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Substitution, Metaphor and Authenticity

> As figure, metaphor constitutes a displacement and an extension of the meaning of words; its explanation is grounded in a theory of substitution.
>
> (Ricoeur, 1978: 3)

Press coverage of addiction tends to be prolific, if not always accurate or considered. We begin our investigation of MMT by examining the ways in which it is reported in three respected daily newspapers, the *New York Times* (US), *The Times* (London, UK) and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia). What place does methadone occupy in Western liberal discourse? What does this place offer to policy and practice in terms of scope for the development of treatment? What does it tell us about clients in terms of their status either as liberal subjects or as Others of liberalism? To conduct this analysis we have chosen to focus on the role of *metaphor* in articles on MMT. As will become evident, the use of metaphor is a primary way in which methadone treatment is given meaning in these texts. This is not to say that coverage of methadone treatment per se in the three papers under examination is voluminous; in fact, as we will be arguing, there is a particular kind of silence around the basics of the programs operating in each country. In part we ask what this silence means, and what effects the use of metaphor – both to figure methadone and to mobilise it as a figure for other phenomena – has in a context where addiction, including heroin addiction, is by contrast extensively discussed. In the process we consider the status of metaphor within Western liberal discourse, and trace the (in some respects damaging) ways in which methadone treatment can be seen not only as a resource for, and object of, metaphorical description and production, but itself as a kind of metaphor – *a metaphor for heroin*.

Why is it important to map and analyse media accounts of methadone? A commonsense response might be: because these representations reflect specific understandings of it, influencing, by disseminating those understandings, the formation of policy and practice around it and the esteem in which those who participate are held in society (McArthur, 1999). As Isabelle Stengers and Olivier Ralet (1997) have pointed out, public debate on drugs and drug treatment is regularly characterised in terms of a putative moral consensus: 'don't take drugs'. Related to this, perceived public opposition to methadone treatment is frequently cited as grounds for timidity or reserve in policymaking (Treloar and Fraser, 2007). The literature examining representations of drug use and drug treatments in the press tends to take this approach, with some very useful results. It finds, for example, that coverage of drug use and drug services is often poorly informed, unbalanced and inclined to reproduce stereotypes (Orcutt and Turner, 1993; Elliott and Chapman, 2000; Coomber, Morris and Dunn, 2000; Treloar and Körner, 2005; Körner and Treloar, 2004). Thus, Orcutt and Turner look at the ways in which particular research findings on student drug use were distorted in the US press, and explore the creative choices, organisational circumstances and other factors that drove the distortions. Other literature on drugs and the media argues that policy is shaped in the context of, and even by, media reports (McArthur, 1999; Elliott and Chapman, 2000; Rowe, 2002). Elliott and Chapman, for instance, explore media treatment of a proposed trial of prescribed heroin in the Australian Capital Territory and the federal government's withdrawal of support for the trial. They argue that it is important to analyse the ways in which drug use is presented in the media because (to paraphrase the work of Ericson et al., whom they quote) the media provide commonsense understandings of deviance and societal options for, and limits on, managing deviance. McArthur also investigates the coverage of the proposed heroin trial, concluding that 'sections of the media had a hand in its demise' (153). Rowe examines a different period in press coverage of drug use, focusing on a flurry of reports in 1995 on a supposed heroin epidemic in Melbourne. He asserts that '"public opinion" and what the policy-making apparatus of governments understand to be real depend heavily on the mass media' (38).

This literature resembles in some respects our own approach to the relationship between the media, policy, the views of members of the public and drugs as material objects. We do, however, think it important to question this framing in that it tends to echo an unexamined inclination within Western thought to take for granted the ontological

separateness of representation and reality, in this case, media discourse and drug use and drug treatment. For example, Elliott and Chapman (2000: 193) ask, 'What was it about the nature of heroin users as portrayed in the press by supporters and opponents of the trial that may have contributed to a lack of political support for [the trial]?' Terms such as portrayal imply prior categories, in this case, the 'nature of heroin users'. While it is absolutely necessary to think about the ways in which media representations co-produce policy, daily life and politics, it is important not to reify 'representation' and 'reality' by treating them as separate entities with a priori attributes. In the Introduction we argued that to account better for the role of material objects such as drugs in producing realities, a theorisation of materiality is necessary that sees it as neither passive in the face of culture or discursivity, nor determining of it. In making these arguments we use Karen Barad's work to formulate perspectives on the agency of objects that best express the co-constitutive nature of the relation between humans, objects and discourse. This relation is nowhere more usefully elaborated than in the discussion of the media, and Barad's theories apply directly to the central issue structuring discussions of the media: the question, as noted above, of the relation between 'representation' and 'reality'.

Along with this different approach to the ontology of representation, our analysis departs significantly from the existing literature in two main ways. First, it is based on an international corpus of newspaper articles, and second, it focuses on the role of metaphor in generating meaning. As a result, the analysis takes a more abstract view of the production of meaning, looking at, for example, the role of images such as that of the silver bullet and its association with the occult. At the same time, it shares with its forerunners a conviction that representation matters for the world and for individuals, even if this mattering of representation is conceived in rather different terms.

