through resonance and repetition (Holland, 2013). What this means is that collective enunciations define the everyday through a process of repetition and resonance which forms the basis of signification.

Language “ensigns” and teaches by order-words (in French the two notions intertwine “ensigne” and “enseigne”) (Sauvagnargues, 2005, p.152) and this process of coding value occurs at the unconscious level. As a matter of effect, collective enunciations perform ‘incorporeal transformations’ and here Deleuze and Guattari again draw on Foucault, the judge’s pronouncement of guilty or innocent, as an example of incorporeal transformation with corporeal implications for the thus subjectified subject (a life of freedom or incarceration). Such then is the functioning ‘operational’ power of the majoritarian language, to define and subjectify in reciprocal presupposition between discourse and effect. If language as collective enunciations forms the ‘doxa’, the opinion of the everyday, if it subjectifies and encodes signification, what is the possible escape from this linguistic determinism? The answer lies, of course, in the ethology of the forces of desire considered above in relation to affect. Language as everything else is in a process of continual variation. The force of power (i.e. political power) seeks to extract ‘constants’ from the variations, that is to move towards homogeneity, to territorialise signification through order-words; the ‘powers of becoming’ create a counterflow, seeking to deterritorialise bodies from the same state of affairs. The permanent variations of language, to put it in simple terms, mean that the rules are permanently undermined, altered.
and changed, and this provides the countercurrent to the territorialisation of the majoritarian language. The result is paradoxical. Deleuze expresses it thus: “Continuous variations constitutes the becoming-minoritarian of everybody as opposed to the majoritarian Fact of Nobody” (D&G, TP, p.118).

Deleuze and Guattari explain the tension between the two forces. They tell us that order-words carry a "death sentence" (D&G, TP; p.118). What is meant by death in this context varies by degree. The example given is that of the order of a father to his son “You will do this...” with the resulting death being what one might term ‘crushed spirit’ in ordinary language, compared to the order of a firing squad. The point, the argument concludes, “was not to elude the order-word but the death sentence that envelops it, how to develop its power of escape, how to prevent escape from veering into the imaginary or falling into a black hole - how to draw the revolutionary potential of the order-word” (TP, p.120).

In term of the ethic of liberation, the object is to transform a situation by drawing something from it to form into a new event that will augment rather than diminish potential. That transformation, however, is neither automatic nor is it free from danger, as it can take us equally to either of the two modes of thought: the creative lines of flight of schizoid thought or the fascistic regression of paranoid thought. Liberation is risky business and Deleuze and Guattari in their later works warn against the dangers of an all too hasty 'destratification'. The fourth plateau ends with the answer to which there is no question: “In the order-word life must answer the order of death, not by fleeing, but by making flight act...” We must find the passwords beneath the order-words “to transform the composition of order into components of passage” (TP, p.122)

If the permanent variations of language allow everyone a degree of becoming minoritarian, i.e. to subvert the possessions of language, it falls to art and literature in particular to fully exploit the possibilities of language through the creation of minoritarian ones. Minoritarian language refers to how language is put to use by distortion, stressing it to its limits: “making language stammer”, “masterpieces are
written in a kind of foreign language” (D&G, TP quoting Proust, p.105; CC, p.1, QQP). A foreign language, not as an external import from another culture, but as an internal re-working of language which pushes it to the limits of grammaticality. Deleuze and Guattari liken it to a sort of sculpting with its rules and variables. A subtractive process which refashions language to minor use by undermining the power elements of its majoritarian state. This creative refashioning has several
implications. It constitutes style. Style, say Deleuze and Guattari, “is nothing more than the procedure of a continuous variation... it is an assemblage of enunciation” (TP, p. 108). An assemblage of collective enunciation with “a triple linguistic, stylistic and political determination”. In Kafka, Sauvagnargues further explains, “the newness of style is at one with the unchartered exploration of the social fabric.” The writer renders the manner in which he is affected (for Kafka, it is the bureaucracy and the relations of power), confirming the becoming of “literature as a physics of affects and thus social ethology” (Sauvagnargues, 2005, p. 159).

Inevitably, one returns to the function of art. Sauvagnargues (2005, p. 53) draws it out in Deleuze as being one of bringing about transitions. The writer is a reader of symptoms, less caught up in social meanings and judgements, which allows him/her to express the unexpressed and the inexpressible. It allows him or her to make sense of the social world by presenting a tableau of its values (relational as well as moral) and to do so by experimentation rather than interpretation. But experimentation is also a hazardous enterprise. The artist as well as the philosopher are brought to the edges of chaos. The point at which we must explore the process of artistic creation, which stretches language (and I shall argue other codes of signs) to the limit.

3.2.3  Déliire: The edges of creativity and madness

For Deleuze, sensations, the affects and percepts of art, are direct and unmediated through language. Producing blocs of sensation is what Cézanne and Bacon achieve with paint (Deleuze, LS, 1981). They literally paint sensation, the sensations as the interacting forces enmeshed in the materials of the creative artist, making possible qualitative experience (the affecting event) apprehensible other than through language. These painters produce affects and percepts from the forces acting beyond language. Whether the artistic medium is painting, music, literature or cinema, the effect of art is the same: that of provoking thought. But the work of literature and the painting will follow different logics. Sauvagnargues (2005, p. 34) notes the progression of Deleuze’s approach to art “gradually moving from language to the materiality of perception”. Art as the capture of forces is Deleuze’s unifying theory of art and the result of that capture of forces is the production of new images of their
relation. Images, not as products of the imagination nor as copies or representations of the world or as clichés of opinion, but as “modalities of matter” (p.37), as something that affects. It is the Bergsonian image of the movement of matter, made up of the speed and slowness and variations of power (puissance) (Sauvagnargues, p.37). The image as such is not an utterance and is to be understood not through an interpretation of coded meanings, which would refer it back to language, but through the power (here as puissance) of the ideas it produces. This is thought as provoked through sensation, which operates on its own logic of sensibilities independent of language. The circle is complete in linking ‘thought’ back to ‘affect’. Zourabichvili (2012 [1994] p.71) re-runs the argument: we do not think without being sensitive to something; thought begins with difference; “something distinguishes itself” and affects us. Thought will never be engendered into thinking if the latter is not first affected. To encounter the outside is always to be forced. An encounter is an affect. Affects are forces. Forces are the outside of thought. Thinking consists of the emergence of sense as a force. Forces are affect (pp.71–72). Thus we follow Deleuze in his intellectual progression, which “moves seamlessly from the logic of sense to the logic of sensation” (Sauvagnargues, p.35).

This separation of semiotic systems from matters of language is what so troubled Groensteen (1999) in his account of graphic narrative when tackling Deleuze. And it seems that many theoretical attempts in comics theory which draw on semiotics in order to understand the relationship between language and image (understood as pictorial representation) are limited—both in their understanding of comics and of art in general—by their inability to go beyond the assumption of an underlying unity. Cohn (2013), Miodrag (2013), Kress and van Leeuwen (2013 [1999]) and Duncan and Smith (2012) all carry the philosophical assumption of a self-expressing and external world.

Forces have been mentioned repeatedly, so more must be said about how they relate to language and to the artistic enterprise. For Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, the forces belong to the world of physics. Molecules or sub-molecular particles are made to vibrate; they are activated by the forces of desire (in the sense of the Spinozist conatus).
Forces materially interacting, material to material or material to body or body with body to the augmentation or diminution of the body’s power (puissance, potentia in Spinoza). Desire—for Deleuze and Guattari, following Spinoza—is the animating force of life which includes desire as libidinal energy but is not limited to it. Creativity, in psychoanalytic terms, is the consequence of sublimation, displaced libidinal energy being channelled into the creative endeavour; in Deleuze and Guattari the forces of desire working through the event, the process of which determines the individuation and is the result of the process of differentiation. This returns one to the notions of the molar as a social organisational mode and the molecular as the individual expression, which is further considered in Part 2 of Section 2.1. At the level of language this translates to the determining subjectivation of the rules of language and the possibility of subverting them by play or error, potentially leading to creativity or madness: operating as lines of flight to hopefully new territories. The passage from one to the next involves travelling the borderlands of délire.

Creativity, including that of science, is not born from reasoned reflexivity, but from the intersection of desire and délire. “Délire is the manifestation of desire” (Lecercle, 1985, p.165). The difference between the creative success of entering délire and getting lost in it, is the account of the ordering of affects. Language as a social production expresses the symbolic order, which in turn determines the ‘subject’ by coding significance and by determining that language as such has boundaries constituted by rules: rules as grammar, which desire, as life force, pushes to breach as the expression of singularity. Délire is at that crossing point. Simply, the social control/channelling/signification of desire is coded in language and its individual expression involves a move away from that ‘territorialisation’, so that, as Lecercle (1985, p.192) puts it, “délire becomes constitutive of language”.

In Deleuze and Guattari, as we have seen, the battle of the counterflow of forces is between the forces of social order embedded linguistically in the order-word and what is termed in Thousand Plateaus the war-machine, the machine of resistance to state/language territorialisation. The creative act in Deleuze and Guattari resides not in the psyche of an individual but in the apprehension of as-yet unarticulated
relational forces in the social domain. In order for these to become articulated, the artist has to go beyond the established meanings that the social/linguistic order affords (i.e. opinion and representation) and through new fashionings, new assemblages, yield the percepts and affects. These are the blocs of sensation that constitute art. At the semiotic level, these assemblages constitute new semiotic chains, new relations between signs and new meanings.

“Délires is at the borders between madness and good sense”, Lecercle (1985, p.6) tells us. That is to say it rests between conventional understanding and the chaos of the beyond. Lecercle examines délires in relation to literature, philosophy, language and psychoanalysis. Lecercle (1985) is an early commentator on Deleuze and Guattari, using their work to further map and illustrate the extent and importance of délires as his own philosophical concern, but his fascinating book remains within the confines of language. Sauvagnargues (2005), with a retrospective on the entire body of work, extracts the importance of the social and political function of art within a wider theory of culture. She also demonstrates the progression of Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking from an almost exclusive concern with literature, broadening the scope to permit a wider application to all forms of art. It is as part of this wider approach that I include graphic narrative as having the possibility of offering new meanings through their own journey through délires, as I hope to show with the examples in the next section.

“At the heart of language there is a deficiency, an exiguity, there are fewer words than there are things waiting to be named. Reality is always in excess of language.” (Lecercle, 1985, p.37)

Lecercle teases out the role délires plays in Deleuze’s system and how it is manifested at the edges of language, how it is at once “the manifestation of desire” operating at the “edges of language and madness” (p.37). The paradox of language is that grammar has rules and rules imply exclusion in the sense that this or that can or cannot be said; on the other hand, “there is nothing that cannot be said, providing one is prepared to break the rules” (p.65). The breaking of the rules is entering the realm of déliere. It can lead to creativity or madness.
Miodrag (2013) draws on Lecercle’s (1985) work on the concept of délire in order to analyse the linguistic play in Herriman’s comic strips *Krazy Kat*. However, I want to argue that Lecercle’s notion of délire covers a much wider field than just that of language play alone. Relevant to this project, I want to argue that much of Lecercle’s analysis of délire can be transposed to an analysis of drawing. Further, I will argue that this transposition can serve as the basis for analysing comics in a way which goes beyond attempts to set up structural accounts based on linguistic models (Cohn, 2013; Miodrag, 2013) or more general semiotic accounts, as set out, for example, by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006 [1996]).

First, the word délire translates poorly; ‘delirium’ is simply too medical or psychiatric. Lecercle tells us in the introduction that he can find no satisfactory translation. Délire straddles many fields and seizes different purposes. The scientist, no less than the poet and the madman, experiences its possession. It is a liminal state operating at the boundaries of any set of rules pertaining to any endeavour. The mania in a line of research, the playful edge of sense/nonsense in language, the delirium of the insane: délire is the aspect they have in common. Lecercle uses the notion “as a form of discourse” which “questions language and philosophy” (p.6). He considers délire in four fields—literature, linguistics, philosophy and psychoanalysis—and finally what lies ‘beyond” délire.

This is the circular journey of délire; the completion of a circle, which is precisely what distinguishes délire from nonsense. Lecercle considers a poem by Lewis Carroll from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and takes us through the six stages of progress through délire which together constitute, through nonsense, the mythical resolution of the central paradox of language mentioned above. The positioning of the subject/author in relation to language is derived from the link he has established between psychoanalysis and language. 1) Language speaks, it is independent, it has no authorship. 2) Language speaks through me. Language as possessor. 3) Language speaks to me. The interpolation of the subject (or, I add, the reader). 4) My speech is empty. I am in a state of possession by language. The resolution of this stage “is to become a linguist” (p.78), that is to make language the object of my speech. Therefore 5) I speak about language. 6) I speak through language, thus
demonstrating its mastery. This is the resolution and the dividing marker between those who successfully play with/at the frontiers of language and those who remain caught up in one or more of the stages without reaching the resolution. This is the distinction between the délire of creativity and the délire of madness.

Lecercle analyses the literary works of four persons afflicted by mental illness—Artaud, Rousel, Brisset and Wolfson (authors who Deleuze and Guattari also consider)—and he demonstrates how the proliferation of meanings produced by crossing the boundaries of language rules—be they phonic, lexical, syntactic or semantic—remain stuck in ever-more production. This is opposed to the cautious and controlled work of, say, Lewis Carroll. But all of these are works of literary production, concerned exclusively with language. Artaud also produced drawings, of course, and there is a considerable body of work produced by people suffering from varying degrees and causes of mental illness, known collectively as outsider art.

Roger Cardinal’s (1972) Outsider Art is the pioneer work which gives a historical overview for the Western context. More recent exhibitions testify to the increasing interest in this field. ‘Souzou: Outsider Art from Japan’ (Wellcome Collection, 2013) offered fascinating examples in painting, drawing, ceramics, weaving, sculpture from a non-Western culture. Of particular relevance are works made up of diaries, letters and maps. These works, the catalogue explains, “bypass linguistic convention to empowering effects”. Colour or hieroglyphs replace words and offer an escape from language, allowing the artists to reach beyond it to give an outlet to channels of ordinary communications which remain blocked. The ‘hyper detailing’ of maps, or notebooks with every part of the page covered in obsessive private calculations—an ordering and reordering of the world to make sense of their environment’s challenges—all fit in with Lecercle’s account of the functioning of délire.

What is different between the Japanese approach and the Western approach to outsider art is that the former has placed its creators in a “public health and education context” (Souzou exhibition guide) as opposed to the Western model, in which outsider artists are placed in the psychiatric context. The first is about social
integration through education and skill development, the second is about causal explanatory frameworks which might enable some form of ‘cure’. There is at least one example which traces the reverse journey: that of the descent into madness. This relates specifically to comics. Charles Crumb, the brother of Robert Crumb, was also a comics artist. Mental health difficulties gradually invaded his comics. The documentary about Robert Crumb (Crumb, 1994) details a progressive loss of ‘mastery’ of the balanced pictorial and verbal narrative. In the later works, the pictorial content diminishes with each frame and is replaced with increasingly large word bubbles containing asemic writing, which ultimately come to fill the whole page. Language has become a paralysis.

But délire is not simply confined language. It can be identified in any aspect of human endeavour. Indeed, Lecercle (1985) examines cases of délire in scientific inquiry and, in a work on language, examines no less than Saussure as a case study of délire in science. Lecercle considers délire from the point of view of language only, but it is clear that, for Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, délire occurs at the point of going beyond the normative, the point of transgression and the confrontation of chaos. For the purpose of this study, I concentrate on délire and drawing. Finally, further evidence that délire is present in drawing as much as it is in language is attested to by the translation of the word manga. Prior to its common designation as Japanese comics, manga referred to a typology of drawing for which translators offer a variety meanings of the first character: ‘man’ in Hanji plus ‘ga’, meaning picture. ‘Man’ is thus variously given as “incoherent”, “disjointed” or “casual”, all referring “to an idea of anarchic profusion” (Brouquillard and Marquest, 2007). “Whimsical drawings” and “impromptu sketches” are other definitions to be found in dictionaries and Wikipedia articles. My particular favourite is the one attributed to Hokusai, prolific artist and creator of a teaching manual of drawing known as the Hokusai Manga (2011 [1812]). He referred to himself as a “drawing maniac”, who understood ‘manga’ as the “brush gone wild”* (BBC Radio 4 programme, August 2012). What is also striking in his drawing system is his use of the diagram to elaborate form.
3.2.4  *The diagram*

Much of the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari is about the passage from one state to another, from one dimension to another, from one register to the other. The processes of such transitions together are the ‘becomings’, the ‘events’ that constitute the perpetual transformations of life. There is an obvious connection to be made between the notion of the diagram and the production of the graphic narrative, even (or especially) in the ordinary sense of diagrammatic representation. The frame, the page layout and the narrative strategies themselves are processes of abstraction; lines on paper in the context of illustration are diagrams.
elaborated on with techniques such as shading, cross-hatching, speed lines and emanata (the equivalent of paragraphing, accenting and punctuating the visual). Indeed, words are also as lines on paper. These signs are the conventions of expression in comics, part of their expressive resources. In the ordinary sense they ‘convey information to the reader’—speed, affect, movement etc.—just as various signs, orientation, plan or elevation, shading and varied symbols do in an architectural drawing. In Deleuze and Guattari, however, the diagram, in a philosophical context, is something which does much more work and which operates in more varied dimensions. It is the “operation”, to use Sauvagnargues’ word, which allows us to go from affect to thought, from image to thought to language, language to art, art to aesthetics, in a circle of connectivity which creates the expression of politics.

Zdebik (2012) examines the various uses the concept of the diagram is put to in the Deleuzian corpus. He also takes us through the intellectual journey of the influences which have shaped the development of the concept in the system. In turn the contributions of Foucault, Lyotard, Heidegger and Kant, as well as artist/writers such as Klee and Lhote, are considered to cover the spectrum of the diagrammatic function. Zdebik’s method is to ‘zoom in’ on the image, much as one would on an image from Google Earth, in order to examine its constitutive elements. At different resolutions of the image we see different functions at play as we move away from pictorial representation. We see that representation is the illusion of an assemblage of lines, each of which has no unity in itself and is fragmented in a composition of contiguous dots (see here also Massumi’s 2012 work *Semblance and Event*). These do not contour form, but fill space and allow it to emerge via a process of abstraction and subtraction, which “take apart the empirical and build it as a concept” (Zdebik, 2012, p.128, quoting Heidegger). Thus the line functions to extract the structure of the empirical and to classify, to organise it, to compose through modalities of the diagrammatic process (schematic, plan, sketch, blueprint, map) and thus to formulate and pass on knowledge. None of these modalities are the things themselves, but they express the invisible relations between them.
From Foucault’s (1979) example of the panopticon, Deleuze and Guattari draw the diagram as “a display of relations as pure functions” (Zdebik, 2012, p.5). There the diagram is made up of two forms along two axes, the discursive and the non-discursive, corresponding to the articulable and non-articulable environment. This distinction is in fact one between the visible and the articulable which Zdebik (2012, p.66) understands as being the same as the distinction between ‘image’ and ‘text’. Accounting for the difference, similarity or interplay between text and image is the central concern of comics theory (El Refaie, 2013; Cohn, 2013; Duncan and Smith, 2011; Miodrag, 2013), so here is a central point which connects Deleuze’s system to the concerns of comics theorists.

In the fifth plateau (D&G, TP, p.23), a semiotic system is defined as a regime of signs. It follows that such regimes can be both visual and verbal and that semiotic systems are social in their nature and refer to other elements within the systems. They form areas of circularity, yet they are never closed and they also connect with other systems. They form assemblages in open systems. The question is what then is the relationship between two different systems in the social field, one discursive—in Foucault’s example, between the legal discourse which classifies, articulates performing the “incorporeal transformations” (TP, p.74) —and one environmental—the prison building as a social and material production of punishment. Two different assemblages which come together, Deleuze argues, through two meanings of form. One as organising matter (the prison), the other as distributive function (the punishment). It is in abstracting their functions that these assemblages can be intermingled while remaining separate. The abstracted functions (surveillance in Foucault’s example) constitute the diagram, the abstract machine. Zdebik sums up the process: “the function of the structure of surveillance is labelled as a diagram. Not the prison or the cells but the relations between the guards and prisoners within that environment.” Once mapped, once diagrammed, these relations can be transposed to other contexts to pursue the same example, the school, the barracks etc. “they share the function of seeing without being seen” (Zdebik, 2012, pp.5–6). The diagram as abstract machine ‘folds’ relations of force and unfolds them in another system; Deleuze’s theory of ‘plicature’ allows the transferability between

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systems to take place. But the diagram is also something dynamic. In between the foldings and unfoldings, in between the superimposition of maps, interleaved between them so to speak, new maps/diagrams are made. Here the diagram is a matter of charting virtualities before they are actualised. “It is a virtual map under the fabric of things before their formation into something real” (Zdebik, 2012, p.8).

How do we pass from language to image and image to thought? The answer is through the abstraction of the diagram. The diagram has to be understood as having various modalities and elements depending on whether it produces an illustration, a symbol, a sketch, a map or a plan. In all cases, it is actualised by abstraction/subtraction. Its compositional elements are the trait and the line. The diagram is the abstract machine, the machine that operates the translation from one dimension to another through the process of folding and unfolding. “The diagram is a duality composed of tracing and mapping” (Zdebik, 2012, p.9); it operates outside language, beyond language. It is composed of lines, and words are lines on paper and a drawing is made up of lines. Zdebik (p.134) summarises what the diagram does for Deleuze and Guattari: “it is the terrain between the visible and the articulable”, which, as described earlier, Zdebik reads as that which lies between the visual and the textual.

