TRANSLATING *HIRAETH*, PERFORMING ADOPTION:

ART AS MEDIATION AND FORM OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

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This dissertation is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Murdoch University, Perth, 2010.
I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

Performance Studies as a site of resistance bridges the gap between theory and practice. As an ‘inter-discipline’, Performance Studies occupies an ideal borderline location from which to stress the crucial mediatory power of creative production, as well as providing a critical space for interrogating the liminal subject positioning of adoption as framed under Western legislation. This autoethnographic performance into adoption (re)stor(y)ing is an arts-based inquiry generated through my praxis and the ‘particular’ life experience of excavating the silences and social norms within a ‘closed’, cross-cultural, adoption. As a form of knowledge production, this experiential process of meaning-making is integral to my arts-practice and research. This body of work challenges the limitations of linear thesis writing and the more traditional tenets of legitimate academic inquiry, as espoused by Enlightenment thinking. In this project, I draw together issues of agency and (il)legitimacy within adoption as an institutionalised social practice, with issues of performative and (il)legitimate modes of knowledge production within academic hierarchies of literacy. Following a hermeneutic spiral, a mediated body of research is substantially represented through the multimedia Installation, Translating Hiraeth (pronounced ‘hirr-eye-th’). Employing a fragmented narrative structure and a form of ‘critical nostalgia’, Translating Hiraeth examines this in-between space called ‘adoption’. Juxtaposed with the (re)stor(y)ing project, which makes visible the contingent, embodied processes of understanding over time, is a broad socio-political overview of adoption. Here, I take into account political and legislative change leading to recent paradigm shifts in adoption thinking including new international agreements and the effects of globalisation. These changes open up the past within an ever-changing present. The creative project offers an emotional and performative site exposing the dialogic nature of translating the ‘self’ across families, cultures, places and pasts, whilst also questioning contemporary notions of identity and (be)longing. It is my intention that Translating Hiraeth Performing Adoption enacts autoethnographic praxis as a generative force of expression, as social commentary and means of cultural production.
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Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my wonderful husband Hugh for his love, patience and understanding throughout this eventful journey.
Translating *Hiraeth*, performing adoption

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past refiguring it as a contingent ‘in-between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.¹

Finding a Form

Before negotiating the introductory chapter to this written dissertation, or dipping into ‘Point of Departure’, the final chapter, I would like to invite the reader to experience the creative component of this project.

Translating Hiraeth\(^2\) (pronounced ‘hIRR-eye-th’) is a multi-screen, ‘narrative Installation’, presented on four DVDs. As a heteroglossic collage, the piece interrogates the complexities of ‘closed adoption’ over time. This work negotiates the layered, yet fragmented story of tracing and reconnecting with my birthmother in Llanelli, South Wales and then my birthfather’s family in North Wales – a family who are ‘Welsh speakers’, members of Plaid Cymru, and who for generations have worked on the Penhryn slate quarries near Bethesda.\(^3\)

This project extends my honours work, *Loss Adoption and Desire*, and has continued the hermeneutic process of meaning making whereby a mediated ‘body’ of research is represented here in the form of a forty five minute multimedia production piece.\(^4\) This work is augmented by the accompanying written dissertation. As a narrative piece, the Installation is resistant to ‘closure’

\(^2\) According to ‘Antiquae Linguae Britannicae Thesaurus’, Welsh-English Dictionary, edited by Thomas Richards in 1753, ‘hiraeth’ means, an earnest desire or longing, the grief one takes after parting with friends, the eager desire wherewith we desire or expect any thing. In ‘Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru’ (University of Wales Dictionary) published in 1979, ‘hiraeth’ means grief or sadness after the lost or departed, longing, yearning, nostalgia, wistfulness, homesickness, earnest desire, *for what might have been*. The additional translation in italics was provided by Professor John Frodsham, in 2003.

\(^3\) On August 5, 1925 at Pwllheli, Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru (the National Party of Wales) was founded. This was a coming together of Byddin Ymreolwyr Cymru (the Army of Welsh Home Rulers) and Y Mudiad Cymreig (The Welsh Movement) which centred on the Welsh language and literary revival. For further reading see, Davis, J. (1993). *A History of Wales*. London, Penguin Books. p.547.

\(^4\) The written component of my Honours thesis, *Loss Adoption and Desire*, has been included with this submission, on a CD, for reference purposes.
and raises further questions about the broader processes of inquiry concerning notions of family, identity, place and (be)longing.

Translation Hiraeth is ‘open’, yet a timed event. Track 1 is a looped Pathe News clip edited in slow motion, without sound, and shown on a monitor positioned to the front right of the space. This archival footage acts as a repetitive, contextual key. Recorded in 1948, this piece of ‘film’ promotes the work of the British National Adoption Society, the organization through which I was adopted.\(^5\)

The three large projections, shown on tracks 2, 3 and 4, move fragments of story rhythmically back and forth, and around the space. The image resonance fades in and out between screens inviting those within the space to physically turn their bodies as they engage with the work. It is important to me that in a phenomenological sense, both the space and story are felt across degrees of transition. The sound track is integral to the work. Four speakers provide quadrophonic sound and a slow sub-sonic pulse created by plucking an African hand piano adds a low, vibrational, physical element within the Installation space which can be felt through the body. Repetition of the 23rd Psalm, in Welsh, weaves underneath the narrative.

Stories take time. The duration and pace of the work is relative to this reflexive process. Through Installation, I want to conflate the idea of experiencing a particular physical space/place, with the more empathetic notion of identification when we metaphorically enter the emotional spaces of particular stories. As a ‘visitor’ positioned within a work, we too are always also in translation. Stories invoke memory and invite personal reflection, but the meanings within each reading can never be fixed. Through the work, I use the notion of hiraeth as a

\(^5\) I was adopted through the Knightsbridge branch of the National Adoption Society in London in 1952. When researching at the British Film Institute for archival footage on Llanelli, in South Wales, I serendipitously found a record of this piece of film.
form of ‘critical nostalgia’ - as a way of (re)membering forward.\textsuperscript{6} Here, translation can be seen as a proximal act of recovery, from within an always transient present.

\textbf{Installation of Translating Hiraeth}

I have included the exhibition format of \textit{Translating Hiraeth} on the four separate DVDs for those readers who would like to experience the full Installation as originally intended. DVD 1, the looped Pathe News clip, is shown on a monitor to the right of the centre screen. Tracks 2, 3 and 4 are played on three separate DVD players, and started simultaneously. Track 2 should be projected centre front, and tracks 3 and 4 to either side respectively. DVD 2 carries the sound track. After a 30 second period of darkness, the sound track begins. This is followed by a slowly emerging image on the centre screen. The imagery on tracks 3 and 4 is gradually incorporated into the piece. For the purpose of this submission, I have also included a composite edit on one track, as a single DVD. This is a format produced specifically for projection in lecture situations, or where technology is limited. In this scenario DVD 1, the Pathe News clip, is shown on a smaller monitor to the right of the main projection. I have also included an additional four track ‘window’ edit on a single DVD to show how, in the full Installation, a change in resonance between the three main screens moves the story around the space. The continuous Pathe loop is the fourth window shown below.

\textbf{Full Technical Requirements}

- 3 x data projectors
- 3 x identical DVD players. (This is so that they can be started simultaneously)
- 3 x large screens or white walls. (Preferably, one on each side wall and one to the front of room, which is track 2)

\textsuperscript{6} I expand on this term in Chapter 4.
• 1 x large TV monitor on stand, or small screen (at corner right front) for track 1.
• 1 x DVD player for Pathe loop (in slow motion and without sound).
• 4 x speakers (Sound is in double stereo)
• 1 x sub woofer with own amp
• 1 x amp
• 1 x small mixer
CHAPTER 1

Opening the text

The words I have chosen for my birthmother’s grave are, ‘loved’, ‘found’ and ‘remembered’. It is now seventeen years since Mary died in Llanelli. As in T. S. Eliot’s Little Gidding, it seems that I have returned to my starting point after a long and complex journey. It is now three years since Leila, my adoptive mother, died in Tunbridge Wells, three years since my birth uncle George Morgan died in Cardiff, and five years since my godmother, Phil, died. It is just one year since my birthmother’s youngest brother, John, passed away in Llanelli. John was still living in the family home where Mary had been pregnant with me, and lived right up until her death, in 1993. John is now buried beside Mary in the family grave and the headstone needs to be reinscribed. As my mother’s only daughter, I am no longer a secret and my cousin Charles has asked me to choose the words for the new epitaph. As Eliot suggests in Little Gidding, it is the journey which is of importance, ‘[a]nd to make an end is to make a beginning.’

This autoethnographic performance into adoption (re)stor(y)ing is an arts-based inquiry which has been generated through my praxis and the ‘particular’ life experience of excavating the silences and social norms within a ‘closed’, cross-cultural adoption. In recent years, adoption has become one of the most contested areas within social politics whereas Performance Studies is already a site of resistance within the humanities which strives to bridge the gap between theory and practice. As an ‘inter-discipline’, Performance Studies occupies an ideal

7 I recorded Phil reflecting on her friendship with my (adoptive) mother, Leila. I used some of her memories in Translating Hiraeth, whilst focussing on the image of her clasped hands.
borderline location from which to stress the crucial mediatory power of creative production. It is inherently in-between and provides a critical space from which to interrogate the liminal subject positioning created through the institution of adoption. As a form of knowledge production, a creative, experiential process of meaning-making is integral to my research and extends linear thesis writing and the more traditional tenets of ‘legitimate’ academic inquiry as espoused by Enlightenment thinking. Through this project, I draw issues of agency and (il)legitimacy within adoption as an institutionalised social practice together with issues of legitimate knowledge production within academic hierarchies of literacy. Following a hermeneutic spiral, a mediated body of research is substantially represented here through the multimedia Installation, Translating Hiraeth. Employing a fragmented narrative structure and a form of ‘critical nostalgia’, Translating Hiraeth examines this ‘in-between’ space called ‘adoption’.

The broader interdisciplinary project reflects other present day concerns focussed by questions of identity and (be)longing due to loss, displacement and a need for reconnection. Therefore, I imagine a wide section of contemporary society will interpret aspects of the work in a useful way. Today, in the ‘West’ we live in a more pluralistic, post-colonial society where many are trying to make sense of their life stories. This arts-based inquiry offers an emotional and performative site to expose the dialogic nature of translating the ‘self’ across families, cultures, places and pasts. The creative project as a whole will be relevant to those employing creative production in their academic research. However, I consider the real value will be to those researchers, communities and individuals touched by adoption and/or family separation, who wish to build on their knowledge of the (re)stor(y)ing process and the use of creative production. Juxtaposed with the (re)stor(y)ing project, which makes ‘visible’ the contingent, embodied processes of understanding over time, is a broad socio-political overview of adoption as an institution constantly ‘on the move’. This takes into account the political complexities of increasing globalisation, changes to the law, and the various

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9 In the main body of this text, I have chosen to italicise publication titles and the titles to major artistic works, for reasons of fluidity on the page, opposed to the referencing style used in my footnotes and in the Bibliography.
paradigm shifts within adoption thinking which have occurred since my own adoption, as well as within the time frame of this creative project. I realise now that it would be impossible to reach a sense of finality to a life-work such as this, and premature to announce an arrival, but it does feel appropriate to return to my starting point as I critically unravel the fluid processes of (re)stor(y)ing, and contextualise my arts praxis across continents in times of rapid social and political change.

The creative component of my earlier project, ‘Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyres, Mother. Mary. Martry’, (Fy Mam), stands as an audio visual Installation work inspired by the (re)connection to my mother’s life, before and after my birth. The piece recreates a reunion meal with family in her house, shortly after her death, and the eating of raspberries grown, picked and frozen by Mary before my return to Wales. Fy Mam reframes the bureaucratic process of ‘closed adoption’ to incorporate the body through ‘the sensory’, offering a palpable sense of (dis)placement and loss, on the one hand, beside a ‘visceral’ (re)connection to the ‘maternal’.10 This work was initially shown at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA), in 1996, as part of Art Medicine and Body, and was the creative component of my Honours project, Loss Adoption and Desire.11

When I embarked on this current research, I intended to examine ‘reconnection’ within adoption by “drawing further on psychoanalysis, phenomenology, perceptual bodily awareness and art, through a notion of the sublime”.12 I stated this intention at the Sixth Australian Conference on Adoption in 1997, where I initially recontextualised an overview of my Honours work to a predominantly clinical forum. I showed documentation of the audio/visual Installation, Fy Mam, and augmented the video with a paper in which I extended aspects of Loss,

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10 Fy Mam is referenced later in this dissertation and the installation is described more fully in the Addendum, ‘Interactions, Reflections, Innovations’, (IRI), D23.
11 For further information on The Art Medicine and the Body project see, IRI, D20. For insight into the critical thinking associated with Fy Mam see the accompanying CD Loss Adoption and Desire.
Adoption and Desire showing, as I thought then, that the postgraduate project was mapped out and progressing well. I was wrong.

The events of 1998 rupture the notion of any prescribed theoretical plan, a singular thesis question or linear map. The personal, cultural and postcolonial complexities surrounding issues of identity, family, politics and language which emerged following the sudden discovery of my birthfather’s family, including a brother, Arthur, in North Wales, widened my focus unexpectedly, challenged me emotionally and culturally, confused my direction academically but, most importantly for me, reaffirmed the value of creative production as a methodological tool for discovery. The Installation Translating Hiraeth incorporates and extends Fy Mam to explore the reconnections with my birthfather’s story and other narrative erasures, including the family, social and cultural silences, which hover below and between languages as ambiguous moments within history. As a process driven work, this autoethnographic project has, from then on, grown organically.

I have, on the whole, found the lack of rigid structure, or even an initial ‘thesis’ question, liberating, although not knowing exactly in which direction one is travelling condones both a sense of the unknown, and feelings of vulnerability. In Grapefruit, Yoko Ono’s short instruction book, she talks of drawing a line then rubbing it out. In her poem ‘a map to get lost by’, she seems to be saying: instead of always trying to find the most direct, or rational route to there from here, consider where you are and leave some moves to chance. If you are here, then what you ‘do’ while you are here is important, and each step takes on a productive exploration, contemplation and interpretation. Trusting the process has allowed me to consider a range of interdisciplinary chance encounters along the way, many of which have added generative value to the overall project and are mentioned throughout this dissertation and documented further in the Addendum.

When working *Translating Hiraeth* towards the Installation, I wanted to find a form which evoked a physical necessity for story, over time, and within space. I wanted to enrich past narrative by connecting to a range of sensory triggers within the present. I wanted to convey the generative process of meaning-making which occurs over a longitudinal time frame. This process of making and understanding as an ongoing performance, or series of generative creative acts, is further explored in *Chapter 4*, ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’. Through this contingent and dialectic arts praxis, I have continued to find new meaning as part of the ongoing hermeneutic process. The work draws from the ‘private’ yet reaches beyond the personal, in an attempt to raise questions about ‘home’, family, longing and belonging.

Whilst this project does offer an emotional, critical and performative site for excavating a particular ‘closed, cross-cultural adoption’, it also raises questions associated with identity formation in a broader sense, and the layers of complexity often hidden within notions of ‘family’. Drawing on narrative, the Installation alludes to the social processes of making art about silence and the influence of cultural norms on the telling of story – what can be told, when, where and to whom. I attempt to position the work within a socio-political and historical context whilst drawing the visitor into an intimate social space through aspects of their own lives. It is my intention that *Translating Hiraeth enacts* auto-ethnographic praxis as a generative force of expression, as social commentary, and a means of shared cultural production.