Theorising representation

How might we best understand the action of the media in 'representing' phenomena such as methadone? Here, we will look a little more closely at one aspect of the ideas elaborated in the Introduction. As we know, one of Barad's aims is to highlight the problems inherent in treating the process of representation as separate and distinguishable from that which is represented. The argument she develops resonates with contemporary cultural studies approaches to the media, within which the thinking of this chapter is largely situated. In short, Barad's theory offers

a way to refine the current formulation of one of cultural studies' central issues (an issue related directly to the representation/reality connection): the question of polysemy. It is a truism of contemporary cultural studies that cultural representations such as newspaper texts are neither able to guarantee meaning (that is, the ways in which they are interpreted by their readers) nor be entirely 'polysemous' (open to any kind of meaning making). In this respect, the relationship between text and meaning, in particular the causal relationship between the two, is understood to be a complex one. In thinking through the implications of polysemy, however, the debate tends to find itself limited to a choice between an emphasis on the power of texts and an emphasis on the power of readers, often settling for a formulation somewhere between the two. Thus, in describing the contribution of the idea of hybridity to cultural studies, Simon During (1993: 7) says:

> Concepts like hybridisation, as they develop out of the notion of 'polysemy', return us to a new culturalism because they enable us to see how particular individuals and communities can actively create new meanings from signs and cultural products which come from afar. Yet a concept like 'hybridisation' still does not account for the way that the meanings of particular signifiers or texts in a particular situation are, in part, ordered by material interests and power relations.

Karen Barad's rethinking of ontology offers an approach that lifts the debate beyond this continuum model. Because Barad's background is in particle physics, her consideration of representation focuses on the representational role of the experiment. Our interest here is in a different representational role: that of the media, but her insights are nevertheless of value to understanding this different role. As Barad has argued, the linguistic turn has tended to position materiality as the product of discourse (in a process that is largely figured as one-way). Cultural studies has tended to focus on the production of meaning and experience for individuals and groups through culture, understanding materiality as either prior to, or the effect of, these moments of meaning making. This approach tends to see reading as a sequential, causal process in which a kind of struggle between the forces of a dominant culture and the resources of the individual takes place. In doing so it treats materiality as indubitably crucial to, but nevertheless one step removed from, this process. Barad's formulation of the phenomenon allows for the consideration of the contribution of materiality to reading that presents it as immediate rather than in some sense distanced from the specific

encounter of reading. In this model, meaning making is the product of the intra-action between texts, readers and material conditions, and meaning, rather than being the effect of *pre-constituted* agents – the text and the reader – is understood as a highly contingent phenomenon co-constituted by other highly contingent phenomena. This model shifts the focus from a choice between two agents (the text and the reader) whose prior attributes are assumed to emerge out of political, social and material conditions, to the constitution of all agents (including materiality) and their attributes in the moment of reading.

It must be said that this chapter does not focus on the making of specific meanings by readers based on the texts under consideration. Rather, its aim is to look at the texts themselves and reserve judgement on how meaning is negotiated by readers. This approach is rather different from that taken in the next chapter, which looks explicitly at the different ways readers negotiate clinical guideline texts. This does not mean, however, that the content of these news texts is of no scholarly or political interest. As the model elaborated above makes clear, all readings depend in part on the *phenomenon* of the text.

Compiling texts

The material we analyse here was drawn from three newspapers, the *New York Times*, *The Times* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The articles were gathered by searching the online database Factiva using the search term 'methadone' and limiting the search to a two-year period: 2004 –2005.[1] All resulting citations (a total of 135) were retrieved in the first instance and examined for the purposes of our analysis. Those that made only isolated references to methadone in pieces of one paragraph or less, or were devoted to unrelated topics, were noted, and greater focus was placed on those articles that made more substantive references to methadone. This latter group included articles containing more than one reference to methadone, articles in which methadone was central to the overall story and articles in which the reference to methadone was especially vivid, suggestive or idiosyncratic (a total of 77 – *SMH*: 29, *Times*: 27 and *NYT*: 21).

All three newspapers examined enjoy relatively high circulation and readership. The *New York Times* was the third-highest daily circulation paper in the US for the six months ending 30 September 2005 (1,682,644).[2] *The Times* enjoyed the second-highest daily circulation among 'quality' newspapers in the UK for the period ending 30 November 2005 (671,666).[3] The *Sydney Morning Herald* had the highest

daily circulation among quality newspapers in Australia during the six months ending 31 March 2006 (211,700).[4] Each one is a longstanding and generally well-respected daily journal, representing, for some, the liberal democratic ideals of journalistic independence and reasoned debate. In selecting these newspapers we leave unexplored representations of methadone in tabloid or 'populist' journalism. There is no doubt that an interesting study could be made of the material found in tabloids, but, being obliged to limit the scale of our search for practical purposes, we chose to explore the ideas and assumptions operating in relatively sober newspaper discourse. It seems to us that there is a great deal to be learnt from the limits of some of Western liberal democracy's most trusted reporting.

Metaphor

There are a number of different ways in which an analysis of newspaper coverage of methadone could be undertaken. In this chapter we focus on the operation of metaphor because the ways in which it appears in the texts gathered is both striking and, we think, revealing. As Helen Keane (2002: 9) has noted,

> As one reads about addiction in both popular and specialist texts one soon notices the reliance on metaphor, and the use of different metaphors to support different understandings of the phenomena. Is addiction like diabetes or high blood pressure (a chronic disease)? Is it like hunger or thirst (a visceral drive)? Is it like enjoying opera (an acquired taste incomprehensible to non-enthusiasts)? Is it like watching TV in the evening (a routine habit)? Is it like falling in love (an irrational attachment)?

