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THE MATTER OF TEARS: TRANSLUCENT ENTANGLEMENTS WITH/IN COUNSELLING ENCOUNTERS

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ABSTRACT

Tears have long been documented in human culture. Tracing their history reveals the very different ways culture has shaped their expression and meaning. In more recent history, human tears have been thought to signify an internalised psychological state, with displays ruled by particular constraining forces within Western society. In this essay, I propose a reconceptualising of tears instead as intra-active cultural, political, social, material and affective phenomena (Barad, 2007). This reconceptualization is stimulated by (and in the context of) the social practice of counselling, and within that, the process of becoming a counsellor. I draw on data gathered with a diverse group of counsellors-in-training over the period of one year using a collective biography methodology. Engaging in a diffractive, rather than reflexive, process of data analysis, which marks a decentring of the individual subject of inquiry, and instead requires an opening up to the intra-active flows, matter, and material-discursive practices, I document how tears came to matter, both as an object of analysis, and for counsellors-in-training, in relation to the multiple forces enacting them.

KEYWORDS

tears, diffraction, posthumanism, affect, counselling

Porous

A fantail rests on the table
part object,
becoming child—
its flight sweeps through me.
A piwakawaka i becomes monarch—
both vessels of dead living love.
Porous boundaries leaking,
in/animate flux
of me-you-boys-who've-gone
but will (not) leave
marks on bodies
that will not erase.

The moment, because it really was only a moment, this poem refers to occurred at the end of a counselling supervision session where I was in the role of supervisor with a counsellor–client whom I had been working with for about two years. The moment this poem depicts is of the emergence of tears, mine, although they were not the only tears present. These were not glassy or watery eyes, but tears rolling down my cheeks, this is perhaps the first time I had experienced this in a counselling session, despite the years I have spent sitting with people telling me the most agonizing and painful stories. Jack Katz (1999), in his book *How Emotions Work*, suggests crying ought to be one of the more compelling areas for research in the human sciences, yet its study is oddly absent. Crying, he suggests, says "What's going on now hits me just where I live. Something has struck at one of the primordial homes of my identity." (175).

In the following essay, I outline how I was compelled to turn toward this study of tears, ultimately exploring the identity of tears, as entangled with other identities, objects, affects, words, spaces, pasts, presents and futures yet to come. While I use the terms crying, weeping, and tears interchangeably in reflecting the following cultural, historical, and psychological literature, I use the term tears for my own analytic work in order to signify tears as *matter* in an agential–realist framework (Barad 2007). As a process oriented philosophy, the matter of tears do not reflect tears as fixed, static, or boundaried but rather as a dynamic, iterative becoming. In this sense, tears are "not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency." They are "morphologically active, responsive, generative, articulate, and alive. Mattering is the ongoing differentiating of the world" (Barad 2013, 17).

Beginnings: diverse cultural, psychological and discursive constructions of tears

The documented presence of human tears in culture can be found as far back in history as the fourteenth-century B.C. in North-Western Syria. These early intimations offer a rich beginning for thinking about the diverse meanings tears acquire and their power to embody and signify. I begin by drawing on Tom Lutz's extensive work on the natural and cultural history of crying, followed by more contemporary psychological and discursive theorizations of tears in order to illustrate some of these ways in which crying and tears have been conceptualized, before turning to a feminist new materialist orientation to counsellor-in-training tears.

Found on Canaanite clay tablets, a narrative poem tells the story of the death of Ba'alz, an earth god worshipped by several ancient Middle Eastern cultures, and of how his sister, the goddess Anat, responds to the news of his death. The accepted scholarly translation of this particular part of the poem is that Anat "continued sating herself with weeping, to drink tears like wine" (Lutz 1999, 33). Seemingly a recognizable grief induced response—weeping at the loss of her brother—the scholar who produced this translation argued that the story was actually related to a springtime tribal ritual which moved from communal weeping and wailing to hysterical and raucous laughing over the course of several days. Interestingly, in this ritual, "frantic crying and raucous laughter are not opposed emotional displays but part of a continuum" (Lutz 1999, 34) which viewed such emotional expression as a source of fundamental pleasure and social cohesion.