To close this section, I consider the conditions which, for Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, make an artwork a work of art. Sauvagnargues (2005, p.139) summarises the conditions for literary art in the Deleuzian corpus: in terms of the linguistic realm it must be minoritarian. In terms of politics it must relate to a social context. It must be ‘a-subjective’, the author must be detached/detachable from the creation. But these three conditions can be applied to any genre of artwork, whereas minoritarian applies to whatever the ‘language’ of its medium might be. In the earlier section on délire, Lecercle, following Deleuze, considered délire only from the point of view of language, and I argued that it might equally be applicable to drawing. Indeed, Sauvagnargues (2005) demonstrates how Deleuze’s initial preoccupations with literature gradually extend to encompass all aspects of artistic production. Comics and the drawing of a comic are subjected to the same possibilities of being
minoritarian. Their anarchic and subversive qualities are often referred to and the British Library’s (2014) major exhibition was entitled ‘Comics Unmasked: Art and Anarchy in the UK’, which points in the direction of understanding that form of art as minoritarian. Graphic narrative is a combination (mainly) of both word and image, providing a double articulation of textual and visual elements and limitless possibilities for interplay between the two, which pushes the limits of the art form, as evidenced by avant-garde or ‘art’ comics. We can accept the criteria set by Deleuze, initially for literature, as applicable to comics as well. That is not to say that all comics are automatically works of art; only those that “stand up” by themselves will pass the test Deleuze sets (QQP, p. 89).

This, however, raises a problem. If we are dealing with works of autobiography, how can such a work stand alone, independent of its creator, whose life it purports to tell? The problem of veracity in autobiographical accounts, of the ‘authorial pact’ with the reader (Lejeune, 1975), is central not only to narratology but to psychosocial research as well. Both Deleuze and graphic artists who produce work in the genre share a similar concern, expressed in their respective ‘languages’. Graphic artists stress that the important factor is the authenticity of feeling which validates the stories irrespective of facts. For Deleuze, it is the capture of blocs of sensations, the percepts and affects that define art. These, Deleuze tells us, “exist in relation to those who experience them, those who have the strength for it” (QQP, p. 89). That is the guarantee of authenticity and the value of autobiographical narrative. The forces are beyond our sensory perception, only apprehensible through their effects, which are the affects in their ordered multiplicity. Grasping them is no easy matter. It requires that journey through chaos, the journey and labour of creative ordering.

We have explored the relation between affect, image and thought, stressing the primacy of affect in provoking thought. Some academics see in the work of the avant-garde ‘drawing as a way of thinking’ (Ball and Kuhlman (2009) assert the “is” in the sub title of a collection of papers of the work of Chris Ware). More recently, Nick Sousanis’ (2015) doctoral dissertation, produced in its entirety as a graphic narrative, explored much the same idea. As has been argued, that is indeed the function
of the diagram; but what must not be set aside is the primacy of affect in that process. Drawing, I conclude, is primarily ‘a way of feeling’.

Having examined the three central notions of affect, délire and the diagram, we can now consider how some of these notions are manifest in the chosen examples of published works of graphic narrative. How each creator stretches or bends the conventions, verbal and visual, of the established genre to achieve new ways (Proust’s foreign language) of telling and showing the relations of affect, creating new styles.
3.3 Reading comics with Deleuze and Guattari

The blank page of the graphic artist is similar to the blank canvas of the painter, which Deleuze tells us is never blank (FBLS, 1981) because it is laden with cultural and social preconceptions. It carries the infinity of potential which it is the artist's task to wrestle from the virtual. To do so, the artist must put constraints in place. A main distinction between drawing and text is that drawing has no formal rules of enunciation; the artist is free to compose his own, and at the onset it is less 'grammatically' constrained. Deleuze (FBLS, 1981; QQP, 1990; DPD, 1996) speaks in terms of an artwork's 'sobriety'. He means the stripping back of the non essential, a practice of less is more.

3.3.1 Jules Feiffer

The example below (figure 1), is from Jules Feiffer’s 1979 graphic novel *Tantrum*, one of the earliest graphic novels, which Feiffer himself refers to as “a novel in cartoons”. What Feiffer does here is to stretch the conventions of cartoon production into a narrative. Throughout the book, there is only one ‘cartoon’ per page; as such the drawings are unbound, and unframed both in the technical sense of comics production, understood as a series of pictures encased by rectilinear frames, and in the sense of the unlimited sense of expansion/expansiveness that this conveys. Indeed, the drawing style of this work is what is most commented on. It is invariably remarked on by commentators and compilers of essential graphic narrative reading. “Scrawly vigour” (Davies, 1980); “frantic, unpolished” as if “pulled from his pen in a hurry” (Gravett, 2011, p.407); “bold possessing a kind of electricity” (Weiner, 2003, p.23); “deceptively messy” (Kannenberg Jr, 2008, p.349); “jagged ink lines... [giving an] immediacy and impetuousness as well a sense of urgency” (Fingeroth, 2008, p.179). In a sense, the spontaneity Feiffer (re)discovered in producing the artwork, and which changed his way of working, mirrors the content of the
story. It was noted in the section on the power of drawing above how this artistic engagement in the act of drawing echoed some of the reflections on drawing by psychoanalysts, poets, and comics commentators alike, all centring on the phrenetic energy of the penmanship. *Tantrum* is a (psychoanalytic) journey through a mid-life crisis and the novel can be said to be his interpretation of that journey. However, such a reading would be piling one interpretation on top of another, in which all interpretations would lead back to a ‘master’ interpretive framework. It is more productive to examine Feiffer’s work, through this particular image, as an example, in the Deleuzian light of art as the production of ‘blocs of sensation’, while mindful that the graphic narrative is a genre that draws on both language and drawing to compose new assemblages of signs.

For Deleuze and Guattari (MP, pp.108–109), style takes on another meaning. “It is not an individual psychological creation... but an assemblage of enunciation, it unavoidably produces a language within a language.” That language within a language is the result of pushing the language to its boundaries, of making it “stammer”, of reaching the limits of its “grammaticality” and entering délire in order to create new assemblages of signs that constitute language. At this point, there is a distinction to be made between the formal use of language as one of several semiotic systems and language as a metaphor to refer to all semiotic systems. Graphic narrative, in Deleuzian terms, is an assemblage of two different sign systems which interact in a manner to be explained, while remaining separate as systems.

The place of language, that is to say of verbal text, is interesting. In the example above (and in much of the rest of the novel), it is relegated to a place secondary to that of the image. First of all, it is handwritten, not to say drawn, and in the example here, it is integrated in the picture almost like cross-hatching, complementing the frame of the door through which Leo’s mother, in great alarm, mistakes her son, regressed to a two-year-old, for a potential wrongdoer. Deleuze and Guattari speak of “tensors” (TP; p.110), of tensing the language “with atypical expressions” which carry language to its limits, to breaking point. In this case language is tensed visually through graphic rendering and its placing in the picture. Word lines meet drawing
lines to unified effect. The affects contained in the lines of the drawing are expressive of the state of délire, both as story and process of its production. Lecercle (1985, p.6) identifies two philosophical traditions of délire: délire as liberating force and délire as dereliction of the linguistic order. In the previous section, I argued the case that Lecercle’s arguments in relation to délire and language could be applied to drawing. In this example, as in much of the rest of the novel, the lines capture the characters at that liminal point, on the edge of madness. Feiffer’s lines express ‘the scream’ of that position in lines that are direct, unmediated by technique or concern for composition. His ‘cartoons’ are thrown on the pages as splashes of ink on paper, but also with the great restraint that economy of speed imposes. A work of art, for Deleuze and Guattari, is always a process of abstraction, of subtraction. They speak of the ‘sobriety’ of the work of art that makes new connections, new diagrams of those connections, new semiotic chains. The diagram, Deleuze tells us, is: “an unleashed manual power (puissance)… with effects that surpass it [...] it is a phrenetic zone where the hand is no longer guided by the eye and super imposes itself on visual perception as another ‘will’ presenting itself as random, accidental, automatic and involuntary” (FBLS, pp.128–129).

The description matches perfectly with how other commentators have described Feiffer’s drawings. And that zone of artistic productivity, which produces the affects and percepts as new relational diagrams, as chains of new signs, is also—to amend Lecercle’s phrase—délire as dereliction of representation and the liberating power of délire is manifest through this making visible of the invisible forces in operation. Elisabeth Juenst’s (2001) subheading of her article ‘How to become yourself by being someone else’, in the context of the Deleuzian (and Spinozist) ethology, amounts to a re-ordering of affects, bringing them to a positive point. What is known through interviews and his autobiography (Feiffer, 2010) is that he spent 18 years in psychoanalysis and Paul Gravett (2011) reveals that Tantrum was a turning point in his way of working; from then on he has always drawn directly in ink without preparatory pencil sketches.

It may be objected that I have linked Feiffer’s lines to affective intensity and shown how he has played visually with the written text, but that this is not sufficient to
distinguish *Tantrum* as a work of art rather than a social reproduction in the comics genre. Can it be argued that *Tantrum* fails because it ‘speaks’ in the majoritarian language of psychoanalysis? Psychoanalysis is the ‘molar coding’ which frames the story, and therefore we are in the realm of visual metaphors pertaining to a majoritarian language and are thus, in artistic terms, in the realm of cliché. What Deleuze objects to in metaphor and why, in his view, it reduces itself to cliché, is that metaphor conditions perception and its affects by relating it to something pre-existing. It channels perception back to something or sets of relations already established and thus blocks the ‘visionary’ possibilities of that perception by territorialising it and bringing it back to the safety of established meaning. For a work of art to be just that it must break this chain and find its own articulation, its own line of flight. So we must ask if Feiffer’s images, which are encased in a psychoanalytic discourse, are majoritarian productions or whether they meet the minoritarian conditions of art. I will argue that if psychoanalysis is the coding which frames the story, Feiffer subverts that very discourse by pushing it to its limits and breaking the metaphor of regression. By making Leo’s regression ‘real’ in the drawings, a visual possibility only really open to comics and animation, Feiffer breaks from the interpretative and offers us a different perception, a different point of view. Leo, from his vantage point as an adult-regressed-infant, is able to show us the unsatisfactory adult world from below and in between its discourses, deceits and illusions. Leo’s regression is a line of flight in all senses, a play with psychoanalysis in a délire of text and image that at once draws on the insights of psychoanalysis while parodying it.

### 3.3.2 Chris Ware

The panels by Chris Ware on the next page (figures 2 and 3), are antithetical in style to the Feiffer drawings discussed above, both in the ordinary sense of the appearance of their drawings and in the more specific Deleuzian sense of their being the results of different affective assemblages. The free unmediated line of Feiffer is diametrically opposed to Ware’s slow, deliberate, architecturally precise diagrammatic lines. His page layouts are more like a map of the relationship between visual components rather than narrative entities. The whole produces what is generally acknowledged as a different and demanding experience for the reader. If Feiffer captures the forces
**Figure 2** Inset page from *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (2000) Jonathan Cape

**Figure 3** Element from Chris Ware's *Building Stories.*
of affects at their highest point of emotional intensity, Ware captures them in the slow burn of time as duration. I want to argue that Ware's constrained work is equally a manifestation of délire, of tensing the rules through persistent variations, which subverts standard comics production, such as narrative time sequence and the demands made on the reader to make sense of things: "A bold experiment in reader tolerance", as Ball and Kuhlman (2010) put it. Ware and Richard McGuire are among the most recognised avant-garde innovators of the graphic narrative. Ware has attracted academic attention by experimenting with the form's visual narrative possibilities, and brings to bear influences from other forms of art, such as literature and modern painting, in a way that enhances the comics form while tensing those same influences. Ball and Kuhlman's (2010) aptly subtitled book Drawing is a Way of Thinking consists of a set of critical essays dedicated to all aspects of Ware's work, which seems ideally suited to a Deleuzian analysis. Diagrams, mappings, architecture, literature, modern art, space/time images in almost filmic presentation (as the above sequence shows)—all are pressed to provoke the reader to thought as if designed to precisely follow Deleuze's theories of the diagram and art in all their forms.

Roeder (2010) demonstrates how Ware both draws on the art world in order to subvert it and how, in turn, the art establishment (museums and galleries) promote and praise his work, by implication promoting the status of the graphic narrative and his status as an artist. The subverter, in turn, becomes subverted. Roeder's account presents the possibilities of revealing the processes at work of deterritorialisation by artistic production, the political function of art, and the reterritorialisation processes of the art establishment. Martha Kuhlman (2010) makes a rapprochement between the experimental works of Ware and the experimental comics of the French group Oubapo, which consciously attempts to push back the limits of the comics form. Both proceed by imposing constraints, creating puzzles of all sorts which disrupt the reading pattern and force the reader to slow down and to thus be engaged more actively. From a Deleuzian perspective, we might understand the efforts of the avant-garde as a line of flight from the constraints of a dominant (majoritarian) market. This is certainly the Franco-Belgian case, where comics
creation from the 1970s onwards attempts to break the format of the 62-page album imposed by the major editing companies (Gove, 2010; Miller, 2007) and detach itself from its sole association with children’s entertainment in order to address all other cultural topics, from pornography to politics.

Isaac Cates’ (2010) *Comics and the Grammar of the Diagrams* brings us back into the mainstream territory of graphic narrative theory dealing with language as both visual and textual. Cates concentrates on Ware’s use of diagrams as comics forms and the diagrammatic quality of his drawing. What Ware is doing, argues Cates, is to use “diagrams to conceal and to reveal information that alters the emotional tenor of *Jimmy Corrigan...* formally by evoking the non-narrative”, his sense of the comics form is closely related to “the visual working of the diagram” (pp.95–96). Just as Feiffer’s characters explode with emotion onto the page, Ware’s appear emotionally paralysed. Ultimately in their different styles, one by stressing emotion, the other by concealing it, both reveal affective relations. Cates come close to being able to fit Ware’s work into a Deleuzian framework of the diagram, but ultimately keeps to a representational view of the diagram, rather than understanding it as an abstraction of function in relation to affect.

3.3.3 *Ibn Al Rabin (Mathieu Baillif)*

This is not a work which, to my knowledge, has been considered by academics; therefore, unlike the other examples, I make no references to critical texts. It is a very short work of 22 pages, of six frames to the page, published in small format (150mm × 100mm) by experimental comics publisher l’Association.

Mathieu Baillif (Alias Ibn Al Rabin), a Swiss comics artist, works in the genre of wordless comics, in which the elimination of language is set as a constraint on the telling of the story. Wordless comics are an established genre (see for example the work of the better known Ayrole) as are the even more constrained abstract comics, with neither words nor visual representations of objects of any sort. The result, in this example of the wordless genre (figure 4, opposite), is that the story must be composed in such a way as to make the drawings ‘speak’. This is achieved by ‘an
unfolding’ (the Deleuzian plicature) of the dialogue bubbles both across a double page and at different heights, breaking up the usual reading sequence of left to right and top to bottom. The reader must stop to decode the dialogic sequence, which is itself formed of further pictures which imply the text. The story is perfectly intelligible at a linguistic level and the reader can almost ‘hear’ the arguments so forcefully indicated by the reductive simplicity of the drawings and the development of the visual logic.

There is another device at play, and that is black figures on white backgrounds. The drawings, as already noted, are minimal, full blocks of black on white, giving the appearance of cut-outs pasted onto the paper. Zdebik (2012) considers Deleuze writing on the black dot on the white background, and shows that it can be read two ways: as white on black and black on white. The effect disrupts the association of white light, black space, giving the negative of a photograph as an example, where that order is reversed. This disrupts the possible judgement we might make and which side of the argument we might take as readers. Zdebik (2012) points to the paradox of black and white in relation to the artist Paul Klee “as points of reference.
in a scale of judgement of the truth and the false. The loudest discrepancy is claimed when either end of the spectrum seems to be consistent with what it represents: light represented by white is more false than light represented by black... positive and negative are erased by this paradox of the black and the white” (p.92).

Finally, the whole work is constructed as a puzzle. The ‘verb’, whose modalities we are taken through as a sort of visual declension, is never stated. The reader must determine the verb from the purely visual narrative. This is the ‘mild’ délire that Lecercle (1985) associates with Lewis Carroll or a parlour miming game. Its novelty and accomplishment are derived from the interplay between speech as drawing and the extreme economy of the drawing, and the stark contrast between the two.

3.3.4 David Mazzucchelli Asterios Polyp

The last example to consider (figure 5, opposite) is that of David Mazzucchelli’s Asterios Polyp. This is a much-quoted work in the literature (Groensteen, 2013; Duncan, 2011; Miodrag, 2013; among others) and the page usually selected for comments is the one above, which I, in turn, consider to see how a Deleuzian lens offers something different from the analyses of others. I concentrate on one aspect only, that of the first encounter between the protagonists and the way this is expressed graphically because it is not satisfactorily covered in the literature.

The page relates the meeting at a party between Asterios the architect and Hana the artist. What is most striking here is how Mazzucchelli emphasises ‘difference’ graphically, the difference of affective assemblages. Each character in the room is rendered in a different style and form of line. The two protagonists are diametrically opposed. He is made up of angles and volumes, she of hatched lines, and their individual definition is further accentuated by the use of two opposing colours drawn from the palette of computer printing: cyan and magenta. Already here, we have a clear sense of their individual composition as they engage in conversation, but as they progress in that encounter, both colour and shape are progressively affected. Mazzucchelli’s graphic novel cannot be said to be particularly Deleuzian or specifically poststructuralist in its textual pronouncements. The protagonist is given to
AND WHEN HE CAME OVER TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF,

I'M SORRY, MY NAME'S ASTERIOS POLYP.

SHE FELT SHE WAS STARING STRAIGHT INTO THE SPOTLIGHT.

FIGURE 5 David Mazzucchelli Asterios Polyp
philosophical speculation in different directions, including the essentialist notion of self, but what these examples show is graphic narrative as a powerful and versatile tool in its capacity to capture the multiplicity of affect. When given a Deleuzian reading, this scene yields far more visually than Miodrag’s (2013, p.174) conclusion.
of it as a “creative lexicon” or Duncan’s (2012, p.54) summation of it as a “rhetorical device” as part of the “hermeneutic image”, whose purpose is to nudge the reader towards an interpretation, or Greonsteen’s understanding, of it as a purely narrative device “heralding their relationship” (p.103). It ‘shows’ quite literally the reciprocitity of affect taking place in the same way that we can witness through the change of colour the molecular chemical change in a laboratory experiment. It at once reveals the materiality of change through affect as well as its psychological alteration. At the same time, it provides a wonderful illustration of Deleuze’s notion of capturing blocs of sensations as the function of art. There is a difference however, in Mazzucchelli work, in that once the encounter is over, the characters seem to revert to their ‘essential’ visual characteristics. I have redrawn the same idea with the Deleuzian implications in mind which preserves the imprint (or the modification) of the encounter.
2.1 Poststructuralism, Deleuze and research methods

Postmodernism throws up particular challenges for qualitative research in its critique of a unified self, expressed through presence and voice. This, in turn, problematises the truth value of reported statements and questions the role of the ‘objective’ researcher (Mason, 2013 [2002]; Ellis, Adams and Brochner, 2011; Coleman and Ringrose, 2013; Jackson and Mazzei, 2013). All research methodologies are anchored in positions, taken or assumed, surrounding questions of ontology and epistemology. The position adopted in the previous chapters has therefore sought to shape the methodology proposed for this project.

Taking up an epistemic and ontological position in a ‘vitalist’ philosophy of ‘becoming’ further problematises the very notion of data; indeed, whether we can speak of an ontology at all becomes questionable. Zourabichvili (2012 [1994]) argues that it is not, since ‘becoming’ negates ‘being’. Others, for instance Massumi (2012), speak of a ‘fractal’ ontology and DeLanda (2006) derives a ‘social ontology’ from the same philosophy. If ‘being’ is replaced by ‘becoming’, the notion of ‘subject’ also becomes problematic for any social scientific inquiry, causing some—for instance, Wetherell (2012)—to reject the Deleuzian approach for having no subject at all. But that position is arguably a confusion between the exteriority of the relational realised through a subject, and a subject giving expression to it. For Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, the ‘event’—that is to say the ‘what-happens’ of an encounter, the reciprocal affecting process of it—becomes the object of study; equally, the ‘assemblages’ that constitute it become the units of analysis.

Assemblages are multiplicities, the totality of whatever is brought to an encounter; and the ‘event’ is understood not in the sense of an accomplished action, but as the
actualisation of an external relational reality of the encounter. “The event is not the
state of affairs. It is actualised in the state of affairs [...] It is the virtual that is distinct
from the actual [...] it is a virtual that is real without being actual, ideal without
being abstract” (Deleuze and Guattari, QQP, 1991, p.156). The analysis consists of
the examination of how those networks function, how these connections, occurring in flux, are coded, decoded and recoded in the social field of language and how these determine relations of power.