A similar emphasis on metaphor, and a similar range of metaphorical figuration, can be identified in texts dealing specifically with methadone. More will be said later about the content of the texts gathered for this study. Before this, however, it is important to consider the meaning of the term 'metaphor'. The status of metaphor as a specific, unique part of language has been under debate for many years. Aristotle provided Western philosophy's first authoritative definition of metaphor, arguing that although in some respects nothing more than an ornament or accoutrement to language, it can also create a change in perspective and, therefore, yield new insights (Miller, 2006: 63). Aristotle's formulation

implies a distinction between metaphor and other forms of language. This view has been challenged in recent decades by theorists such as Ricoeur and Derrida. In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur argued that if metaphor 'displaces a certain logical order', it must be

> the same as that from which all classifications proceed. The idea of an initial metaphoric impulse destroys these oppositions between proper and figurative, ordinary and strange, order and transgression.
>
> (Ricoeur, 1978: 22–3)

This argument has led others to conclude that metaphor characterises all thought and language. As Don Miller says, 'Most metaphors are old; some others are new and these shape the next wave of knowledge and action in the world' (2006: 64).

In making reference to 'old' metaphors, Miller invokes the work of Derrida, among others, on metaphor. In 'White Mythology' (1974) Derrida sets about deconstructing the literal/metaphorical binary, arguing that all concepts contain 'worn-out' metaphors that are no longer evident to speakers or listeners, appearing instead as literal language. These worn-out metaphors nevertheless help shape the trajectory of our thinking. While he takes a tack rather different from Ricoeur's, Derrida also concludes that metaphor is at the centre of all literal language, that there is, in fact, no clear separation between the two. As James Seitz puts it, 'It is tempting to say that metaphor "creeps into" language when we are not looking; but in fact it is metaphor that allows us to look – to speak our looking – in the first place' (1991: 292). This formulation emphasises not only the role of metaphor in expressing ideas, but, by bringing otherwise unrelated things together, in generating new ideas. Again, as does Ricoeur, Derrida sees metaphor as important not least because it is at the centre of the production of new concepts. How do the metaphors operating around methadone create new concepts, or shape the trajectory of our thinking? This will be explored in the next section.

Metaphor has also attracted feminist critique, some of which is highly pertinent to the subject under consideration in this chapter. Meryl Altman (1990), for example, notes that feminists have tended to be suspicious of metaphor for several reasons. The appropriation of femininity as metaphor (for terrain, the passive, the ornamental, the duplicitous and so on) has been shown to be widespread within literary and political texts, with significant implications for meaning making around gender. In this respect, some feminists have argued that metaphor has been traditionally

used against women's interests. Others, however, have embraced metaphor as a means of imagining new relations, including those of gender, the work of feminists writing in the genre of *Écriture féminine* (for example, Cixous, 1976; Irigaray, 1985) being an important example of this. As Cixous (1976: 875) puts it, 'Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies'. This writing must be done by breaking up the 'arid millennial' (875) textual ground of masculine dominance, the primacy of reason and the suppression of women's unconscious. Her classic article 'The laugh of the Medusa' offers an example of such writing, replete, as the title exemplifies, with figurative language of all kinds.

How might this use of metaphor for feminist purposes operate? Altman (1990: 496) describes the function of metaphor in the following way: 'what begins as an interesting analogy spills over into a proposition about how something "is". This blurring is the source of a tremendous discursive power'. Clearly, such 'spilling' can have both positive and negative effects. Altman notes, for instance, that gender hierarchy is itself a pervasive metaphor for other phenomena (499). For some feminists, and other critics, however, metaphor is not only potentially subversive, it is *inherently* so. Where Enlightenment thinking – reason, univocality, linearity and the concrete – dominates, metaphor, in its fluidity, suggestiveness and liminality necessarily occupies an oppositional domain (Janusz, 1994). Of course, feminists can be as guilty as others of using metaphor in dominating ways – the once-famous expression 'women are the niggers of the world' is the example Altman offers here. She identifies the expression's appropriation of racist oppression to feminist politics as distinctly colonising. Also concerned with the politics of metaphor, geographer Neil Smith makes a rather different observation, but one nevertheless linked to Altman's in its attunement to the dynamics of the centre and the margin. He points out that part of the function of metaphor is to establish the object as unknown and the phenomenon being used as the metaphor as self-evident: 'To the extent that metaphor continually appeals to some other assumed reality as known, it systematically disguises the need to investigate the known' (1992: 64). Later we will consider the implications of this dynamic for those surprisingly common textual cases where methadone is mobilised as a metaphor for other phenomena.

These critical issues are important for thinking about the status and action of metaphor, though in taking them on board it would be a mistake to lose sight of what is perhaps the twentieth century's most significant observation about metaphor – that (as noted earlier) the literal

and the metaphorical cannot be separated.[5] Indeed, amid the debate among feminists over the merits of metaphor is the recognition that, in any case, metaphor is both ubiquitous and indispensable. Michelle Le Doeuff, for instance, identifies the operation of metaphor in philosophical texts, arguing that metaphor cannot be excised even from these works, which, after all, often aspire to being purely rational discourse. Instead, the appearance of metaphor in such texts demonstrates the impossibility of operating entirely in the rational, and more specifically, of the places within the text where there is something 'the system itself cannot justify, but which is nevertheless needed for its proper working' (Le Doeuff, 1989: 3).

If this is the case, if metaphor is everywhere, what is it about metaphor that can be identified as the object of investigation in this chapter? How should it be read when it appears? Here, we return to Barad's take on representation: her recognition that all phenomena always already incorporate the very process of observation that identifies them, in other words, that all phenomena are made in relation to the observer and to other phenomena. Likewise, metaphor is always already produced through the process of observation (such as through our reading of it), and through its relationship to other concepts such as the 'literal'. Any ambition to isolate and reify the metaphorical as an autonomous object of study would not only be misguided, but would occlude valuable interpretive tasks. Indeed, as Seitz (1991: 291) points out, while it is tempting to think of metaphor as something that is 'chosen' or 'used', such formulations tend only to reinstate an erroneous construction of the subject and agency as *prior to* metaphor rather than produced within it, and of metaphor itself as somehow dotted throughout language, rather than as co-constitutive of it in various ways. For these reasons, we want to mobilise a broad concept of metaphor, albeit one that can also take account of the different senses in which metaphor operates within texts.