After finding my father’s family, I returned to Wales in 1999 to present a performative paper with slides in Aberystwyth at the *Psi5 Conference, Here Be Dragons: Beyond known borders, hinterlands and beyond*. This paper,

‘Cartographies of Loss and (re)stor(y)ing’ incorporated some of the ‘new’ complexities surrounding the reunion with my father’s family. I found the writing of the text more difficult than anticipated but, over time, this paper slowly matured and my process developed towards the Installation now entitled Translating Hiraeth. Expanding the original monologue, the piece now draws on other narrative positions and archival evidence. I use video, space and additional sound to negotiate a fragmented, multi-vocal, yet relational ‘text’ which is, I suggest, positioned somewhere between transgression and empathy. Throughout this project, I have found the process to be an integrated form of research through which I have been able to negotiate some of the awkward social and subjective questions associated with identity formation in cross-cultural ‘adoption’. Adopted within the UK, I feel that it is appropriate to acknowledge that I speak from a privileged, white, middle class, English-speaking, perspective.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I bring together two contested, interdisciplinary areas of knowledge production within academic research – that of creative praxis, through Performance Studies, and the increasingly vigorous area of academic engagement within adoption literature. In Chapter 2, ‘Autoethnographic Performance as Epistemological Practice’ I expand on the development of this process-driven study and the use of autoethnography as my research methodology. This long-term project has evolved as an epistemological process through an hermeneutic practice. My mode of investigation and articulation draws on an accumulated knowledge base across a broad range of disciplines and life circumstance.

Before elaborating on Performance Studies as a flexible, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural container for this arts-based research, I briefly outline the beginnings of the academy, the formation of structured disciplines and the traditional thesis model. By way of introducing multimedia Installation as a hybrid art, and form of cultural production, I offer a broad genealogy which leans towards my own praxis, before discussing the influence of poststructuralist feminism and autoethnographic writing on my work. In drawing together the connections between adoption, performance and performativity, I expand on closed adoption’s
liminal norm, whilst distinguishing the interpretive processes of translating hiraeth from other popular forms of ‘critical nostalgia’.\(^\text{15}\)

In Chapter 3, ‘Adoption: A social institution on the move’, I attempt to offer a broad socio-historical overview of institutional changes to adoption within the Anglo-American world. I reflect on the earliest legislative frameworks for ‘closed adoption’, to the beginnings of humanitarian intercountry adoption following WWII, to the present entangled, political complexities of ‘alternative family formation’ within which adoption is now firmly placed. Originally a child-centred policy, adoption was seen to ‘overcome’ the stigma of ‘illegitimacy’ and the exploitation of children in the labour force. Due to the influence of the civil rights movements, the rise of feminism and the growth of ‘identity politics’, ‘closed adoption’ has become a critical site through which to question the silences imposed on ‘many’ through the judiciary. Adoption as a social institution, like the academy, also emerged from Enlightenment thinking, although, the growing number of ‘Adoption Studies’ in Australia do not, as yet, sit under a disciplinary umbrella or particular academic ‘faculty’.

By rethinking Australia’s colonial past and the removal of Indigenous ‘children’ from their family networks and culture, in this study I link the ‘new’ ‘global’ back to the ‘local’ by drawing on Homi Bhabha’s call for a ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’.\(^\text{16}\) I contextualise these ideas beside issues of racism, and comments gleaned from the 9th Australian Adoption Conference in Sydney, in September 2008, where discussions flagged Australia’s ‘need’ to follow examples in the UK and the US in legislating a pathway for adopting children from the foster care system.

\(^{15}\) In Chapter 2, I make the distinction between Translating Hiraeth, the installation and translating hiraeth the process.

Following increased globalisation, on the one hand the hegemonic discourse of capitalist development has impacted on ‘sending’ and ‘receiving’ countries involved in intercountry adoption which has, as a result, now become enmeshed between international politics and foreign aid. At the same time, a perceived rise in infertility and increased ‘parenting rights’, within now broader interpretations of ‘family’, have prompted prospective parents to lobby for legislative change in adoption. This movement is closely associated with technological advancements in assisted conception and new ‘available’ opportunities to parent. The mass media, the attention on celebrity adoptions, and the influence of the ‘religious right’ have also boosted a ‘demand’ for adoptable children by the ‘West’. This ‘demand’ is now ambiguously placed between notions of humanitarianism and neo-colonialism.

In Chapter 4, I expose aspects of my process and review my arts praxis over an extended time frame. In ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’, I show how ‘closed adoption’ provides an emotional, critical and performative site for examining the complexities of ‘family’, and the dialogic nature of narrating live silences across cultures, places and pasts. Through the interrelationship between lived emotional experience, creative production, critical reflection, and social interaction, I ‘touch’ on the contingent yet ambiguous process of (art)iculating the ‘self’ across discontinuous and dispersed identities. The past/present of living necessarily draws on nostalgia, critically, with an archaeological sensibility that is forward thinking. Gomez Pena has a way of talking about transformation. He describes it in terms of something that happens over time which may be situated in the future, although prompted by an event in the present – born in memory. Through story, I use the experience of my ‘return’ as a proximal ‘act’ of translation from within the present – an ongoing performance which undergoes change still as I write. Cyfrwng is a Welsh word meaning ‘medium / a means of / communication with / between’. Using a ‘cultural phenomenology’, and drawing on the agentic qualities within the term

18 I was introduced to this word by Lisa Lewis, in 2004 when she invited me to participate in Cynhadledd Cyfrwng, a bilingual media conference held at the University of Wales, Bangor.
I reference previous works in Western Australia, an (im)placement project in Wales, and a range of significant events, to reflect on autobiographical praxis as a generative force of expression, a form of mediation and understanding, and as a means of cultural production. I also reflect on other layers of the creative process enmeshed within tracing and reconnecting with my birthmother in Llanelli, and my father’s family in North Wales.

I interweave a range of theoretical engagements to highlight this fluid form of mediation. I also reveal the ongoing hermeneutic practice underpinning the processes of translation, transformation and communication. My earliest contribution to this chapter was in the form of a short performative paper specifically created for the bilingual conference, Cynhadledd Cyfrwng held at the University of Wales, Bangor, in 2004. I was invited to participate in a panel designed to offer a taste of artistic practices associated with Performance Studies. The theme of the conference was ‘Wales and the World’. The title of my paper was, ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: A postmodern quest or diasporic inversion?’ This desire to ‘return’ to Wales from Australia in search of my ‘Welshness’ grew as a result of opening up my ‘closed adoption’ records.

In 2006, an extended version of this paper was published with images in the refereed online journal, IM. In this version, I also refer to my presentation and the Installation of Translating Hiraeth at the North Wales conference. I begin the ‘story’ with a reflection on Translating Hiraeth as presented in the Murdoch Worship Centre in 2003, and then work back and forth revealing the various interpretive works negotiated as part of the ongoing process. By reflecting on my praxis in this way, this section does, I believe, call to mind how new embodied understandings are reached, and highlights the contingent nature of each piece of work. I reveal how prior understandings within the process are built upon and enlarged through this ongoing hermeneutic spiral. In this thesis chapter, I have

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reworked and extended the content towards ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’. This section also augments the creative component of my submission by conveying the ongoing process of *translating hiraeth* at any particular point in time. By way of introduction to this performative chapter, I have outlined this creative project of adoption (re)stor(y)ing as an embodied process, to which I have added some relevant aspects of contemporary neuroscience and memory research. These aspects offer new understandings of how ‘we’ make sense of the artistic process and embodied experience. Much of this research has emerged during the course of this project and does, I suggest, present an important layer of credibility favouring the use of creative production in the formation of new knowledge.  

In this dissertation, I evidence this generative process in play as the project meanders, loiters, and spirals with, and beyond, my initial concerns.

I have now been documenting my interactions with various forums over a seventeen year period. These include many interdisciplinary conferences and seminars related to creative production, my arts practice, adoption and/or alternative family formation. This broad range of involvements has encouraged me to reflect not only on my own process but also on that of others, and on the experience of family formation within a wider cross-cultural context. When presenting aspects of my praxis at various events I have noted local attitudes, indigenous rights, global events, trends, changes to family law in Australia and overseas, the reallocation of power structures, and the apparent paradigm shifts within hegemonic thinking during the overall time frame. I initially intended to highlight how this critical diary of events has interacted with my creative process in a stand-alone chapter; however, this proved too extensive. I have now integrated some of the relevant material into ‘[A]doption: A social institution on the move’ and inserted an edited personal addendum, which I have entitled, ‘[I]nteractions, Reflections and Innovations’. I have presented this section in a table format primarily for cross-referencing purposes.

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20 My interest in neurology goes back to the 1970s. After completing my nursing training, I spent a post graduate year working on a busy neurosurgical unit at a London teaching hospital.
Following the Installation of *Translating Hiraeth* in the Murdoch Worship Centre and then at the University of Wales, the work was selected as part of the *Perth International Arts Festival (PIAF)* in 2005 and shown at Fremantle Arts Centre. In 2008, I installed *Translating Hiraeth* in a more clinical environment at the 9th *Australian Adoption Conference* in Sydney. This year, 2010, I had the good fortune to exhibit the piece at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston for a conference centred on ‘Adoption and Culture’, where the focus leaned towards creative production. The work was well suited to this forum and proved an evocative ‘fit’ within the current political adoption milieu of the United States.  

There have been other screenings and cross-disciplinary forums where I have projected the single screen format. I have documented these exhibitions, seminars and conferences in the *Addendum*, and included their relevant outcomes.

To sum up, in this dissertation, I open up family, social and cultural silences within adoption as I document my own processes of investigation. Over the time frame of this longitudinal project, I reflect on major changes in the practices of adoption and alternative ‘family formation’. Through this work I do not attempt to provide any overriding solution for those involved in adoption (re)stor(y)ing, or to conclusively theorise the adoption experience for others. However, I do want to show some of the complexities inherent in opening up the past, in times of rapid social change. I want to express the necessity for story, and the value of employing creative production as research, particularly when excavating past silence. In this dissertation, I look closely at the various paradigm shifts in adoption thinking, the underlying associated socio-political structures, and I examine some of the popular cultural assumptions surrounding adoption. In parallel, I show how my arts praxis has evolved as an autoethnographic process and methodological tool in the production of new knowledge. In this interdisciplinary research project, I consider creative production a crucial mode of

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21 In Adoption: A social institution on the move, I discuss past ‘closed adoption’ and the state of adoption legislation in North America.
investigation, articulation and communication. I assert this means of knowledge production be deemed a vital form of epistemological practice.
CHAPTER 2

Autoethnographic Performance as Epistemological Practice

Synopsis

By employing a performative autoethnography as my research methodology, I am drawing together issues of agency and (il)legitimacy within adoption as an institutionalised social practice in the West, and issues of legitimate knowledge production within the hierarchies of literacy as laid down by the academy. This project has evolved as an epistemological practice through a hermeneutic process whereby a mediated ‘body’ of research is substantially represented in the form Translating Hiraeth, the multimedia Installation work. This mode of investigation and articulation draws on an accumulated knowledge base across a broad range of disciplines and circumstance. As a form of knowledge production, I employ a praxis-based, experiential process of meaning-making which is integral to my research methodology, contradicting, or possibly extending linear thesis writing and the more traditional tenets of academic inquiry.

Before discussing Performance Studies as a flexible, interdisciplinary, cross cultural ‘container’ for this arts based project, I reference the beginnings of the academy, the formation of structured disciplines, and the traditional thesis model. From there, I draw the reader’s attention to the fact that ‘adoption’ as a social institution also emerged from Enlightenment thinking, although, as yet, in Australia, critical studies on adoption do not sit under a particular disciplinary umbrella, or within a discrete academic ‘faculty’. In spite of this, the growing
international body of cultural studies focussed on adoption increasingly reflects the complexities of contemporary society within a now global economy.22

By way of introducing the development of the multimedia Installation, *Translating Hiraeth*, I have ‘drawn’ a genealogical background which brings together my own interests associated with the beginnings of Installation art, video art, early feminist art, and performative multimedia work. I briefly discuss the influence of poststructuralism and autoethnographic writing on my research before considering *translating hiraeth* as a phenomenological process of understanding, or knowing, which draws on and extends contemporary notions of ‘critical nostalgia’.23 I recognise the longitudinal time frame which has been necessary for this study, the archaeological sensibility required when excavating family, social and cultural silences, and the need for constant ‘(re)vision’ across disciplinary sources, and within my own process.24

The Installation itself offers a measured, meditative pace whilst unfolding a layered and fragmented narrative, where evidence of another family, language and cultural ‘landscape’ gradually enters the social space of the broader (re)stor(y)ing project. Employing sound, video, voice, smell, archival imagery, past documentation with performative text, this heteroglossic collage moves slowly between screens, encouraging the visitor within the space to turn back and forth as s/he physically engages with a dialogic and fragmented ‘story’ over an extended time frame. It is my intention that *Translating Hiraeth* empathetically

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22 In April 2010, the inter-university Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture, in the US, hosted the 3rd international conference on adoption and culture entitled, *Adoption: Secret Histories, Public Policies*. This forum was held in association with the English Department at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston. Within this dissertation, the effect of past policy on the ‘present’ is addressed further in Chapter 3, ‘Adoption: A social institution on the move’.


draws divergent understandings of ‘longing’ together, whilst inviting reciprocity from the visitor within the space and raising an awareness that there is no hermetic seal to the ‘readings’ of such narratives. Although explicitly about the silences within a ‘particular’ ‘closed adoption’, the piece offers an emotional social commentary on loss and life’s transience evoking broader, contemporary, existential questions associated with meaning(s) of home, longing and belonging. By regarding creative performance as research, and a form of cultural production, the embodied hermeneutic spiral within the processes of making Translating Hiraeth can, I suggest, be considered a discursive form of epistemological practice.

**Linear thesis writing and disciplinarity**

Unlike this particular project, academic research has traditionally been prescribed as a linear process with its projected outcome to be argued rationally, leaving intuitive meanderings and the ‘mess’ of the body behind. The emotional experience of ‘doing’ research is sanitised to the extent that irrational or unexpected personal outcomes are omitted, and any vulnerabilities hidden. Following Enlightenment thinking, the traditional thesis format uses propositional discourse to argue a case within a specialist field of investigation. After presenting a literature review of published knowledge in a chosen area of study, the candidate sets out to defend or ‘prove’ his or her hypothesis to illuminate a new position of authority within that specific field, or discipline. It is only since the Enlightenment that ordered disciplines have been developed within the academy, each with a specialised language or ‘discourse’, and experts in their field. Ellen Messer-Davidow, David Shumway and David Sylvan borrow from Foucault when they say that, “disciplinarity is the means by which ensembles of diverse parts are brought into particular types of knowledge relations with each other”.25

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In today’s terms, the narrower picture of a postgraduate thesis may be an exaggeration as many poststructuralist models do now challenge ‘masculinist’ formats, using innovative methodologies across disciplines.26 Doctoral students working in the process driven areas of Performance and Creative Arts are, however, still open to evaluation vagaries as institutions continue to work out practical strategies in how to ‘measure’ ephemeral works, ‘in situ’, against the more conventional model. In some of the more conservative institutions, the Enlightenment bind between ‘power’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ still hovers around the validity of creative production being a legitimate form of research, by privileging scientific discourse in its search for provable facts over art. I find this argument particularly (ir)relevant when discussing the ‘pre-verbal’ encodings and affective responses associated with the making and reception of art, in light of the recent body of research in developmental affective neuroscience. In this dissertation, I will endeavour to show how art and science can enrich one another.27 Central to Foucault’s work on power is the ‘hierarchy of knowledges’, which polarises what is ‘true’ from what is ‘false’. The promise of attainable truth, therefore, also privileges ‘arrival’ over process – especially the creative process. It follows that any resistance towards a researcher being both subject and object of her own work is also grounded in this dichotomous thinking which disqualifies “low ranking, local, and popular forms of knowledge”.28 According to this ‘line of thought’, as Trish Harris emphasises, self knowledge can then only be obtained at the price of relying on an expert.29 Foucault has been criticised by feminists because he infers that power has subjugated everyone equally, whereas,
throughout history, ‘woman’ has been a low ranking “site for knowledge”. Until fairly recently, the ‘emotional’ has been aligned with the body and left outside serious research. Social policy and institutional knowledge in general has been based on rationalist models of the human subject. The ‘emotional’ has been associated with irrationality – the hysterical female body and the pejorative. Thus, as a woman employing an arts-based, self-reflexive, autobiographical, self-guiding methodological framework, this project problematises traditional notions of social research.