The philosophical constraints of such an approach impose a different type of analy-
sis on the data. A philosophy which excluded essentialist notions of the self, which
rejects ‘being’ in favour of ‘becoming’, which substitutes a framework of interpreta-
tion for one of process, and ‘flux’ in favour of fixity, requires a different way of pro-
ceeding with data. Whereas more standard methods of research will seek patterns
in data and abstract these into unifying generalities through processes of coding, a
Deleuzian approach to theory will emphasise how connections between assem-
blages function and what they produce in turn.

Key Deleuzian concepts here are the molar and the molecular, corresponding to the
macro and the micro, but without reductionist implications, organic unity or spe-
cific referents. Each is constituted of assemblages and networks of assemblages
operating not as separate spheres, but as “relatively autonomous” “spatial scales”
(DeLanda, 2006, p.250). DeLanda’s social ontology is theorised through Deleuze’s
concept of assemblage; it bridges the gap between the micro and the macro via an
understanding of the processes of network interaction. Individuals interacting
emerge into interpersonal networks, and these networks, in turn, into institutional
organisation, and those again into urban centres and so on into empires and whatever
potential lies beyond. The central difference, then, between the molecular/
molar and micro/macro distinction is that the molecular is “that which plays a role
of component or part at any one scale, while the molar is the statistical result of
molecular populations at any given level of scale” (DeLanda, 2006, p.252, quoting
Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The incessantly moving interaction of space and the
scale of the molecular/molar is the data. The implication is that the interaction is

never complete since it is always becoming, always an unfixable point in time and unpredictable. Alicia Jackson (2013) stresses the ‘becoming’ nature of data. Data are productive, using the Deleuzian analogy of the machine, data are data-as-machine; that is to say data connect and reconnect in relations that are external to the subject.

“This is a crucial methodological point for data ‘analysis’ and ‘interpretation’ in qualitative research that uses a Deleuzian frame: a data-machine has supple substance, but what matters most are its relations, affects and machinic potential to interrupt and transform other machines, other data, other knowledge projects and so on... there is a radical possibility in the unfinished.” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013, p.123)

In the case of this project, episodes of graphic narrative and the encounter of the follow-up interview will form the assemblages to consider. The aim will not be to excavate some hidden truth of narratives, based on essences of beings, or to reveal a concealed unconscious reality or structure, hidden beneath a surface of language and/or drawing, but rather to seek how such a reality is constituted and actualised on the surface (the planes) by the elements which are brought together.

However, this is not straightforwardly a question of substituting one theoretical model for another. What is at stake is the question of what sort of social or psychosocial inquiry can be conducted. If the elements of the standard procedure of data gathering, coding and analysis are destabilised through a critique of their epistemic and ontological assumptions, what kind of ‘social science’ are we left with? The literature of those who have made the ‘Deleuzian connection’ to their qualitative research projects repeatedly warn that we cannot fully escape previous research paradigms. The need to investigate social questions persists, while reliance on the ‘objective’ nature of the component parts of that enquiry becomes problematic under philosophical scrutiny.

Deleuze’s own position on the social sciences is not explicit but several inferences can be made. In the first instance, as DeLanda (2006a) points out, Deleuze remained a committed Marxist and this circumscribes his social philosophy; however, he
Part 2 Method

goes on to argue that Deleuze’s concept of ‘assemblage’ allows us to go beyond the macro-reductionism that Marxism implies (p.252). Secondly, Deleuze’s (Deleuze and Guattari, QQP, 1991) understanding of the respective functions of philosophy, art and science place them in opposition to the world of opinion—that is to the non-philosophical, non-artistic, non-scientific world of daily life. Each of these disciplines undertakes a journey through chaos and each brings back something different according to their function. Science ‘slows down’ the flux in order to isolate ‘variables’. Art brings back ‘varieties’ as percepts and affects: “Art is not chaos, but a composition of chaos” (p.202). Philosophy brings back ‘variations’, “reconnections through a zone of indistinction in a concept” (p.204). And, as Zourabichvili (2012 [1994]) succinctly puts it, “Every concept participates in an act of thinking that displaces the field of intelligibility, modifying the conditions of the problem we pose for ourselves” (p.141). Chaos and opinion (doxa) leave little to choose between them, Deleuze tells us. “We have opinions on everything that we see or that affects us, to the extent that the human sciences can be seen as a vast doxology” (Deleuze and Guattari, QQP, 1991, p.155). Under such conditions, the purpose of the research project is then to identify unchallenged opinions and habits of thought—the daily ‘doxa’ which ‘territorialises’ the experiences of relationships—but also to see how these are challenged, ‘deterioralised’—creating emancipating ‘lines of flight’ through new assemblages—or ‘reterritorialised’ by other narratives. The real purpose of philosophy “aims not at stating the conditions of knowledge qua-representation, but at finding and fostering the conditions of creative production” (Smith and Protevi, 2013).

In order to proceed methodologically, we must, as Jackson and Mazzei (2012) remind us, follow Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) instruction to ‘plug in’ our texts to the concepts. This at once disrupts common sense and opens up new spaces of understanding (Dyke, 2013). Whichever of the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari we draw on depends on the purpose of the inquiry and helps to shape our methodology. MacLure (2013) reminds us that we still have data to analyse; however, that data and the process of coding it take on a new aspect, different from assigning data units to pre-established taxonomies. She advocates a “wallowing” in the process of “cutting up” the data. “During the process of coding, some things gradually glow, or
glow into greater significance than others and become preoccupations around which thought and writing cluster” (MacLure, p. 175). This is the creative function of the researcher, the researcher as creator rather than as discoverer.

2.2 Design

The original empirical research generated for the study consisted of two different sources of data concerning middle-aged men’s experiences of long-term relationships: one drawn, the other verbal. The choice of asking participants to draw a graphic narrative was informed by two factors. First, graphic narrative as a means of autobiographical expression is a fairly recent and rapidly expanding cultural phenomenon attracting increasing academic interest. Secondly, graphic narrative is part of an ever-expanding visual culture and though still underrepresented academically in visual research methods as previously stated, it is worthy of its place among them. Thirdly, the very requirements of that method, i.e. of seeking an active production from participants, unsettle the binary of researcher/researched and lean towards a collaborative process more easily accommodated by a poststructuralist research construct.

Comparatively little has been done to use the medium of graphic narrative itself as a research tool, even within the emerging field of visual research methods. Rose’s (2012, 3rd edition) text on visual methodologies does not mention graphic narrative, and neither does The Handbook of Visual Culture (Haywood and Sandywell, 2012). The weighty Sage Handbook on Visual Research Methods (Margolis and Pauwel, 2011) only contains one article on graphic novels. Children’s drawings have long received more attention from researchers either in developmental or educational contexts (Ganesh, 2011). Ethnography has begun to see the potential of drawing as an ethnographic resource worthy of attention (Mitchell, 2011) and as a valuable way of visualising (adults’) interior worlds and linking therapeutic technique to ethnographic research (Pink and Hogan, 2012). Coleman and Ringrose (2013) stress that looking at research methods through a Deleuzian lens reveals the “false divide between theory and practice” (p.2) and requires a reformulation of empiricism which is not possible without working in an interdisciplinary way. This is precisely...
what Mitchell (2011) and Pink (2012) think ‘visual participatory methodologies’ have to offer. They represent a crossover between social research, personal therapy, community engagement and, arguably, ideology, through the use of drawing. Such an approach to the visual offers new directions in research with interesting interdisciplinary possibilities. It also has implications for the skills of the researcher and offers an active part to participants. There is then a sympathetic overlap here between the inclusion of drawing as a research method and a Deleuzian-inspired approach to methodology. Coleman and Ringrose (2013) note that the preponderance of Deleuzian-inspired research comes from those working in the field of education, where interdisciplinarity is inescapable given that education as a subject area must embrace all others, thus creating greater interaction between disciplines.

Turning to the specificity of the project, the first part was a drawing task which the participant had to carry out by themselves, though under the ethical guidelines set for the project; help was available if anyone was in difficulty. The requirement was that each participant should draw an episode which they considered to be or to have been significant in the context of a long-term relationship. Some themes were suggested to help focus the narrative towards the research question and to provide a starting point, if it was needed, from the blank page. For instance: ‘you may wish to include things about ‘being a man’, about ‘love’, ‘sex’, ‘my partner’, ‘an important episode in my relationship’, ‘difficult moments’, ‘joyful moments’, ‘how things are now’, ‘how they might be’, or ‘any other aspect you feel is or has been important in your relationship’. It was anticipated originally that the drawings would relate one particular episode, a particular time of intensity, what Denzin (2013) calls an epiphany or a turning point. In the event such moments were at times referred to, but always placed in the context of a broader narrative surrounding the relationship. For several participants the drawing component was more an opportunity for reflection on the relational process of daily life—the ups and downs, misunderstandings, differing expectations of daily life, as well as its joys and sense of companionship—than an account of a specific episode.

Once the drawings were received, the interview was arranged as soon as convenient
and as close to the time the drawings had been submitted. Galman (2009, p.203), a pioneer in the use of graphic narrative as a research tool in the field of educational research, noted that the drawings she elicited from her students did not work as “stand alone” texts and required “collaborative interpretation”. Except for two instances (out of ten), this project found the submitted drawings could be made sense of without further interviews, but since the stories were very short, being four pages on average, they could not yield the wealth of information that a full-length graphic novel might. The narratives, as a result, were very condensed segments of stories and the interviews helped to link and fill the gaps. The interviews complemented the drawn work, not only ‘filling in’ the gaps between the narrative segments, but providing the context of the stories together with a greater understanding of the beliefs and narratives which underpinned the men's experiences of their relationships.

Preparations for the interviews on my part consisted of careful consideration of the drawing submitted, trying to get a sense of the content and a feel for what was being expressed. Studying the drawings was a sort of ‘get-to-know-the-participant’ exercise prior to meeting them in the interview. No specific questions were prepared other than the first, which was invariably to ask how they had experienced the process of drawing their story. The interviews were guided by two things. Firstly, the drawings themselves were discussed. These opened up topics of conversation and offered a point of reference to return to when the discussion drifted away. In Deleuzian terms and in relation to the interviews, the drawings were a map, a cartographic diagram on which and around which the encounters were constructed. Secondly, again in Deleuzian terms, the ‘intensities’ of the encounter selected the direction of the conversation. In other words, by selecting the route from the map, that is to say the topic of the conversation, I helped to focus on what I perceived to be the directions which most engaged the participant.

2.3 Recruitment and data collection
The original intention had been to recruit 15 participants in the age range of 40– 65. In the event 10 men completed the project. The unusual nature of the request to draw a graphic story, which for many would be an unfamiliar form of expression, as
well as the time investment the project required, meant that the participants would be ‘self selective’, i.e anyone fitting the age profile and prepared to undertake the tasks was selected. No attempt was made to achieve a balance of class, ethnicity and education. It was hoped, and this hope was realised, that participants would be balanced between those who had drawing skills and those who didn’t, and between those who were familiar with the narrative form of comics and those who were not. Of the 10 participants, four had no drawing skills; four had some through their profession or prior studies; two had a high level of skill and had produced comics in the past. The ages ranged from 42 to 65 and the professional composition was as follows: two academics; one architect; one book designer; one psychotherapist; one mental health worker; one NHS complaints adviser; one senior local government officer (retired); one teacher; and one person of independent means. Of these, two participants did not have a degree and six had postgraduate qualifications.

After a promising start, recruitment proved more difficult than anticipated. ‘Cold’ recruitment strategies failed. A poster was designed outlining the project and what would be required from participants. The background to the wording was a collage of different comics representing different styles. These posters were then displayed in various local venues after obtaining the necessary permissions. These locations included public libraries, comic bookshops, general bookshops, public libraries, charity shops, local institutes and meeting halls. More directly, posters were also sent to people in the helping professions for display in their waiting rooms, in the hope of personal recommendation in cases when the practitioners were known to me. This led to the poster being placed on the British Institute for Psychotherapists’ website, where the project received positive comments but no enquiries from would-be participants.

Conferences and private parties proved more productive due to the possibility of making direct approaches to people. Women on the whole were far more enthusiastic about the project than the men who might have to complete it. Women tended to volunteer their partners/husbands and on two occasions went on to send links to other men of their acquaintance. In all, five participants were recruited from
contacts made at parties, four from conferences and one as a result of a personal introduction. The attrition rate from those who initially expressed a willingness to participate was about 50%.

Initial contact was followed up by an email recapitulating a previous conversation, giving further details about the project as well as attaching a copy of the poster and the consent form. I allowed two weeks to pass before initiating further contact if no response had been forthcoming, in order to gently enquire whether they still wished to participate. Those who were usually replied and further email correspondence followed to cover any questions (usually clarifications about what was required) and to discuss deadlines. Initially I did not wish to insist on deadlines, which might be yet another pressure placed on participants, but as time wore on ‘hand-in dates’ became increasingly important to stress, as my initial ‘laissez faire’ policy tended to allow things to drift on for too long. Even with mutually agreed deadlines for submitting the drawn narratives, extensions had to be granted on several occasions. Once the drawings were received the interviews were arranged as soon as possible. These lasted on average 40 minutes, with one lasting over one and a half hours. They took place in a variety of locations. Four were conducted in the West Country, which was where the participants’ houses were located, and one in a local café. Five took place in London, usually in a public space such as a railway station or café. One interview took place at my house. Two were held at a university. Location made little difference, except that noise in public places on occasion made the recording difficult to hear.

2.4 Data analysis strategy

Following from the opening section of this chapter, Deleuzian philosophy remains the inspiration for both the method and the analysis of the data in this project. In a sense, the philosophy is the method and it remains only to determine what sort of ‘social science’ the philosophy prescribes. For example, ‘nomadic’ thinking, the mode of generating thought which is not hierarchical but which seeks to connect concepts to one another from wherever they might be found and to see how they connect or fail to connect. “Select what resonates”, Coleman and Ringrose (2013, p.14) advocate in the face
of the open-ended possibilities of Deleuzian multiplicities, and MacLure’s (2013) notion of “wallowing in the data” to allow clusters of intensities to form, serve as guiding principles for data analysis. With the removal of the cloak of ‘scientificism’, the researcher is left to fall back on his/her integrity, experience, knowledge and limitations, the ‘other skills’ that Galman (2009), Pink (2011) and others refer to. The capacity for listening, for self-knowledge, for openness, qualities which I would amplify beyond ‘skills’, beyond the mimetic to integrated values.

Section 3.3 of Part 1 contains sample analyses of published graphic novels whose topic is pertinent both to the age group of the participants and to the topic of research. These serve as prototype models for the analysis of the graphic component of the project. There are differences between analysing a complete published graphic novel, which is a commercial product, edited and reworked to fit a market profile, and looking at short pieces of work, unpolished and made in response to a research project. But there are also similarities imposed by the constraints of the genre, both by the formal properties of graphic storytelling (sequence, segments, frames, layout, etc.) as well as in the textual narrative strategy (the position of the narrator, for instance, who is simultaneously actor and narrator). The second difference is the interview component. While each element, the verbal and visual, can be analysed separately to different effect, the interesting connection to make is how the two elements link or disjoin to produce something new, that is, to make a new assemblage. Part of the analysis will have this emphasis.

Coleman and Ringrose (2013) see the validity of bringing Deleuzian ideas to research methodology, believing it could potentially help “shed some light on other ways of knowing, relating to and creating the world” (p.4). By this I take them to refer to the wider vision of life that Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy offers through examination of humans’ place in the wider context of existence and of the forces that generate becoming. This thesis aligns itself to this aim. The specific contributions for this project are in the use of drawing, the centrality of affect and the function of creativity and its processes in order to read ourselves in new ways.
2.5 Ethics

The matter of ethics is considered under two aspects: firstly as a matter of theoretical consistency; and secondly as a matter of authorisation by the academic institution. Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism has in its ‘folds’ an ethic of practice. The theory is the practice and the practice is what is formed and actualised on the plane of immanence, the becoming of the encounter, the actualising from the virtual by capacitating the bodies in a positive way rather than a negative one. Unlike a transcendent ethical system, derived from general principles upheld by reason, the Deleuzian ethic is implicit in the singularities that concern it.

“Deleuze’s approach to ethics is thus concerned with evaluating ‘what we do [and] what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved’ and in relation to the kinds of potentials and capacities that those ways of existing affirm. Within such an evaluation, it is not what a body ‘is’ that matters, but what it is capable of, and in what ways its relations with other bodies diminish or enhance those capacities.” (Anna Hickey-Moody and Peta Malins(eds), 2008).

This is an important consideration in the power interplay between researcher and participant, an ethic to enhance and open up and allow the flow, the ‘desiring machine’ to be productive, that is to say to be creative, to co-jointly produce a new reality in the ‘becoming’. This deductive ethic, steeped in Spinoza’s system, can also be partly understood in the more strictly social interaction terms of Layder’s (2009) power games, which either enhance or diminish possibilities. This ethic of the encounter, stressing the release of potential, also corresponds to the prescriptions of humanistic psychotherapeutic practice. In short, the theory of research is an ethic legitimated in a philosophy of practice and, in the other direction, the practice of this ethical philosophy is also the research theory.

In relation to the specificity of this project and the ethical requirements required to validate it, “ethical clarity makes for good research practice” and “visual research methods elicit new problems beyond those dealt with in word or text” (Wiles, Clarke and Prosser, 2011). Research codes and guidelines such as the International
Visual Sociology Association (IVSA code for Visual Studies, 2009) and the British Sociological Association (BSA guidelines, 2006) offer general principles such as integrity, competence and respect, but no specific ‘how to’ advice to the putative researcher. Within this relatively new area of visual research, ethical concerns address mainly film, photography and video, with little attention having been given to the specificity of drawing or graphic narrative; this raises problems, but also offers specific safeguards in terms of ethical practice.

Wiles, Clark and Prosser (2011) identify the factors which bear directly on visual research as: a) the law; b) institutional regulation; c) critical issues of practice: informed consent, confidentiality etc.; d) individual moral framework (pp.686–700). Legal issues pertain mostly to interviews, filmed or recorded, in which people are identified and have no obvious relevance to the research with graphic narrative proposed. The only possibility could be one of legal ownership of the images, but good practice and common sense would have the participants as the owners of their work, copies being taken for the researcher and originals returned, as indeed was the practice carried by Galman (2009). This was also how this project was carried out.

Institutional regulation has particular requirements for research for helping to guide good practice. This can, however, be problematic when “projects are often evaluated through word-oriented measures” (Wiles, Clark and Prosser, p.703); this is what Baetens and Sidiacourt (2011) refer to, in a slightly different context, as the difficulty in shifting “linguistic imperialism” (p.591). It is important to understand the particularities of the graphic narrative in order to properly evaluate and foresee the difficulties.

The issue of confidentiality of identity is central to all ethical considerations in research, be it personal or location identity. Graphic narrative can throw up a different perspective on this seemingly straightforward problem. Producing a graphic narrative is a creative endeavour produced potentially, in this case, as a collaborative participation. An authorial performance (Galman, 2009; Mitchell, 2011) or an artistic creation (Pink 2012), as such, may throw a different light on the issue of confidentiality. Some of the anticipated problems and reflection on them centred on the specificity of graphic
narrative production. It could be that participants, having enjoyed producing their story, may have wished to be credited for their effort. This could have been the case, especially from those participants familiar with drawing. I described above the plurality of voice available to authors in graphic narrative; the representation of the ‘self as other’ through drawing and the “fictive but not fictitious” nature of the medium (Hatfield 2005 p.124). These factors, when taken together, ‘soften’ ethical concerns found in other participatory visual research methods; for instance, the ‘political conundrum’ reported by Lomax, Fink, Singh and High (2011) simply cannot apply to this research context.

What Pink and Hogan (2012) claim for feminist art therapy, I also endorse for graphic narrative, that is something to the effect that the act of drawing blurs representation by overlaying it with the interior world of fantasy and imagination and, as such, can reveal, unfiltered, other dimensions of personal experience. In more Deleuzian terms, we could say that the graphic narrative of the autobiographical genre forces re-imaging ideation of memory as past events and the creation of a new reality through the process of its production, thus creating new assemblages beyond language for the reader/researcher to engage with. That approach, I would argue, brings us to another dimension of authenticity where the identifiable ‘factual’ is incidental and the creative act therefore requires different consideration.

2.6 Practical considerations and reflexivity

Procedures for obtaining participatory consent were adhered to. Consent forms were signed by participants. Mindful of Galman’s (2009) advice, great attention was paid to the confidential nature of the material and to the vulnerability which graphic narrative might induce. The material would not be shared with other participants. In the unlikely event of psychological difficulties arising as a result of the production of the material, participants would have been offered the possibility of professional help. Participants were free to opt out of the project at any time. Participants remain the authors and proprietors of their work.

If recruitment was problematic at times, those who took part enjoyed the process. The least effusive response was “not an unpleasant commitment”. At the other end
of the spectrum, taking part in the project seems to have had longer lasting results. One participant, new to the genre, has gone on to use graphic narrative in his work and to publish that work online. Another who hadn’t drawn ‘comics’ for over 20 years had his enthusiasm for it rekindled and is now working on his next project. With hindsight, it perhaps should have been clearer that a project requiring such a personal and time commitment would not attract any response from a poster or an email on a website. That the initial ‘advertising’ approach to recruitment was a failure is a point to note for such projects in the future. Given the extraordinary volume of interest from would-be graphic narrative producers, I would perhaps attempt to recruit from the numerous full-time, part-time and evening courses available and seek to engage participants’ interest from there. I would also, perhaps, again given the vast production of material already produced, recruit from comics conventions where anyone can sell their work, or to prolific publications on the internet. I deal elsewhere with the untenable distinction between amateur and professional artists in the genre.