In keeping with this interest, we structure the next section of this chapter according to the different ways in which metaphors work in the newspaper texts gathered for this study. We begin by discussing an instance of the 'worn-out metaphor' described by Derrida, that is, an expression that has so long been used as to have lost its obvious metaphorical function. As we will argue, expressions such as this are nonetheless active in co-constructing their object. Indeed, in their invisibility, they can be especially powerful generators of meaning. Following this we will look at some overt examples of metaphorical language used in relation to methadone and consider the implications

of their use. Third, we will conduct a close reading of an extended metaphor found among the texts and ask how methadone, those who take it, and the social, cultural and political conditions under which the treatment is deemed to make sense are co-produced through this metaphor.

Tracing metaphor

The 'worn-out' metaphor of addiction

In examining the metaphors used in references to methadone in the *New York Times*, *The Times* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* during 2004 and 2005, it is important to emphasise that such references were relatively uncommon in all three, and that where they did occur, they were most often isolated instances, surrounded by little or no explanatory detail. Contexts for these references varied enormously, from stories about the use of sniffer dogs on New South Wales railway stations (Gibbs, *SMH*, 2 July 2004) and the gentrification of New York neighbourhoods (Mooney, *NYT*, 25 January 2004), to the development of iris recognition technology (Chessell, *SMH*, 19 March 2004), and a court case surrounding an aged pensioner charged with supplying heroin (N.A., *Times*, 16 October 2004). The consistent absence of explanatory detail accompanying these references suggests that authors take for granted reader familiarity with methadone, and its implications. In this respect, these references recall Smith's observation on metaphor in that they produce some elements in a text as known, and others as unknown.

What does it mean that methadone is regularly referenced as if it were widely understood – as 'known'? Little or no research exists on public awareness or understanding of methadone programs, though there is some literature on public opinion on needle and syringe programs and other harm-reduction measures (see Treloar and Fraser, 2007, for an overview of this literature). In one sense, then, it is difficult to evaluate this assumption. However, given the stigma associated with methadone treatment and illicit drug use (Murphy and Irwin, 1992; Gourlay, Ricciardelli and Ridge, 2005) and the relative silence around drug treatment in most communities, it is doubtful that readers are indeed well informed about it. The implications of the assumption of familiarity and understanding depend very much on the nature of the references themselves. Perhaps the only consistent effect we might identify is the suggestion that methadone treatment is so established that it needs no explanation. Yet, in tension with this, the references perform quite different notions of methadone. As such, each would need to be examined

individually to draw conclusions about its impact. It must be said, however, that most of the references mentioned above carry negative implications in that they are articulated with other textual references to crime, poverty and ill health.

What of the specific use of metaphor in references such as these? One of the most 'worn-out' metaphors associated with methadone must be that of 'addiction' itself. A *Times* article, for example, describes filmmaker David Graham Scott as having been 'addicted to heroin and methadone for 20 years' (Chater, *Times*, 8 June 2004). Likewise, a *Sydney Morning Herald* article on drug treatments states that 'depending on the level of addiction, either methadone, buprenorphine or abstinence will be prescribed' (Pelly, *SMH*, 26 February 2004).[6] There is no doubt that in contemporary English the term addiction is understood to have a literal rather than metaphorical function. Literary critic David Lenson (1995: 35) notes, however, that the origin of the word 'addiction' relates to the Latin *addicere*, meaning to say or pronounce, to decree or bind. In his view, this etymology references drug users' loss of control over language and of consciousness, that is, the notion that they are already 'spoken for', bound and decreed. Instead of *saying*, one is *said* (35).

Given the centrality of language to Western liberal formulations of the subject, this metaphor – and its contemporary identification as literal expression – has significant implications for the status of drug users in liberal societies. Our argument is not that this etymology is known to those who use the term, rather, that the term's early meanings helped shape notions of addiction from their inception. Where regular drug use is designated by a term that implies the inability to agentially generate or enact speech, where, indeed, the drug user is designated by the ontological state of being defined rather than by the ontological act of defining (that is, of passivity rather than activity) there is little room for surprise that drug users are commonly presented as other than, or less than, fully fledged liberal subjects (that is, full citizens). As Lenson notes, through the metaphorical figuration of regular drug use as a kind of surrender to (and of) the powers of speech, 'the addict is changed from a subject to an object' (35). This change can have significant implications for the materiality of treatment programs such as methadone treatment; for example, pharmacotherapy clients are often excluded as stakeholders from policy development around treatment provision (Treloar, Fraser and valentine, 2007). This exclusion points in part to the perception of addicts as most appropriately spoken rather than speaking. In turn, it co-produces treatment conditions (such as those around the regulation of takeaway doses or the physical conditions

under which clients can access treatment in clinics and pharmacies) specific to the interests and concerns of the stakeholders consulted, materialising programs in particular ways. In the next section we look at metaphors of methadone itself.