Further explorations of historical texts, particularly Greek sources, make even clearer this nourishing, sustaining, and pleasurable association with tears and crying, often in the form of transformative rituals. Lutz refers to *The Iliad,* where Homer talks of "desire for lamentation" and "taking satisfaction in lament" (cited in Lutz 1999, 34). Ultimately, Lutz concludes that weeping was so pleasurable that it was seen to "make one 'shiver' with delight" (35). This association of tears with pleasure is was evident as recently as the mid twentieth century. For example, when psychologists began studying the psychophysiology of tears, William James wrote in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), pleasure was possible during the actual weeping part of what was called the "dry sorrow-weeping" cycle (James cited in Lutz 1999, 35). Later, physiological psychologists, including Silvan Tomkins, continued to make suggestive arguments about tears and pleasure; however, as Lutz (1999) concludes, the pleasure of tears remains inexplicably unexplored and, I would suggest, lost within the current cultural imaginary.

More contemporary psychological associations with the expression of adult tears include "powerlessness/helplessness, the loss (or threat of the loss) of an important relationship, and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, exceptional performances and the forging of new bonds" (Vingerhoets 2013, 261). Vingerhoets and Bylsma (2016) add, "in addition, perceived empathy, altruism, and a basic sense of justice, essential building blocks of human society, are major reasons for tearfulness in adults" (214). However, Lutz suggests a perhaps more complex and contradictory understanding of tears. He says, "[i]t is often …mixed emotions or competing desires—fear mixed with desire, hope mixed with despair—that can trigger the release of tears" (Lutz 1999, 22). Regardless whether they are described as tears of happiness, joy, pride, mourning, frustration, or despair, such an expression of emotion is generally viewed as an outward sign of an individual's emotional interiority or of reflecting a particularly individual, personal meaning or experience.

Several scholars have suggested that the process of civilization has been responsible for the increased restraints on the public displays of emotion, including crying (Vingerhoets 2013). Indeed, neoliberalism, with its "emphasis on the making of particular kinds of selves" in contemporary society, creates the conditions to increase the likelihood of tears for subjects "always on the boundaries of failure" (McAvoy 2015, 26). At the same time precluding the expression of such emotion, lest it affirm the very failure the individual subject strives to avoid. Drawing on humanism's binaries, or dualisms, such as: subject—object; self—other; mind—body; male—female; rational—emotional (Haraway, 2004), we see, too, how emotion is subversively relegated to be 'less than' its dominating and colonizing partner, reason. The effects of humanism's binaries are far-reaching and, indeed, devastating to many of those on the wrong side, who "have struggled to reclaim and rewrite untold histories, to subvert what counts as knowledge and truth, and to challenge those who claim the authority to speak for them" (St-Pierre & Pillow 2000, 5).

Tears are messy, an uncontained leaky bodily fluid, perhaps even unpredictable, incoherent, and irrational—material evidence of what a sexist, neoliberal society would identify as a 'feminized self,' and characterize as a 'poor relation' to the hegemonic, rational, self-contained, coherent, knowing man. Such affective practices stand in stark contrast to the power of the contemporary neoliberal discourse that prioritizes and constitutes individuals as autonomous, rational, self-maximizing, economically productive subjects (Davies & Bansel 2007; McAvoy 2015).

Tears in the counselling room

The discussion above explores crying and tears from historical (Lutz 1999), psychological (Vingerhoets 2013) and discursive (McAvoy 2015) vantage points, in an attempt to understand causes, meanings, effects, and displays of such a mysterious and complex phenomenon (Vingerhoets 2013). Yet there has been little attention given to the study of tears in the counselling literature, despite studies finding that tears occur with great regularity in helping relationships (e.g. doctor–patient; nurse–patient; therapist–client) (Blume-Marcovici, Stolberg & Khademi 2013; 2015; Lutz 1999). Indeed, while recent studies have found between 72% (Blume-Marcovici et al. 2013) and 87% (t' Lam, Vingerhoets, & Bylsma 2018) of therapists report having cried in therapy, there are less than a handful of studies on this topic (Knox, Hill, Knowlton, Chui, Pruitt & Tate 2017; Morgan & Nutt Williams 2020). Findings from this small body of work have primarily focused on the therapeutic context of tears (e.g. grief and loss), therapist perspectives on the effects of therapist tears on the therapeutic relationship, and on psychotherapeutic processes. Causes of therapist tears tended to be framed in personal, circumstantial, and emotional terms, such as a strong empathic response, a triggering of their own loss or grief, or a symptom of burnout. Therapists tended to worry about the effects and appropriateness of their tears for clients, while wanting to remain in control of their emotions (Knox et al. 2017).