Another point worthy of note is that the theoretical approach I wished to pursue, namely establishing a ‘Deleuzian connection’ between comics theory and psychosocial research in order to link the two, did not clarify itself until well into the project. My decision to pursue a Deleuzian approach was a result of the iterative process of researching and reading around my subject and questioning how to analyse graphic texts. As such data collection preceded the theoretical and analytical framework to some extent—as is often the case in doctoral research. In hindsight I would be more precise in what I was looking for in terms of the drawn narrative. I would have been more specific as to what I meant by the notion of ‘episode’ in a relationship, as opposed to a review of a relationship, which is how several participants interpreted the brief. Perhaps more importantly, there is a need to explore further and in greater depth the methodological possibilities that making ‘Deleuzian connections’ between comics and psychosocial research has to offer. This thesis points to the possibilities of that direction. The lack of a Deleuzian consideration of comics in current comics theory has already been noted, and that link remains in the ‘virtual’ waiting to be ‘actualised’.
**COMMITMENT**

SO WHAT'S THE EXCITING NEWS THEN?

WELL... DAN AND ME... GUESS WHAT?...

YOU HAVEN'T HAD...

S. E. X.?

YOU'RE GOING ON HOLIDAY TOGETHER?

OMG... DON'T TELL ME HE'S "ASKED" YOU?!!

NO... WE DID THAT AGES AGO

No...

NO, DON'T BE SILLY...

LOOK YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME... ARE YOU PREGNANT?!

WE'VE BEEN TO IKEA TOGETHER!!
Part 3 ‘Wallowing in the data’: What emerges

3.1 Identity

The aim here is to provide an account of one aspect of the formation of subject and identity in order to allow us to both consider the data from a psychosocial standpoint and make sense of the drawings submitted. To this end I draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘haecceity’. The concept is introduced and discussed in the tenth plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus* (pp. 256–341), but because it was better suited to the aim of my analysis, I specifically follow Anne Sauvagnargues’ (2005) exposé of haecceities in relation to the function of art. Sauvagnargues’ crystal-clear exposition goes beyond being an explanatory text of Deleuze’s conceptual framework of art, into a new assemblage of his ideas over time, providing the reader with new insights. In the last section of Part I, I justified the use of Deleuze and Guattari’s system of ideas. Here I attempt to show how some of these ideas can be put to use for different analytical purposes. That is to say they can be employed in much the same way that Deleuze ‘uses’ ideas ‘extracted’ from various philosophers.

Writing on Spinoza, Deleuze says that his purpose is not to become a new Spinozist scholar but rather to draw from his and other philosophers’ concepts that can be used to further the development of philosophy, while of course remaining true to the intentions of the author. In much the same way he builds up his store of concepts, whether drawing on Spinoza, Nietzsche, Hume or Bergson. An analogy of that use would be to draw out a minor character from a novel in order to bring that character to the fore and expound their story. This is what Lecercle (1985) does with the notion délire in Deleuze relative to language and Sauvagnargues (2005) with haecceities and art. Lastly, for a visual understanding of this concept, we can refer
Part 3 'Wallowing in the data': What emerges

back to graphic narrative with the help of the example from Mazzucchelli’s (2009) *Asterios Polyph*, expounded in Section 3.3.3, which perfectly illustrates visually the concepts in play.

Drawing on his short work on Spinoza (1988 [1970]), which asserts Spinoza’s system as a practical philosophy of life, Deleuze presents the process of the self-constitution of the subject (subject in the widest sense of anything that is constituted) as taking place along two axes—longitude and latitude—which map modalities of power. These modalities mapped along the axis make up its singularities or haecceities (a term derived from the medieval philosopher Duns Scottus). Put another way, haecceities are modes which constitute singularity. They are not to be confused with the thing or the person themselves.

The two axes correspond to mappings of power on different registers. The longitudinal axis carries the semiological repertoire and the state of forces in their speed and slowness; that is the particles of matter with the power to affect. The latitude axis carries the ontology of power; the intensities and the affects of that power. The first maps extrinsic power, the second intrinsic power. The two map the modal variations of bodies, the multiplicities that constitute an individual at any moment. As with Spinoza’s account in Part 2 of *The Ethic*, for Deleuze ‘life’ is driven by desire. Desire is life, but desire not as a longing for something or someone in the ordinary sense, nor as a lifelong ‘lack’ resulting from the infant’s failure to possess their mother, as with Lacan, but desire as power; the power to affect and to be affected. Power here is to be understood under the distinction of ‘pouvoir’ in French (for example, the power of the state) and ‘puissance’ more as in the mathematical sense of $x$ to the power of $y$, as a potential for the augmentation or diminution of life. The same distinction ‘potestas/potentia’ is in Spinoza.

So, to recap we can say that the individual is composed of an infinite part of extension (matter, molecules, etc.) a multiple corporal individuality under a singular characteristic (in longitude) and the internal dynamic of the modifications of that power (in latitude). Sauvagnargues (2005, p.67, my translation) puts it thus: “Each
individual defines himself/herself/itself by its longitude and latitude, that is to say by the relation between the forces which are marshalled and by the affects which determine the power he/she/it is capable of.” And goes on to add the following quote from Deleuze: “animal or man will be defined, not by its form, its organs and its functions, neither as a subject: he will be defined by the affects of which he is capable.” It’s all a matter of cartography, or drawing maps of lines.

There are important consequences that flow from this mapping the individual along a longitude and latitude corresponding to the external and internal forces. “It explains the relationship between the semiology of power and the ethics of affect” (Sauvagnargues, 2005, p.67). The first is that this philosophy of haecceities offers a new way of understanding form; form no longer as a Platonic ideal or as a matter of representation, but form as a becoming of forces. Turning to Sauvagnargues again: “It changes the understanding of form as it determines the doctrine of sign and image” (p.68). I return to this relationship in the next section. The second consequence is that the power of affect to augment or diminish life, we could say to open up or close down possibilities, is its own ethic. This is a central theme in Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, and it overlaps with what Holland (2013) refers to as the onto-aesthetics and anthro-ethology (p.52 and p. 76).

Forms are the becoming of forces. That is to say whatever state of powers and affects one is in determines the forms (shapes, if you will), the multiplicities of the corporeal state. Haecceities do not define categories, but capture becomings in action. To follow Sauvanargue’s definition: “We can define form as the modal variation of a relation of forces in a way that we can again consider ‘forms’ in art, on the condition that we consider them as being a result of a varying assemblage of materials” (p.69), i.e. not as matters of essence, representations, etc.

The last implication of haecceities is on the function of art in Deleuze's system. Art’s function is to make visible these forces, otherwise invisible, as relations of power. And this function is applicable to all forms of art: cinema, literature, painting... I will add comics to the list. Art is a mapping of affects. Force is what creates
the differentiations. Form is about force when it relates to sensation. What Deleuze (2003 [1981]) identifies in Bacon is precisely this seizing of forces with the materiality of his craft: paint, canvass, brushes, etc. Sauvagnargues (p.212) notes that the object of art is not to find new forms, but to distort form. Working the language to breaking point in a novel, the distortion of flesh on a canvas (exemplified by Bacon’s work) and, one could add, the distortion of caricature in the comics art form. In the same work on Bacon, Deleuze draws out the distinction between the figurative, as essential representation, and the ‘figural’, which is the bringing to the visual field of the forces at play which, through distortion, transform and move from ‘figurative’ to the ‘figural’. This capacity to ‘capture’ sensation is the distinguishing feature which makes for art that has validity. Art which draws on conventional repertoire, cliché, imitation etc., and the secondary function of representation, remains of little consequence. As with everything else in Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, these distinctions are for the sake of formalising the arguments. In actual art, and certainly with graphic narrative art, there are always elements of both. I now turn to a consideration of the work of the participants in my project, firstly from those whose texts seem to cluster around matters of identity.

3.2 Analysis

Each story has been examined separately with occasional reference to another when topics appear to intersect. This is because each story is very different in content, expression and style. After ‘wallowing’ in the data (MacLure, 2013) in order to allow an emergence of what I take to be the important topics of each, I then “zig-zag” (TP; ABCdaire ‘Z’ Parnet interviews YouTube) through drawings, text and interview in order connect the data to concepts and to capture the élan of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, as it might be applied to graphic narrative and qualitative research. The zig-zag being at once the erratic criss-crossing of the fly’s journey as well as the spark of lightning which ‘lights up’ the connection between two (or more) disparate elements. Inevitably, ‘the data’ becomes transformed by this process of connection. Alicia Youngblood Jackson (2013) puts it the other way round: “I allow the data to contaminate Deleuze’s theory in its own act of becoming. The plugging in is an activity to provoke, explain and elaborate the assemblage” (p.114).
For the sake of practicality, as well as to stress the contribution to the psychosocial part of this research project, I have divided the data analysis into three broad categories, each concerned with a topic I think is particularly salient, or at least which I extract from the participant’s work. These are: Identity, Therapy, Daily Life. I have given a topical heading to the participants’ stories where there is a clear theme and
selected a drawing from their work which I think best illustrates it by means of a title or heading.

**Participant 10**  *Lines of flight, nomadic cultural identity: a marriage assemblage*

“In our minds this is our marriage”, Participant 10 tells me with assured emphasis as we progress through the drawings during the interview. One element of this visual assemblage had left me puzzled when considering it prior to the meeting: the broom. In ignorance I had tentatively imagined some symbolic interpretation: sweeping away the past? Entering domesticity? I had worked out that this was a marriage, evident from the festive balloons, three-tiered wedding cake; and a cross-cultural marriage at that, indicated by the ‘pièce montée’, the traditional cake of weddings and other family festivities in France. “Getting married... is going to another commitment beyond having children”, P10 tells me, “we literally ‘jumped over the broom’, because we made our own wedding ceremony.” The Deleuzian ear pricks up. Children, then marriage; marriage a commitment beyond having children; this already reverses the traditional, linear order of the stratified sedimentations of life’s stages. Is it an act of resistance to a dominant discourse of marriage, as a Foucauldian analysis of power might have it, or should we understand it as something more, something beyond the individual/social tension? Something at a more processual level of morphogenesis, as a ‘detterritorialisation’, creating a ‘line of flight’, such as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offer? That is to say a process of destratification taking place by slipping through the cracks and weak points of the strata (itself an assemblage of the cultural, familial, social, economic etc.) in order to create new connections.

But why France if it is the case that his wife is XXXX? “She has a French name,” says P10, and her family history is a cultural peregrination through France, Scotland, Flanders, Holland and back again, with the family name adapting itself to the
cultural setting of each generation. “But the reason we got married in France was ‘neutral territory’”, the practicality of having a convenient place for both the English and continental members of the wedding party to get to. There is more to the choice than the ease of travel arrangements. The location itself: “It’s a magical place”; “it’s like a second home to us”. The friends that introduced the couple to this site are the very same friends that went ahead of the wedding to prepare and decorate the barn for the wedding; who painted the walls, placed the balloons, ordered the cakes, etc. and the very same friends in the very same place, so laden with ‘good memories’, is also the place where this summer P10 undertook the drawing task for this research. The barn, depicted in shadowed overlay in page 4 frame 1, I first took to be a tent, a maquis. P10 corrects me: “It’s actually a barn, but it is actually a tent as well... it’s like a permanent temporary home.” The nomadic tent enabling the perpetuation of an inherited cultural transhumance at once escaping the sedimentation of traditions and refashioning anew its significance through the couple’s own assemblage.

And the broom? “We have the expression ‘jumping the broom’... which is very Scottish.” For P10 its significance lies in what it represents: “again labels of outside and inside love”, a theme he has already evoked in relation to frame 5 on page 1, of linking the outer world to the inner. For some reason I felt there was more to the broom than P10’s account yielded. The cultural history of ‘jumping the broom’ is linked to Scotland and Wales and more specifically to Romani communities. What appears to be agreed by all is the power of the ceremony to bind a couple in marriage, albeit in a non-traditional form (i.e. one not legitimated by church or state or given wider social recognition beyond the immediate community: the marriage of the outsider).This ‘binding’ echoes the words in the drawing placed horizontally and vertically in the gutters of page 3, overlaid with spiritual reminiscences through the shape of a cross.

What is perhaps most striking about P10’s graphic story is the portrayal of him and his wife as animals, albeit cartoon animals. How can we understand this? A facile account would draw us all too easily to see the animal portrayal of their characters as the product of fantasy, as romanticised anthropomorphic representations, part of the intimate private language couples use to communicate feelings of love—as visual pet
names acting as a shorthand to express sensual and other affections. It may indeed be that all these things are intentionally at play, but at the same time it brings to the fore something of wider significance in the context of the human/animal relationship. Certainly there is a long tradition of animal representation in comics, from Mickey Mouse to the mice of Spiegelman’s *Maus*, that most celebrated of graphic novels. However, it is not a tradition comics invented, but is instead probably one that comics naturally incorporated: animals as articulate beings, standing in for humans in their wisdom or folly. These have been around since Aesop’s fables at least, coming up to us through medieval tales to early comics characters. P10’s animals are not of the cutesy/cuddly genre; while they no doubt have a caricatural feel, we can frame the ‘animalisation’ of the characters in a wider context of “becoming animal”, an important part of the tenth plateau (D&G, TP, p.279). But firstly how does the participant himself account for the animalistic characterisation of his account? It begins with an attempt to translate a pet name into his wife’s mother tongue, something “like lucky little rabbit”, but it comes out all wrong as “xxxx xxxx”, which in turn becomes a name and the name becomes a cartoon character, meant to be P10, but with the added feature of a mask. A rabbit wearing a mask, the mask of a comic book superhero: a double disguise. His partner is also in double disguise: a hybrid animal at once deer and giraffe. In his explanation during the interview, P10 speaks of anthropomorphic ideas, of observing animals in an animal park and making links to the personal characteristics of himself and his partner. These were “interesting conversations”, he recalls.

Our relationship to animals as conscious representations intimately connected to ourselves goes back to the shamanism of prehistoric cave painting, which some comics historians choose to read as a prototype of the comic form (Grove (2010) devotes a chapter to the pre-history of comics). Brought closer to our purpose, the understanding of that relationship has attracted renewed interest in recent years. Postmodernism has, through its challenging of humanism, forced a reconsideration of the human/animal rapport. Braidotti (2013) argues that the anthropocentric, hierarchical division of human/animal is no longer tenable. Scientific advances increasingly blur the distinction. Dolly the sheep and the Oncomouse, ‘cyborg’ creations, are “creatures of mixity or vectors of posthuman relationality” (p.73). We
need to rethink our dogs, cats and other sofa-based “companions” who, she says, quoting Haraway (2003), “have been historically confined within infantilising narratives that established affective kinship relations across the species” (p.70).

What I wish to examine is whether we can draw a parallel function between Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming animal and Pro’s use of animals to express his relationship beyond the ‘ordinary’ understanding of such affective (here in the sense of feeling) metaphor.

Deleuze and Guattari’s tenth plateau deals with the ‘becoming-animal’, hyphenated to indicate that it is a becoming in relation to animal rather than becoming an animal. Becoming-animal has no purpose, it has no end point in view. The emphasis is on the process of ‘becoming other’ and what that makes possible. It is not a question of ‘really’ becoming a wolf, a rabbit etc.; the materiality of wolf or man does not alter in becoming-animal. Neither is it a question of imitating or miming the animal, though Deleuze and Guattari state that this may prove useful in order to “enter the zone of proximity” (TP, p.302); that is in order to confront the animal and share its molecular resonance. It is also important to stress that it is not about a correspondence of image to a symbolic order of the unconscious. It is not about representation, i.e. the Oedipal animal-human relationship that Braidotti (2013) identifies as one problematic aspect of our relationship to animals. (The others being the instrumental: the animals we trade and eat. The third being the ‘fantasmatic’ relations; the animals of dreams and fantasy (p.70).) It is a matter of confronting the animal, of allowing the resonance of its existence to vibrate, to allow the shared molecular existence to create the ‘intensities’ that create the ‘event’ of the becoming; “you become animal only molecularly” (D&G, TP, p.302). It is a matter of extracting the function to become other and this becoming other functions as a disguise.

Lawlor (2008) emphasises that “becoming is only a ‘becoming other’ if it produces a work of art (‘une oeuvre’ in the French text)” (p.170, my emphasis). Now Deleuze selects the examples from his preferred art form to make the point, that of writing, but an “oeuvre” can proceed from any form of art and I extend that for my argument.
to graphic narrative. Lawlor takes Deleuze and Guattari’s example of ‘becoming-rat’: “the rat becomes a ‘feverish thought’, it forces thought”. The response he goes on to say is not to look like a rat but to write like a rat (p.171). Or, indeed, in P10’s case we could say, to draw like a superhero rabbit. Extracting the ‘function’ of rabbit and the mask of giraffe and deer does not imply becoming a superhero rabbit and giraffe/deer, but as lines on paper it doubles the disguise. It was noted earlier that a graphic representation of oneself in comics is always a ‘self-as-other’. Abstracted lines on paper, marking the contours it captures, the blocks of a becoming human/animal of which the resultant drawing is the extinguished representation.

Deleuze and Guattari (TP, 1987, QQP, 1991) return to their re-examination and critique of Freud’s account of little Hans: the fallen cart horse, the whip, the driver etc. “Little Han’s horse is not representative but affective.” It is not a question of identity, imitation or ‘playing horse’, nor is it to do with analogies between assemblages. “The question is whether little Hans can endow his own elements with the relations of movement and rest, the affects, that would make it possible to become horse, forms and subjects aside.” They go on to question whether a different assemblage, “as yet unknown”, of horse, Hans etc., where Hans ‘becomes’ the horse, might not provide him with a way forward in his difficulties or, as a therapeutic expression, might put it to reconfigure his problem (MP, p.284).

‘Becoming’ for Deleuze and Guattari is the central process of life. Not becoming something as in a journey from point A to B, but as a permanent process through the forces of desire that animate life. Desire is here understood not as Lacanian lack or the ordinary sense of ‘wanting’, but in the sense of Spinoza’s ‘conatus’: a propelling force which is life itself. A force which drives the totality of existence. In its emancipatory aspect, Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphysics is directed (though not in a linear sense) towards a ‘becoming imperceptible’. This is achieved by freeing, by releasing desire through an escape from the forces of subjectification through processes of ‘deterritorialisation’, creating ‘lines of flight’ which free up new forms of creativity. The steps in the argument are as follows: all becoming is becoming...
minoritarian. Minoritarian, in the sense Deleuze means it, is a breaking away from the power controls of majoritarian regimes. Thus ‘man’ can never become ‘man’ because ‘man’ is already majoritarian, so man must become woman and woman in turn becomes animal. This is not in the sense of a real actualisation, but is to do with the formation of new connections between the two (Lawlor, 2008).

Now the obvious objection is that Deleuze concentrates with ‘becoming-animal’ on pack animals, rats, wolves, dogs etc.; however, “every animal is essentially... a pack” (D&G, TP, p.239). What interests them is not the characteristics of any particular animal “but the modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peo-

pling” (p.239) and this in opposition to propagation through filiation. The band, the pack, it is the multiplicity “dwelling within us?” (p.239). “All we are saying here is that animals are packs and that packs form, develop and are transformed by conta-

gion.”(p.267, my emphasis). Holland (2013) sums up the purpose of becoming-animal (becoming-woman, becoming-child, etc.) thus:

“It means accessing or retrieving a behavioural repertoire most of which has been selected out or repressed in the process of reaching (molar) adulthood. It means restoring a kind of ‘polymorphous perversity’ (Freud’s expression) if you will, providing we understand it as a repertoire of means of enjoyment that bear no necessary relation to reproduction or even to sexuality.” (p.106)

On the final page (see full text of P10 work in the appendix), dark thick outlines of some of the elements of that magic place (the barn, the tree with the cockerel, the flowing stream, the windmill) overlay the repetition of the previously drawn memories. More sketchily drawn with coarse, thick black lines, these overlays have a menacing quality. Indeed, P10 had warned me that the last page of his narrative was the only one that might need further explanation. During the interview, we were discussing how the final picture and statement are a reference to a picture of hope and potential in a well-known text on comics when something erupted in the conversation. “Maybe on another level there is something... because the images are not... well in a way they are
scrambled and the final pages are called ‘memories and tangles’ and tangles reversed and memories reversed.’ The wedding was the ‘last significant thing we did’ with XXX’s mother, who was by then already suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. Further, it appears to run in the family, with other members also affected. The spectre of this awful disease causes a good deal of anxiety to both partners. The disintegration of the details of those happy memories, the fear they will no longer be shared and yet the need to remain optimistic and have trust in the development of a cure. Those who have to endure watching the decline of a loved one affected by any form of dementia have often expressed it as witnessing loss of identity: ‘S/he is no longer the person I once knew.’ Re-cognition through habit, memory gradually disappears as the biological deterioration of the brain forms random connections which can no longer be used to make new creative connections. It is the biological destratification which progressively detaches the sufferer from the social sphere. Deleuze and Guattari draw attention to the porosity between the biological and the alloplastic strata.

P10’s graphic animal identity has been placed in a post-anthropomorphic, posthuman context, as an expression of a continuity of identity which decentres the human and human/animal hierarchical binary. Along with Deleuze and Guattari’s chapter on becoming, attention has been drawn to the creative powers of disguise. The earlier chapter on graphic narrative pointed to disguise of the self as a central narrative device in the autobiographical graphic narrative.