Bullets, handcuffs and strangleholds

As Helen Keane (2002: 3) observes, 'there is a view that addiction is intrinsically bad because it destroys the addict's freedom'. Indeed, the basis for this preoccupation with freedom is indicated in the etymology of addiction. Yet it is not only through worn-out metaphors like that described above that issues of freedom and entrapment inform discussions of methadone and drug use. For example, overt military, policing and pugilistic metaphors are commonplace in the newspaper material. In an article on the negative effects of crystal methamphetamine, for example, methadone is identified as the 'silver bullet' for heroin: 'Drug experts say there is no methadone, no silver bullet, to treat methamphetamine addicts' (Jacobs, *NYT*, 12 January 2004). This reference is interesting for a number of reasons. First, as with other references described above, it occurs in isolation in the text. No further information on what might be meant by the comparison is provided. This is particularly significant in that methadone treatment is rarely, if ever, described as a silver bullet – indeed, its risks, costs and shortcomings are regularly revisited in almost any relevant discursive context (medical articles, consumer newsletters, sociological commentaries and policy materials are some examples). Evidently, it is worth considering what effect the discussion of a new drug thought to be even more destructive and addictive than heroin (crystal meth) may have on the discursive construction of opiates in the future. In this instance, methadone, at least, appears to fare well by comparison. Of significance is the way in which a sequential metaphorical move is made in this reference. Not only is the 'silver bullet' used as a metaphor for methadone, but methadone itself is used as a metaphor. In this sense, methadone is both signified (expressed by the idea of the 'silver bullet') and signifier (expresses a concept something like 'perfect solution', although of course the analogy refers in turn to, of all things, werewolves, and to the notion of the ideal or singularly efficacious kind of ammunition). Understood in Smith's terms, this metaphorical instance sets up two relationships of the known to the unknown. In the first, methadone is presented as unknown, as somehow inadequately elaborated, and our understanding of it as thus expanded by reference to the 'silver bullet'. In the second, it operates as the known; the poorly articulated generic

'perfect solution' is clarified by reference to a known perfect solution –
methadone. In both cases, methadone is co-constructed through asso-
ciation with ideas of conflict and danger. Heroin addiction operates as
the 'werewolf', as it were, and methadone as the mythical, almost
sacred, ammunition.

   While the 'silver bullet' metaphor is a familiar one – especially in
relation to illness – it is particularly suggestive in the context of addiction.
Otten (1986: 8) describes changing formulations of the werewolf,
noting that

> While the ancient myths are powerful warnings to humans to
> abstain from indulging bestial appetites and from obeying irrational
> promptings, and the ecclesiastical and Scriptural werewolves are to
> be feared because of the wily stratagems of the Devil who goes about
> 'seeking whom he may devour' (1 Peter 5: 8 AV), the werewolf in the
> medieval narratives evokes pity and sympathy for the werewolf, who,
> banished by fellow humans, was barbarised by his shape and
> excluded from human fellowship and love.

The power of bestial appetites and irrational influences, the threat of
corruption, the devastating effect of stigma and discrimination, all
these aspects of the werewolf reproduce familiar understandings of
the addict.

   Also implied in this metaphor, of course, is the view that methadone
does indeed annihilate heroin addiction. In some respects, then, this
metaphorical reference to methadone presents it in positive terms; as ideal
solution, the sole answer, able to slay the monster. In other respects, such
references to monsters and to slaying – to images of danger, death and the
'unnatural' – can be seen to do methadone no favours. In some contexts
dependence on methadone is seen as little better than dependence on
heroin. The state of addiction is identified in these instances as an evil in
itself, inevitably leading to further evil (Hall, Ward and Mattick, 1998a: 7–9).
For these reasons, it is unlikely that metaphorical constructions that
demonise heroin will ultimately benefit methadone treatment.

   For some, methadone does not slay the monster, it merely shackles it.
One *New York Times* article (Kilgannon, 6 October 2005) discusses the
documentary film 'Methadonia', focusing on one of its subjects, Mario
Belfiore, saying he 'has been using methadone – sometimes known as
liquid handcuffs – for thirty years, but still suffers relapses with pill
addictions'. In this example, reference is made to a metaphor for
methadone perhaps not familiar to the general public, but widely known

among heroin users and methadone clients (see Stancliff et al., 2002). The view of methadone as liquid handcuffs has international currency among drug users, referring in part to the perceived role of methadone treatment as a form of incarceration, a convenient method of controlling the behaviour and limiting the freedom of those who would otherwise use heroin. We will return to this point throughout the book – the force of this metaphor in co-producing experiences of treatment is discussed in Chapter 4, and alternatives to common understandings of treatment as constrained repetition are considered in Chapter 5. Indeed, the metaphor carries a range of implications, perhaps the most obvious being that methadone treatment constitutes an imposition of controls and constraints where none existed before. Clearly, regular heroin use entails a range of obligations and constraints even for the most wealthy of users, yet these are overlooked in this analogy. This is perhaps because the objection to methadone implied in this metaphor (or, more specifically, to the social and political economy in which methadone treatment becomes a 'solution') is its nominal status as legal, and the convoluted circumstances under which the biochemically similar drug that clients otherwise prefer (heroin) is not legal. In this respect, the metaphor refers to the somewhat arbitrary introduction of an element of criminality to – of the injunction to police – drug use that renders methadone treatment a meaningful solution (and heroin a meaningful problem) in the first place.

This metaphor also operates in intra-action with others found in the material, not least with the metaphor of the silver bullet described above. In speaking of technologies of shackling, it rather clearsightedly identifies Western culture's 'fallback' response to addiction where slaying the monster proves impossible. In the process of constructing the metaphor of the shackle, however, the monster itself is reframed as a victim of overzealous policing rather than as a perpetrator of terror and destruction. Coined by clients to describe the process by which they, as heroin users, are inserted into a kind of carceral economy, it criticises the tendency of methadone treatment to exert control over clients in limiting travel and the ability to work, and in requiring submission to techniques of surveillance such as urine testing for the presence of illicit drugs.