A privileging of objective knowledge over subjective experience within research is still noticeable within the more orthodox areas of the social and psychological sciences. In the Arts, the ‘French Feminists’ have long acknowledged the body as ‘source’. Feminism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and now postcolonialism and diaspora studies have contributed enormously in legitimating the autobiographical voice within, for example, the area of ethnography, traditionally a masculinist area of ‘authoritative’, objective study.

33 I was reminded of this recently at the 9th Australian Adoption Conference (2008). During the panel discussion there seemed to be considerable support for ‘objective’ knowledge and something referred to as ‘neutral’ or ‘value free’ research.
35 The French structuralist, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) was seen as the father of modern anthropology, whereas, in contrast, the contemporary qualitative autoethnographic work of Michelle Citron powerfully explores her own past trauma and its relationship to the present through film media. As a feminist, poststructuralist film maker, she documents her own process in film. Citron, M. (1998). Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions. Minneapolis & London, University of Minnesota Press. Filmmaker, feminist, postcolonial theorist, writer and composer, Trinh T. Minh-ha, focuses on women’s work, the autobiographical voice and the space between. In her film Reassemblage, she explains that she does “not intend to speak about - just speak nearby”.

33 I was reminded of this recently at the 9th Australian Adoption Conference (2008). During the panel discussion there seemed to be considerable support for ‘objective’ knowledge and something referred to as ‘neutral’ or ‘value free’ research.
As a major part of this autoethnographic, arts-based enquiry into adoption (re)stor(y)ing, I present broad social research within a multi-media, narrative Installation – a space which incorporates the interrelationship and subversion of sensory triggers beside story and ‘fact’. Between the projected images, archival material, sound, performative text, voices, intonation, rhythm, a vibrational base, smell, ‘light’ and proximity, there may be moments of recognition for the ‘visitor’, where valorised affect calls on aspects of memory from within the present. I suggest this form of cultural studies project and kind of investigation helps to further dissolve the boundaries between the social sciences, literary studies, the creative and performing arts, and now sociobiology and neurophysiology.

During my candidacy, I have noticed that an increasing number of Australian and international institutions are now welcoming PhDs with creative components.\(^{36}\) In spite of this trend, the ephemerality of performance works, and the temporo-spatial and contextual requirements of Installation based pieces, can pose funding questions associated with arranging on-site, or site-specific exhibition, accompanied by the logistics associated with the external and international examination process. Some of the questions still being asked do also address the ‘reading’ of the work. Does secondary documentation adequately represent the bodily experiences of the ‘visitor’ within a space? What forms of documentation ‘act’ as sufficient evidence of the original, and/or, does secondary representation become another piece of work in its own right, and/or is this then part of an ongoing generative process? Interestingly, in terms of ‘contemporary art’,

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\(^{36}\) Here I draw a nominal distinction between PhDs and DCAs (a Doctorate of Creative Arts) which is a fairly recent innovation in Australia where some institutions offer a specific nomenclature and structure for research based in the visual and performing arts.
following on from Neo-Dada or Fluxus, many ephemeral works have only become famous, and politically important, through their documentation, rather than through the few people who experienced the original event, in the first place.\textsuperscript{37} I was reminded of this when viewing the travelling exhibition on show at ACMI in Melbourne, in 2007, of ‘New Media Installations’ from \textit{La collection du Centre Pompidou Musée National d’art Moderne}. I found the documentational aspect particularly poignant when ‘presenting’ the historically important performance works by, for example, Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci.

In this written dissertation and in \textit{Translating Hiraeth}, I attempt to reveal some of the contingencies within my own praxis. This feeds into what has become a hermeneutic spiral of meaning-making, (re)vision and understanding.\textsuperscript{38} This, of course, extends to wider interpretations according to the biases and positionings of the particular reader, and so on. Here, I would like to reiterate that I am situating a self-reflexive, autoethnographic praxis within academia, where my creative performance both mediates and generates a critical and discursive process over a longitudinal time frame. I consider that the emergent dialectic process informed by this fluid methodological framework adds a new dimension to contemporary ‘literature’ on adoption, whilst building upon what traditionally counts as research within the social sciences. I would like the reader to consider the \textit{Addendum}, ‘Interactions, Reflections and Innovations’, as a diaristic guide to some of my cross-disciplinary participations over time – an indicator of how various opportunities have introduced me to a range of discourses and directions, many of which have been distilled into the Installation, \textit{Translating Hiraeth}. I have welcomed the generative force within this process, and the contingent nature of realizations, questions and understandings as they have evolved – so much so, that it is the research process which has become the ‘thing’ under investigation. Here, I acknowledge the advantage of long periods for gestation, which goes against the current preoccupation with timely completions in postgraduate research.

\textsuperscript{37} I use the term ‘contemporary art’ as the now broad ‘Western’ umbrella for works produced since the mid twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{38} This generative, interpretive working process is evidenced performatively in Chapter 4, ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’, and also within the process of documentation presented in the Addendum, ‘Interactions, Reflections, Innovations’.
I have given numerous presentations and papers based on my project at various stages of my research candidacy but ironically, I am still conscious of a bodily resistance towards writing a formal dissertation which will ‘mark’ the completion of this project. First, this relates to the discussion concerning linear models of presentation or rather, in support of evocative, creative modes of representation as valid forms of research in their own right. Secondly, this process-driven methodology, directed by personal experience and my praxis, as such, supports a more organic, generative model which is therefore transient. Thus, by its nature, this celebrates lateral digressions, chance encounters and life’s deviations. In his book, Loiterature, Ross Chambers endorses both work of a meandering nature and the value of an extended time frame.\textsuperscript{39} As previously flagged, the Installation, Translating Hiraeth, offers a mode of representation and form of research which resists closure and declarations of finality.\textsuperscript{40} A third reason is held more particularly within the emotional processes of ‘doing’ ‘vulnerable research’.\textsuperscript{41} Ironically, form, methodology, and content are all about crossing boundaries, exploring emotion, and speaking out of line.

The Installation, Translating Hiraeth now acts as the crucial mediator within understandings of translating hiraeth as a process although it is, paradoxically, during the ‘writing up’ that an argument is being articulated, whilst legitimating or enacting a pathway.\textsuperscript{42} It is, therefore, my intention that the Installation and this dissertation will sit in metonymic tension with each other, thus completing the submission.

\textsuperscript{40}I am referring to the process of translating hiraeth rather than to the completion of the installation itself. Even then, the meanings within a work are not finite due to the many and varied interpretations.
\textsuperscript{42}Much clinical research on adoption still tends to follow the objective scientific model, where data is formulated and ‘written up’.
“Art is often a bastard, the parents of which we do not know”.\(^{43}\)

Whilst positioning my research within the area of Performance Studies and, more particularly, my Installation praxis within the broader area of contemporary art, I am reminded of the creative ‘freedoms’ I now take for granted as an arts practitioner in the 21\(^{st}\) century. In this chapter, I reflect on the radical avant-garde arts collective known as the *Fluxus* ‘laboratory’ which emerged across Europe, America and Japan during the 1950s and 60s. These artists questioned the rational, progressive and utopian ideas supporting modernism. They welcomed

\(^{43}\) These words of Nam June Paik were cited in de Meredieu, F. (2005). *Digital and Video Art*. Edinburgh, Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd. p.180. I refer to this work entitled, *Zen for Film*, later in the chapter.
process and chance and rejected notions of ‘truth’. Their modes of production and presentation no longer shock us or necessarily point us in the direction of new thought. Many of the radical influences then, have now become mainstream, although, in the spirit of *Fluxus*, ‘intermedia’, multimedia, and technological innovation in the arts is still strong. Social critique through art is alive, as many artists directly engage with both local and global political concerns through their work. The ‘attitude’ of *Fluxus* is healthy, as many practitioners ‘push the envelope’ and challenge the *status quo*.

By way of offering a genealogical framework for this creative project, I wish to reflect on some of these prominent vanguard artists of the twentieth century. I will also consider my debt to feminism in legitimating the ‘emotional’ and the ‘autobiographical’ in art, as well as works by recent artists whose ideas, I find, resonate with my own practice. Nam June Paik’s words on the previous page provide an ironic starting point with which to begin this particular ‘genealogy’. They also act as a poignant reference when trying to trace the development of ‘video’, from being a ‘new’ performance and tele-visual Installation medium, through to its convergence with filmic projection, and/or mergence with computer art, satellite technology and digital multimedia Installation work within current hybrid and cross-cultural arts practices. When referring to any notion of lineage, categorisation, or the naming of any discrete genre or movement within art history, Nam June Paik, as a member of *Fluxus*, played a major role in challenging normative traditions and ‘modernist’ classifications within Western art and culture. By merging disciplines and genres and experimenting with new forms, including electronic and digital communication, the Korean-born, New York based Paik, like the many other international artists associated with *Fluxus*, questioned Western cultural assumptions associated with Enlightenment thinking by raising an awareness of Eastern philosophy, the *experience* of art, and its relationship to contemporary life and culture. It is important to note here, that in Eastern art and philosophy the experience of art is understood in a much more holistic or metonymic sense, as opposed to traditional Western understandings of symbolic representation through the art object itself.
Following Futurism, Dada and Surrealism, a form of Neo-Dadaism – which underpinned Fluxus began to take shape following the conflicts of the Second World War. Dada was the name of the avant-garde group formed following the atrocities of the First World War. Marcel Duchamp was, at the time, strongly associated with Dada’s reaction against Bourgeois culture. During the 1950s and 60s, the work, attitudes, and ideas of like-minded artists, largely influenced by Duchamp’s ‘readymades’ and John Cage’s commitment to Eastern thought, came from a variety of disciplines and dispersed locations across Europe, the United States and Japan. Artists were actively brought together predominately through the networking efforts of Lithuanian-born entrepreneur, George Macuinas. Macuinas was a designer, musicologist and amateur art historian who was particularly interested in ancient philosophies. In his studies, he found that some of the pre-modern philosophers, such as Heraclitus, were referred to as ‘fluxists’ due to their belief in change and impermanence as a basis to reality.\footnote{Smith, O. (1998). \textit{Fluxus: The History of an Attitude}. San Diego, Atticus Press, San Diego State Uniersity Press. p. 306.} Thus, the name \textit{Fluxus} emerged, and Macuinas organised the first \textit{Fluxus} Festival, or \textit{Fluxfest}, in the City Museum in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1962. Many other Fluxfests were to follow, for example, in Copenhagen, Paris, Düsseldorf, New York, as well as various locations in England, Wales, and elsewhere. Early festivals critiqued traditional culture, whereas later festivals focussed more on art as daily life.\footnote{See Ibid.}

\textit{Fluxus} originally began as an idea for a magazine to publicise the work of its artists. Those such as Dick Higgins, Joseph Beuys, Wolf Vostell, Paik, George Brecht, Ben Vautier, Alison Knowles, Allan Kaprow, Carolee Scheeman, La Monte Young, Jim Dine, Yoko Ono, and Ken Freidman, amongst many others associated with the \textit{Fluxus} ‘laboratory’, became part of the much larger twentieth century radical avant-garde – not only wanting to change traditional notions of art, but also the way people perceived the world and cultural difference.\footnote{Ibid.} The post-war decades were a critical period of social and political upheaval. Activism was galvanised by such events as the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Cold
War and anti-war protests, the Civil Rights movements, the Paris student riots in 1968, and the rise of feminism in the 1970s. In art historical terms, *Fluxus* represents an anarchic journey away from modernism’s introspective, Eurocentric ‘grand narrative’ of ‘isms’. *Fluxus* stood against capitalism and Western individualism, and leaned towards socialism, internationalism, community, and collaboration.

In the mid-twentieth century, *Formalism*, as coined by New York art critic Clement Greenberg, saw abstraction as the pinnacle of modern art.47 Greenberg’s *formalist* notion of ‘purity’, particularly within painting and sculpture, was countered by *Fluxus*’ attitudes emphasising the productive dialectic between and across media. In 1964, Nam June Paik’s Installation of his clear film projection, *Zen for Film*, referenced earlier, was an act of defiance against the highly aestheticised image and any notion of the pure art form. In point 5 of his *Fluxus* Manifesto, in 1963, George Macuinas promoted a ‘state of being liquid through heat and fusion. …in order to PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD OR TIDE IN ART’.48

47 I should mention that there were abstract painters who were also influenced by Eastern mysticism at this time, who did not identify with Greenberg’s *Formalism*.
Following the growth of Minimalism and Conceptual Art, in her 1968 essay written with John Chandler, Lucy Lippard draws on *Fluxus*’ ideas concerning ‘the dematerialisation of art’, that is, the move away from the art object. She refers to John Cage as the prophet of “the so far unrealised ‘intermedia’ revolution”.\(^{50}\) Cage’s demonstrations and classes at Black Mountain College, in North Carolina, initially inspired experimental ‘new music’ and were attended by several *Fluxus* members from 1952 onwards, including Nam June Paik and la Monte Young.\(^{51}\) During the 1940s, Cage was greatly influenced by Zen metaphysics and the works of French philosopher, Henri Bergson. According to Zen philosophy, “the world is a united web of interrelationships that are in a constant state of flux and

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change”.\textsuperscript{52} Cage was later noted for his own works centred on ‘silence’ and ‘indeterminacy’.\textsuperscript{53} Bergson similarly held that everything is related through process and change, and that “everything interpenetrates ultimately transcending the limits of reason”.\textsuperscript{54} This sat in direct opposition to modernist Eurocentric attitudes and rational organisation, linear categorisation and notions of progress in art. Crossing social and cultural boundaries, disciplines and genres, \textit{Fluxus} became a subversive cross-medial, performance-based collective engaged in a form of artistic anarchy. Cage, like Duchamp, also rejected modernism’s notion of the artist as a lone genius, the primacy of the art object, and art’s elitist function in Western society. He believed that art should harmonise with the natural processes of chance and change, so that chance and change would thus become part of the artistic process. He extended Duchamp’s critique of the elevated artistic experience over the ‘ordinary’ by suggesting that art should reflect nature’s non-hierarchical values. In this way, Cage believed, art could create an important awareness of one’s actual environment.\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Fluxus} claimed that it was not a ‘style’ dependent on Western art history for its references. Any genealogical claim to such a lineage would have been an anathema. \textit{Fluxus} was anti-art’ in any canonical sense, demanding a more democratic, political dimension to praxis that not only represented life, but where there was little distinction between art and life.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{52} Cited in, Ibid. p. 21.
This thinking was a reaction and counter position to ‘serious culture’, as Macuinas called it – a counter position to art’s system of commodification supported by the taste of dealers, gallery owners and collectors who were, in turn, influenced by the powerful role of the critic and art curator. In his Manifesto, Macuinas promoted “living art, anti art, and a NON ART REALITY to be grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals”. In his words, he wanted to “fuse the cadres of cultural, social and political revolutionaries into a united front and

57 Digital still taken from Translating Hiraeth (blood and milk in water).
Macquinas’ enthusiasm was apparent and appreciated within the group, although some artists regarded him as too extreme.