Participant 9 Identity and the ambiguity of language

My first reaction on reading this text was that it was not so much a graphic story as a ‘graphic poem’. It uses language, it explores the uses of language in the context of a relationship to define, label, judge, destroy or build. Language and thought, language and affect and the materiality of language as words, as images that are at play in the relationship at the interface of love and power. My second sense was that, through its considerations of language it was the story of how relationships are affected by the subjectification of words and discourses, received through the social sphere and how these create tensions (see frames 5 and 6 on p.1, in the appendix). We read and measure each other through social discourses that determine certain expectations;
these accord or disaccord with individual flows of desire. Of all the graphic stories submitted, it is the most 'standalone' text. That is because its level of abstraction makes it self-contained; it requires no external information in order to make sense of the text. That is not to say that additional biographical information cannot add to or amplify an understanding, but that the text is fully intelligible without it. In fact, the transcripts of the interview offer little personal information and little seems to be required in the interview.

Most of the interview conversation centres around the production of the piece, its motivation, how P9 went about it, and what he consciously tried to achieve. P9 wanted through this exercise to say something about language since his studies took him to look at language use through philosophy:

“So my challenge was how to put this across, because when you write about this stuff you get into long paragraphs that are fairly dense and complex ideas. So how do you represent it in a way that has immediate impact? That’s what I like about the challenge. [of the project].”

What particularly resonates with P9 is that there is already an overlap through a shared understanding of the self in its postmodernist complexity. “I knew I wanted to play with the boundary a bit... I was going to say something about being contained within a story and the effort to re-story ourselves through the constant tensions we have.” Playing with the boundaries, forcing the saying of something about language with drawn image, reaching for a new expression of the “tension we have”.

What is interesting there is that P9 achieved this without any specific knowledge or practice of comics, other than having read them as a child; he was nonetheless immediately able to see the art form’s possibility of expressing the forces of affect. And
it is this particular quality of comics that makes many comics scholars (Murray, 2011; Miller, 2010; El Refaie, 2013, etc.) claim comics as the postmodernist art form.

Considering how P9’s work is constructed, three aspects draw our attention. Firstly the layout, secondly the drawing style and thirdly the triple function of language use.

The layout belongs to what comics theorists refer to as the formal properties of comics. These properties (layout, spaces between frames, reading direction, words/picture balance, etc.) set out the way in which a graphic story is rendered legible independent of plot or drawing style. In this case, each page is divided into frames, but these are drawn freehand and vary in size and shape to suit the image and to give pace and rhythm to the text. None of the frames are closed, which accentuates the sense of fluidity, allowing a possibility of escape and connection from one to another.

Similarly, the drawing style is fluid, minimal, and open ended; nothing, object or person, is ever fully enclosed. Everything is pared down, abstracted to a minimum of representational definition with a few outlines, never fully defined as if not to hinder their potential transformations. The characters themselves are naked, unadorned, unprotected and undisguised bodies, emphasising their vulnerability in the face of the ‘affects’ the words produce. Words which ‘territorialise’ them and words with which they attempt to territorialise each other. Bodies with no facial identity seeking to free themselves from the expectations of their situation and of each other. They seek lines of escape both from the social processes of their ‘subjectification’, the over-coded semiotic chains, regimes of signs, which literally bind them in both senses and separate them. What we see are bodily movements, almost as a dance in which the words themselves become the obstacle objects, objects of accumulation, objects of exchange, objects of stratification in the social milieu, objects which swamp, overwhelm and hurt in turn. Faces barely feature, removing the subjectivity from the actors to emphasise the process of the forces at play. They seek lines of flight through words in books, “words that make stories... that lead somewhere”, as the text tells us (p.3, frame 6, see appendix).

Having examined how words connect to the drawings, how they become objects, we can now consider the words which form the textual part of the story. First there is the
narrative text which meanders through the work, sometimes at the top of the frame, sometimes at the bottom, occasionally at the side, slipping through and opening up further the gap sections in the frames and linking them horizontally, at times even vertically. Grammatically the text is written in the first person plural: “we” “us”. This positions the narrator as speaking for both parties, and this has the function of emphasising the process of what we might term ‘language affect’ by distancing the actors from personalities and character traits. In turn, this harmonises with the drawings, which creates the same sense of abstraction. Then there are the speech bubbles, also part of the formal resources of graphic narrative; their function is to convey dialogue between the characters in the story. In this case they report the speech acts of accusations “You did this”, “you said that” (p.2, frame 8), examples of Deleuze’s order-word. On the final page, the exchange opens up possibilities rather than closing them as on page two. This is the affective ethology in process. Thirdly, there is the ‘over text’. Written in capital letters and appearing at the top in the middle and at the bottom of the page, its function is to deny the implied value judgements the story might imply and to hint at something deeper than the trappings of language might lead us to. This over text works in counterpoint to the narrative. P9 seems to follow intuitively the Deleuzian precepts not to search for meanings, not to interpret, not to determine moral judgements, but to ask how language works, how it connects to ‘affect’. This is what he reveals about language: observing how words are used in relationships literally when we become victims of our own words (p.4, frames 3, 4 and 5): “caught... by our own... words”.

3.3 Therapy: The uncertain ally

Participant 7  life’s assemblage of stories.

In terms of its production what is most noticeable in P7’s piece is the imbalance of words to pictures. Comics purists might categorise it as an illustrated story rather than a piece of graphic narrative, but categorisation, in terms of a standard set of rules for the inclusion or exclusion of a piece of work, offers nothing to the understanding. Better then to ask with Deleuze and Guattari: ‘How does it work?’ rather than ‘What is it?’ What emerges is an overall story, composed of several interrelated stories, each dealing with a particular relationship, their points
of intersection making up their significance. The narrative ambition exceeds the size and format of the exercise. The drawings in their ‘naive art’ simplicity form an eerie backdrop to the seriousness of the events.

There is a lot packed on two sides of a piece of art paper of indeterminate size. It is the only submission to the project that uses colour to narrative effect. Colour is usually used as a device to indicate affective intensity. In the interview P7 tells me that he ran out of time and that, therefore, the final section is in text only. The story told and expanded upon during the interview is a life story of failed or difficult relationships and, finally, of happy resolution. It begins with abandonment in infancy; continues (in his words in the text) as a failed “go-between” for his adoptive parents’ unhappy marriage. Then as “the bolter” from relationships with women, leading to his nearly throwing away his one significant relationship, which has so much to offer him. After a near-disastrous episode in which he re-discovers his birth mother and siblings and a therapeutic journey which he experiences as an attempt to destroy his relationship, against all odds P7 ends up finding peace and fulfilment with his partner.

The way the narrative is set out is interesting. The narrative appears to be linear, but calendar time (dates feature in several of the images) is juxtaposed with time as intensity, achieved pictorially by linking images from one piece of text to another and by magnifying faces, which emphasises significant emotional content. The presentation challenges the reading order, since the eye is drawn horizontally at times, vertically at others. There are no frames as such incorporating text and image. Instead there are images spaced by blocks of text which become progressively larger as the story heads towards an ending. There is no identifiable ordered layout, only blocks of text and images filling two sides of a not-quite A3 sheet of paper. The reading order is at times indicated with the arrows which link image to image or image to text and by dates set in the corner of several of the images, indicating chronology. These function as signposts and give the whole piece the feel of a map. A map of time as well as of space, depicting events when time flashes by or has no narrative relevance and when it is suddenly slowed down and magnified, pinpointing its intensity. Chronos and Aeon, the distinctions of time—derived from
Bergson—that Deleuze and Guattari (MP, QQP) emphasise. In terms of the textual narrative, beyond the first block of text, which is a question P7 addresses to himself in the first person about the circularity of experience, the text is written in the third person with a postscript to the effect that the author is aware of this unusual manner of self-referencing. What is interesting here is that, without any specific knowledge of graphic narrative, P7 intuitively draws the multiplicity of authorial positions in graphic narrative. He names himself Moses and refers to his partner as ‘The Woman’, usually followed by an epithet (e.g. “with the nice hair”), giving the feel of an ancient epic recounted. And indeed it is an epic story with several textbook example of relational situations (the Oedipal mother/son) which should guide us to well-established interpretations and predictable conclusions if psychoanalysis was the chosen method of analysis. In P7’s account and in the taped interview, that is certainly what the ‘couple’s therapist’ is understood to be doing. A psychological profile is built up leading to a moral/political judgement about his worth as a potential partner. It is a political judgement, because, as a woman, she seeks to protect her woman client from a partner whom she reads, with her psychological understanding, as unsuitable; and a moral judgement, because of that very ‘diagnosis’.

The choice of imagery is indicative of how P7 constructs and makes sense of his story through the use of mythic analogy. The ‘foundling’ Moses adopted by the couple who provide material comforts but also hold him as a “go-between” in their unhappiness. Then the epic search for his parents, undertaken at the age of 28, taking him to unfamiliar lands and very different communities from his own, to a reunion that has near-disastrous consequences. The disaster is averted and opens up the possibility of finding ‘true love’ (i.e. a stable and loving relationship) with ‘The Woman’ “with the nice hair”. But the journey isn't over yet. There are residual problems with drugs, alcohol and running away which love alone, however passionate, cannot resolve.

A condition of reunification imposed by ‘The Woman’ after P7’s last episode of “bolting” turns out to be a Herculean task: “12 sessions of (joint) counselling with ‘a lady’ from Relate”. Throughout the interview P7 appears wary of interpretation and
ascensions of any sort. When intrigued by the repeated image, the face in profile at the top of this section, I seek clarification. Is it a representation of his partner, or something like an all-seeing eye? P7 tells me I am reading too much into it and that he simply likes the images. The researcher caught out by the ‘deformation professionelle’ of interpretation. Therapy also lends itself to being a context for interpretation, diagnosis and assessment. In the text P7 writes:

“Moses hated this, and The Woman (who rarely cries) cried a lot. In a final session which Moses did not attend, (the counsellor) told Woman she should not be taking Moses back. He bad.”

The advice was not heeded, but what had been said in the counselling room was repeated. Furthermore, the manner in which P7’s partner was able to relay the counsellor’s advice without further “verbal static” (i.e. without judgement, explanations or recrimination) seems to have been a turning point which allowed change to begin. In the interview P7 tells me more about the therapeutic experience. “I could see I was being branded the bad guy here, rather too much.” His view of Relate is coloured by that experience, which, though filtered by time, remains much the same. He admits his opinion may be thought slightly sexist, but, for him, it is an organisation that “is set up by women for women”. No man would ever suggest “I know what we should do, let’s go to Relate” and later: “whether I said something to offend the sisterhood, I don’t know. Sounds a bit paranoid. I should put it differently, whatever I felt the Relate lady took against me and in favour of XXX.”

Having all three accounts would make for rich research. The intersection of three points of view, plus that of the researcher making the fourth. Different points of view with differing interpretations. The whole thrust of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* (1972 [1987]) is a critique of psychoanalysis which demonstrates its political alliance with capitalism through its focus on the nuclear family and the Oedipal narrative and its disregard for social context. In its place they offer schizoanalysis, a materialist ‘psychiatry’ offering an analysis of the flows and codings of desire in order to set it free and thus to fully release the potential of creativity. This,
in order to draw an analogy (and as a formal exercise), illustrates the depth of the disconnection between the counsellor and P7 around matters of interpretation. It highlights questions of judgement which have moral implications. Interpretations entail political implications embedded in the theoretical position in a given system. Deleuze and Guattari’s system is a rejection of both interpretation and judgement.

In his analysis of the genre in *History of Sexuality* (1976 [1978]), Foucault says that in the ritual of Catholic confession (p. 61) the priest (here as counsellor) holds the power of interpretative knowledge through professional accreditation, which bestows on her the “scientific” language with which to perform “incorporeal transformations”, and which also validates whatever political positions accompany them. The professional ethic can become lost in the diagnostic judgements. So in the triangular encounter, within the confines of the counselling room, the unequal power in terms of space (the counselling room) and knowledge (the counsellor is the ‘expert’), P7 increasingly feels labelled as the “bad guy”.

The significance of this will vary in accordance to the theoretical approach we bring to it. For the psychoanalyst, it would be evidenced as a resistance to transfer-ence. A more behavioural approach might see it as a re-enactment of behavioural patterns set by earlier experience re-creating these feelings. In terms of the power dynamic, the consequences it has on P7 are clear: he is identified and confronted as oppressor. Hence his sense that the “counselling business” is “made by women and for women”. We can speculate that a Deleuzian approach would have centred on the interplay of affects on the couple, determining what worked and what didn't, what augmented their wellbeing and what diminished it, as a starting point.

There are both differences and similarities in the way Deleuze’s philosophy and psychoanalysis operate. They are both invitations to change our understanding. But psychoanalysis is primarily offered as a ‘cure’ achieved under the guidance of the analyst’s powers of interpretation. Deleuze’s approach, like Spinoza’s before his, is an invitation to change through philosophical labour. Very broadly, under psychoanalysis, the cure is complete when the patient ceases to resist and is
readjusted to his social context, capitalist values untouched or reinforced. All the creativity of the 'cure' resides with the analyst's interpretation, of which the patient is the grateful recipient and may believe himself to have co-constructed. Deleuze's system, on the other hand, is a challenge addressed to all to be creative, to go beyond received opinion. The adventure is one of thinking, of pushing to the limits everything we know of living with the instability of uncertainty and permanent renewal; of confronting chaos and sailing close to the shore of insanity. The reward it offers is not one of discovering our true self, or a celebration of our personality, but a program for the "becoming imperceptible" (TP, p.279) as the "immanent end of becoming", Deleuze's "cosmic formula", as Holland paints it (Holland, 2013, p.110). And this has a connection to a theme which emerges in this research. Not unlike several other participants, P7 stresses the importance of 'practices' in his life. P4, through his practice of meditation, has gained greater insights, he feels, than that gained from all the therapeutic theory he has been exposed to. For P7, the practice of Tai Chi, and the practice of yoga for his partner, form a crucial aspect of their relationship. Later P4, a psychotherapist himself, claims much the same thing. Eastern disciplines share an aim in the transcendence of the illusory ego to the plane of immanence, but in the case of Deleuze, not as a foundational place for 'pure being' but as a state of permanent becoming. This is a formula somewhat at odds with the (over) valuing of the insecure 'me' of modernity.

We can look at the denouement of the story from the point of view of different concepts drawn from the work of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari. 'The Woman', in the event, appears to be left with a choice between her love for P7 and the apparently authoritative, reasoned judgement of the counsellor. We can consider the drama in terms of the concepts of stratification and lines of flight, the therapeutic discourse as an example of institutional thought, state thought, as a product of 'royal science' as opposed to nomadic thought which makes escape possible. State thought is stratified thought (Holland, 2013, p.45), while nomadic thought is rhizomic. This excursion into epistemology may seem a long way from what can be said about P7's negative therapeutic experience. On the contrary it provides us with the possibility of a completely different reading of the data, one that allows us to
gaze through the crystal clear waters of a philosophy of difference, to the depth of divergences of interests in operation. P7’s decision not to attend the final sessions can be seen as an act of resistance to the territorialisation the stratified ‘counselling’ machine tries to mould him to. There is something in the physicality of the encounter that prompts him to resist; “bodies are never far from metaphysics”, Elizabeth Grosz (2011) writes. The accumulated layers of accepted psychological patterning, labelling, classifying with all their social consequences and which P7 seems to resists. His partner simply repeats to him the counsellor’s judgement without “a load of other verbal static”. By doing so they seal for themselves a line of flight and, as P7 puts it, “change commenced. And continues.”

**Participant 4. Comics on the couch**

This submission reads as a declaration of love. An act of délire, which Lecercle (1985) points out “is an act of communication: you engage in délire for someone” (p.151). It is a composed of private symbolism and metaphor, the language of love’s unreason. I was unsure initially how to treat it ‘as data’. It wasn’t really an episode of a relationship as such, but it was certainly expressive of something important. This was aided by the fact that the participant sent me some further drawings pertaining to and opening up a process of inquiry, rather than concern for categorising data and carrying out prescriptive interview techniques. The reward was that this participant’s work turned out to be a key that unlocked a story of how a cartoon character’s identity made and then unmade a relationship.

Starting with page 1, the character Boo is born, mid-page, in a moment of passionate intimacy, enclosed in its sealed square frame with emanata (i.e lines, squiggles, dots, etc.) which emphasise emotion (M. Walker’s 1980 definition). The heat of affective intensity rising above their heads testifies to the embodiment of emotion. The slight “wrong” (as the text tells us) of her as drawn in her adult female form is that it no longer reflects who she has “become” under a new ascription of signs, in
name and drawing. The “energetic little toy character”, as the participant refers to his creation in the interview, is released in mid-run onto the page, having been “delivered during a big hug” (p.1). This is to the visible satisfaction of both parties in the last frame. An ‘incorporeal transformation’ has taken place. What became intriguing to know was how the graphic image, the created text (and the text as an act of creation of and in that relationship) connected itself to the lived life of that relationship. In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) sense, to ‘plug’ the text back into the relationship to see how it worked and functioned.

In order to do that it had to be connected into another ‘text’: that is the interview. A verbal story about the graphic story, itself a story connected to a relationship, in turn mediated by time and the memory of the participant and further mediated by my questions, the affective interplay and the time specificity of the interview. Mediated further through a transcript which at times skips over the inaudible; which may miss an inflection or misconstrue a phrase or perhaps hear selectively that which enters the zone of my understanding, my own connections, constructions and everything that spreads from that. In all a rich assemblage, ever becoming, through which a thread of continuity must be picked to further becoming. Any such encounter is an act of transformation, a process of becoming; neither is the same at the end as at the beginning. Where is my data? In retrospect I was asking participants to illustrate a moment of ‘epiphany’ in their relationship, ‘an episode you consider of particular significance in the course of a long-term relationship’, as my poster said. I suppose I was expecting something in the sense that Denzin (2014) describes: “a moment of interpretative crystallisation of experience which shapes the representation of lives sending them into different trajectories” (p.28), aware that these lives and selves “are storied performances” (p.35). This is doubly so when we go beyond voice to graphic narrative, with the double stepping of narrative and graphic representation presenting and re-presenting the “self as other” (Rugg; 2011); multiplying meaning while erasing the authority of ‘presence’.

The birth of Boo, is the epiphany, a joyous crystallising moment, but of what? Is it the cementing of a foundational moment of desire which binds a relationship in
mutual recognition, an expression of ‘true’ love? Or is it part of a process of reciprocal affectivity which leads to the construction of meaning? Accounts will vary whether we choose ‘interpretation’ or ‘use’ as the guiding principle. Regardless of whether we are following Deleuze and Guattari (1988), we seek to understand how it functions in relation to other constitutive aspects of this relationship or whether we seek to decode or interpret meanings in the visual and verbal representations.

It begins with a difference. All other participants produced their drawn work in response to my brief. Their work is addressed to me. I am the intended reader. Here P4, in the context of how he was working with comics at the time, offers a comment of (p. 3): “It addresses her... she's the reader”. My analytical focus, therefore, is from a different viewpoint, a different point of perspective, to those where I am the intended reader. The interview is more important here in decoding the ‘private messages’ in the drawings and some of the “in jokes”.

“Me: What role did comics play in this relationship if any?
“P4: [pause] Kind of double edged.”

P4 stresses that his comics are not planned. “They’re improvised as they go. I’m doing it panel by panel.” It’s the sound of words, the rhyming and the images that spring to mind, that construct the story; nothing is the product of reflection transferred to paper. It is in retrospect that the things drawn reveal themselves; things drawn which “are suggestive without having to say what they mean. Yes that makes sense.” Here P4 reaffirms the unmediated link of comics creation: the blocs of sensation realised through the pen on the paper. Meaning, like representation, is a secondary residue.

As to what the Boo character and the stories built around her represented in the relationship, the point is repeatedly emphasised: “This was an attempt to draw the inner self of her” and again “This represented Boo which is the self as she was in the relationship.” And how did X receive it? Again, the emphasis is clear: “As a great delight... She kind of saw herself in them (the comics)... and she loved being Boo.”
She wanted ‘Blue Vows’ (the submitted graphic piece) to be blown up as a poster. She loved getting the cartoon character on cards, etc.

Assemblages of emotions can be contradictory; in terms of the ethology we can say that they can augment us in one context and diminish us in another. This is what P4 expresses in a language of character traits. There was a tension in X between an inner and outer sense of self, and a resistance to giving expression to the former. Boo was in essence “the self she was in the relationship” but during the course of therapy X came to refuse the Boo identity, claiming it as an imaginary construct that P4 had fallen in love with. For P4 that message was understood to mean that if “she wants me to treat her as she is on the surface to other people, then she doesn’t want to be with me anymore.”

Looking back to the early day when “she loved being Boo... she wanted to see that but outside herself... rather than she could be that person that could receive love and affection.” There were, of course, other levels of relating (“it’s not we were always in cutesy mode”); they talked about professional matters and negotiated difficult times such as funerals. The character traits he identifies in her are in direct contrast with the comic character he offers in the drawings and therefore how he perceived the ‘other side’ of her. She was, he says “formidable”, “hard-nosed and kind of serious about herself” in spite of being “very funny in a serious hard-edged way” and that at times it was better to be on her side. Boo was “almost an antidote” to always being strong. Even with her friends “she wasn’t this kind of vulnerable playful with anybody else.”