This attention, in the broader literature on crying and tears, to the finer detail of psychological, social, and cultural forces and encounters offers a somewhat familiar analysis of social context determinants and cultural and historical variability, with the counselling literature offers a primarily psychological framing of therapist tears. In the following sections I turn to my own doctoral research, outlining how deploying a feminist new materialist approach opens me as researcher up to 'seeing' the matter of tears as an object of analysis, and how, through such a reconceptualization, therapist tears came to matter in myriad ways.

Data that glows: researcher-data intra-actions and the emergence of tears as an object of study

This research data was originally generated with feminist and post-structuralist aims of exploring and mapping the embodied encounters of counsellors-in-training as "subjects-in-relation, subjects-in-process" and of making visible the discursive processes of subjection, (Davies 2009, 8), in order to think differently (from predominantly humanistic views) about counselling and counsellor identity. Inspired by Collective Biography methodology (Davies and Gannon 2006; 2012)

I, as researcher, met with a small group of eight counsellors-in-training for a series of eight three-hour workshops over the course of a one-year period. Participants were invited to explore, through processes of talking, listening, making, and sensing, critical incidents or meaningful encounters contributing to their identity formation as counsellors. Data from these video recorded workshops included verbal content (transcribed), affect, silences, emotion, physical space, and other matter arising in the time and space of data analysis.

Coming to 'see' tears in this data emerged with an onto-epistemological shift to feminist new materialism *(*Barraclough 2018), through an intra-active process of engagement with feminist new materialist theory (Barad 2007) and of paying attention to data that "*glow*" (Maclure 2010, 282). These were tears which were talked about by participants at the workshops, as emerging in encounters with clients in counselling sessions, both as present on counsellors' faces and/or in their eyes, and/or as felt in the body (a restrained desire to cry) but not emergent on the face (ghostly). Tears at times also re-emerged during the collective biography workshops, as participants re-called such moments in the counselling sessions.

This intra-active process of coming to 'see' tears in this body of data refers to Barad's notion of intra-action (2007). The concept of intra-action is key to her agential-realist framework and stands in contrast to the usual 'interaction,' underscoring a profound conceptual shift. Interacting components, such as human and non-human forces, observers and observed, or data, theory, and human researchers suggest the interaction of independent, pre-existing, separate entities. Intra-action, on the other hand, delineates the ontological inseparability of these entities, the non-dualistic nature, with the emergence of their boundaries and properties only becoming determinate through the larger material arrangement (material practices). In this way, phenomena such as 'tears,' are merely a part of the world's ongoing, dynamic, and intra-active becoming, emerging as specific configurations or articulations in relation with the time and space of the research entanglement.

Thinking with theory as an intra-active process of analysis, entailed "an embodied engagement with the materiality of research data: a becoming-with the data as researcher" (Lenz Taguchi 2012, 265). It is not that the phenomenon of tears lay inertly waiting in the data to be found and studied as an object of analysis. It is not that there are a finite number of analytic objects requiring unearthing in

the data. Rather, tears emerged through my "body as a space of transit," (Lenz Taguchi 2012, 265), that is, through the intra-action of multiple, dynamic subjectivities of counsellor, woman, mother, researcher (…) with the material-discursive phenomena that we have labelled 'data.' This entangled process then produced the *glow* of tears.

MacLure (2013) states that the glow of data appears around singular points, "— 'bottlenecks, knots and foyers' " (Deleuze 2004, in MacLure, 662), that, she says, involve a loss of mastery over language (and ultimately, over ourselves). Drawing on a feminist new materialist theoretical orientation, I re-turned to my data with a desire to look beyond the post-structural subject with which I was most familiar, to decenter this individual subject and instead open up to matter, flows, intensities. I re-turned to the voices, sounds, and bodies of my participants, invoking, too, MacLure's (2013) notion of wonder, around what came to matter during the hours we met together over the period of several months. This required attention to desire, intensity, and the embodied felt sense of something reaching up from the data to grab hold of me. I centered MacLure's affective descriptions of wonder as "movements of desire and intensity that connect bodies—human and nonhuman, animate or inanimate" (MacLure 2013, 229) and as a "potentiality [that] can be felt on occasions where something…seems to reach out from the inert corpus (corpse) of the data, to grasp us" (MacLure 2013, 228). Such an orientation to data analysis perhaps requires a letting go of old practices of industrious, mechanical, and cognitive searches for meaning within inert data and instead requires a greater attunement to and reliance on the senses, that, ironically perhaps, invoke a capacity for further thought. In letting go of a cognitive approach and attuning to the senses invokes capacity for further thought, what started to glow for me, and immediately became evident as intra-active (material-discursive) phenomena, were 'tears.' Starting my research from such a decentered position, invited a seeing, feeling, and sensing with/in the data ultimately opened me up to new and different ways of knowing.