From within the seemingly monolithic label of modernism, the development of ‘modern art’ had been traced to this point through a linear, chronological series of stylistic movements or ‘isms’. Each style was seen as progressive as it usurped its predecessor with the ‘new’. In 1935, as the first director of the new Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, Alfred H. Barr published his genealogical map of the stages within ‘modern art’ showing, in his view, how each phase or movement came to a close and where each new progression linked into the past. According to Barr’s diagram, everything linked towards Abstraction, where the New York School of Painting and Abstract Expressionism held a central position.

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It was in 1939 that Greenberg extended Barr’s ‘map’ by publishing his two influential and well argued papers, outlining his ideas of artistic ‘progress’ towards Abstract Art where Formalism took centre stage. Much of Greenberg’s thinking echoed that of Russian Suprematist, Kazimir Malevich, whose 1913 painting, Square, is seen by many to be the forerunner of Abstract Art and Minimalism. As a prominent critic, Greenberg actively promoted those artists whose work supported his theories, such as the abstract expressionist, Jackson Pollock. As a major proponent of the New York School and of ‘modern art’, Greenberg articulated Formalism as a complete break with perspective and the illusionism associated with the Renaissance by promoting ‘his’ ‘purity’ within painting and sculpture. He espoused a ‘truth’ to materials and form where a painting, for example, was a flat, completely self-referential surface which leaned ultimately towards pure abstraction – thus, a work which resisted any other representational influences or other layers of meaning.59 Greenberg’s notion of ‘purity’ also applied to three dimensional form where, the art object stood ‘true’ to itself and its materials, isolated within space. His theory relied on a disassociation from all other art forms such as music, theatre, poetry and dance. Greenberg’s views were enormously influential in academic circles, and were supported by Western theories of individualism, psychoanalysis, and the timely popularity of existentialism with its focus on pure essence. In line with Barr’s ‘map’, “[a]bstraction emerged as modern art’s highest achievement, and the expression of pure opticality as its rarefied mission.”60 In 1934, Barr paid little attention to the radical element within the avant-garde, of which Duchamp had already become a prominent figure.61

In 1917, during WWI, and again in 1951 following WWII, Marcel Duchamp presented his now famous and then controversial work, Fountain, within the

gallery space. Through his anti-aesthetic frame, this recontextualisation of a mass produced urinal in glazed sanitary ware was presented as an aspect of everyday life, as art. This was, perhaps, the strongest statement yet against the bourgeoisie, the hierarchy of the art-world, and the notion of high art. In the 1950s, Duchamp’s ‘readymade’ again countered any notion of the ‘pure art object’ existing in and for itself. He challenged the opticality of Abstract Art and Formalism. In a call away from what he termed ‘retinal’ art, he supported a move towards conceptualism, which was to be very influential. Given that religious iconography had initially preceded the exalted status of the high art object, Duchamp intended to question the iconic status of art, and the subsequent separation of art from life. As an influential member of DADA in 1918 and then later as an inspiration to Fluxus, Duchamp’s ‘disrespectful’ gesture of putting the urinal on a pedestal not only encouraged a re-evaluation of everyday experience as being on a par with ‘art’, but undoubtedly subverted the ‘value’ of the art object per se. His use of a series of ‘readymade’ objects was also an influential precursor to the idea of the ‘multiple’ within artistic ‘assemblage’. Prior to the age of internet communication, Fluxus multiples gained particular importance between 1965 and 1969 as a form of communication, production and documentation. As well as musical works and scores, they took the form of Fluxletters, Fluxboxes and Fluxkits.\textsuperscript{62}

\footnote{62 See, Ibid. p. 165-203.}
In terms of early Installation Art, Duchamp was also one of the first artists to critically play with the spectator’s movements within the exhibition space. In 1942, when curating the ‘First Papers of Surrealism’, he ‘installed’ / threaded a ‘Mile of String’ back and forth across the gallery and between the hanging art works, requiring the ‘visitor’ to physically engage with the space, making it

63 The multiple has played an important role in my own practice. See the Addendum, ‘Interactions, Reflections and Innovations”, D27, presentation boxes for Loss Adoption and Desire: D9, both Installations, Subject and Object and Dislocation: Postcards 1993, D13-1, D16, D17, Postcards, D19, Postcards, D19-2 Heresay, Snapshot, D37, the Implantment of the sample bags in Wales, D42-47 Bags, D58-1, working once more with the postcards at Cristina Castrillo’s workshop, 2001: D71, 2003.
difficult to actually view the ‘art’. In his now famous work of 1946, Etant Donnes, he further challenged the expectations and intentions of the viewer when ‘reading’ his work. The ‘visitor’ was invited into a small designated space within the Philadelphia Museum of Modern Art, where s/he was tempted to look through a tiny peephole lit only after stepping on a concealed switch beneath the carpet. In the ‘reading’ of what was beyond the peephole, the viewer ‘completed’ the artwork by becoming a “voyeur of a sexually provocative scene, quite unlike other nudes on exhibition elsewhere in the gallery”. Duchamp must have known that the image would be controversial, particularly in the museum context, and so he clearly seems to have considered the differing attitudes and expectations that the ‘visitor’ might bring to a work of art within this particular space, or gallery situation. Thus, it also appears that Duchamp was incorporating the shared social meaning associated with the museum space into the work itself, as understood in the reading of any contemporary ‘site-specific Installation’.

Ten years later, as a member of a panel discussion at the Convention of the American Federation of Arts, in 1957, and ten years prior to Roland Barthes’ famous essay on the ‘Death of the Author’, Duchamp incorporated the viewer into a two-fold process of meaning-making which he publicly outlined in his interpretation of the ‘creative act’:

All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.

Here, Duchamp considers both the intention of the artist, and the various assumptions and experiences brought to the reading of a work by the viewer, who

65 Barthes, R. (1967). “The Death of the Author.” *Aspen 5*+6(Fall - Winter): Boxed. Roland Barthes initially presented his paper as part of this special journal edition, now referred to as The Minimalist Issue. Barthes’ paper was one of 28 boxed items which included two other essays, films, drawings, an artist’s book by Sol Le Witt, a cardboard model and a music score by John Cage amongst the many other exhibits.
is also part of the ‘external world’. However, in this statement, he does not directly articulate a spatial element in which this process of meaning-making takes place, or overtly attribute the social meanings associated with the actual space, toward the overall reading of the work.\footnote{Duchamp’s stand in challenging the art object and Western value systems within art, has come to be regarded as groundbreaking. In December 2004, the BBC News announced that Duchamp’s work \textit{Fountain} had been voted the most influential artwork of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century by 500 prominent artists and historians.}

\section*{Intermedia}

In the late 1950s and 60s, prominent \textit{Fluxus} artist, Allen Kaprow, coined the term ‘happenings’ at which audience participation within a particular space was the key. As a painter, Kaprow initially blurred the boundaries between painting and theatre by \textit{directing} the audience through the gallery space, over a long period of time. He later referred to his some two hundred ‘happenings’ as ‘activities’ and the intimate spaces in which these ‘activities’ took place, he called ‘environments’. Kaprow, famous for \textit{18 Happenings in 6 Parts}, examined everyday behaviours and habits. ‘Happenings’ often went on for hours, even days, moving away from notions of ‘entertainment’ within a particular genre or time frame.\footnote{As flagged earlier, the later Fluxfest performances such as those at Douglas College, \textit{Fluxmass} and \textit{Flux-sport}, differed from earlier festivals such as at Wiesbaden, in that Fluxus performances were initially intended as a “countering process to conventional notions of culture”, as in this case, and were usually held within institutional spaces. The later performances such as \textit{Hotel Event} and \textit{Street Cleaning Event} were more often than not held in ‘ordinary’ spaces, celebrating games and every day experience with humour. They were less concerned with traditional culture and more concerned with ‘daily life’, Smith, O. (1998). \textit{Fluxus: The History of an Attitude}. San Diego, Atticus Press, San Diego State University Press. p. 208.} These activities were ephemeral and usually documented photographically or on film. \textit{Fluxus} works were often intentionally distilled into simple actions and were difficult to recognise as ‘art’ in any traditional sense. As artists crossed disciplines and genres, broader terminologies started to emerge such as ‘visual poetry’, performance art, sound sculpture, Installation art, land art and environmental art.
In 1966, *Fluxus* artist Dick Higgins coined the term ‘intermedia’. Two years later, the first Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) course in Intermedia was inaugurated at the University of Iowa where visiting *Fluxus* members, including Higgins, worked with students. Endorsing the socialist values of *Fluxus*, Dick Higgins wrote: “We must find ways to say what has to be said in light of our new means of

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69 Setting up *Subject and Object*, Tresillian Centre, WA, 1991 (rammed earth forms made from soil samples collected from geological sites across Western Australia).


71 This course still runs today. [www.uiowa.edu/~iinterart/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~iinterart/) *Fluxus* follower and artist, Owen Smith founded two other MFA courses in Intermedia, one at Arizona State University and the other at the University of Maine. This is now a three year postgraduate course. See, [http://www.art.asu.edu/intermedia/](http://www.art.asu.edu/intermedia/).
communication”.\textsuperscript{72} Here, he was also referring to new media innovations using television, video and computer technologies. Initially, investment in ‘cutting edge’ electronic communication was funded by governments, the military and industry. Some commercial companies, particularly in the United States and Germany, made the new media available for artistic experimentation.\textsuperscript{73}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Silent Mother, Tawaddog Fam, a manipulated still image from Fy Mam. PICA, 1996. See, the Addendum, IRI, D23.}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{73} Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), set up multidisciplinary laboratories where technicians and artists worked side by side. de Meredieu, F., Ed. (2005). \textit{Digital and Video Art}. Edinburgh, Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd. p. 18.

\textsuperscript{74} Silent Mother, Tawaddog Fam, a manipulated still image from Fy Mam. PICA, 1996. See, the Addendum, IRI, D23.
Since the early 1960s, the general distribution of television, followed by the widespread distribution of the computer, has given rise to major technological innovations within the arts. These technologies have impacted on our concept of the ‘moving image’ and Installation, and more particularly, on ‘intermedial’ and new hybrid art forms. In this sense, artists were no longer defined purely by the material qualities of one medium. They combined media and/or crossed genres, bringing a conceptually rich, experimental complexity to the creative arts. The early twentieth century development of television as a system for transmission and reception has been followed by the video camera, video recorder, video projector, the digital computer, satellite technology, the internet and beyond. The availability of video projectors, then the data projector, facilitated a move from tele-visual Installation works towards the proliferation of floor to ceiling projections, seen particularly during the 1980s and 90s, and up until the present. Today, new technologies can provide a wide range of experimental projection techniques which can be employed with, or without, other objects in real time and space. Within the realms of interactivity and virtual reality, the ‘visitor’ can now be transported to other dimensions and imaginary spaces.

Traditionally, film sits within the materially-based, process-driven ‘craft’ of photography where the negative is exposed on light sensitive film, developed, edited, and linked with sound before being shown. On the other hand, from the beginning, the new video technology was much more immediate, enabling live transmission using closed-circuit television, which collapsed time and space between the action and instantaneous viewing – for example, Vito Acconci’s Remote Control (1971), Dan Graham’s Present Continuous Past (1974) and Peter Campus’ Interface (1972). When compared with film, ‘video’ and computer technologies have undergone constant and radical changes in format over the last few years, creating many stages of electronic and digital obsolescence along the way. Today, the photographic medium of film can be

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‘shot’ on location, developed, digitised and edited on a computer, before being projected via a data projector or shown on an LCD panel or plasma screen, as in the contemporary filmic Installation works of Finnish artist, Eija-Liisa Ahtila. Conversely, digital video can be constructed on a computer using imagery obtained via the internet, manipulated using digital ‘plug-ins’, and projected in a cinematic environment to look like film. Through the expansion of the digital arts, the proliferation of virtual spaces and galleries, and the globalisation of arts networks, the convergence of different digital media in one way or another is now commonplace. Following Paik’s words mentioned earlier, a point of origin to any particular work or image may be even more difficult to locate today.

Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell are regarded as prominent figures in the early development of television and video Installation art. It is impossible to consider multimedia Installation today, and the nuances within the development of this term without acknowledging, in particular, Nam June Paik’s innovative contribution over four decades. In The Artist’s Video, Robert Beck reflects on Paik’s career:

Linking the art world and the media, pop culture and the avant-garde, technology and philosophy, Paik’s works resonate with an iridescent humour and subversive brilliance that have influenced contemporary art, video and television.

His early works were transcultural, intertextual collages which drew on the global consciousness of the radical avant-garde. Influenced by John Cage, Paik’s ‘prepared’ pianos and instruments soon led to a series of ‘prepared’ and altered television sets. His first televisual exhibition was held in 1963, at Gallerie Parnase in Wuppertal, Germany. By bringing a magnet into contact with the cathode-ray tube inside each television set, he was able to distort the transmission in a different way on each TV screen within the gallery space. Nam June Paik was

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later seen to be the father of video art, and this particular exhibition, its birth. After arriving in New York in 1964, Paik famously bought one of the first Sony Portapacks. On the same day, he videoed Pope Paul VI’s visit to New York from a taxi window, then drove to Café a Go Go where he replayed the video to an eager audience. Early televisual / video and performance artists such as Paik, were innovators in cross-medial works, particularly during the 1960s and 70s. In 1969, his work featured in *TV as Creative Medium* at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York. By employing the new technology in what was formally the sculptural space of the gallery, his work hovered at the interstices of art, new technology and popular culture. During this period, Paik also produced many video performances with avant-garde cellist, Charlotte Moorman, as well as a prodigious body of video Installations including *Global Groove* (1973), *TV Buddha* (1974) and *TV Garden* (1978). During these *Fluxus’* activities of the 1960s and 70s, artists such as Nam June Paik were already bringing Marshal McLuhan’s predictions of a ‘global village’ to life.\(^78\) Paik’s experimentation and interest in satellite technology, in order to connect different cultural contexts across time and space, began in 1977, and in collaboration with Joseph Beuys and Douglas Davis, he exhibited at *Documenta 6* in Kassel, West Germany. Paik continued working with satellite technology well into the 1990s. Sadly, he suffered a debilitating stroke in 1996 and was no longer able to work. He died in Miami in 2006.

Today, the terms ‘intermedia’ and ‘multimedia’ are sometimes used interchangeably across the creative arts. Both are well accepted terms, although ‘multimedia’ infers a combination of derivative technologies associated with television/screen media and computer arts, whereas ‘intermedia’, I consider, still suggests a broader transdisciplinarity and performance-based communication, with which to create and enrich our understandings of art, life, and society.