As for himself, P4 stresses the importance of the external pressure of deadlines: “you should turn up in a room, you improvise, you get it done. Otherwise it’s too daunting to work out what you’re going to do” (my emphasis). “In a room, make me have to do these things or I’ll be an idiot if I don’t. It’ll be embarrassing if I don’t. It’s down to pressure.” When I suggest that the raw emotion of an experience can be a motivating factor in the creative process he replied: “the kind of challenge you set here which is aimed to express feelings within a relationship (his interpretation of the brief) I think
I’m not very good at.” He returns to contexts of pressure as motivators of production. Taken together with the fact that he doesn’t work in autobiographic mode (“My stuff isn’t autobiographical”), this plays to the traditional view of men’s reluctance to express emotions. P4’s example also demonstrates how, through graphic narrative, he was able to put across and negotiate a complexity of affective complexes.

What intervened to ultimately break the relationship between P4 and X? “She... used it in her therapy.” The Boo comics, especially ‘Blue Vows’, were subpoenaed to be reinvested, re-examined and reinterpreted in the context of the therapeutic relationship. What had represented hope “this dream of the future... the house by the beach... the dog playing on the beach... the coffee, the embrace and these promises... yeah” were reconfigured, reframed and re-presented to its creator in a new interpretation. What had been “emblematic of a self I saw in her and that other people were not privy to because of the closeness of our relationship” became something “that was infantilising and not sexual in particular”, which alienated X and “that this was my imagined version of her”. Later the “crunch point that came up in therapy... that was feeding this idea that Boo was who I was in love with and that it was a barrier...”

Being in couple’s therapy in “the last five or six months of their relationship” seems to have yielded different results for each party rather than a shared framework from which they might negotiate their different stakes in the relationship. P4 remains ambivalent and in part resistant to interpretation. It is clear that he understood the discourse of the infantilisation, the implied desexualisation. For him, losing the emotive signification of Boo was experienced as a rejection of him. When Boo, under the therapeutic lens, was recast as something that obliterated X rather than reflected her, “it seemed to me that obviously I wasn’t what she wanted. So the rejection of the character, the cartoon character, came with the rejection of me and my love for her.” What changed were the assemblages that created meaning. X found augmentation in the therapeutic discourse and P4 the opposite.

Perhaps it is sufficient to say that we have a one-sided view of a conflict over meaning and identity. It is perhaps fitting, therefore, to let P4 have the last word. If, ultimately,
the therapy sealed the separation, it opened up avenues for reflection, balancing points of view that are still unresolved. P4 reports “And that idea of externalisation... when I was doing my Master's I studied Winnicott” and the idea that the comic was a transitional object (apparently also mentioned in the therapy) “which enables us both to engage in our relationship”, which makes things safe in order to “then become something we can handle”. The need for that ritual “is confusing”. Further, he wonders if that is not a pattern “that I’m neutralising intimacy by creating a character to love while negating the individual. There is a force about that.” And yes, he has a predilection for giving pet names to friends, lovers and his pets, but this has not been a problem before; it is only in this case “that the love that’s expressed through that name has been... has become neutralised, I think by her.” He still wonders about it.

This example, together with that of P7, sounds a note of caution into how psychotherapeutic intervention—taken as part of the ‘cultural tool kit’ for negotiating affective communication in order to bring about greater democratisation—must, as Giddens (1992) argues, be mindful of possible ‘distortions’ and the power relations ensuing as a consequence of differing theoretical formulations of affect and emotion.

3.4 The affects of emotions in everyday life

Participant 3 The material arena

Much of our lives are taken up in dealing with the mundane, the trivialities of the everyday. How we navigate and resolve these little difficulties, which can diminish the quality of our lives, is not always straightforward and we often need to draw on broader narratives or combinations of narratives in order to find solutions or simply make sense of how our differences make us deal with things and affect us.

Strictly speaking, Participant 3’s work belongs more to the photo novella genre than to the graphic narrative. There is, of course, vast overlap between the two in
the way the narratives are structured. The way the photo narrative is framed; the
dialogue, utterances or thoughts of the characters are expressed through the same
codes of bubbles. P3 chose this format as a compromise: “My problem is if I wait
until I’ve got enough time to do things to the standard I want to do them it’ll never
get done.” And later: “I didn’t want to do it in a stickman kind of way” and then
again he felt he didn’t have the drawing skills to do justice to what he wanted to
convey. “I wouldn’t be able to do all the emotional portraying that I wanted to do.”
After reflecting on the brief for some time he decided that “in the end it wasn’t
anything specific, it was a kind of general principle that I wanted to illustrate.”

The resulting photomontage is a humorous interplay of mood, chaos, rhythm and
pace which drives home P3’s dilemma of finding a solution to how to respond to his
wife’s apparently defensive inability to cope with the everyday mechanics of
things: doors, windows, gas cookers, etc. The black background on which the pho-
tos and texts are superimposed give a ‘film noir’ density to the piece. In counterbal-
ance, the layout stresses the frenetic pace of the “demented irritation” (line 1).
The image of the woman with the hammer is given extra emphasis by slanting the
images and placing them consecutively; this is used as a visual narrative device to
convey intensity, repetition and speed of action. This is intensified by the over score
with the repetition of “& again”. The lettering, in red italic capitals, highlights the
alarming resulting state. The offending material objects, the causes or triggers of
the unfortunate states, are then presented. Their use is neatly indicated by arrows
and a few words of instruction as reminders of the simplicity of how these things
operate. Then, the self-presentation: the man in despair at the emotional cost of
these trivial things which so disrupt his wife’s (and therefore his) life. Next to it on
the left, the textual explanations of his attempts to find a way through, boxed in
three sections which intercut each other but go nowhere and only emphasise his
despair. His wife parries his various attempts, which are displayed with the use of
progressive close ups, creating the sense of the increasing aggressive intensity, at
once humorous and perhaps recognisable to many. And so to the final humorously
dramatic Clint Eastwood finish, indicating the ‘no win’ situation.
In this account we have what appears to be an intractable problem which, on the face of it, should have an easy solution. X believes object A should operate by carrying out manoeuvres 1, 2 and 3. This empirically fails to work, negating the value of X’s belief. The correct procedure for operating A is, in fact, manoeuvres 3, 4 and 5. If X could substitute her false beliefs for the correct ones, then that should be the end of the problem once and for all, with economy of frustration on X’s part and despair on P3’s part. The problem is that X will not accept the need to change her belief in the face of repeated evidence that it does not work. There is obviously something else at play here, perhaps a secondary set of beliefs which, rightly or wrongly, uphold the first. But how does P3’s account for this state of affairs differ? What narratives inform his understanding of the difficulty? Already the printed story gives us an indication in its text: “She is EXTREMELY sensitive... any attempt... might be interpreted as some form of condescension. Especially, it seems, if it’s me trying to be helpful...” Here we seem faced with an almost stereotypical male patience, along with rationality and the woman’s impatience with it.

During the course of the interview the context of his understanding is broadened out. “It’s a safety valve for her emotions” is a theme he returns to. Her frustrations are displaced onto the nearest object, which seemingly ‘malfunctions’. And this unleashes the arguments, different triggers, but “the same argument... the same argument”. So what are the elements that make this assemblage so explosive? It is more than a question of ‘emotional makeup’. What makes P3’s wife refuse any offer of assistance, which is the root of the argument, is the connection as part of an assemblage on her part between condescension and feminist beliefs. “But people like XXXX (his wife) who are highly intelligent, who are very aware of feminist issues, who have in the past recognised this kind of behaviour perhaps as being condescending to her as a woman.” They both know it is actually not the motive at play, but the trigger having been pulled “it’s like reverting to type”. “Something is triggered in the memory... and the response is as inevitable as it is without solution.” The conditions trigger responses on both sides, it seems, and the object at issue becomes the location of each’s misplaced response. Different cultures and family
patterns play an important part in their differences. “We use the same words, but we mean different things,” P3 tells me. Same signs, different significations.

**Participant 5  Belief and shared practice**

Of all the participants, P5 probably had the least experience in drawing. In fact, during the course of the interview he explained that he had been put off by two factors: firstly, his father had been an artist; secondly, a hurtful comment by an art teacher at school made him resolve never to have anything to do with the subject. Notwithstanding, he embraced the project with gusto. The result is perhaps less a graphic narrative than 12 illustrated scenes, each making a point about his relationship with his partner. Perhaps to ensure clarity he handed me a list of the 12 topics together with the drawings so that I could easily find my way round if the artwork itself failed to ‘show’.

The drawings were executed on a long train journey. P5 was conscious of not quite following the brief. “The brief... said... one particular incident, whereas for me it was sort of summary of the conditions that are important facets of the relationship.” His endeavours were towards finding “a slogan which summarised a broader point... it was the slogan that summarised a key facet of our relationship... I should have gone into advertising”, which is apparently what many of his friends think. While ‘summarising slogans’ made statements about the relationship in increasingly warm and glowing terms, it gives little sense of the particularity of the relationship.

Images 1.3 and 1.4 seemed to deal with a power struggle, the ordinary fare of rela-
tional adjustment to each other and, from there, celebratory statements about overcoming difficulties and achieving a long, successful and joyful companionship.

There were several aspects of this encounter overall which led me to think there was perhaps an element of dissimulation in P5’s engagement with me. The first happened during the time we were making the arrangements to meet. Suddenly, there were questions from his wife addressed through him on matters of confidentiality and ethics. These were answered, I assumed satisfactorily as I was invited to meet him at his house for the interview. At the last minute this was changed to meeting in a nearby café as his wife wasn’t comfortable with the interview taking place at home. Initially, when P5 approached me to take part in this project, as a result of a third-party notification, he told me he would get together with his wife to discuss what he would ‘draw’ up. It surprised me somewhat that he should stress this consultation with his partner before beginning the project. Several participants did discuss the project or aspects of it during the course of producing the work; either aspects of it, or showed their partners what they had produced. Others did not mention it to their partners or chose to tell a story of a previous relationship. Then there was the first image on p.1. The traffic light at red. The “yes dear” bubble, offered with no context or explanation in prime position. Was it part of the account of his relationship with his wife, did it link to pictures 3 and 4 of p.2, or was it a statement about the reservations his wife had about his taking part in the project? Something to unsettle me or a sort of coded apology for his wife’s interventions?

Again, the interview begins with concerns about confidentiality: what will happen to the data? I offer reassurances at each stage and reiterate his right to pull out of the project at any stage. This makes me question whether we might be in a sort of power game. As we progress through the interview, I learn more about him. A turning point in his life was when he discovered “that men weren’t scary”. Prior to that, all his close relationships had been with women, often blurring the lines between friendship and sexual attraction. Now he says all his close friendships are with men, leaving him with all the affective energy to be shared with his partner. What he particularly values is that with men “we don’t have to apologise about lust... [we have] a
shared biological make-up.” Areas of what is “unsayable or unshareable” between heterosexual couples is something that recurs. P5 finds an outlet for the silent areas in the male companionship of his men’s group, others find it in counselling or psychotherapy, where the unsaid can be talked about; for others, as we shall see, it remains a source of frustration.

What perhaps makes this particular encounter interesting is that there are hurdles along the way to making it a positive experience. In Deleuzian terms, it is a question of navigating the affects to the positive encounter by making and remaking directional choices. First, the last minute change of venue: the venue itself, a café, became increasingly busy as we progressed through the interview, making hearing difficult at times and rendering some of the recording inaudible. For me at least initially, the interview is overshadowed by his partner’s concerns around issues of confidentiality. In retrospect this seemed to hang over the interview as an area of silence. Something that remains unsaid and which I leave alone. P5 is, to all intents and purposes, open, confident and very articulate. He describes himself at various points as “extrovert, garrulous”. We zig-zag through the pictures, branching off here and there into discussions about feminism: “he grew up with it.” He discusses the nature of his profession, his activities with various men’s groups and how his practice of ‘mindfulness’ have brought him “more understanding than years of psychology”. His own summary of his relationship is something like this: strong central “core” beliefs, centred on practices of meditation, unite them and have enabled them to stay together through a difficult period. As with P4, shared practices of mind/body exercises emerge as strong elements in binding relationships. Inevitably, they imply shared values and philosophies.

What emerged from this encounter is still for me a little unresolved, and maybe it is neither critical nor possible to do so. In Deleuzian terms, maybe I was simply not in the same field, the same “basin of attraction” to use Holland’s (2013) analogy. What we do not understand is always ‘as yet’ because we are not in the same ‘zone’ at a particular time. Here we are back to the autoethnographic dilemma. While reflective practice is the guarantor of authenticity, under certain conditions of poststructuralism; the
ceaseless flux of becoming, the ethic of the encounter, where truth is understood as the power of enhancement, reflexivity is post-event layers of interpretations.

3.5 External forces and the flows of desire

Participant 2  the affects of material conditions.

“It’s life’s circumstances that really put on the pressure.”

Puzzlement as to the ‘what happens’ in relationships is a recurring theme. It occurs in P4 and P8, and trying to make sense of it is often the riddle embedded in these narratives. P2 is a clear example. What is different in P2’s account is the way he makes sense, or attempts to make sense, of ‘the what happens’, not through an appeal to character traits as causal factors or to psychotherapeutic narratives of communication or power struggles, but through an understanding of how the everyday pressures of life, the humdrum, repetitive nature of work, problems of money etc., affect body, mind and emotion and steer the relationship for good or ill. With very little drawing background, P2 conveys very powerfully the emotional binary between the loving togetherness experienced on a holiday and the alienating pressures of their daily lives upon their return.

How the drawings are made up and their success in conveying the intended feelings would tend to suggest a familiarity with the comics form. He draws creatively, using well-established conventions of comic production. For instance, the use of motion lines behind the car and the wobble of the luggage on the roof rack give the sense of movement and speed; the hearts of love as icons of affection, whole on page one, broken on page two, accentuate the changed feelings, all bypassing the need for a multiplicity of words. The simple but effective diegesis, counterbalanced between the joy of the holiday and the joylessness of home; the powerful image of the broken bed. The use of shading gives depth to the pictures; everything is simple yet effective. “I’ve drawn occasionally... it’s not something I do often, but I have drawn... so I knew I could draw stick men that would look like stick
men or people", he tells me when I enquire about his drawing experience. I fail to ask him if he is or has been a comics reader.

And, of course, there is a story behind the story which emerges in the interview. It consists largely, in P2’s account, of the damaging differential in the earning capacities of him and his partner. This affects what they can do together, the expectations they have of each other and how differently they value the importance of money, which gives rise to tensions and misunderstanding. Money is the recurring theme throughout the interview; it is considered from various angles: work, expenses, projects, who owns what, etc. And even when the discussion is not overtly about money but, for instance, about doing something or going somewhere, at the root of that lies money. Money dictates the expectations of each partner and, being unequal in income, the scope of their aspirations is also different. “If Camelot (the lottery) ever comes up... we’d be laughing.” And would she see it like that, I enquire? “I think she would, yeah.” Money, then, is the hidden theme behind the submitted story. And, uniquely, P2 accounts for his relationship in terms of the economic forces at play. But it is not in the text; instead it erupts in the interview: “That was one of the other big things: money. I don’t think I put money in there” (meaning in the story). There is also another pressure, the look of ‘others’, which adds a further pressure to the hidden pressures that money brings. On the face of it, he tells me, he and his partner seem to be a well-suited couple. Similar outlook, similar interest in the outdoors, etc. which then aggravates the frustrations when, for financial reasons, they are not able to share in a project both would enjoy.

In Deleuzian terms we can look at this story in terms of the ‘molar’ and the ‘molecular’, which, as DeLanda (2006) points out, equate approximately to the ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ in sociology. The difference is that the two terms stand not in binary opposition, but are better understood as vectors of direction between processes of organisation and individual expression. What is at play is that differential social value of their work and thus rewards in the sphere of employment. This structures their expectations of activity and leisure differently, and the disjunction between these expectations in turn gives rise to emotional tensions which can appear insurmountable and threaten
the shared purpose of their relationship. The shared structure of the holiday clearly suspended these tensions, which the return home revived.

In terms of graphic narrative, a casual reading sees the story as celebrating the fun of holidays against the debilitating drudgery of everyday life. But the starkly portrayed contrast between the two states also invites consideration as to why this should be. Rather like the example of Mathieu Baillif considered above, it sets us the puzzle, in this case as to why this should be. What is interesting here is that broader context explained in the interview by P2, which was painted not in terms of a therapeutic narrative of poor communication or affective dysfunction, but in terms of the way economic forces affect emotional relations (the molar forces) and the difficulty of finding a way through that (the molecular resistance).

**Participant 8  “Long-distance runner.”**

Participant 8 began his account by bringing in at the onset his contact with me and the project. This perhaps shows what several other participant experienced, i.e the disjuncture between their eagerness to take part and their initial doubts as to how to go about it. It also underlines that I am the intended reader, this piece having been created for my research.

P8's story is an account of the end of his previous marriage. Again, a previous relationship is put forward. An event that took place over 20 years ago. Like P4, P8 also discussed the project with his current partner. Interestingly, P8’s wife questioned his choice: “it was an interesting conversation with her as to why I had chosen this, you know, 20 years ago... which is why it finished up on the final picture” (his reading the book celebrating his present marriage). “I knew I needed to balance my relationship with her and that was the tricky thing.” Perhaps she would have preferred him to submit an episode of their happy times together,
whereas he was set on talking about what was “way and above of traumatic significance”, adding that it wasn't difficult to bring up because “it is still around”. At their daughter’s wedding last year, his first wife “made things extremely difficult”, prompting him to realise just how much all this still has “tentacles into current life”. As with P2, the perception of others masks and embeds in the private sphere deep feelings. People “underestimate the repercussions... which is not helpful”. Social narratives are invoked for the sake of smooth social interaction: “Oh it's 20 years ago, why are you so bothered” (time inevitably heals) or “in some marriages that’s what happens” (it’s a normal situation) and “we’re friends with your ex-wife and we’re friends with you” (we’re a bridge between you both).

Divorce for P8 was “unthinkable”. He holds the pattern from his parents. At his mother’s death his father said to him “you know son, I’ve known you mother for 71 years” (out of 80). His divorce was a long and painful process made all the more so because it ran contrary to his beliefs in the institution of marriage. A separation, initially on agreed terms prior to the divorce, was reneged on when his wife sought legal advice at the instigation of friends and at his suggestion. “She was badly advised” he says, and the courts awarded her a less advantageous outcome than the one initially agreed privately between them. Court proceedings dragged out the divorce process and brought with them much bitterness. P8’s account (part of it at least, and with hindsight) is that the bitterness arose from her inner conflict between tradition and innovation. Money was very important to her, coming as she did from a very poor mining family background. Through her own efforts she had taken up the new educational and professional possibilities open to women and had risen to the top of her profession, which was still very much male dominated.

Recognition of that achievement through status was also important her. That all those successes would be underpinned by a stable marriage was assumed and unquestioned. The model for each was endurance, one through the restriction of poverty, the other through the stability of longevity. “There was a kind of conflict about what should have been.” Both, it seems, wereclear on the impossibility of separation: “A divorce with two teenage children you know, was absolutely
unthinkable.” P8 repeats this at various stages in the interview. And she believed “I would never go through with it” and he thinks at one stage that she asked him to stay in a separate part of the house, in order, so he thought, to be available for DIY and other responsibilities. Of course they had both grown up in the heady 1960s days when marriage and traditional lifestyles were being questioned: “we went through a period of not being married for a while, as was conventional in the late sixties and early seventies and then came marriage shortly before the children were born... we started to be conventional then, I suppose (it was) the acknowledgement of how one conforms etc., etc.” We can see this as the process of stratification by the context from which both emerge, different assemblages, both from strong traditions, one of economic hardship which imposes its own conformity, the other, from the conformity of good example, material conditions and moral example, which pointed them in the same direction.

In their early days, another conformity, that of resistance, in the form of the counterculture of the 1960s, makes them resist the notion of marriage for a while. Jolted back into “the proper order of things” by the arrival of children. I ask if this experience of divorce changed his views on marriage. It changed, he tells me, in how he “went about” the next relationship, which also became a marriage. It did not alter his belief in marriage. At the time of his breakup he and his wife were aware of other couples locally who were living together apart. “That (those examples) didn’t really pan out” says P8, meaning these were not convincing or enduring solutions. The institution of marriage remains the gold standard of relationship aspirations for men and women even if we fall short of its exacting demands and have to start again. Faith can triumph over bad experience. What is interesting here is what sustains the beliefs in the choices we make irrespective of where these choices may lead us.