There are likely a multitude of intra-active forces which led me here, to notice, investigate, and map entangled genealogies (Barad 2007) of counsellor-in-training tears. From personal childhood (and adult) experiences of tears as involuntary and excessive, undesirable, and unavoidable, to witnessing the pain-filled tears of clients and students, friends, and family, who shamefully apologize and wipe away this evidence of a natural-cultural physiological process. The researcher-I was also influenced by the voluminous counsellor education literature on the perceived negative emotional effects of learning counselling, and the often resulting individualized solution to find better ways of coping (e.g. Elliot & Wheeler 2010; Rønnestad & Skovholt 2003; Truell 2001).

The plentiful presence of tears as a site of intense affect in the data seemed to offer a way of exploring this further, but from a theoretically different perspective than the previously dominant individualized, psychological framings in the counselling literature, offering an opening also into material and discursive forces shaping the emergence of the tears. My desire was to also challenge and reconfigure normative practices and assumptions related to emotion, crying, and the discomfort of visible displays of tears. Such normative practices needlessly contribute to increased self-flagellation and pain that, most likely, contributes to the *glow* of tears. Desiring to make a "demonstrable difference" (Bell 2012, 117), to undo the rational–emotional binary, and taking up the agential-realist's "responsibility for the world's becoming," and to "to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering" (Barad 2003, 827) is no doubt another force in the materialization of tears as object of analysis through this boundary making analytic practice.

Conceptualising tears as affective-material-discursive phenomena

Having experienced this emergence of tears as an object of inquiry with/in the data, I then turned to a further inquiry of what might emerge through an analysis of tears as an affective-material-discursive practice, or "phenomena" (Barad 2007). This meant seeing the materialization of tears as inseparable from and intra-active with, the discursive conditions that mutually constitute them. That is, tears not as "entities with inherent boundaries and properties but phenomena that acquire specific boundaries and properties through the open-ended dynamics of intra-activity" (Barad 2007, 172). In this sense, the discursive practices and the materiality of the tears do not "stand in a relationship of externality to each other," neither are they "ontologically or epistemologically prior" and neither are they "articulated or articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated" (Barad 2007, 152).

The more we understand the physiology of tears the more apparent this dynamic entanglement of matter and meaning becomes. For example, three different kinds of tears are recognized by physiologists and ophthalmologists. These tears not only have different functions but also have different chemical, hormonal, and protein compositions—referred to as basal, reflex, and psychic tears. Lutz (1999)

illustrates that "basal tears are the continuous tears that lubricate our eyeballs. Reflex or irritant tears are produced when we chop onions, for instance, or get poked in the eye. Psychic or emotional tears are those caused by, and communicating, specific emotional states" (67).

In a fascinating photographic study by photographer Rose-Lynn Fisher, shared in her book *The Topography of Tears* (2017), Fisher has explored the physical terrain of more than one hundred tears emitted during a range of emotional states and physical reactions by using an optical microscope with an attached digital camera. There are many factors determining the resulting tear image, including "volume of tear fluid, evaporation or flow, biological variations, microscope and camera settings, and how I process and print the photograph" (Fisher 2017, 8). Comprising a wide range of her own and others' tears, from elation to onions, as well as sorrow, frustration, rejection, resolution, laughing, yawning, birth and rebirth, Fisher (2017) suggests "it's as though each one of our tears carries a microcosm of the collective human experience" (8).

In noticing the very different material composition of tears as well as the forces of their entanglement with the visual photographic-microscopic image of tears (including the apparatus of measurement), tears as intra-active phenomena becomes evident. Through immersion with/in the data it became apparent that there were diverse and situated patterning processes at work in the enactment of tears. Paying attention to these offered the opportunity to bring forth the complex and multiple material-discursive forces at work, not just in the materialization of tears, but through tears, in the (re)(con)figuration of counsellor-in-training subjectivities.