The sense in which the metaphor appears in Kilgannon's article is, of course, rather different from that intended when it is invoked by clients (that is, criticism of the program's effects and rationale). In citing methadone's putative shackling role when describing Mario's history and his continued, if intermittent, consumption of prescription medications,

the article tends to indict *him* as evidently in need of constraint, rather than the substance or the program as excessively controlling. Clearly, the ways in which metaphors signify are specific to their context, even as it is possible to trace meanings in these metaphors which help to shape the phenomena to which they refer. The impact of particular metaphors always rests on the operations of other metaphors and of the accompanying text (that which is not overtly metaphorical). In this sense too, metaphor and literal speech cannot be separated. As Barad might put it, these phenomena are made only in their intra-action with other phenomena.

The image of the handcuff is not the only figure of constraint that appears in the newspaper coverage examined here. A different example is that of methadone as exercising a 'stranglehold' on clients. In an article in the *New York Times* (O'Connor, 3 August 2004) on recent developments in pharmacotherapy treatment for opioid dependence, the field is described in the following terms:

> Methadone's limitations prompted experts to look for medications that were less likely to place recovering addicts in a stranglehold.

The way in which methadone is thought to exercise a stranglehold is not clarified in the article, yet the article's commitment to the idea of a kind of wrestling match goes further. A similar metaphor is used to figure addiction itself in the article's title: 'New ways to loosen addiction's grip'. In both these metaphors, an intense, highly corporeal, even visceral, struggle is invoked. Both heroin and methadone emerge as in some sense personified: ruthless and entrapping 'dirty' fighters. Other examples of this type of metaphor are common; thus, it is possible to 'combat' (*Times*, Bird, 31 January 2004) or 'beat' (*Times*, Lister, 1 April 2004) addiction using methadone.

While these pugilistic metaphors vary in how they position methadone (some present it as an illegitimate aggressor, others as a legitimate, necessarily tough, response to the aggression of heroin), they all present addiction as a battleground, as necessarily involving violent struggle (see also Kaufman, 2004; Warren, 2005; English, 2005). In these images, the stakes for those involved are extremely high, and the possibility of a peaceable co-existence with addiction is obscured (see also Tong, 2004). This last effect not only renders obscure other ways of living addiction, it also tends to instate a mythical proper subject untouched by dependence – an unimpeachably autonomous agent, innocent of compulsion or the processes of engaging it.

Elsewhere, Fraser has identified and critiqued binary thinking related to health and illness, in particular to the formulation of appropriate prevention responses to hepatitis C infection rates, focusing on untenable but commonplace binaries such as clean/contaminated, closed/open and well/sick (Fraser and Treloar, 2006). The metaphors at work in the literature examined here point to another salient binary for health research, especially that relating to addiction treatment: autonomous/dependent (see Charmaz, 1997).

   How might the construction of addiction as battleground, and the subject as characterised by the binary autonomous/dependent, co-constitute MMT? Perhaps most obviously, the battleground image finds echoes in the design of some methadone treatment clinics such as those in New South Wales, Australia, in which, as we describe in Chapter 3, security measures are felt by some to eclipse the development and maintenance of humane relationships between staff and clients. The binary model of the subject finds resonances, for instance, in blanket disapproval among some practitioners and others of maintenance treatment in general, or in the view that methadone treatment should, at least, be short term, leading quickly to abstinence from drug use. The latter view entails specific approaches to program funding and delivery, materialising in, for example, dosing regimes based on progressive reduction. Further, as Émilie Gomart (2002) has argued via the notion of the *dispositif*, the different ways in which programs are delivered constitute not just different treatment regimes or different views on and experiences of treatment, but different 'methadones' with different effects. In other words, the substance itself can be understood to be co-constituted through processes of representation. The 'battle' to overcome addiction to heroin or methadone, the action of methadone as shackling: these metaphors have significant implications for the materialisation of methadone as substance, especially in relation to questions of withdrawal.[7]

Charm, appeal and authenticity

Occasionally newspaper articles make use of extended metaphors relating to methadone. Here, we examine one example of this. Referencing a recent feature film dealing with issues of memory, identity and fidelity, this *New York Times* piece is entitled 'Eternal sunshine of an addicted mind' (Erian, 27 March 2005). Intended as a light-hearted look at modern dating in New York, and classified as a product of the newspaper's 'magazine desk', the article of some 1000 words describes a newly single woman's dalliance with a charming

but somehow inauthentic romantic partner. The article begins by locating love and romance squarely in the domain of addiction, and by identifying a commonly formulated dilemma associated with methadone:

> Two years ago, at 35, I met the Methadone Man. My husband of eight years had just moved out, and I was on my own. I didn't know that he was the Methadone Man at the time, that I'd come to depend on him to wean me from my romantic addictions.

Neatly condensed here are several phenomena popularly associated with drugs: emotional vulnerability (in author Alicia Erian's newly single state), naivety (in her failure to understand the likely trajectory of the relationship and the real effects of the Methadone Man) and entrapment (in that her 'solution' to dependence becomes another instance of it). The article goes on to develop an account in which Erian establishes a relationship with the Methadone Man, despite recognising that he is not 'serious'; that he should not be mistaken for the real thing. This absence of integrity or authenticity in both the Man and the relationship troubles Erian, yet she finds he is useful when her dependence on love leads her into two 'lousy relationships' (presumably these, or love itself, could be figured as 'heroin' in this extended metaphor). Each time Erian recognises that she has become unable to 'shake free' of a bad relationship, she encounters the Methadone Man again, and his charm and attention are enough to replace the 'lousy' partner, and therefore enable her to end the relationship. As she explains:

> I was in a lousy relationship [when the Methadone Man asked me out for dinner]. It was in that instant that the Methadone Man earned his name. Because it was also in that instant that, miraculously, the other man I'd become involved with was erased from my mind.