P8 found salvation through therapy. His first wife chose the law, and this seems to have left a legacy of bitterness and ongoing resentment of P8. How has all this been expressed in a few narrative pictures over two pages? Interestingly, P8 has no current interest in comics or graphic novels, though he did read them as a young man. Comics theorists tend to interpret the ‘gaps’ between the drawings, known as
‘gutters’, as the part of the story that has to be interpreted or filled in or connected by the reader. In this case, we can see on p.2 (see appendix) that gaps between the drawings are wider, making the pictures almost detached from each other. What is presented are ‘slices’, ‘tranches’ of the story’s key progressive emotional moments of his marital breakup, together with the context which provides both narrative context and the justification for bringing up the story. It is these moments of emotional intensity which give direction to the story (p.1, frames 1, 2 and 3). Frame 3 is particularly interesting in that the mirror is yet again invoked in a piece of autobiographical account, but this time not as a means of self-reflection, but rather as the object that evokes the unflattering portrait/memory of his first wife. She stands before him in the reflected image of his memory. This is a strong image and an excellent way to represent visually the coming to consciousness of the past as present. Frames 3, 4 and 5 of p.1 and frames 1, 2 and 3 of p.2 mark both time and pain. The calendar marking the years, the sadness and stress of the situation and the gradual realisation of the inevitability of the outcome through the picture of the two barges drifting apart. This, P8 relates, was in fact a dream which he talked through with his therapist and which marked a moment of realisation. The final separation (frame 3, p.2) is marked where the narrative simplification of his partner’s assent is offset by the calendar indicating that nearly three years have passed. And frame 4, which is both the release from guilt through the realisation that the situation was beyond rescue in any case; a moment which opens up to the possibilities of the happiness experienced in the present. “Thought, thought and memory and then translating that into a pictorial journey... I was quite excited by to be honest.”

**Participant 1  Space/time intensity and the flows of desire.**

P1’s drawn account is not so much a story as an illustrated series of disrupted moments of intensity. P2 attributed ‘the pressures of life’, especially those around money issues, as having a detrimental effect on his relationship. For P1, the problem is one of physical space and its corresponding effect/affect on ‘psychological’ space. He put the story together when he was by himself: “I had the house to myself so I didn’t have any distractions. Obviously distractions is what the story is about.” It seems that all the things he really enjoys and values—music, reading, etc.—cannot
be enjoyed to their fullest extent if there is the possibility of interruption. “The quality of doing these things] is totally different when I know I’m not going to be interrupted.” For instance, unless he’s on his own he can’t pick up his beloved guitar. P2 quotes *Zorba the Greek* in that the instrument itself dictates when it can be played and if there someone else around “it doesn’t want to be played... and I find that very strongly”. But the problem is experienced as something beyond a matter of personality: “I don’t actually think it would probably matter who I was married to... just having someone else in the house... it means it’s not my space any more. I can’t actually operate in the way that I do when I’m on my own.” Time uninterrupted in a space unshared seems to be the required condition for the flow of desire to be enjoyed. What are the material conditions for psychological wellbeing? What lies of the bottom of this conundrum? Is it a matter of square footage, or something about living together? Certainly, he tells me, people with larger houses “may have a room of their own, where they can just go there” but even then there are always the interruptive calls of “dinner’s ready” or “will you pick up the phone?” which constitute “an imposition on your space”. And yes, there are attempts at negotiating the problem and the recognition that “we both need our space and that is the truth, and the house is small.” This statement is repeated several times through the interview and P1 is keen to stress that his wife does make some effort to “modify her behaviour”. In spite of the seriousness of this seemingly irresolvable problem, the graphic account, like that of P3, ends with a humorous filmic reference, this time from a *Monty Python* sketch highlighting the ultimate trivility of interruptions and their maddening consequence.

Would his wife identify the same problem were she to participate in this research? P1 thinks her expressed concern would be about his “not having the same standard
in domestic cleanliness or chores that she has.” Again, as with P3, the problem is not about sharing the work: “we’ve shared out this work”, but it is about not being put under pressure as to when to do it. He wants to be able to do it at his own convenience and not to have to drop whatever he is doing in order to hoover or do the washing up. “I work from home... other people go to an office. I wouldn’t be able to do anything if I was working in an office. I just happen to be here but I am at work.”

The shared discourse of equality finds discord in the timetabling.

Ironically, the interview is interrupted by an increasingly loud noise coming from the central heating system, just as in P1’s drawings, so I bring the interview to an early close while the heating system is attended to and we sit down again to talk in post-interview mode. With the tape switched off the conversation turns to matters of sexual attraction. Again, as with P2 and the topic of money, the subject suddenly emerges as if hidden behind the pictures, or maybe the pictures as vectors of ideas create the connections. Expressed with humour and echoing P4’s statement that “with men we don’t have to apologise about lust”, the talk is about attraction to younger women. This is experienced as a tormenting factor, a sense of being victim of one’s biological programming. The differences and changes in pre- and post-menopausal women are also discussed and how the physical changes are expressed as a regretful fact but offset by psychological changes whereby post-menopausal women are felt to be “more relaxed” and “less defensive”, with the reflection that the removal of the possibility of children fundamentally “alters the stakes”. This is felt to be a positive thing. This leads on to the ‘tabu subjects’ in relationships. What can and can’t be said or spoken about even in the context of a relationship “which sets out to be equal and honest”. Sexual desire, the wish for other relationships and issues of sexual attraction are experienced as being “off limits”. This inexpressibility forces a sense of the furtive, which can border on feelings of betrayal when exploring or wishing to explore any level of intimacy with other women. This is seen as an unhealthy state as well as an intractable problem. And how is this understood? Part of it is attributed to conflicting discourses in feminist attitudes. Women wanting equality in all domestic and general life matters (seen as a good thing) but not moving
at the same pace in tackling the more “difficult matters” (sexual attraction to others, etc.) within the relationship. Women being “rather fixed” on ideas of marriage, fidelity etc. These are ideas that belong more to their mother’s generation, which forces “the real dialogue to always remain incomplete”.

In this story, the question being posed is how, in the context of a relationship, the flows of libidinal desire can be made to flow with greater ease. Not in the sense of abandonment to transitory want, but to manage desire to effect its ethological purpose of life enhancement. Whether the desire is around time, solitude or sex, especially sex, that debate—as we have seen elsewhere—is often the one that is silenced, confined to the unsayable. Its effect is to affect other areas of life through displacement onto other matters and/or to amplify itself to the level of deceit.

**Participant 6** *Time/space, space as distance, distance as separation: the materiality of time.*

P6 relates the break-up of his first “real relationship” and the narrative, both visual and textual, is intriguing. It is almost set as a puzzle for the reader to solve. Was he manipulated into colluding to end the relationship? Was she simply hesitant? Is it that she couldn’t face taking the decision on her own? The story implies she initiated it. Or was she trying to protect him from the pain of the inevitable? The text leaves the question open and the machine of those final communications, the phone, is left floating in the air. Throughout the piece there is a strict linear and logical sequence of narrative storytelling, both verbal and textual, which is given expression in the layout. The narrative is in the first person and takes the reader through the progressive steps of two break-ups prior to the final separation. The visual text runs parallel with the verbal one, repeating or emphasising the text with visual metaphors (for example, the ruler is used to indicate the length of and the breaks in the relationship as measurable entities of time).
In the layout, there is a strict symmetry in the setting out of the frames, whether as nine or three to the page. Frame 5 on page 1 serves both to signal a dramatic moment in the narrative and to function as an unofficial title to the piece, radiating as it does from the centre. The tight and closed grid pattern of the frames gives a feeling of control and encasement, and this is further amplified by the box-like quality of much of the content of each frame: the four-poster bed (p.1 and 2, see appendix), the net to capture the thought (p.2), the cage and the house (p.3) all reinforce that sense of something encased, imprisoned as if they are facts captured for an investigation. The repair to the broken ruler (p.4) to the final shattering of the stonewall (p.4). P6’s puzzlement is expressed in the first three frames on p.4. Either side of the chess board, chess as the ultimate game for working out possible moves. There is throughout a play on the word break as both time out and a rupture of the relationship.

Compared with other accounts, the emotions surrounding the break up seem to be, if not missing, at least veiled behind the attempts of Pr’s understanding of his partner’s intention and as readers we are drawn into his trying to work it out. In the interview, P6 seems to agree: “yeah, it was a working out... and the orderliness of the comic does reflect a desire to understand.” The drawings, on the other hand, are more telling of the affective underlining of the climate of this episode. I have already alluded to the encased nature of some of the images, contributing to an oppressive feel, but the final page (p.4) appears alive with powerful emotion. The thundering lines surrounding the revelation in frame 3. The jagged breaks in the ruler and its repair in frame 4 and the disintegrating stone wall of frame 7 seem to express the turbulence of the events.

The logical approach to P6’s understanding of that event is further evidenced by the interview. At the onset he pointed out to me that there was a “contradiction” in the text between the statement in frame 3 on p.4, “But I think she didn't know what she wanted”, and that on the penultimate frame on the same page, “I suspect that was what she wanted all along...” He found this contradiction “interesting” and, after toying with the idea of removing it, he decided against it because “it sums up the contradictory moment of my own blurred understanding of the situation” and that aspect of the events wasn't something he planned intentionally; he discovered it in
the process creating the graphic narrative. The images of containment, on the other hand, were deliberately used to convey entrapment. An exception was the poster bed, though when I suggest that this follows the same pattern he agrees: “now you point it out it is inescapable.”

Even though the events of the relationship described happened some years ago, P6 is very protective of the woman’s identity. Neither in his story or in the interview is there an attempt to represent her (or him for that matter) other than through the generalised characters we see sitting on the bed, or standing in shadowed outline at various stages. Indeed, she is not mentioned by name in the interview but is instead referred to as “the girl in question”. Questioning this self-effacement reveals a different and interesting assemblage. To an extent, drawing the images “was led by what I could draw”. Skills provided one constraint, but P6 consciously set out to offer only “symbolic representations” of himself: “I deliberately tried to efface myself” and again: “No, I didn't want to draw myself... for reasons practical, theoretical and existential. I didn't think I could do it well, I wanted to convey a sense of... not knowing exactly who I was, I suppose, at that stage and not wanting to claim also the whole... embarrassment I suppose.”

When pressed, contained in this refusal of self-representation are elements of self-protection (and that of his then partner), “I don't particularly like seeing myself”, which is extended to “the girl involved” as a matter of ethical principle: “It wouldn't have been right somehow.” So to the anxiety of skills “I wouldn't have done it well” and the anxiety of possible embarrassment of being identified to the situation he depicts, he adds a third: that of memory. Looking back at the time of that relationship: “I don't see myself as I see myself in the mirror or photographs... there is a time factor... and I'm not thinking so much what do I look like as if I remember it (the time) it is much as myself as I do remember.” The veracity of the account, P6 seems to be saying, has nothing to do with concerns for correct visual representation of the characters involved but everything to do with capturing the feelings of confusion, the ‘games’ of conflicting messages, brought about and how attempts to escape these, by taking repeated ‘breaks’, only served to perpetuate the relational knot. This continued until he expressed the redundancy of the relationship if she no
longer wanted it. This opened up a line of flight and thus a resolution. What had hitherto remained unsaid seemed to have locked both of them in a cycle of ‘break’ and ‘repair’, graphically shown in frame 4 on p.4 as the broken and patched-up ruler. The ruler, the measure of time and space, the breaking of which increases the distance between them, is patched up but remains unconvincingly serviceable in the image. P6 is tempted to see that final episode as “She wanted me all along for me to collude in the end of the relationship” (frame 8, p.4; my emphasis).

However, seen through a Deleuzian lens and concentrating on the process, what we see perhaps is an attempt to provide an explanation. What we witness is the transition from a closed to an open situation, from one which is immobilised by unspoken expectations. The relationship is based on strong emotional bonds which make it viable, but also, as we see in the drawings, one that is trapped in the passivity of what we might term ‘a love assumption’. When I probed P6 for an account of why the relationship came to an end, a lucid and surprising set of explanations came to the fore:

“I think we both always had different ideas about what the future would hold...[this] for whatever reason was suspended when we were going out... and yeah... I’m not surprised, you know in retrospect you kind of... you know it was a good relationship, but the internal, structural principles on which a relationship needs to have to have a future, I don’t think were particularly there.”

P6 refers to “the internal structural principles” being absent, by which I take him to mean the external conditions prevailing in both their lives at the time, pushing them apart. They lived in separate towns, each committed to a new job at the beginning of their careers, which made it impossible for them to live together: distance, the ruler of relationships, segmenting their time together and gradually undermining the affective bonds, diminishing the intensities, and undermining their love. Time and distance conquering all. Time together and distance apart together create the ‘cages’ we see in the drawings. Flows of desire interrupted by time and distance and flows of desires pulling in different directions (location, work, etc.) territorialised by the demands of an economic structure: “It was impossible to say that in
three years [time] we could live together... there was no way of practically saying that would happen. That’s a big reason.”

What the drawings show are the effects of the segmented flows and counter flows of desire, which gradually confine their love to the sedimentation of memory. Entrapment inevitably ensues in boxes, nets, four-poster beds and zoo cages. Their attempts to ‘break out’ only lead them back to the same place in a doomed circularity. The spell is only broken by the explicit mention of “we should end it”, which unlocks the line of flight, as we see at the bottom of page 4, by breaking down the wall.

The recognition that material conditions can impede the putting into play of personal feelings, and that these conditions can sometimes be insurmountable, is a difficult realisation. The tendency is to fall back on explanation in the realm of therapeutic narrative: poor communication, emotional hurt, unconscious motives, gender awareness reaching into our most private feelings and masking the socio-economic constraints. It is in this sense that Deleuze and Guattari see psychoanalysis as serving the interests of capitalism, by drawing us away from the material conditions.

For P6, love is a repeatable event, and one which is made up of various elements. His current relationship is the third in his life “for love in that romantic sense” and it needs reciprocity for it to be real (actualised?), and further it is a reciprocity of “things you can’t quantify”; what you give and receive are of equal value. But then he corrects himself: “I think I’m talking about relationships and not love.”

A definition of love here is wanting. Is it an absolute, a universal, a uniqueness, a totality, or a repeatable process? For Deleuze and Guattari, of course, love “is a matter of intersecting multiplicities” (Holland, 2013, p.95), it is “the dismantling of self” (TP, p.167), a depersonalisation which lays bare our multiple make-up and allows desire to flow freely, and through which we can apprehend and merge with the other’s multiplicities. This is not an entirely different definition to that given by P6.
Part 4 Drawing conclusions

4.1 Deleuze, comics and the psychosocial
This project has been an experiment with ideas and method, attempting to link Deleuzian philosophy with comics in order to forge a new tool for psychosocial research, using middle-aged men as a subject of inquiry. What happened at the point of this intersection? The short answer is that the questions of psychosocial research were redirected and redefined through Deleuzian philosophy, moving away from modes of interpreting data to a showing of process. The hitherto marginalised comics form was promoted to the rank of art, through a redefined understanding of its function. Participants became artists of a democratic art form open to all, as they created accounts of their past anew. As a researcher, I too became an artist, fashioning new assemblages from the assemblages of others within the constraints of my metaphysical selection. This project claims no more than to offer a vector of direction towards possible further research in the use of comics and a post-methodology approach to psychosocial research. Below, I recapitulate some of the contributions in theory and in practice.

4.1.1 Value in theory
A case has been made for a critical engagement with poststructuralist thought, mostly through the work of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, for both psychosocial research and comics theory. In the case of the psychosocial this is already happening; in the case of comics, it is embryonic. As examples of avant-garde work have shown, comics production is ahead of the critical body of its analysis in its expression of poststructuralist thought.

The first important contribution Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari have to offer the psychosocial discipline is a new understanding of the rapport between art and
philosophy. Sauvagnargues (2005) convincingly argues that this new rapport, with all its political implication for the role of art in society, makes the artist the diagnostician of society. Understanding the processes of creativity in social life at a formal level must also be a central concern for understanding psychosocial processes. As social beings we live in contradictory directional pulls. Pulls of repetition (habit, opinion) and the necessity of creating new assemblages to allow the flow of our desires. We need to experiment with life, Deleuze tells us, in order to maximise its ethical potential and thus our wellbeing.

The encounter of art and philosophy is inescapable for the advancement of thought; each's function is the same but achieved through different means, and that is to confront chaos. Deleuze, initially concerned with literature, saw its ultimate function as being able to construct from the chaos through its délire a “state of health” (“cette création d’une santé”), “that is to say a possibility of life”. This initially strange-sounding purpose attributed to literature is a theme that Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari return to throughout their writing. QQP (p.173, my translation) alludes to the fact that both philosopher and artist often suffer poor health, because “they have seen in life something that exceeds them”; as such they are marked out not by death, but by “the something” that also provides the vital breath which allows them to live through illnesses. No doubt he has in mind not only his own failing health but also that of Proust, Spinoza, Nietzsche and many more. More theoretically, the connection of artistic creation to its cultural function is that of art as medicine and the artist as physician. What does this strange claim mean? The point made earlier about language at the edge of chaos, the forcing of language to its breaking point. The délire of language, the délire of art, places artistic forms outside of language, outside of sight, outside of hearing, beyond the senses. It is the wrestling with chaos which creates the new. Artistic creation is thus a state of health. One that speaks the unspoken for the unspoken about, one that captures the unseen forces that operate between the gaps of social life. But it is not délire itself that “liberates life wherever it is prisoner” (QQP, p.171), but the creative manner with which it is handled. Always provocative (provocation is what prompts thought), Deleuze puts it this way:
“Literature is délire, and as such plays out its destiny between the two poles of délire. Délie is an illness, the illness par excellence, when it draws up a race pure and dominant. But it is the measure of health when it invokes an oppressed, bastardised race ceaselessly agitating under domination, resisting all that squashes and imprisons and draws itself into the centre of literature.” (CC, p. 15)

What he means by “art as an illness” in this case is the subservience of art to a dominant ideology. In the ‘healthy’ function of art, the artist is given a prominent role as “symptomatologist” of society and that of physician of culture. A task exhilarating in its potential but also fraught with possible dangers, including madness, ill health and self-destruction. This has ethical implications. At the end of *Critique et Clinique* (1993), Deleuze brings us back to the Spinozist ethic, which is also at the centre of his own system. Abandoning all judgement is not a surrender to relativism (“the most idiotic of all positions” (Deleuze, Parnet ABCdaire, YouTube) but the advancement of a new way of choosing between different modes of existence. “Faire exister, non pas juger” (p.169) (“enable existence, do not judge”); in order to do so, we must feel what accords or disaccords with us, what augments or diminishes our life.

Also with Sauvagnargues (2005), we saw how Deleuze’s approach to art develops to encompass all forms of art. Under that licence I included comics, and I argue that comics are a special case of interest for the psychosocial disciplines. This is for several reasons. First of all because the graphic narrative is developing within the broader context of the increasing dominance of the image. The importance of the visual turn in the social sciences has already been discussed. Historically, both Simondon and Barthes saw in the plates of the *Encyclopédie* (Zdebik, 2013) the advent of the image in relation to the word as a method of communication. The abstractive powers of drawing to condense the essential parts of information to be conveyed clarified communication. The technological advances since the 18th century have accelerated the advance of the image. If the development of photography in the late 19th century was seen in some quarters as a threat to art, what it actually threatened was art as representation. The consequence was that art was pushed
Part 4 Drawing conclusions

towards other concerns; for instance, towards problems of perception, point of view, mass and movement. This was the inevitable move towards abstract art, Deleuze (QQP) tells us. A similar process, for a different reason, is at work in graphic narrative. We have seen how the avant-garde is moving from narrative to abstractions in which more and more is demanded from the reader.

Secondly, for reasons much connected to the development of technology, comics represent an increasingly democratic form of artistic expression. They are increasingly independent from the publishing industry through self-publishing and the internet. In short, comics are for all and can be made by anyone. Thirdly, in the specific genre that concerns this thesis, comics deal with articulations of the self, problems of identity, gender and subjective experience. Lastly, as we saw, experimental comics by artists such as Ware, McGuire and, more recently, Soussanis (2015) a work described by his publisher, Harvard University Press, as “an experiment in visual thinking”. These factors testify not only to the growth and importance of comics, but also to the ever-increasing advance of the image over the word as a social phenomenon. We can speculate whether in the context of globalisation it might not in due course provide a new lingua franca for the exchange of ideas in the same way that IKEA provides pictorial assembly manuals for universal use.

We have also seen how Deleuze and Guattari’s system, in its anti-representational stance, pushes back the boundaries of judgement. This also applies to aesthetics. It takes us to a new approach to understanding aesthetics, beyond the usual considerations of evaluative judgements within a philosophy of art. The new rapport between art and philosophy gives a new use for art; it is also a new way of investigating philosophy, as previously mentioned.

The difference in the realm of aesthetics lies in the difference between the elaboration of a philosophy of art which is imposed as an analytical framework through which to understand the aesthetic merit of particular works, and one which determines the value of a work in terms of how it reveals new orderings of life. This difference also serves as a critique of how some academic disciplines engage with
comics. Jeff McLaughlin (2005) edited a compilation of articles on comics from a philosophical standpoint. But his approach is not that of an engagement with comics. It is more one of using comics to illustrate philosophical problems. More recently, Thomas Giddens (2015) makes similar use of comics for the discussion of legal problems in the recent edited work *Graphic Justice* (2015). While these approaches have merit in themselves—using graphic narrative as an educational tool, to tease out cultural representations of a profession, or to facilitate critical reflections on ideological standpoints—and are no doubt of use, they leave out that critical engagement with comics that could advance both their discipline and the comics form. In other words, they leave out a more creative use of that encounter for both dimensions which would avoid a hierarchical order of creative endeavours. The new aesthetic Deleuze and Guattari offer us is determined by what the work of art does, how it works as the ‘physician of society’, and how it presents us with new blocs of sensation that allow us to make new connections in our own lives.