Thinking in this way, tears are construed not as an object or thing with inherent boundaries, but rather as an entangled, dynamic relationality, where the boundaries of intra-acting forces are reconfigured to produce the real, material, situated effect of tears. This analysis aims not to understand the essence or singular meaning of tears as produced by a bounded individual, rather, thinking tears in this way invites an analytic focus on the boundary making practices, or forces, that intra-act in producing the ever-increasing multiplicity of tears. Generating such a multiplicity then acts to destabilize reductionist, naturalized notions of tears as only emotional, as failure, as female, and so on. Instead, new models are generated for being and becoming-with tears, which are multiple, processual, dynamic, and open-ended (Baker 2013).

Drawing on Whatmore (2006), and staying with a relational ontology, tears can be seen to be a "force of intensive relationality," an intensity that is felt but is not personal, and that is visceral but is "not confined to an individuated body" (604).

Such a view of the affective nature of tears in particular, although from a different tradition, also aligns with Wetherell's (2012) theorizing of the affective-discursive. She argues that "human affect is inextricably linked with meaning-making and with the semiotic (broadly defined) and the discursive. It is futile to try to pull them apart. An affective practice like a dancing plague recruits material objects, institutions, pasts and anticipated futures" (20). This aligns with Barad's notion of intra-activity, and the inseparability of mutually entangled forces, including space, time, matter, and discourse. What Wetherell's work brings to this discussion in particular is a focus on the *affective* nature of such an entanglement or practice. As she says, "it is the participation of the emoting body that makes an assemblage (cf. entanglement) an example of affect rather than an example of some other kind of social practice" (2012, 159). Tears in this sense, as an affective intensity, are inseparably entangled with other matter, bodies, times and spaces, and momentarily located in and on a body, embodied.

Poetics as analysis—making intra-active tear-poems

At this point, I turn back to the data and transcorporeal engagements in order to show what might be materialized or made visible through the enactment of tears as intra-active patterns and to examine how they may be figured differently. In performing this analysis with the data from the workshops, a number of intra-active tear patterns emerged, that were configured through the analytic device of the poem. I use Suchman's (2012) definition of an analytic device as an inventive method, an analytic resource, through which things are made. I constructed a number of poems from the participants' talk of tears in the group sessions, in relation to the stories they recounted of crying and of the materialization of tears, in their eyes and on their faces, while performing their roles on placements as counsellors in counselling sessions. In keeping with Barad's agential realist ontology, these patterns are not seen to be exhaustive or representative, rather, in the time and space of the lives and groups of these participants and with myself as researcher, they are what came to matter.

Though creating the tear-poems from the talk of participants shaped the initial stage of my data analysis, the next stage turned to both theory and the poems in order to further enact the contingent and entangled "processes of *patterning*" (Hughes & Lury 2013, 786) in the space-time-mattering of tears. In such an

intra-active approach, I was reminded that this process is one of experimental encounter, where "the researcher does not know in advance what onto-episte-mological knowledge will emerge from the experimental mix of *concepts, emotions, bodies, images, and affects"* (Davies 2014, 734, emphasis added). In addition, the researcher's body acts as a "space of transit" (Lenz Taguchi 2012, 265) for transcorporeal engagements with data, theory, and other multiple elements of the research encounter, too infinite to be listed.

Through this research I had become familiar with the use of the poem as a method of inquiry (Richardson 1994), to think with. In a reconfiguring, I now think of the poem as an analytic device, as a structure which "cuts things together-apart" to produce an intra-active pattern (Barad 2013, 2). The poem offers a structure to map myriad interferences, of human and non-human encounters and non-linear figurations of time and space (Barraclough 2018). Poems, like Osgood and Giugni's (2015) *Odes and PhArts*, are offered as "valid knowledges generated as non-representational figurations that capture the intensities, fragments, impressions, politics and affects" (355) of entangled, intra-active, multi-sensibilities. While Osgood and Giugni similarly present *Odes* as a "materialization of post-humanist logic to reconfigure and offer diffractive readings" (355) they do so *not* with the intention of decoding them. In contrast, while my intention is also to offer poems as valid knowledges, it is to use them additionally as an analytic tool with which to map and think in relation to my encounters with the data and theory, and in order to ask 'how and what comes to matter for counsellors-in-training?'