Joseph Beuys is another *Fluxus* associate and prominent artist whose life and work I greatly admire. Beuys’ construction of his war time rescue by Tartars in

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the Crimea served as a strong myth of origin to his arts practice. According to Beuys, he was covered in fat and wrapped in felt to keep warm. Both these materials were a constant source of reference in his practice. His larger-than-life persona lives on well after his death and is perhaps one of the most iconic figures to have emerged from mid-twentieth century art.\textsuperscript{79} Through his friendship with Paik, when both were professors at the Kundstakademie in Düsseldorf, Beuys became an active member of \textit{Fluxus} in the early 1960s. Following his personal trauma and the realization of the collective trauma of war, together with reflections on his military service under Nazi Germany, Beuys suffered a crisis which lasted until 1958.\textsuperscript{80} It was through his practice that he recognised the healing potential of art at both the personal and social levels. Beuys developed a transdisciplinary perspective of art and was influenced, in particular, by the works of Rudolf Steiner, Carl Jung, Goethe, James Joyce and Leonardo de Vinci. He believed in the interconnection of art and science, and, above all, in art’s power for transformation. Beuys envisioned a social revolution which would be effected by a dramatic transformation of human society.\textsuperscript{81} His ‘expanded concept of art’ was based mainly on Steiner’s ideas, where art was placed at the same level of cultural importance as economic theory. According to Beuys, in 1985:

\begin{quote}
Art that can not shape society and therefore also can not penetrate the heart questions of society, [and] in the end influence the question of capitol, is no art.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

It was through his praxis and life experience that he recognised the healing potential of art at both the personal and social level. He famously criticized Marcel Duchamp for his ‘silence’ in art during the latter part of his career although, here I should say that Beuys’ ideas, ‘actions’, ‘vitrines’, and ‘environments’ are more identifiable with the concept of Duchamp’s ‘readymades’ in his attempt to \textit{change} institutional thinking, than with the more nihilistic, \textit{anti}-institutional stance that Dada and \textit{Fluxus} took. Duchamp’s later life


\textsuperscript{82} As found under ‘Political Activism’ on the Walker Art Centre website, \url{www.walkerart/archie}. 
was dominated by the less political activity of playing chess. In Beuys’ view, art was the impetus for social action and a way to change the world – to fight against the forces of ‘silence’ and apathy – hence his criticism of Duchamp’s quieter life style. It was doubly frustrating for Beuys because, at this time, there was a renewed interest in Duchampianism by American artists engaged in Pop Art, Minimalism and Conceptualism. For Beuys, art needed to overtly engage with live issues. He integrated life, art and work, and wanted to rebuild what he saw as a “senile social system” into the ‘social organism as a work of art’.


84 The hare is a German symbol of renewal and a sign of transformation.

In his ‘action’, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), Beuys symbolically covered his head with honey and gold leaf as an alchemic reference to the human ability to think and to understand on many levels. He then mumbled muffled noises as he ‘explained’ the various art works within the space to a dead hare cradled in his arms, ironically suggesting that the dead animal might intuit more than some human beings. This particular performance was viewed through a glass screen and also relayed by closed-circuit television to a monitor placed outside the gallery space. Beuys’ use of video on this occasion was in communication and as documentation of the ‘action’.
Joseph Beuys later referred to the problem of ‘explaining’ art, and that notions of ‘understanding’, too, cannot be restricted to rational analysis. He believed imagination, inspiration, intuition and longing all lead people to sense the various levels that also play a part in the understanding of art. He said of his ‘actions’ that he “tried to seek out energy in the human power-field, rather than demand specific knowledge”. He wanted to “bring light to the complexity of creative areas – to seek out a reaction to the action”. Beuys’ endorsement of the evocative and intuitive power of art fits obliquely, although importantly, alongside contemporary neurophysiological research and work focussed on the vagus nerve

complex surrounding the viscera, which results in what is often described as a ‘gut response’ or bodily intuition, leading to implicit memory recall and subsequent reasoning. Daniel Siegel writes:

Intuition seems to involve the registration of the input from the information processing neural networks surrounding our viscera. Our body’s wisdom is then more than a poet’s metaphor, it is a neural mechanism by which we process deep ways of knowing via our body’s parallel distributed processing, surrounding these hollow organs. This input registers itself in the middle prefrontal cortex and then influences our reasoning and our reactions. 87

In terms of ‘making’, Beuys considered “[e]very human being an artist, a freedom being, called to participate in transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives”. 88 In 1967, Beuys, with Bazon Brock and Johannes Stuttgen, set objectives for the German Student Party, a precursor to the Green Party in Germany. In 1974, he coined the term ‘social sculpture’ and set up his vision of a Free International University (FIU), instigating his Social Sculpture Research Unit (SSRU). 89 Johannes Stuttgen became the coordinator of FIU and is now a patron of the Social Sculpture Unit being run at Oxford Brookes University in the UK. 90 At art school during the 1980s, Beuys’ sculptural and performance works were brought to our attention, but I suspect his spiritual aspirations were seen by some at that time as a form of romantic idealism. It is Beuys’ ‘social sculpture’ and strong sense of commitment, that I admire – also the way he imbued form with conceptual content or, rather, manipulated meaning through form – not so much his choice of objects. Beuys’ environmental project for the 1980 Documenter, the planting of ‘7000 Oaks’, was completed after his death by his son. The recent environmental push for a sustainable planet has again given recognition to Beuys’ work and ideas.

88 Cited on the Social Sculpture Research Unit website run by Oxford Brookes University, UK in association with the Bauhaus, Weimar, Germany. http://www.brookes.ac.uk
90 http://www.brookes.ac.uk
Before the first wave of Feminism

In light of the earlier discussion focussed on modernism’s ‘grand narrative’ of art history, Linda Nochlin’s seminal paper published in 1971, ‘Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists’, is poignant when considering, in particular, such a luminary as Louise Bourgeois, the French born American printmaker, painter and sculptor whose working life spanned six decades.\(^91\) Her practice was deeply rooted in emotion, her experiences of childhood and her relationship with her parents. Driven by rage against, yet a love for, her disloyal father, she energises the emotional pain of growing up in a dysfunctional family. Through her practice, Bourgeois distilled feelings of anger, betrayal, jealousy, and often irony in her ability to tap the ‘unconscious’, beside her knowledge of psychoanalysis and the ‘law of the father’.\(^92\)

Unlike the work of the modern formalists, and perhaps more like Joseph Beuys’ ‘vitrines’ filled with objects carrying symbolic meaning, Louise Bourgeois is famous for her spiders, and her ‘cells’ in which she entraps a strong conceptual relationship between form, material and emotion. Her cage-like Installations show an ability to evoke various types of pain. This is reflected in the skilfully worked elements of her assemblages. She combines found objects with exquisitely carved marble, delicately sewn fabric, bulbous-shaped bottles, crafted wood, cast phallic objects, slumped glass, metal and other mediums, creating emotionally charged, often psychosexual environments. In an interview with Donald Kuspit, Bourgeois says, “[f]ear is pain. Pain comes from not knowing how to understand”.\(^93\) She talks about the abandonment she felt when her mother died in 1932. “I simply could not make out the ‘why’ of her disappearance”.\(^94\) Perhaps this is my very personal point of access to her work.


\(^93\) Ibid. p. 132.

\(^94\) Ibid. p. 132.
Bourgeois had a dislocated career and is only now being revered as one of the great women artists of our time. Even today, some are critical of the level of emotional exposure in her work, relegating it to the ‘confessional’ and not able to see its worth, although she was strong and clearly not positioning herself as a victim. Bourgeois said of her work, “[a]rt is not about art. Art is about life, and that sums it up”. Her practice rose to prominence following her early shows in 1947 and 1948. Alfred Barr, in fact, bought a work for the MoMA Collection in New York. In the late 1940s and early 50s, Bourgeois worked alongside many of the modernist ‘greats’ in both New York and Paris but gained little recognition herself. Ironically, she outlived them all, became famous, and worked right up until her death earlier this year. She was largely ignored by the art market of the 1950s to mid 60s. Feeling unable to talk about her silences, she retreated from the masculinist art world of modernism. Bourgeois’ work came to the fore again following the deaths of both her husband and father in the 1970s, and at the height of the first anarchic phase of feminism, her practice was lauded. In 1982, at the age of 75, she was the first woman to have a retrospective exhibition at MoMA in New York. Aged 82, she represented the United States at the Venice Biennale. At 88, she was the first artist to be commissioned to fill the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern in London, and in 2008 she starred in the documentary, Louise Bourgeois: The Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine. Her work is still as contemporary, diverse, skilful, and as conceptually relevant now as in earlier years. Psychoanalytically, “the mystery is not what she has tapped into, but how radically she has transformed it” – into art. The content of her early work was, I suggest, before its time. Still affected by the conduct of her father and the complexity of family relationships, she also absorbed herself in other women’s stories to transform the psychodynamics that underpinned her own early life, into art.

95 Ibid. p.124.
96 Louise Bourgeois died in New York on 31st May 2010.
When I reflect on the development of my own work, I realise that during my time at art school in the 1980s I gained confidence and the beginnings of a political focus, for which I am grateful. There were mixed influences and strong opinions, but riding on the back of minimalism, conceptualism, *Fluxus*, and particularly feminism, everything seemed available to us. At this time, I was trying to create a ‘language’ which articulated my struggle with silence, although

100 This has continued through my practice and gained depth when undertaking my Honours project at Murdoch University, and beyond.
I had not confronted my literal inability to speak about it.\textsuperscript{101} I began my first year by exploring the works of other women artists, and joined the first women’s discussion group within the Curtin School of Art.\textsuperscript{102} Conscious of the instabilities within my own story, I began researching institutional power structures, autobiography, and broader issues associated with identity and agency.\textsuperscript{103} 

During the 1980s, there was an overt provincialism between Australian cities. This was largely due to the vast physical distances, mainly, between East and West, expensive interstate air fares, and the immaturity of global digital communication. Perth was considered regional and often marginalised by dominant attitudes nurtured within the cities of Sydney and Melbourne. However, Perth’s ‘isolation’ – its closeness to Asia and its energetic entrepreneurial spirit supported a strong arts community, and fostered lively exchanges with artists from across Australia, New Zealand and the Indian Ocean region. ARX, as it became known, stood for Australia and Regions Exchange/Artists Regional Exchange. This artist-run initiative grew from the avant-garde ideas of the 70s. Some of the local artists involved were Adrian Jones, David Watt, David Jones, Nola Farman, Aadje Bruce, Matthew Ngui (Australia and Singapore) – to name only a few. Curtin School of Art supported ARX events, and some students, including myself, took part in ARX exhibitions.\textsuperscript{104} Many of the works were experimental and at the time reflected a strong belief in artistic agency. Praxis was a contemporary, artist-run space, based in Fremantle, which promoted experimental works, performance, and ‘new music’. Later moving to the Old Perth Boys School, in the Centre of

\textsuperscript{101} It was during the course of my Honours project that I began to unpack aspects of the unspeakable and unsayable within adoption. I outline these terms in greater detail later in this chapter. See also Durey, J. (1997). Loss Adoption and Desire. Separation, Reunion, Reconciliation: Proceedings from The Sixth Australian Conference on Adoption, Brisbane, Benson. p. 105-113.
\textsuperscript{102} This group was initiated by artists Nola Farman and Annette Seeman and historian Robyn Taylor.
\textsuperscript{103} It was in 1994 that I exhibited, ‘Silent Mother, Tawaddog Fam in the National Mandorla Art Prize. Four years after leaving art school, I began to publicly acknowledge the content of my work.
\textsuperscript{104} In 1988, I showed work in ‘Water Works’, which was a Curtin-based ARX initiative.
Perth, this initiative became the precursor to, what is now known as, PICA (Perth Institute of Contemporary Art).

There is obviously much that could be written on the vibrant Perth art scene of the 1980s. However, in this context, I draw mainly on international artists as I lean towards my own practice in this genealogical account.

It was through a growing awareness, and through the development of my work that I began to understand the depth of my loss. At this time, the content of my work was not made explicit, however, as a student, there were many who influenced me, and supported my emerging practice whilst at art school — in particular John Teschendorff, Helen Taylor, Miriam Stannage, Mary Moore, David Watt, Michael Iwanoff and Aadje Bruce. During my third year at Curtin, in 1989, I spent some time with visiting New York painter and writer, Roberta Allen, who introduced me to the Brazilian existentialist writer, Clarice Lispector. Lispector’s work affected me greatly, and pointed me towards Helen Cixous’ writing which was, and has been, a major influence on my work, particularly for my Honours project, *Loss Adoption and Desire*, and the making of the audio visual Installation, *Fy Mam*.  

Contemporary Installation obviously includes an enormous body of diverse works. Here, I will only mention a few artists whose works and/or ideas resonate with my own, and those who use the projected image in some form. If I were to look in more depth at how artists interact with technology, particularly the ‘moving image’ and ‘new media’, it would be necessary to offer a detailed typology within this genealogical form, and also to comment on cinema art, and art house film. In Installation today, there are those who employ a range of new media in innovative ways that intentionally play with the futuristic ‘potential’ within scientific advancements, such as the various forms of surveillance technology. Perhaps Bruce Naumann’s piece, *Going around the Corner*, in 1970, could be seen as a prototype for such works. There are the digital interactive virtual environments, touched on earlier, which collapse time/space, and works which intervene with biomedical research and nanotechnology, pushing the ethical envelope of new scientific discovery. However, in this instance, I am

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107 At this stage, I was not ready to negotiate my father’s story.
108 Cross reference with IRI, D7 in the Appendix. See also, Allen, R. (1986). *The Traveling Woman*. New York, Vehicle Editions. It was also in 1989 that I received my original birth certificate. See D8-1.
interested in those who employ technology in more subtle, reflexive ways, as an integrated form of articulation where technology and content ‘are at one’.

When I exhibited *Fy Mam*, at PICA in 1996, as part of *Art Medicine and Body* (AMB), I was keen to present the still images as a slide projection, thus drawing out an aesthetic connection to the ‘family photo evening’.

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Although some of the photographs had been cropped and digitally manipulated, I converted them ‘back’ into a physical slide format. Using three carousels, a dissolve unit, and linked sound, the piece was projected through a large open window onto the facing wall of a ‘dining room’. *Fy Mam* was programmed as a seventeen minute loop and the actual sound of the slides clicking was very much part of the Installation, whilst the slow dissolves added movement to a fragmented story. The mechanics worked well in this instance, although would have been impractical for a longer piece.\(^{112}\) The construction of *Translating Hiraeth* felt like an entirely different process, and included numerous visits from Australia to Wales over an extended period of time. The initial Installation was in Murdoch University’s Worship Centre, in 2003.\(^ {113}\) The image was projected directly onto the rammed earth walls and the data projectors were positioned on tall black plinths within the space.\(^ {114}\) When technology is incorporated into the body of an exhibition space it also becomes a creative component of the work and has to be negotiated as such by the ‘visitor’. When considering the ‘reading’ of the moving image within the Installation space, reception varies, not only according to the content of a work, but also in light of the specific social space and the cultural context in which it is positioned. Each ‘visitor’ brings their own experience to the ‘reading’ of the piece at that time, within that space. The same person, a few days later, may respond to another aspect of the work, each time embodying a new ‘significance’, and so on.

A line is being blurred, I suggest, between the cinematic front projection experience of art house film and some filmic Installation works where rows of seating may be strategically placed within the space for the visitor.\(^ {115}\) New virtual and digital technologies, plus the immersive nature of surround sound, also challenge historical critiques of popular cinema as being a purely proscenic experience. The recent release of James Cameron’s 2009 film, *Avatar*, is a good

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\(^{112}\) For more information about *Fy Mam* and *AMB*, cross reference with IRI, D23.

\(^{113}\) I expand on my ‘readings’ and responses to the installation within the various sites, in the Addendum.

\(^{114}\) The rammed earth walls provided a direct reference to a previous series of works undertaken between 1989 and 1991.