Again, as Smith has pointed out, metaphor is about the designation of the known and the unknown. In this extract, while the particular emotional dynamic described by Erian (what might perhaps be called, following the popular idiom, 'co-dependence') is accompanied by a substantial amount of explanatory detail, implying its status as unfamiliar – as worthy of investigation and elaboration – the phenomenon used metaphorically to furnish this detail goes entirely unexplained.

Its meaning, in other words, is treated as self-evident. Implied in this reference to methadone are several assumptions:

1. That heroin use is akin to a 'lousy relationship': that is, useless and destructive, in need of discarding
2. That heroin use is difficult, if not impossible, to stop
3. That methadone is able to 'erase' the thought of heroin from the mind, and presumably, its influence on behaviour
4. That this action is in one respect or another 'miraculous'.

While heroin accumulates a range of negative associations through the use of this metaphor, as with some of the previous examples, methadone emerges in a relatively positive light. Yet, as we argued in the previous section, the meaning of metaphor is not made in isolation. All metaphors also construct meanings for the objects that surround them, that is, in Barad's terms, for the other elements that constitute the phenomenon of methadone beyond the commonplace understanding of the boundaries of the material object itself. To rehearse a point made earlier, where heroin is represented in terms of compulsion, desperation and entrapment, methadone too is liable to materialise in the same ways. Indeed, as Erian concludes, the Methadone Man himself becomes the object of compulsion for her, something she must, in turn, free herself from: 'Now though,' she says, 'I have to get off the Methadone Man'. As with the metaphors described in the previous section, the focus is on a dynamic of struggle or battle.

This odd extended metaphor (patently not 'worn-out') is surprising not least because it appears to take for granted the audience's familiarity with the role, functions and pitfalls of methadone treatment, while the relatively prosaic vagaries of dating are thought to warrant spelling out. Why would methadone present as an appropriate and effective literary device to explain a romantic phenomenon? Why would this otherwise largely stigmatised substance, associated as it often is with regimentation, urine tests, security guards and barred dispensing counters (see Chapter 3), be thought to evoke, in a meaningful way, a charming and attractive man? Admittedly the Methadone Man's very charm and attractiveness could be seen to approximate methadone's positive effects, and its appeal. But considering that methadone is understood to be the (relatively) non-euphoric alternative to heroin (Bourgois, 2000) – its workaday cousin – the analogy would appear to be better suited to heroin. Then again, the shallowness of the relationship with the Methadone Man, the fact that it does not

ever register as 'the real thing' for Erian could be seen to bear some similarity to methadone's status as replacement for the genuine, the more satisfying, the real, experience of heroin.

Nevertheless, the appropriation of methadone to elaborate Erian's account of dating and love strikes an incongruous note, raising with it questions about the politics of metaphor. Erian's mobilisation of methadone as a metaphor for mainstream concepts of love and romance would seem to deny the controversy surrounding it, even to obscure or ignore the severity of stigma and discrimination faced by those on methadone treatment. There is a sense in which Altman's concern about the colonising reflex of some metaphors can be identified here. However, a reverse argument could also be made that in domesticating methadone as something akin to the commonplace experience of romantic love, Erian's piece counters the stigmatisation of methadone, materialising it as rather more banal. No doubt both these interpretations have some validity, and in any case, readings such as these rely on the perspectives brought by the reader and the context of the reading. They are themselves phenomena.

The ontology of methadone

How is Erian's apparent inclination to take for granted methadone's lack of authenticity, its lack of substance, its infidelity, read by its audience? In the absence of empirical research, we cannot say. Other observations, however, can be made. Striking in this example is the connection that can be drawn between methadone and metaphor as both exemplars of inauthenticity. We have already noted that metaphor has long been linked to the feminine via its definition as seductive, (merely) ornamental, untrustworthy and non-rational. Questions of authenticity pertain to all but perhaps the last of these. Ricoeur's (1978: 11) account of Plato's approach to rhetoric is especially evocative here. For Plato,

> [r]hetoric is to justice, the political virtue *par excellence*, what sophistry is to legislation; and these are, for the soul, what cooking in relation to medicine and cosmetics in relation to gymnastics are for the body – that is, arts of illusion and deception. We must not lose sight of this condemnation of rhetoric, which sees it as belonging to the world of the lie, of the 'pseudo'. Metaphor will also have its enemies, who, giving it what one might call a 'cosmetic' as well as a 'culinary' interpretation, will look upon metaphor merely as simple decoration and as pure delectation.

Central to Plato's formulation are gendered taxonomies of the real and the meritorious. Where cooking and cosmetics are framed as lesser, even false, versions of medicine and gymnastics, femininity is, by association, framed equally disadvantageously in relation to masculinity. Likewise, femininity and metaphor are sites of inauthenticity, while masculinity and literal speech are sites of authenticity.

It is similarly possible to identify the aligning of notions of addiction with femininity in Western culture (and this is explored further in Chapter 5), in that both are understood to involve the dominance of the emotions, a lack of control, irrationality and untrustworthiness. Thus, a series of connections can be drawn between metaphor, femininity and addiction. All occupy the same side of a series of well-known dualisms at the centre of Western thought. These, as Fraser has noted elsewhere (Fraser and Treloar, 2006), operate in a hierarchical way to establish legitimate and illegitimate practices, forms of experience and lives.[8] However, the case of methadone is more complex than this. In the metaphors described above and elsewhere, methadone is doubly materialised in relation to addiction and all it entails in terms of inauthenticity and untrustworthiness, but also as inauthentic in relation to *heroin itself*. As noted earlier, methadone is often understood in policy and practice as the non-euphoric, 'synthetic' alternative to heroin (Bourgois, 2000): the legal alternative that replaces what some consider a desperate, others an outlaw, lifestyle with a domesticated, relatively regimented existence in which participation in crime is minimised. (Its impact on crime is widely documented: see Digiusto et al., 2006; Hall, Ward and Mattick, 1998b. Other effects and uses of methadone, such as its place in new ethics of care, have received less attention, as we explain in Chapter 4.)