4.1.2 Value in practice

This leads us to the questions about the value in practice of bringing comics to psychosocial research. Trying to demonstrate that value has been the purpose of this project, the ‘graphic interrogation’ as a tool for psychosocial research, having a piece of graphic narrative at the interview provided a focal point which allowed the interview to flow. The discussions centred around the produced drawings. They were always there to pull the participant and the researcher back to the topic at hand if the conversation drifted or if a topic was felt to be exhausted. Secondly, the participants, having already put considerable effort into reflection on the topic and execution of the work, were better prepared to talk around the subject than they would have been had they arrived to the interview ‘cold’, so to speak, with only a sketchy idea of what the questions might be. I think this allowed, at times, a deeper exploration than might have otherwise been possible.

On the negative side, the whole idea of carrying out a drawing task proved off-putting to mwh personal contact, but those who agreed to take part did so with great enthusiasm. Reflecting on why recruitment proved difficult has led me to believe that there
Part 4 Drawing conclusions

were several factors involved. The most obvious being that what was being asked was a time-consuming task which required some prior thinking, combined with the fact that drawing was perceived as a task requiring a display of skill. The reluctance to draw formed a first barrier, in spite of my attempts at reassurances that it was not a competition and that I was not interested in levels of artistic skill. However, behind that reluctance was also a certain anxiety or at least an unease at the possibility of being ‘exposed’. While this may be a factor in much qualitative research, the difference here is the inability to exercise any control over the drawn work once submitted, whereas in the context of an interview one has, to a degree, ‘self-revelation’ editing possibilities. Part of this unease with producing a drawn narrative must rest with the everyday understanding of psychoanalysis. The popular imagination tends to understand its purpose as the unmasking of hidden secrets and the style of drawing analysis considered earlier with Fabricius (2006) goes some way to supporting this view as the exposure of the contents of the unconscious, “the dirty little secrets” of the author, as Deleuze puts it. The embarrassing revelations of the ‘unconscious’ exposed as the antics of a family triadic rapport is precisely the type of interpretation that Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari set out to overthrow in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972 [1983]).

Without exception, all of the participants found carrying out the drawing tasks an enjoyable experience, and in two cases this has led to their embracing the form and incorporating graphic narrative into their professional lives. It is not unreasonable to speculate that the enjoyment was derived from the creative nature of the task. For most, it was a new experiment which offered an exploration of aspects of their lives in a mode other than verbal.

Familiarity with graphic narrative varied from fully conversant to very unfamiliar, as did drawing skills. Those unfamiliar with drawing tended more towards words, which were then illustrated with drawings, rather than using drawings to progress the story. That being said, all the ‘stories’ told centred on intensive affective states, many times offered contextualised in a broad ‘philosophy of life’ reflection.

The true value of these graphic narrative episodes for research in the psychosocial
disciplines is that they allow the researcher to tease out the social narratives, or assemblages of social narratives, through which we frame our lives and give sense to them, as well as how we navigate between them to allow the flow of our desires. Equally important was that the drawings also show how individuals resist and recompose those same narratives—in order to make them their own and to fit them in with their lives, to accommodate themselves with the ‘pack’, or the ‘mass’ to use Deleuzian terms—or to select new ones: the creative struggle of daily life. Both the narratives and the way these were navigated varied greatly as the analysis of the texts showed. Cultural identity with P10, the economic constraints that impeded P2, time and distance with P6, the institution of marriage with P8; we saw how P9 navigated the trappings of language, the conflicts of logic and emotion that P4 experienced, the interrupted flows of desire in P1, and so on.

In accordance with Deleuze’s and Guattari writings on the function of art, comics in the genre of autobiography were said to depict affect as their primary function, weaving it into a narrative. The corollary of the narratives is the opening they provided onto how affects remain as blockages or are put creatively to use in the logic of the ethology. Graphic narrative as a form of expression resembles poetry in its highly condensed nature and the possibilities it presents of playing with time, space, character and language. The autobiographical graphic narrative presents a sort of puzzle for the reader, who must himself be invested in the reading task. Points of resonance, zones of interest, must be shared for meaning to emerge. A criticism of early attempts to work with graphic narrative (Galman, 2009; Bartlett, 2012) was that there was no theoretical understanding of or engagement with the comics medium as such. As a result, perhaps much was missed and reliance on verbal interviews and interpretation was what became the primary data. Working with graphic narrative in a research context, I suggest, requires a theoretical engagement with the art form, an understanding of how image and text work and interplay in order to draw the most from both the visual and the textual.

There is much to explore in this new creative fusion. If, as I argued earlier, the graphic
narrative forms an important social movement in the democratisation of art, and art has a political function to articulate—to expose the unseen, the unsaid—then graphic narrative has the potential to blur the distinction between the production of ideas and the production of art. Graphic narrative, as democratised art—acting independently of an art establishment which selects, promotes and markets that which serves its ends—has the potential to become a “creative advance into novelty” by continuing the “adventure of civilisation” (Michel Weber, 2015, quoting A N Whitehead). And so back to Deleuze and Guattari, who saw the function of philosophy as being to create concepts through creative engagement with scientific and artistic disciplines.

There are problems of definition that surround the psychosocial. The word cannot carry the ‘logy’ component that would mark it as an independent discipline, and this leaves one with the notion of ‘a field of study’ to which one must bring theories of both the psycho and the social, and a methodology that will encompass both aspects. The difficulty, and the challenge historically, has been in ‘stitching’ together an understanding of the individual to that of society and vice versa, approaches which in epistemology and/or ontology have often proved mutually exclusive. Woodward (2015) gives a comprehensive account of the various influences and attempts to reconcile different theoretical strands, but only signposts poststructuralist endeavours without engaging with their possibilities. In that context, the metaphysics of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari offer a way out of the irreconcilable dilemma of binary opposition by offering an understanding of the processes through which the individual and society are repositioned in the wider continuum of life. Adopting such an approach requires a high degree of philosophical readjustment and the abandonment of deeply held notions, such as those of self-hood and methods of interpretation. The gain is that the philosophy itself becomes its own method. The influence is only beginning to take hold and the full implications for an understanding of the psychosocial have yet to fully unravel. As MacLure (2013) and others have pointed out, we are still hampered by a conceptual vocabulary shaped by the history of psychosocial research. Notions of objective units of data and their interpretation are still default positions.
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Appendix 1  The Graphic Element

These versions of my graphic work are ordered in the way they appear throughout the text.
The Big Idea
Appendix 1: The Graphic Element

Author(ity)

Okay, who is telling this story??

I am, it’s my story.

Wait a minute - I’m telling it!

You are only the protagonist, I am the author.

Wait a minute what about me? I’m the narrator without me who’s going to be able to follow the story or make sense of anything?!

You’re just a bunch of words without me.

What! You’re just a bunch of lines.

Now look here, you are both mere lines on paper, I am the creator.

Oh no, you’re not. You’re just the words that I’ve made up.

The Editors have censored this final frame in order to avoid unnecessary unpleasantness.
We live in the abstract

Yes, that’s the sort of thing that keeps me awake at night.

I’ll work it out tomorrow.

It’s no good.

Maybe this new graphic novel will take my mind off things.

This is really good.

Wow! He’s meeting Asaf Hanuka, the same guy I’ve chosen for my analysis!

It’s an abstraction of an abstraction, an encounter with a diagram of someone encountered through his own abstracted diagrams and reencountered through my own.

Yes—we live in the abstract—and no one has ever lived other.

(Delever)

Click
As Good as it Gets

Hello Tom! Hello Derek! How's it going?

Yeah, all right. I suppose you. Yeah, things are okay, I think.

Well can't ask for more. No, that's can we? Probably as good as it gets.

Yeah - can't ask for more. Can we?

Yeah - can't ask for more. Can we?

Well better be getting along...

Yes MeToo. Things to do and all that.

Children Health Values Achievements Companionship Beliefs Success Art Sex Relationships Marriage Approval Meaning

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Appendix 1: The Graphic Element

Border Line

[Diagram with various border line designs]
Walking the line
Appendix 1: The Graphic Element

Zone of indiscernibility
COMMITMENT

SO WHAT'S THE EXCITING NEWS THEN?

WELL... DAN AND ME... GUESS WHAT?...

YOU HAVEN'T HAD...

S. E. X?

NO... WE DID THAT AGES AGO

YOU'RE GOING ON HOLIDAY TOGETHER?

OMG!... DON'T TELL ME HE'S "ASKED" YOU?!?

NO DON'T BE SILLY...

LOOK YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME... ARE YOU PREGNANT?!!

WE'VE BEEN TO IKEA TOGETHER!!

!?!
Enduring Love

So what's the matter?! X

It's because I didn't go to that art exhibition with you, isn't it?

I've given up trying to get you interested in art.

Look, I know I forgot your birthday last week but...

You know these stupid rituals don't mean a thing to me.

Okay, how about I cook you a meal tonight?

...you always leave such a mess...

??!??!

GOT IT!

We haven't had sex in a while! How about it eh? Wild, passionate hot sex! Now! Yeah?

...not in the mood!

Well I give up. What the hell is the matter?

You haven't made me a cup of tea in over a week!
TO THAT END, I PROPOSE WE SET UP A COMPETITION WITH A PRIZE TO BE AWARDED FOR THE PICTURE THAT BEST CELEBRATES GAPPORD AND COUNTY CRUNCHIES BISCUITS.

EXEMPLARY IDEA!

GOOD FOR THE COMPANY
GOOD FOR THE TOWN
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE
OF COURSE!

SO, SHALL WE SAY £5000 PRIZE?

HOW MUCH?

RATHER A LOT, I THINK.

WE CANT AFFORD IT...

ITS ONLY A SUGGESTION, MY WIFE, AS YOU KNOW, IS CHAIR OF THE GAPPORD ARTISTS NETWORK, THIS IS OBVIOUSLY A BOARD DECISION — FROM WHICH I MUST EXCLUDE MYSELF.

WELL OF COURSE ON REFLECTION, IN DEFERENCE TO YOUR GOOD LADY, IT WOULD BE CHURLISH TO...

I THINK WE NEED TO LOOK AT IT AS AN INVESTMENT IN THE COMPANY AND FROM THAT PERSPECTIVE...

IT CAN ONLY ENHANCE THE COMPANY’S IMAGE IN THE WIDER CONTEXT!

CERTAINLY OUR ECONOMIC POSITION COULD WITHSTAND A GENEROUS ...

GOOD! ALL AGREED THEN.

IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN MISS B-B IS HOLDING AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE GAPPORD ARTISTS NETWORK.

COULD I BE DATING THE MEETING TO ORDER! WE HAVE BUSINESS TO...
APPENDIX 1 The Graphic Element

So each in his/her workspace, sets to the challenge...

Biscuit parts
Broken biscuits
Crumbs
Taking the biscuits
Biscuit affects
Let them eat biscuits

Elemental deconstruction
A narrative in a metaphor
A symbolic expression of capitalistic exploitation
An exercise in pure aesthetics
A conceptual parody into the sensory
A political analogy in a visual pun

And in her studio at the back of the GAPFORD GALLERY (40th birthday gift from Hubby), VANESSA BRUTON-BARLEY sets furiously to work on her own inspiration:

Biscuits on a plate

And Judgement Day comes to pass. The great and the good of GAPFORD gather at the gallery, greeted by Mrs B-B.

GAPFORD GALLERY

Mr Mayor, how lovely to see you.

I hear your wife's picture is very good.
MARVELLOUS!
SAYS IT ALL
EXCELLENT

NOT EVEN LOOKING
AT OUR STUFF

TODAY WE HAVE SEEN
SOME EXTRAORDINARY
WORK ... A TRIBUTE TO
GAPFORD!

AND WHILST I'M NO
EXPERT IN MATTERS
OF ART ... I KNOW
WHAT SPEAKS FOR US
ALL WHEN I SEE IT...

THE JURY'S DECISION IS UNANIMOUS...
THE PRIZE GOES TO MRS. BRUTON-BAILEY.

CLAP CLAP CLAP

A PHOTO FOR THE LOCAL
PAPER.

THE EVENT MARKED THE END OF THE
GAPFORD ARTISTS NETWORK!

MEANWHILE, STROLLING
DOWN THE HIGH STREET
Boris Godunov, the
FAMOUS ART CRITIC, WHO
HAS BEEN RECOVERING
FROM THE VICISSITUDES
OF LIFE IN A NEARBY
SPA HOTEL, IS TAKING
IN GAPFORD...
LEAVING THE GALLERY SEEN AS DEPRESSED AS BORIS.

YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO BUY A COMIC BY ANY CHANCE?

WELL IT CAN'T BE WORSE THAN WHAT I'VE JUST SEEN—HERE A TOWNER FOR YOUR EFFORTS, SON!

AND NOW FOR A WELL-EARNED COFFEE.

NOW LET'S SEE WHAT THIS HAS TO SAY.

Mmm... Something in there.

INCONTINUOUS INNOVATIVE. VASTLY POST-MODERNIST.

PENETRATING SOCIAL INSIGHTS.

UTTERLY BRILLIANT.

AND RUNNY TOO!

HIGHLY MARKETABLE!

NOW WHERE COULD HE HAVE GONE TO IN THIS SMALL TOWN...

ADRIAN DARLING!

LISTEN... FOUND IT!

... THE NEXT BIG THING!

YES! A COMIC... YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT. MAJOR PUBLISHER... EXHIBITIONS...

THAT IS IF EVER I CAN FIND HIM AGAIN!
Appendix I: The Graphic Element
AND SO IT CAME TO PASS THAT SEÁN WAS IN LONDON

BOOK SIGNINGS...

COMICS CONVENTION

CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND ACADEMIC INTEREST

EXHIBITIONS OF HIS WORK...

AND THE CROWNING GLORY: A PROGRAM ABOUT HIM PRESENTED BY MELVYN BRAGG.

TODAY WE HAVE A NEW SENSATION...

AND EVERYTHING THAT SEÁN HAD EXPRESSED IN HIS COMICS WAS ERODED BY THE VERY SUCCESS OF WHAT HE HAD CRITICISED
APPENDIX 1 The Graphic Element

SO SEAN RETURNED TO GAGFORD, BUT THINGS WEREN'T THE SAME.

AND THOSE WHO DESPISED HIM NOW Sought TO HONOUR HIM...

AS MAYOR OF GAGFORD, IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO WELCOME BACK ONE OF OUR JUSTLY CELEBRATED SONS.

EVEN AMONGST FRIENDS THINGS FELT DIFFERENT...

WHAT LINE HAD HE CRIBBED?

WHERE COULD HE GO FROM HERE?

AND THE GARRET HAD BECOME A DESIGNER LOFT APARTMENT.

WITH APOLOGIES TO VARGAS FOR THE TITLE TITHE, JAMIE MANNING, ROBERT CULLEN, SYD WANNAMAN, D.J. THOMPSON, HENRY WILLIAMS FOR VISUAL QUOTAS.
Appendix 2  Work Submitted by the Participants

These full versions of the Participants' work appear in the order in which they are discussed in Part 3.
Participant 10  page 2
TODAY THE POSSIBILITIES ARE AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE BEEN...

...ENDLESS.
THIS IS NOT OUR STORY...
when we first met
there were no boundaries
but suddenly words got between us

our love, house, work, friends,
our children, plans, parent expectation, home, duty time, possessions

identity, faith, gender, care, Georges, romances, passion, man, woman, money, them, love

THESE ARE NOT OUR WORDS...
but we gave them...
"Kind" "strong"
...to each other

we felt burdened
"provider!"
and trapped
"home-maker!"

WE ARE NOT THESE PEOPLE...
THIS NOT OUR ARGUMENT...
we resisted... but words are 
...gender roles weapons
weak distant uncaring

THESE ARE NOT OUR THOUGHTS...
after each fight...
critical intolerant hateful
failure judgmental obsessive
useless neglectful irrational
...we gathered up each other's words

we built our boundary
you said I'm too critical
you said I'm useless

my pain my hurts

THESE ARE NOT OUR FEELINGS...
These are not our understandings...

when we could see each other, we were...

becoming like cultural icons

so to reach each other...

...we
read and
read...

...words

words, that make stories...

that lead somewhere

are these our words?
WORDS ARE DEFINITIONS, DIFFERENCES OR POSSIBILITIES...

you can’t judge me for being too judgmental

I can’t be intolerant of your intolerance

when you are oppressive I can’t put you in your place

caught... by our own words

but words also make possibilities like breaking boundaries

the end

THIS IS NOT THE END

Participant 9  page 4
In 2051 after Moses attained, somewhat chastened, and for the second time, a condition of his ration would be a dozen sessions of counseling with a lady from the LFR in Manchester Hill. Moses blamed this on the woman (who really cries) and the man who nearly cries. She cried a lot. In a final session with LFR, which Moses had not attended, LFR told Moses she should not be taking Moses back. He bad. This is something that worked, and perhaps because it was not accompanied by a loud & other visual static, was heard. And change commenced. And continues...

Participant 2
Work Submitted by Participants

P.S. Moses is aware that third-person referencing is neither acceptable. He does not normally do this.
My girlfriend.

Drawn like this she looks a bit wrong...

Since she's become "boo"

after "baby baby baby baby baby baby baby baby baby baby Boo!" delivered during a big hug, which then stuck.

That's the nicest thing anyone's ever called me.

It's the nicest thing I've ever called anyone...
When you go out it will rain daisies...

You'll never have to make coffee alone.

The world will be your oasis...

Three BLUE VOWS for you...

And what's to come will not go UNKNOWN.

END

some candles... silk mittens... a bone.
Participant 3

I’m only trying to help ... honestly

Simple things in life can drive her to distraction.
Doors that won’t close; gas rings that won’t light;
windows that don’t open. And often, she’ll attack
the problem the way she thinks the thing ought
to work, or the way it used to work, and, even
though it clearly isn’t working, keep trying ...

until she’s DEMENTED with irritation

I hate seeing her get so frustrated.
Life’s stressful enough with all the things
we have no control over. Why does she let
these little things we can control get
the better of her?

I’m her husband. I want to help.
I want to say there’s a knock to the
doors, the gas ring and the window.
Honestly ...
I have tried ...

The thing is, for what ever reason, she is EXTREMELY
sensitive to being patronised. So much so that ANY
attempts at helpfulness or kindness might be interpreted
as some form of condescension. Especially,
it seems, if it’s me trying to be helpful ...

humour ...
keeping it conspicuous ...
being casual ...
Doing nothing isn’t really an option

Do I look like I’m in the mood for joking around?

Don’t talk to me as though I were a child

Look if you’re so bothered about how I’m doing it why
don’t you just do it yourself?

Are you just going to sit there?

“Well do you ... ?

Keep quiet and let the person whose
happiness means so much to me go bonkers ?
Or try explaining, one more time ? ...
... in other words, do I feel lucky?

... PUNK?”
Participant 5  page 1

1. YES! DEAR!

2. Daddy, I need a Pooh!
YOU HAVE ALL THE POWER HERE

I consult then decide. You just do what you like. You consult then decide, but you can't co-operate.
Participant 5  page 3

\[\text{My best mate}\]

\[\text{20 years on and we still find each other sexy}\]
Participant 5  page 4

LOOK! HOW FAR WE'VE COME TOGETHER

LET'S SING AND DANCE TOGETHER
WE MEET DEEPLY AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER SPIRITUALLY & EMOTIONALLY

MINDFULNESS IS A SHARED CORE OF OUR LIVES
WE'VE LIVED WITH ILLNESS AND ACCEPT IT IN OUR LIVES.

LET'S GO FOR A WALK, THEN OUT FOR TEA.
APPENDIX 2  Work Submitted by Participants

Participant 2
Participant 8  page 2

After 24 years of being broken — I realized we have drifted apart. I dreamt of two hearts silently slipping away.

We decided to have

How great OK

Finally, after all that anger I was flunging a dead horse!

How wonderful life is.... I never dreamed it possible 10 years now I love it never thought possible!

Life with Jacqueline 2022
A PLACE OF ONE'S OWN...

...IS A VERY PRECIOUS THING
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IT IS DIFFICULT TO MEASURE THE LENGTH OF MY FIRST RELATIONSHIP—MY FIRST REAL RELATIONSHIP...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...BECAUSE OF THE TWO BREAKS AT THE END OF IT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SECOND TIME, SHE TOLD ME OVER A PHONE CALL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think we need to take A Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE FIRST BREAK STARTED AT THE END OF A WEEKEND AWAY.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d passed my PhD and we’d gone away to celebrate. A hotel in the Cotswolds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the last night she said—yes!—Can we talk?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So we sat on the bed, and she told me she didn’t feel our relationship was special any more.

Then she said she wanted a break, and she went for a walk, so I could collect my thoughts.

(Or was it the other way round? Walk, then break?)
THE NEXT MORNING WE WENT DOWN TO THE RESTAURANT AND ENJOYED A PAINFUL BREAKFAST.

AND GOT BACK TOGETHER.

WE WENT ON HOLIDAY WITH HER FAMILY — ALL HER FAMILY — TO THE HIGHLANDS.
Perhaps she wanted to get back together for the holiday.

I get to be part of the family one last time.

But I think she didn’t know what she wanted.

Which is why we went on a break.

And then we were back together.

And then we went on a break again.

We spoke once more. Maybe three weeks later? On the phone.

I said we couldn’t keep on a break, that if she didn’t want to get back together we should end it.

I suspect that was what she wanted all along, for me to collude in the end of the relationship.

She agreed.