\(^{115}\) In my own work, the mode of narration, or presentation format, has also been flexible to suit a particular function or gathering – for example, a lecture situation versus the more intimate space.
example, where the audience is invited to wear 3D glasses which incorporates them into the science fiction. Within Installation however, the visitor can stand, sit, walk or even lie down within the space, and is therefore more physically engaged in a phenomenological sense. A show can be manipulated to inhibit or encourage the visitor’s movement, as in the earlier example given of Duchamp’s work. Conversely, the boutique cinema now offers increased levels of comfort for watching a film, whereas Installation is, more often than not, characteristically an ‘uncomfortable’ space. In relation to my own work and in line with this genealogy, I am interested in Installation as a sculptural space of mobility which impacts on the body of the visitor – Installation as an immersive, phenomenological space of transition, movement, and understanding, where the visitor is also aware of their own life experience beside their bodily relationship to the specific exhibition site.\textsuperscript{116}

In the ‘spirit of Fluxus’, perhaps with an unconscious nod to Andy Warhol’s earlier split screen piece, Sam Taylor Wood’s (1999) work, Third Party employs seven projectors to screen her multi-filmic, ‘real-time’ ‘surveillance’ of a cocktail party.\textsuperscript{117} When I first experienced the work in 2001, at the Tate Modern in London, walking the space was definitely part of the work. This seven camera piece is projected onto the four walls of the Installation space in varying screen size. The cameras seem to focus on the mood of the guests against a backdrop of voices and loud rock music. Most of the party goers – many of whom are well known celebrities – appear to be lonely and disaffected. As a visitor to this work, I became an uncomfortable voyeur, as the ‘eye’ of various cameras record brief social liaisons within the room, or zoom in on individuals such as Marianne Faithfull, drinking and chain-smoking in a corner. Here, a copious amount of film footage documents private moments in what appears to be a fairly superficial event. In another work, Killing Time, Tayor Wood distils a perceived density of time within a single momentary image. Here, it is the still photograph which takes precedence. By constructing a dynamic still scene, Sam Taylor Wood subverts the

\textsuperscript{116} I do appreciate that now surround sound in cinema also adds to the phenomenological experience although, the primary emphasis is on visual content.

\textsuperscript{117} Here, I am referencing Andy Warhol’s 1964 split screen work, Inner and outer space.
idea of the documentary photograph capturing a split second within a longer ‘real time’ performance. By staging an evocative action, she leaves the viewer with a feeling of dissatisfaction, wanting to know more. I was reminded of certain animated photographs belonging to my mother, Mary, in Llanelli. As I slowly worked my way through the images looking for something familiar, I could ‘read’ a sense of occasion into apparent ‘events’ but was dependent on my imagination for the detail. In the making of both performative Installations, *Fy Mam* and *Translating Hiraeth*, I (re)presented some of those images in what I consider to be counter-constructions of restor(y)ed imaginary moments.

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Another artist whose practice I have been drawn to recently is Miroslaw Balka, from Poland. I feel an affinity to the relationship he has with the spaces in which he works. He also employs autobiography in relation to wider social and political issues. Balka has a strong interest in the historical relationship between real places and the people who are no longer living there; that is, the now absent body and the traces left behind. Here, I make connections with much of my own work on memory and inhabitation.119 His use of smell, sound and other sensory triggers resonates for me in association with both *Fy Mam* and *Translating Hiraeth*.120 Some of Balka’s previous works were based on a space where someone he once knew lived, and then died. By working within that space, he tries to focus on how two histories can overlap. In the context of this work, I think of inhabited space as a place of deep personal meaning – of resonance within my own story. I was deeply affected by being in my birthmother’s house for the first time following her death. Her clothes were still hanging in the wardrobe. I touched her hats, neatly stacked to the side. I sat in her favourite chair and enjoyed a cup of tea in her kitchen. Just a few years later, I was back in the house where I grew up, following Leila, my adoptive mother’s passing. Both occasions highlighted a sense of physical presence and contemplation. In ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, Heidegger offers poetic insight into the existential importance of ‘dwelling’ in a phenomenological sense. Our perceptual bodily awareness of the ‘place’, and the subsequent memories associated with story, which infuse ‘meaning’ into a building over time – as opposed to the construction, architectural ideas and/or the material value of a building.121 In his practice, Balka too is committed to the history of objects and their movements – how they interact with the bodies, stories and spaces within a place.

119 See in the Addendum, my references to the Postcards in IRI D16, D19, *Tawaddog Mam*, D18. Refer also to my Honours project, *Loss Adoption and Desire*, and in particular to the writing and visual work that emerged from the ‘raspberries’ *Familiar Taste*, p.79, and IRI, D23.
120 Cross reference with IRI D23 and D75.
At the moment Balka is working from the house where he grew up, in Poland – using the building as his studio. For him, this is a place of familiarity and of memory. Through his work, he investigates how domestic space is juxtaposed with collective memory. He uses self-referential material to explore the richness of metaphor and evidence of daily ritual. In his work, the body is absent but, as in *Fy Mam*, it is there by association. In the Llanelli house, I imagined myself into the spaces in which Mary lived using my own schemas to bring the significance of the past into focus with the present. In the Tunbridge Wells house, I recalled many memories from my childhood as they insinuated their way into the processes of *translating hiraeth*. Recently, I recalled Gaston Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space* as I literally cleared forgotten objects from the cellar and from the attic of the house.

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122 Mary’s favourite chair in the front room, Alban Road, Llanelli is on the left, and on the right is Leila’s favourite chair in the front room of the Earl’s Road house in Tunbridge Wells.
123 I mention this process again in Chapter 4, ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’.
In her multimedia work, particularly *The House* (2000), Finish artist, Eija-Liisa Ahtila expresses a psychic intensity through her complex filmic Installations. She creates an aesthetic of emotional ambiguity which appears to echo some of the psychic intensity expressed in Louise Bourgeois’ work, albeit in another medium. Ahtila’s work is presented in digital format on DVD. Australian artist, Tracy Moffat’s seventeen minute film piece, *Night Cries – A Rural Tragedy* was made in 1989 and also reflects a poignant psychological tension. A middle-aged Aboriginal woman is caring for her aged and dying, white, step-mother. The relationship between them is conveyed through feelings of anger, frustration and love. Australia’s past colonial policies of assimilation and of ‘removal’ are very resonant in this work.

Mona Hartoum is an artist who often uses trauma as a starting point to her work. Hartoum travelled to London from Beirut, for a study break, in 1975. During her stay, war broke out in the Lebanon and she became stranded in England. As a Palestinian born in Beirut, she had a British passport and subsequently made the choice to embark on an art career in London. After completing a BA in Visual Art at the Slade School, she has now based herself in Britain. As a migrant separated from family and culture, much of her work focuses on issues of dislocation, cultural difference, and war. The experiencing body is central to her work, whether it be through performance, or within an Installation space. In an interview with Michael Archer, Hartoum comments on her early observations of people in the ‘West’ – their disconnectedness and their very apparent, so called, ‘mind/body split’. By comparison, she feels that in her ‘homeland’, the experiencing body is understood as an integrated cultural concept.125 In response to the intensity of the war and her dislocation from Lebanon, Mona Hatoum’s earlier works offered a tremendous feeling of loss as she drew on the emotional separation and distance from her mother. *Measures of Distance*, (1988) is a video work based on a series of letters written between herself and her mother. Hatoum has also been struck by the way in which the Western media often depicts Arab women *en masse*, crying over dead bodies, rarely revealing the personal feelings

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or stories of those individuals who have lost relatives. Written in Arabic, the letters appear as a veil over the body of a middle-aged woman. Her mother is having a shower. In revealing this intimate act, the writing gradually takes on the appearance of barbed wire and thus becomes more threatening. Here, I have drawn on Hatoum’s work as she employs autobiography and issues associated with dislocation through performance-based Installation projects that place her particular processes within a wider critical and cultural context.

In *Recollections* (1995) she uses hair balls constructed from her own hair as a symbol of remembrance, through which she memorialises the social and historical circumstances of loss. Catherine de Zegher writes of Hatoum’s work: “At once

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126 A digital still of Mary’s hair from *Fy Mam*, PICA, Western Australia, 1996. See, IRI, D23.
pointing to the act of remembering and to the spiritual (re)gathering of oneself, *Recollections* suggests a sense of improvised ancestry and community*.¹²⁷

Much of Christian Boltanski’s work is introspective and associated with ‘death’, and *loss* of identity. He focuses on aspects of his own and other life stories which have past – stories which are only kept alive through memory. Boltanski is of French and Jewish Ukrainian heritage, and was born in Paris in 1944. Working with autobiographical images and relics from his childhood, he reconstructs his own personal history. According to Boltanski, “someone’s photograph, garment or dead body are pretty much the same thing: there was someone there – now they’re gone.”¹²⁸ The photograph, when seen as past evidence of one’s life lived at a particular time and place, interests me greatly. I became fascinated with how a person’s identity can be ‘imagined into’ differently with another name, and a ‘new’ family history.¹²⁹ I (re)labelled photographs taken before, and after, my adoption. By (re)nam ing the slightly older infant *June Elizabeth Morgan*, I created a referent to a ‘missing person’. Often using documentary, real and fictive imagery, Boltanski too attempts to memorialise those who have disappeared, albeit often under sinister circumstances. I recently found that, in the 1970s, he also began working with autobiographical documents presented in *Vitrines de References*.¹³⁰ In his artistic practice, Boltanski employs a wide range of media, moving between sculpture and paint, photography, film, Installation art and performance.

I find that I am drawn to those who enter the realms of performance from the peripheries. Chinese Australian William Yang’s post-colonial performance work challenges popular assumptions about what is, or is not ‘art’. I particularly enjoy the way his work blurs the boundaries between performance art, theatre and

¹²⁸ www.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ENS-Boltanski_en/ENS-Boltans
¹²⁹ I explore the significance of the name in greater depth in the Honours project, *Loss Adoption and Desire*, drawing on the works of Sartre, Derrida, and Marie Maclean.
¹³⁰ Cross reference with IRI, D75.
photojournalism. Yang began his career as an architect, before training as a freelance photographer and photo journalist. By projecting still images, accompanied by live music, and his own ‘journalistic’ monologue, he presents story within a proscenic theatrical environment, which offers a kind of ‘visual arts’ sensibility.

In *Sadness*, Yang’s narrative approaches ‘difficult’ political issues such as racial prejudice, his gay sexuality, and the suffering of friends through the devastation of AIDS. In December 2008, Yang presented his tenth performance piece, *My Generation*, for the opening of the new National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. This

occasion was an endorsement of a multimedia monologue entering into the canon of ‘portraiture’ from the perifery, signalling a new inclusive policy for a canvas orientated tradition.

It was in 1997, after a series of serendipitous meetings, that my own work took a more performative direction. The evolving connection between my (re)stor(y)ing project, the development of my praxis in general, and the Centre for Performance Research (CPR) in Wales, has been very advantageous to this work. In 1998, I attended Points of Contact: Performance Places and Pasts at CPR in Aberystwyth. It was really from there that I became more interested in Performance Studies as a disciplinary umbrella for this project.\textsuperscript{132}

**Performance Studies as a discipline**

As a flexible, academic ‘container’ grounded in the experiencing body, Performance Studies suits both the hybrid nature of my arts practice and my growing cross-disciplinary interests. Working with performative text, social research, multimedia Installation and site-specific, ephemeral works, I have been drawn towards the inclusive position of Performance Studies’ on interdisciplinarity within research.\textsuperscript{133} A confessed lack of ‘discipline’, a non-hierarchical structure and an inclusive, international, pluralistic approach to a wide range of cultural studies and working methodologies, strongly aligns Performance Studies (PS) to early avant-gardism – the *Fluxus* project and Dick Higgins’ introduction of ‘intermedia’.\textsuperscript{134} Joseph Beuy’s advocacy for the ‘transformative’ within art, his sense of the response-ability of art within community, and his incorporation of transdisciplinarity within his Social Sculpture Research Unit has also laid much of the groundwork for PS, and sits well with my own thinking. This is reflected in a hybrid praxis, the tenuous social

\textsuperscript{132} Refer to, IRI, D36-38 and D47.
\textsuperscript{133} See the Addendum, ‘Interactions reflections Innovations’ (IRI), D38, D47, D69.
context of this project, and above all, the in-between status of my own subject positioning when ‘performing adoption’. Performance Studies does, I feel, affirm the necessary mobility. \footnote{Here it is necessary to flag Victor Turner’s work on ‘liminality’ on which I will draw later. See, Turner, V. (1982). Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology. From Ritual to Theatre. New York, USA, PAJ Publications. I would also like to remind the reader of Homi Bhabha’s words at the beginning of this dissertation.}

I was first drawn towards performance as a mode of representation when working on my Honours project, \textit{Loss Adoption and Desire}, whilst based in the area of English and Comparative Literature at Murdoch University in Western Australia. \footnote{Durey, J. (1997). Loss Adoption and Desire. \textit{English}, Perth, Murdoch University: 106. At this time, I was also involved in the Art Medicine and Body Project, at PICA. See, IRI, D20 – D27.} The layered heteroglossic nature of one particular thesis chapter was also clearly ‘performative’ and ideally suited for ‘voice’, sound and image. \footnote{I am also indebted to writer Marion Campbell for encouraging me towards performance whilst I was working on an independent study unit with her during my Honours programme.} It was from this point that the audio visual Installation \textit{Mother. Mary. Martyr. Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyres (Fy Mam)} evolved. This work was submitted as part of the thesis and, as mentioned in the introduction, proved to be the stepping off point for this longer project. It was during the second year of my PhD candidacy that I attended the previously mentioned \textit{Performance, Places and Pasts}, the very stimulating itinerant conference hosted in Aberystwyth, Wales. The inspiring presentations, the other delegates, and the contacts and friends I made through this forum encouraged me to look into the obvious connections between my own project and PS. \footnote{Refer to IRI, D38.}

It was after this event that I bumped into theorist and performance artist, Dwight Conquergood. He was heading for Scotland to research his ancestry and I was off to North Wales to see what I could find out about my father. I had just filled and placed a sample bag labelled GWYBODAETH on the beach and was making my way across the road to have a coffee. \footnote{‘Gwybodaeth’ is Welsh for Knowledge.} We had a lovely conversation, as I remember, and it was due to his encouragement that I put forward an abstract for

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\footnote{Here it is necessary to flag Victor Turner’s work on ‘liminality’ on which I will draw later. See, Turner, V. (1982). Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology. From Ritual to Theatre. New York, USA, PAJ Publications. I would also like to remind the reader of Homi Bhabha’s words at the beginning of this dissertation.}

\footnote{Durey, J. (1997). Loss Adoption and Desire. \textit{English}, Perth, Murdoch University: 106. At this time, I was also involved in the Art Medicine and Body Project, at PICA. See, IRI, D20 – D27.}

\footnote{I am also indebted to writer Marion Campbell for encouraging me towards performance whilst I was working on an independent study unit with her during my Honours programme.}

\footnote{Refer to IRI, D38.}

\footnote{‘Gwybodaeth’ is Welsh for Knowledge.
the 5th International Performance Studies Conference (PSi5), *Here Be Dragons: Mapping the Undiscovered Realms of Performance Studies: Boundaries, Hinterlands and Beyond*. In relation to the content of my own project, I found the title incredibly evocative. The conference was to be hosted in Aberystwyth the following year, which meant that I could tie the event in with more of my own fieldwork in Wales, and follow up research at the National Library. Fortunately my abstract was accepted.\(^\text{140}\)

New to Performance Studies, I found that the discipline was itself relatively new and already a site of resistance. As well as conflicting institutional views as to whether creative production should be submitted as academic research, I found that there were varying opinions within the field about what Performance Studies is, or is not. Performance Studies was first formalised as a ‘faculty’ at New York University in 1980. Richard Schechner, as a theatre practitioner, originally brought people together who were working in the performing arts and the social sciences to discuss the relationship between social anthropology, psychology, semiotics and the arts. As my praxis touches on all these areas, Schechner’s definition of Performance Studies as “unframed – unfinished, open, multi-vocal, and self-contradictory” felt appropriate. In *The Ends of Performance*, Schechner writes:

> Performance Studies is inter – in between. It is intergenric, interdisciplinry, intercultural – and therefore inherently unstable. Performance Studies resists or rejects definition. As a discipline, PS cannot be mapped effectively because it transgresses boundaries – it goes where it is not expected to be. It is inherently in between and cannot be pinned down or located exactly.\(^\text{141}\)

It is nearly forty years since Dick Higgins, as a member of *Fluxus*, founded his course in ‘Intermedia’, and Joseph Beuys introduced his ideas for an ‘expanded social sculpture’ and set up his Free International University (FIU). It is twenty years since Richard Schechner outlined Performance Studies’ broad approach to academic research, but only relatively recently that Denzin and Lincoln (2000)\(^\text{140}\)\(^\text{141}\)

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\(^{\text{140}}\) Cross reference with IRI, D47.

pointed out, in the second edition of their large publication on qualitative research methodologies, that “there is a quiet change in outlook, a transnational, transdisciplinary conversation, a pragmatic change in practices and habits in academia”.\textsuperscript{142} Even though institutional recognition of arts-based research appears to have taken its time in the social sciences, the Cartesian legacy that we have inherited from the Enlightenment period does still privilege ‘mind’ over ‘body’. In 2002, Dwight Conquergood highlighted the need for a more integrated form of knowledge production, claiming performance-based research still strives to validate its position within the academy. He wrote: “Performance Studies struggles to open the space between analysis and action and to pull the pin on the binary opposition between theory and practice”.\textsuperscript{143} As he rightly argued then, “this embrace of different ways of knowing is ‘radical’ because it cuts to the root of how knowledge is organised in the academy”, and what counts as research.\textsuperscript{144}

Dwight Conquergood’s interpretation of Performance Studies at North Western University carries a slightly different nuance and includes cultural performance, performance as personal narrative, storytelling, the practice of everyday life, social drama, and performance as social research. In his work, this also included the use of ethnographic film making. He saw performance as a way of knowing through the body – a cultural practice and ethnographic praxis. I relate to Dwight Conquergood’s commitment to creative performance as a form of hermeneutics which, through social interaction, provides an ongoing vehicle for political and social reform. Another important player in the formation of Performance Studies as a faculty at New York University was Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett.

145 *Fy Mam* was installed in the Fremantle Arts Centre, as part of the exhibition, *Translating Hiraeth* for PIAF, 2005.


147 I am drawn to Dwight Conquergood’s ideas and practice, particularly his project with the Chicago street kids. I see my own work as a hermeneutic spiral where each facet of the project adds importance and meaning to the overall progression of the concept and the area of social reform.
(BKG). She celebrates the freedom within such an inclusive approach to research when she writes:

As a post discipline of inclusions, Performance Studies sets no limit on what can be studied in terms of medium and culture. Nor does it limit the range of approaches that can be taken. A provisional coalescence on the move, Performance Studies is more than the sum of its inclusions.  

Taking advantage of such a fluid and rich ‘organising principle’, I employ this useful reading of agency through a hybrid arts praxis informed by a range of social studies on alternative family formation, historical and literary studies on adoption, current research in sociobiology and neurophysiology, gender studies, anthropology, performance studies, cultural geography, social politics – in fact, anywhere that potentially offers new meaning to the project.  

BKG combines her interests in Jewish studies, museum displays, tourist performances and the aesthetics of everyday life. Through this praxis, I have gained, and am still gaining a greater understanding of the complexities within the project and, subsequently, a wider appreciation for the significant relationship between art, adoption, and culture when (re)stor(y)ing a ‘closed’ and/or cross-cultural adoption. To reiterate, the agentic use of creative production, and the flexibility and multiplicity within Performance Studies, reflects both Beuys’ notion of Social Sculpture, and Dick Higgins’s ‘intermedial’ approach to research in the arts.

As an arts practitioner working across creative genres and academic disciplines, I am attempting to articulate some of the liminal, in-between complexities and fluid processes when ‘opening’ a ‘closed’, cross-cultural adoption. Through the silences of ‘closed adoption’ and the processes of subjectification within my own positioning, I have often felt inherently in-between, quite literally. I value Performance Studies as a vehicle which recognises agency within that liminal

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149 Some of the seminars given by visiting academics through the Institute of Advanced Study (IAS) at the University of Western Australia (UWA) were particularly stimulating. Refer to my notes in IRI, D53, D57 and D62.
status.150 By crossing traditional academic boundaries and drawing from a wide range of knowledges through my praxis, I deconstruct the normative forces and silences imposed through the social institution of ‘closed adoption’ itself, as practiced from a Western perspective.151 I suggest that process driven, embodied forms of creative research need to be fully acknowledged within the academy as a valuable contribution to culture, particularly in areas which address trauma and the effects of social silence – where words may not be readily available, and where rational ‘explanations’ about experience and silence are inadequate. Art can increase our ability to understand and/or create new meaning with, and through, the body.152 Art has the ability to evoke positive and/or negative affect associated with past experience. The temporo-spatial, intersemiotic qualities of narrative Installation offers, I suggest, a phenomenological density to the ‘articulation’, and to the ‘reading’ of the (re)stor(y)ing project. The visitor within an Installation space will translate the narrative, and intuit their own meanings from the work.153

150 I discuss Victor Turner’s notion of liminality later in this chapter, and in relationship to the ‘closed adoption’ policy, ‘as if’, in Chapter 3, and again through the creative process in Chapter 4.
151 In Chapter 3 I discuss local, cross-cultural and international adoption conventions.
152 In Chapter 4, I offer a mediated form of cross-cultural translation, and/or approximate understandings of a performative (re)storying of the self.
As this research has progressed, in association with the processes of making *Translating Hiraeth*, I have incorporated a range of creative genres and modes of representation into the work. I feel that my praxis has evolved through an embodied generative process of production, critical reflection and communication.\(^{155}\) Dwight Conquergood compares the traditional, critical, analytical ‘view of research from above’ with the more embodied notion of “the researcher’s involvement on the ground, in knowing how, and knowing who”.\(^{156}\) In his 2002 essay, Conquergood described this process and outlined the three (A)s

\(^{154}\) *Translating Hiraeth* installed at Fremantle Arts Centre, 2005. Still image, taken by Bill Shaylor.

\(^{155}\) These increments are documented more fully in the Addendum, ‘Interactions Reflections Innovations’.

as negotiated by the department at North Western University – ‘Accomplishment, Analysis and Articulation’. 157

**Accomplishment** – the making of art and the remaking of culture; creativity embodiment; artistic process and for; knowledge that comes from doing, participatory understanding, practical consciousness, performing as a way of knowing. 158

**Analysis** – the interpretation of art and culture; critical reflection, thinking about, through, and with performance; performance as a lens that illuminates the constructed creative, contingent, collaborative dimensions of human communication; knowing that comes from contemplation and comparison, concentrated attention and contextualisation as a way of knowing. 159

**Articulation** – activism, outreach, connection to community; application and intervention; projects that reach outside the academy and are rooted in the ethic of reciprocity and exchange; knowledge that is tested by practice within the community; social commitment, collaboration, and contribution/intervention as a way of knowing practice. 160

The ethical framework above fits very closely with my own thinking and I am grateful to Dwight Conquergood for putting it so succinctly. When practice and theory complement each other as an integrated form of social research, the work can be used as both cultural contribution, and political intervention, within the wider community. In his essay, Dwight Conquergood did not, however, specifically address the notion of the artist/researcher using herself or himself as the subject and object of their academic research.

**Poststructuralist feminism and autoethnography**

When I first encountered Caroline Ellis’s writing, I found the directness and integrity of her research very affirming. Ellis employs autoethnography as a

157 Ibid.
158 In Chapter 4, 'Performing Adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation', I examine Raymond William’s term ‘practical consciousness’ beside my own processes of making and understanding.
159 In Chapter 4, I also offer a personal reflection on the ongoing hermeneutic process in play.
160 In the Addendum ‘Interactions, Reflections, Innovations’, I have included some of the ways in which my project has intersected with activities within the broader community. See, D18, D20, D21, D23, D55, D56, D60, D61, D63, D67, D68, D73, D75.
methodological framework within her social research.\textsuperscript{161} Her projects are postmodern feminist accounts involving emotionally difficult topics, such as abortion, and a death in the family. She locates deeply personal, emotional experiences as both researcher, and as subject, in a context that relates to wider social and cultural issues. Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the cultural. In her work, as in my own, the personal biographical, political, social and cultural issues are fluid, interwoven components. I initially came across Caroline Ellis’s work ‘online’ following her presentation at the United States, National Communication Research Seminar, entitled ‘What Counts as scholarship?’ In her paper, she problematises the notion of scholarship. Interestingly, the presentation was a performatve questioning of herself in the third person:

> How should she make her case to this forum? Will she pre-empt accusations of self absorption by saying good autoethnography always speaks beyond itself? Should she defend again the ‘personal is political’, or accuse orthodox social scientists of the worst sort of voyeurism, whilst protecting their own lives from scrutiny?\textsuperscript{162}

Instead, she decides not to present an argument with propositions for her opponents to shoot holes in although, “she understands it is their way of knowing and persuading”. Instead, she presents three short vignettes from longer stories which highlight notions of stigma, tolerance and difference. “She wants her audience to feel stigma, sense some of the evocative power, embodiment and understanding of life”. At the end of her paper she asks; “What does scholarship do? How is scholarship used? How do we feel when we read it? What meaning does it give to our lives as academics?”.\textsuperscript{163} Quoting Lakoff and Johnson, she recognises how easy it is to slip into the metaphor of argument as war, and says


\textsuperscript{163}Ibid.
there must be a better way to communicate.\textsuperscript{164} For some, there will always be the need to critique from a position of attack, but others will be trying to analyse how the work might be affecting them – what they feel from having experienced the work, and why. This also requires a certain vulnerability or sensitivity within the ‘reader’ or viewer. I believe this is surely a more meaningful level on which to negotiate knowledge.

In \textit{Women Writing Culture}, feminist anthropologist Ruth Behar places herself within a narrative piece of work about her father and strategically refers to her academic role within this area as ‘vulnerable research’\textsuperscript{165} She discusses the difficult decisions she makes about what to divulge as public information. Sometimes the norms and constraints that prevent one from ‘writing’ are the very things that need to be ‘written’ about. In his journal article, ‘Breaking Rules: The Consequences of Self Narration’, Paul Eakin unpacks the ethical responsibilities involved in such a process.\textsuperscript{166} I know that in my own work, I have struggled with some of the details concerning my adoptive father’s biography. After several months of angst, I decided that the information was important to the reading of the ‘relational’ narrative as a whole.\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Translating Hiraeth} employs a dialogic form of life writing through which I hope to encourage an ‘empathetic identification’ and engagement from the ‘visitor’ which extends to the other subject positions within the story.\textsuperscript{168} Without encouraging undue bias or prejudice, I attempt to work \textit{with} the ambiguities, avoiding the convenience of neat solutions. As a result, I hope to evoke an embodied response in those who occupy the space which is both emotionally reflective, and critically challenging.

\textsuperscript{168} I was introduced to this term when reading McDermott, S. (2002). "Memory, Nostalgia, and Gender in A Thousand Acres." \textit{Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society} 28(1): 398-408.
Many others before me have argued that research is always ‘situated’. By working with the silences and local ambiguities held within my adoption story, I have used emotion as the generative core or initial key to the creative work, where the media becomes the means of exploration. I have found that embodied understandings are reached through these mediated, kinaesthetic and performative processes of production. By unearthing the social tensions and invisibilities embedded within local ambiguities, ‘the local’ becomes both productive and political. By critically exposing the broader cultural dynamics at play, an epistemological process is mobilised. Some of these particularities and broader processes of interpretation are examined in Chapter 4, ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’.

As I reflect on my methodology, and the various theoretical understandings reached at particular material stages in the (re)storing project, it becomes evident that as new information about the past is being brought into the present, the present is always in a process of transformation, as the past is continuously being re-evaluated. I have gained, and am still gaining, discursive layers of knowledge for particular aspects of the project. Within my earlier search for a perceived ‘continuity’, Foucault’s ‘discontinuity’ now seems more relevant to the fluidity of the process in a non-linear sense, over time.

Foucault writes, in *Archaeology of Knowledge*:

> Recurrent redistributions reveal several pasts, several forms of connection, several hierarchies of importance, several networks of determination, several teleologies, for one and the same science, as its present undergoes change: thus historical descriptions are necessarily ordered by the present state of knowledge, they increase with every transformation and never cease to turn, to break with themselves.

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Foucault’s quote offers an appropriate juncture at which to mention neurologist Antonio Damasio’s 1994 groundbreaking publication, *Descartes’ Error*. Not only does he ‘break’ with the Cartesian legacy from Enlightenment thinking by suggesting that emotion is part of cognition, but ‘turns’ it on its head by pointing out that with very severe emotional impairment there can be no rationality.\textsuperscript{172}

During the last decade and a half, there has been a vast amount of sociobiological and neuroscientific research being undertaken which now ‘validates’ an integrated, embodied form of knowledge production from a scientific perspective. Damasio examines how ‘knowledge’ can be enacted through corporeal experience, forming a ‘dispositional representation’, or a range of cognitive and bodily associations, which lead to an integration of embodied understandings.\textsuperscript{173} This is an important validation of narrative Installation where facts are recorded with the physical and sensory experience of being within a particular spatial environment. Conversely, logical or abstract facts can also be learnt chronologically, at arms length, and conceptualised in a detached, unemotional way by increasing the ability or use of the left hemisphere and inhibiting input from the right brain, which deals with bodily and emotional functioning.\textsuperscript{174} This can enhance a *dissociation* between cognitive and emotional processing.

Neuroscientist Louis Cozolino suggests that, “[e]xperiencing the world from high atop the left hemisphere led Descartes to equate human existence with thinking, much to the detriment of philosophy and neurology”.\textsuperscript{175} However, following the large body of recent research in the areas of sociobiology, neurophysiology and now neuropsychoanalysis, experiential, emotionally rich, meaningful connections clearly make sense through the body.\textsuperscript{176}

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See, ‘dispositional representations’ in Ibid. p. 104. I refer to this term again in, ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’.

\textsuperscript{174} This suggests a way of mentally absenting oneself from a potentially emotional issue at hand.

\textsuperscript{175} Cozolini, L. (2006). *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing social Brain*. New York, W. W. Norton & Company Ltd. p. 69. Lower right brain function can also be a result of atrophy due to early childhood trauma or neglect. It may be interesting to note that Descartes own mother died when he was one-year-old – a crucial age for the development of attachment and growth of the right brain according to contemporary neuroscience. Descartes’ father remarried in Rennes, leaving him in La Haye to be raised first by his grandmother and then by a great uncle. In clinical language, this would be seen as a disrupted attachment.

\textsuperscript{176} It might be useful to link these ideas to my participation notes following the Teatre Della Radici workshop, IRI, D58, in the Addendum.
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For Helene Cixous’, the ‘source’ and motivating force for her artistic work comes from the body as a response to the ‘other’. The breath or le soufflé is the intake of life. It is the creative impulsion from the inside to the outside. The ‘woman body’, or the ‘feminine’, is the place from which the birth occurs metaphorically, organically and conceptually. For Cixous, writing is political. Through her work, Cixous uses emotion as a political tool against structures of disempowerment. She writes: “The writing body is a subject of movement which is not logomotion”. Cixous calls herself a poet. Her writing is as much prose poetry as a theoretical statement. It is autobiography, prose poetry, performance and theory. She uses boundary metaphors such as, ‘through the door’ and ‘getting past the wall’, to ‘breaking down the walls of genre’, and ‘getting past the walls of difference’. In her explicitly autobiographical essay, ‘Coming to Writing’, she endorses throwing off norms and constraints that forbid one to write. In her case, it was her Jewishness, her foreignness and her femininity. It is the rupturing of such pressure points which impel and/or sustain the work on a politically important tangent. I suggest such pressure points act as nodes for creative production – as a source of agency.