In this respect, methadone's designation as 'replacement' (see Ward, Mattick and Hall, 1998: 1, for example) is as important to our argument as the specific elements it is understood to replace. This chapter opened with Ricoeur's observation on metaphor:

> As figure, metaphor constitutes a displacement and an extension of the meaning of words; its explanation is grounded in a theory of substitution.
>
> (Ricoeur, 1978: 3)

Likewise, methadone, in operating as a 'substitute' for heroin, can be seen to constitute a displacement and extension of the meaning of heroin. By registering, for example, as domesticating and regimenting,

it extends and displaces other meanings of heroin, reformulating it as undomesticated, outlaw, even chaotic (Fraser and Moore, in press).

This sense of methadone as itself a 'metaphor for heroin' carries with it all the implications of metaphor explicated above. Where metaphor is considered secondary to the literal, where it is associated with the feminine, with inauthenticity, with artifice and untrustworthiness, it can offer only a stigmatised, marginalised location for those undertaking methadone treatment – indeed, the stigmatisation of those who take methadone is well documented (Murphy and Irwin, 1992; Gourlay, Ricciardelli and Ridge, 2005). This observation is, however, complicated by the fact that the acknowledged alternative to methadone use, heroin use, is also denigrated and stigmatised, but in rather different ways. To put it more specifically, then, *both* in the particular ways in which methadone is metaphorised within the public realm, such as in newspaper articles, *and* in the sense in which methadone itself operates as a metaphor for heroin, it occupies a doubly problematic relation to mainstream liberal values. As Ricoeur says,

> the 'place' of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb *to be*. The metaphorical 'is' at once signifies both 'is not' and 'is like'. If this is really so, we are allowed to speak of metaphorical truth, but in an equally 'tensive' sense of the word 'truth'.
>
> (7)

Herein lies the motor of methadone's double marginalisation. Methadone is both *not* heroin and *like* heroin – this is the ontological dilemma that informs its liminality, its struggle for legitimacy. In being *not* heroin, it is inauthentic. In being *like* heroin, it is dangerous, defiling, disordering. This double meaning is rather prosaically condensed in one newspaper's reportage of comments made by Australian federal Health Minister Tony Abbott:

> 'Methadone is an important part of our response to the drug problem, but in the end it's just a substitution of a legal for an illegal product,' Mr Abbott said. 'It doesn't stop people being addicts ... This Government would like to see people off drugs.'
>
> (*SMH*, Robotham, 3 December 2005)

In this extract methadone is represented as a replacement for heroin rather than a real solution: a replacement that is not different enough

from heroin to leave those consuming it without the (negatively valued) addiction that prompted treatment in the first place. Given that methadone operates ontologically as a metaphor for heroin, it is unlikely that its status will improve unless that of metaphor (and of heroin) also improves.

Conclusion

In making the particular argument we have made here, we take for granted that the accounts of methadone given in the press are not straightforwardly separable from methadone as it operates in reality. To restate our approach, there is no methadone except that which is represented, and the differing ways in which methadone is represented produce not different 'aspects' of methadone, rather, different 'methadones' (Gomart, 2002, and in a different context, Willems, 1998). On this argument, matter such as methadone is not seen in terms of a priori attributes, rather as a phenomenon produced in specific intra-actions with other phenomena, including particular media accounts. It is in this sense that media accounts of methadone can be said to matter: they are profoundly implicated in methadone's material becoming, and this constitutes their ethical action. Given that many of the references to methadone in the newspapers examined here are either isolated and poorly elaborated, or whimsical or comical in intent, this ethical burden may seem incongruous. Yet it is the spectre of 'public opinion' (partly revealed, it is often assumed, through press coverage) that politicians, legislators, policymakers and service providers regularly cite in formulating the legal and material conditions for harm-reduction strategies such as methadone provision (see Treloar and Fraser, 2007). At present, methadone is materialised in part through its representation in the print media as aligned with inauthenticity, disorder and the feminine, as well as, in an ontological sense, always already metaphor. All these alignments, indeed, all these 'Others' of liberalism (Moore and Fraser, 2006) may need to shift together if the standing of methadone and those who take it is to change to any significant degree. Yet policy may have a small role here. Perhaps most straightforwardly, there is a role for policy in reconsidering the framing of methadone treatment as 'replacement' or 'substitute'. These terms are always likely to invoke the inauthentic, and alternatives should be found. Different ways of naming and framing methadone will bear on how it is represented elsewhere – indeed, this reframing will remake methadone in its materiality. This is, of course, no simple process

(indeed, what follows in this book is as implicated in the remaking of methadone as are the texts analysed above). As Miller (2006: 65) has declared: 'The world needs a multitude of new metaphors ... but metaphor, like life, is full of risks.' Because methadone is co-constituted in the media, it is here that some of these new metaphors must be performed, as well as in works such as this book (here we also return to Cixous's conviction that representation is an opportunity for remaking). And this – the need to remain open to media coverage rather than to hope for, or act to, minimise it as do some politicians, policymakers and providers – constitutes one of the many productive risks methadone and those who support it must take.[9] The next chapter extends this observation by considering the ways in which other texts, and the risks they entail, work to co-constitute methadone treatment.

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