I draw here too on Barad's (elaborating on Bohr), agential realist understanding of an apparatus, in thinking about what it is that my use of the poem might do. Apparatuses, as with the poem, are not merely a collection or assemblage of human and non-human forces. Rather, says Barad, they are "specific material reconfigurings of the world that do not merely emerge in time but iteratively re-configure spacetimematter as part of the ongoing dynamism of becoming" (2007, 142). As such, my interest is in what the tear poems might produce, reconfigure, and remake in relation to the phenomena of 'tears' for counsellors-in-training. Tears as a multiplicity are re-imagined through the form of the poem which, then, invites an ongoing re-shaping of both the phenomena of tears and of counsellor/reader subjectivities through intra-active readings of the poem. The poem, as with any text, produces differences which matter, in ongoing intra-active processes.

These notions of 'mattering' and 'reconfiguring' align well with certain feminist and activist poets. Such poetic work is political, and has worked to make the invisible visible, and change the landscape of possibilities for those margin-

alized and oppressed within capitalist heteropatriarchal systems. Writing in the *New Yorker* on the work of Adrienne Rich, for example, Claudia Rankine (2016) comments, "[w])ith Rich came the formulation of an alternate poetic tradition that distrusted and questioned paternalistic, heteronormative, and hierarchical notions of what it meant to have a voice, especially for female writers." Poetry, in this sense, becomes not just literary or romantic or clever, but aims for a far wider, and more life determining, reach. This is particularly evident, too, in the infamous words of Audre Lorde:

> For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our exist- ence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams towards survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives (1984, 37).

Poetry, in these forms, is most definitely a material-discursive practice, recon- figuring the world in all senses for the writers, for the world of poetry, and for all of those who have had the privilege and pleasure of reading such work. New boundaries are enacted through the force of poetry, "not merely in the sense of bringing new things into the world but in the sense of bringing forth new worlds" (Barad 2007, 170).

This is true also in the sense that a poem intra-acts with the reader to produce an affective force. Poet David Whyte (2012), in speaking about poetry, suggests that "poetry...is not *about* a subject, not *about* a quality, or an experience, it is the experience itself" (n.p.). Such personal and evocative texts have come to be seen as potentially powerful, political, and meaningful in qualitative research, with the capacity to "move writers and readers, subjects and objects, tellers and listeners into this space of dialogue, debate and change" (Holman-Jones 2005, 764). In staying with a relational ontology, "affect refers to the force of intensive relationality—intensities that are felt but are not personal; visceral but not confined to an individuated body" (Whatmore 2006, 604).

In this sense, the force of poetry to move, to affect, is a dynamic relational one, an intra-action between, at least, words, space, time, and bodies. Such a theorizing reflects the new materialist, post-qualitative "shift of concern from what things mean to what they do," that creates "a shift from an onus on *meaning* to an onus on *affect*" (Whatmore 2006, 604). Thus, the poem as an analytic device is intended

to doubly work to reconfigure what things do rather than express what things mean, as well as to advance performative understandings of knowledge-making practices for counsellors-in-training which may go on to affect others.

It is with this understanding of the poem, as an affective force itself, that I turn to the poem below. The poem is an intra-active tear pattern enacting multiple material-discursive forces, a collective biography of the tears, both present and ghostly, of a small, diverse group of becoming-counsellors in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This poem was created by me at the end of my analytic work for my PhD as a way of bringing together the now visible multiplicity of material, relational, social, and cultural forces and processes intra-acting to produce counsellor-in-training tears. Beyond the scope of this essay, such intra-active forces were inclusive of gender, ethnicity, neoliberalism, professionalism, counselling spaces, High school spaces, private-public binaries, counselling ethics, and multiple other times and spaces and matter.

While the poem was shared with the participants, as part of the feminist research practice of reciprocity, they offered no specific input into it. Given that the poem's aim was to bring together a collective re-telling of the forces shaping the emergence of tears for counsellors-in-training in this study, I imagined the poem as resonant with the multiplicity of encounters they described in the workshops. The structure of this poem was prompted by a poetry collection by New Zealand poet, Bill Manhire, called *Tell Me My Name*, (2017) comprising of a range of riddles. In reviewing Manhire's collection, Norman Meehan (n.d) writes, "Every culture has riddles—they keep company with runes and spells and Christmas crackers, they challenge and entertain us, they remind us just how mysterious the world can be." (n.p.). The poem I created also connects with Barad's agential realism, where agency is no longer considered the sole property of the human, but is rather shared with, co-constituted in relation with other more-than-human matter. The aim of the poem is to reflect tears as encompassing both the mystery and agency of portraying the ways they are formed in relation with, and are inseparable from, other identities, affects, matter, and discourses, and how these forces simultaneously shape the possibilities for counsellor-in-training subjectivities.

Tear reconfigured

I am translucent entanglement
formed of multiple histories
and futures-yet-to-come
colliding in the eye of a storm.

I am surprise, intensity, flow,
abject outcast made to matter
in the dark, the secret, the private,
the under-ground space of a profession.
I am nature-culture, matter and meaning
you and her, an inseparable we
made of genuineness and empathy,
of the other—in, on and under one skin.
I am losing control, irrational, non-white
neurotic female vulnerability.
I am man to man, turned inside-out,
brave and strong and good.
I am ethics—listening, hearing, relating.
I am ordinary fragments, cut together-apart,
unanticipated, world in seed, taking root
in the fertile earth, at the edges of our skin.
I am non-chronos, a point of time,
sadness, desolation, abandonment,
inseparably spliced through, entangled with
forgiveness, hope, compassion.
I am piwakawaka and monarch, a re-turn
to a place of beginning that marks
the present. I am embodied alterity
made visible. I refuse to rest.

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I am ghostly matter made real,
a potent presence of
a figure marked by its absence.
I nevertheless, demand your attention.
I am im/possibility, energetic entanglement.
I inhabit the subterranean, a rhizome—
thick with loss, pain, powerlessness and fear
of breaking down, apart, of becoming, uncontained.
I am handling it, I am okay, I am relief.
I am you, me, them and us,

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a gazed upon, subjectified body, formed
of ideologies, normativities, and imagined ideals.
I am a rational calculating creature,
full of feeling, desire, and illicit love.
I am undesirable, uninvited, bordering on failure.
I am paradox.
I am large and small, ideology and subjectivity,
an intra-active montage threatening to leak, seep
and leach beyond my borders
into foreign terrains.
I am time accelerated, a compulsion
to speed up and slow down,
a simultaneity of overwhelm and powerlessness
to independently do either.
I am counselling space, High School space
professional space and always the space between,
a conduit of networks, of appropriated subjects
making materializations of the not-yet-known.

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This is not all. This does not end.
Porous and responsive, an iterative ethics,
one tear dissolving into ocean, reconfigured
and reconfiguring an unending of im/possibilities.

Conclusion (un-ending)

The aim of this essay has been to outline the ways in which a turn to thinking with feminist new materialism opened up new possibilities for engaging with data, in particular through the phenomena of tears for counsellors-in-training. This analytic direction for research in the counselling field is relatively new and yet holds significant potential for bringing to light the complexity and multiplicity of forces at work in counselling encounters. Making these intra-active material, affective, and discursive forces visible (and thus revisable) seems imperative in such a relational and emotional field that places counsellors at increased risk of burnout (Kottler 2010). While the analytic detail of how these forces, such as neoliberalism, intra-act to shape the emergence of tears, and thus counsellor-in-training subjectivities, is discussed in depth in other work (e.g. Barraclough

2017), it has also been the aim of this essay to illustrate their multiplicity and intra-activity through the use of the poem. Poetry's affective force to move its reader and to increase our capacity to know and to act in previously un-thought ways, strongly aligns with feminist new materialism's project of opening up to the not-yet-known, and producing differences which make a difference (Barad 2007). Drawing in particular on Barad's concept of intra-action in relation with data analysis, the phenomena of tears, and the poem as analytic device has offered generative possibilities both for re-thinking tears as intra-active phenomena and for contributing to new understandings of the dynamic, iterative and co-constitutive process of becoming for counsellors-in-training. A feminist ethics and politics has been pivotal to these processes, through engaging with a feminist new materialist affirmative approach to power relations and undoing of oppressive binaries (Hinton & van der Tuin 2014). This is echoed in the collective rendering of tears formed in the poem. Here, tears are reconfigured from an either/or binary dominated by 'feminine' constructs as emotional, private, personal, vulnerable, and neurotic to a multiplicity, where tears become also professional, rational, strong, brave, and shift to paradox, entanglement and ultimately to an un-ending of possibilities.

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