**Liminality, performativity and adoption**

Victor Turner’s anthropological work on ritual and liminality has laid much of the groundwork for Richard Schechner’s definition of Performance Studies, and by extension, Judith Butler’s work on ‘normative performativity’. Performance genres are liminal, acting ‘in-between’ time/space, where social norms are broken apart through the medium, as an expression of new creative performance.

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Turner cites the use of ‘anti-structure’, as applied to ‘liminality’, in relation to the dissolution of normative social structures such as ‘role-sets’, ‘duties’, rituals and so on. He then cites Brian Sutton-Smith’s extension of his (Turner’s) work on ‘anti-structure’, when relating it to experimental studies, and the invention of new games. Quoting Sutton-Smith, he writes:

The normative structure represents the working equilibrium, whereas the ‘anti-structure’ represents the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it. We might more correctly call this second system the proto-structural system [he says] because it is the precursor of innovative normative forms. It is the source of new culture.\(^{181}\)

Turner highlights the liminal as a potential space out of which new paradigms can arise – “as the seedbeds of cultural creativity”.\(^{182}\) Richard Schechner uses ‘as if’ to theorise liminality when performing ‘as if’. He sees the crossing of structural boundaries as transgressive.

In terms of ‘anti-structure’, or when breaking away from the social structures of normative habitual behaviour, Judith Butler, in her theory of ‘performativity’ sees the potential alternative as an act of agency. She takes Turner’s theory of ritual and uses it to describe normative repetitive acts as normative performative behaviour, and Schechner’s use of performance as a transgressive act which crosses structural boundaries. ‘Performativity’, following Butler, is not a singular ‘act’. It is always a reiteration of a norm, or set of norms, to the extent that it acquires an act-like status which also conceals the constraints of which it is a repetition.\(^{183}\) Therefore, liminality can be theorised not only in terms of a time/space ‘anti-structural’ play/performance, following both Turner and Schechner, but also in terms of a time/space structural behavioural normalisation. To (re)story in adoption using performativity and performance, is, therefore, both

\(^{181}\) Ibid. p. 28.
\(^{182}\) Ibid. p. 28.
an act of agency following Judith Butler, and an act of transgression following Richard Schechner.

When performing ‘closed adoption’ as in performing difference, following Butler, the sealed record system was about *not* breaking the silence, and performing ‘as if’ born to the adoptive parents in ‘wed-lock’. The adoptee’s life emerges by silencing and being silenced from their past family and culture. Therefore, subjectivity in ‘closed adoption’ is constituted through compulsory performances of social norms, or a normative, repetitive performance within the adoptive family culture and community. Here, Victor Turner’s notion of ‘liminality’ and the adoptees’ normative subject positioning converge in what could be referred to as *closed adoption’s liminal norm.* The making of the work and the project itself is, then, potentially both transgressive and resistant. The quote by Homi Bhabha cited at the beginning of this dissertation feels all the more poignant here:

> The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past refiguring it as a contingent ‘inbetween’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.

The creative ‘act’ of (re)stor(y)ing in ‘closed adoption’ is transgressive as it reveals aspects of the ‘other’. When ‘illegitimacy’ is confronted, the normative boundaries and constraints enacted by those living within ‘closed adoption’ are ruptured, bringing the past into the present. If sealed records conceal the illegitimacy of the adopted person, as Paris de Soto points out, they also conceal the illegitimacy of the adoption. In both the Installations, *Fy Mam* and *Translating Hiraeth*, I have endeavoured to break through the normative constraints ascribed to ‘closed adoption’, by interrogating the normative

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behaviour and the ensuing silences which sit within ‘privacy’, notions of ‘loyalty’, and imposed ‘legality’. Above all, I have tried to confront the word ‘illegitimacy’ with the full affective and historical force of its meaning. I have followed what Marie Mclean refers to as the empowering process of ‘delegitimation’ – a form of agency which ‘realises’ the past to reveal the potential within the present and the future.188

**Translating hiraeth: A critical process in adoption (re)stor(y)ing**

When returning to Homi Bhabha’s words: “[t]he past/present becomes part of the political necessity not the nostalgia of living”, it is the word ‘nostalgia’ which becomes a complicated term in this context, and within current feminist theory.189 Now, the implied gap between the ‘political necessity’ and the ‘nostalgia of living’, may not appear as wide as perhaps originally intended in Bhabha’s writing. Poststructuralist and postcolonial feminist interpretations of ‘nostalgia’ have redeployed the word as a political tool for ‘rewriting’ personal and hegemonic histories from the past into the present. Since the early to mid-1990s, a mass of critical writing relating to ‘nostalgia’ and memory has emerged, particularly from within feminist psychoanalytic literature in association with trauma theory, and reparation of the past.190 By employing ‘nostalgia’ critically, from within the present, ‘romantic’ and pejorative interpretations of the term are being reworked, validating the emotional as political, within a restorative form of ‘counter memory’.191

As a methodology, the concept of a ‘critical nostalgia’ is attractive and gains agency as a tool for rewriting the past/present, although, linguistically and within

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189 The emphasis on a political component is my addition here.
In popular culture, the word ‘nostalgia’ itself has, since its inception in the 17th century, moved through a range of medico-psycho-social, historical, ideological, and political phases. Semantically, ‘nostalgia’ can be associated with individual and/or collective memory, and has served both conservative and radical ideological aspirations. Based on the Greek words ‘nostos’, to return home, and ‘algia’, a painful feeling or unbearable suffering, the condition of ‘nostalgia’ was originally coined as a medical or neurological term by Johannes Hofer in 1688, as a disease caused by ‘home sickness’. As a medical student, Hofer recognised the malady in Swiss mercenaries fighting in Europe. At that time, the obvious cure for nostalgia was to return home. By the 18th and 19th centuries, the term became associated with absence or loss. Kant claimed that what the nostalgic longed for was not the place of the past, but the temporal loss of childhood itself. In the early 19th century, a form of collective nostalgia was also ideologically linked with a resistance to modernism, industrialisation and notions of progress. By the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, nostalgia was still associated with memory, but more in terms of forgetting and amnesia, and became a psychiatric disorder associated with psychosomatic symptoms and melancholia. Attributed to grief, loss, and incomplete mourning, nostalgia in this sense was seen more as a regressive form of ‘homesickness’. Following the Second World War, ideas still based on psychoanalysis described a form of ‘immigrant psychosis’ which was identified as a subconscious yearning for ‘home’.

By the 1950s and 60s, the ‘first wave’ of feminism was subverting the term ‘homesickness’ as a move towards women’s liberation from the home, which for many had become too confining: “They were sick of home”.

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associations between the female body and ‘home’, nostalgia was regarded by many ‘constructionists’ to be escapist or essentialist. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, psycholinguist Julia Kristeva had extended Freudian analysis to empower the ‘woman body’ within the ‘symbolic order’.\textsuperscript{196} Material feminists were bringing the body to theory, although, when trying to articulate and theorise difference through the experiencing female body, constructionist accusations of ‘essentialism’ were still limiting.\textsuperscript{197} In 1990, in \textit{Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference}, Diana Fuss critiqued the relationship between nature and culture, and enabled the use of the term ‘essentialism’ when writing ‘difference’.\textsuperscript{198} When negotiating the experiencing body within post-colonial theory, Gayatri Spivak called for a ‘strategic essentialism’, in order to deconstruct hegemonic power structures within identity politics through the ‘particular’.\textsuperscript{199}

Writing into her own story, Helene Cixous’ reflects on exile – of having no legitimate place, no land, no fatherland, no history of her own – “coming from elsewhere”.\textsuperscript{200} Reflecting on Cixous’ impetus for ‘writing the body’, Susan Rubin Suleiman writes “[t]he miracle is, that out of a sense of lack, writing came”. She speaks of the “miraculous metamorphosis when mourning becomes language and turns from emptiness to substance, added to the world”.\textsuperscript{201} By writing into the past, from within the present, Cixous offers contemporary political meaning within that which has been lost. When looking back, it is easy to see how a term such as ‘critical nostalgia’ has been conceptualised by feminists as a useful methodological tool for fixing the past. In the reclaiming of ‘counter memory’,
alternative stories can replace or rewrite the embedded hegemonic history of a particular time and place.²⁰² Bould, Knowles and Leach say that “‘critical nostalgia’ counters society’s active forgetting”. It “involves entering into negotiation with the past”.²⁰³

In the Installation work, Fy Mam, I drew on psychoanalysis to specifically address the ‘pre-verbal’ and the ‘maternal’ in past ‘closed adoption’, by investigating the area of the psychically unsayable beside the silences and norms associated with the culturally unspeakable. Cultural norms control not

²⁰² The former National Apology delivered by Australia’s then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd to ‘The Stolen Generation’, and the National Apology to ‘The Forgotten Australians’ – the child migrants and those in ‘children’s homes’ in post-war Australia, are good examples of cultural awareness brought about by the exposure to the personal narrative.
²⁰⁴ A detail from audio / visual Installation, Fy Mam.
only that which can be brought to the ‘surface’, but also that which is ‘repressed’. The *culturally unspeakable* in ‘closed’ and cross-cultural adoption may have more to do with circumstance, secrets, power structures, social taboo (which also includes infertility) and denial of bodily evidence of pregnancy, birth and any *post partum* contact or attachment with the mother. In past terms of illegitimacy, the ‘abject’, Julia Kristeva’s definition for that which is expelled, including blood, placenta, wounds and milk takes on an even greater ‘grotesque’. It is, in fact, everything that is carefully not talked about or cleared away with the original name, documents and histories.

On the other hand, the *psychically unsayable* has more to do with the pre-linguistic, sensory psychic inscriptions or traces recorded by the *infans* (pre-subject) within the maternal space. Here I draw on Kristeva’s work on the ‘semiotic’ and the chora. Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger uses the term ‘matrix’ as a metaphor to describe the psychic space mother and baby share before and after birth. Extending Lacan’s *object a*, Ettinger offers a way of relating which is another source of desire, of imagination, and longing. A more detailed version of these ideas is expressed in my Honours project, *Loss Adoption and Desire*. In 1996, I noted the initial connections being made between Freud’s earlier work in the area of sociobiology and some of the research emerging from neuroscience. As I have already noted, in the last fifteen years, there have been huge advances in the areas of neurological research, neuropsychology and psychoanalysis which are now very relevant to adoption separation but, more so, to the project of (re)stor(y)ing. I elaborate on the impact of these neurological finds at the beginning of *Chapter 4*, ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as

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206 I extended the *psychically unsayable* and the *culturally unspeakable* in adoption, during my presentation to the 1996 Australian Adoption Conference, held in Brisbane. See, Durey, J. (1997). *Loss Adoption and Desire*. Separation, Reunion, Reconciliation: Proceedings from The Sixth Australian Conference on Adoption, Brisbane, Benson.
mediation’. It is also of note that there is now an International Society of Neuropsychoanalysis, and a growing number of clinical neuropsychologists working in the area of adoption.  

Installation is, by its nature, an embodied experience which brings the past into the present. Bodily desire, emotion and ‘pre-verbal’ affect can be conveyed within a space beside other content. Somatic markers take on particular meaning for each visitor as different sign systems create connections or dissonances between sound, image, smell, proximity, vibration, breath, voice, text and light within the space.

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209 See www.neuropsa.org
These affective triggers and ‘emotional’ links are more individual, as are the connections made between silence, perception and memory. Visceral feelings of loss or longing can sit below the surface. From a psychoanalytic perspective there can be a gradual ‘waking up’. This process can also be initiated through sensory pre-verbal memory, beside an awareness triggered through aspects of narrative content, within a particular work. Through Installation, the embodied processes of understanding the past/present, beside a critical engagement with the narrative content, sits comfortably under the umbrella of ‘critical nostalgia’ but, as I mentioned earlier, ‘nostalgia’, for me, now carries too many conflicting historical, cultural, theoretical, linguistic and emotional values within my experience and, it would seem, within popular culture. There is the cold pejorative judgement of the ‘regressive’ nostalgic, and/or the negative reading of over sentimentality; whereas a warmer romantic reminiscence is often prompted by a particular piece of music, a smell, an image, event, or combination of sensory perceptual stimuli, that ‘takes one back’, as in relation to notions of the ‘pre-verbal’. ‘Nostalgia’ today is often distinct from ‘homesickness’ although, for the recent migrant or refugee who does not feel ‘at home’, reminders of family left behind and a home which has been lost can obviously induce longing, sadness and great pain. Verging on irony, there are also the somewhat unconvincing ‘nostalgic’ museum displays where actors ‘relive’ history for the tourist industry. A different nuance is associated with collective memory in, for example, something as huge as the holocaust, or in memorial to a particular event or person within cultural history. Ideologically, a form of nostalgia can be associated with patriotism – also the nation state – even right wing fundamentalism.

From all of the above, some aspects of ‘nostalgia’ are very relevant to this project, but the word itself now carries so many different popular nuances alongside various theoretical reworkings and historical associations, that I find it overflowing with meaning. It is not free enough to carry the specific range of

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211 This is explored further in my Honours project. Durey, J. (1997). Loss Adoption and Desire. English. Perth, Murdoch University: 106.
212 Art theorist Jill Bennett also affirms the role of Installation as a way of understanding the past within the present. See, Bennet, J. (2002). "Art, affect and the bad death: Strategies for communicating the sense of loss." Signs 28(1): 333-339.
emotions or the intense yearnings for (re)connection and/or sense of belonging which I associate with (re)stor(y)ing in adoption. Unlike ‘nostalgia’, for the non-Welsh speaker, such as myself, hiraeth does not carry such an accumulation of embedded cultural meanings, although there are obvious connections between the various definitions and translations associated with nostalgia, and the various forms of longing, offered for the word.\textsuperscript{213} Because of its lack of historical complexity within my own linguistic experience, as in the case of other non-Welsh speakers, its specificity to the (re)stor(y)ing project, its resonance and apparent “untranslatability”, make the word hiraeth an ideal metaphor for a critical and ‘nostalgic’ process such as this, as any exact translation will always remain elusive and will always be only suggestive.\textsuperscript{214}

As I have articulated within the Installation, and reiterated performatively in \textit{Chapter 4}, hiraeth, plus a vague translation, entered my vocabulary via a very personal point of access to the story.\textsuperscript{215} By employing the term \textit{translating hiraeth} as a fluid methodological process for this specific liminal practice, I literally enter a space between two languages, in an attempt to creatively express a zone of untranslatability within myself. It is the ongoing critical and creative process within this translation which has become the focus of \textit{Chapter 4}. I attempt to show how hiraeth has gained in specific value creatively, kinaesthetically, and theoretically, over the duration of this project.

Following my initiation to the word, I came across this heated article published in the English \textit{Guardian} newspaper on Saturday, August 11, 2001, in which the politician, Hywel Williams wrote:

\textsuperscript{213} Here, I should make a stronger distinction between the non-Welsh speaker of Welsh descent living in Wales, who has been politicised within Welsh culture, and a non-Welsh speaker who has been acculturated elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{214} In Christa Wolf's \textit{Cassandra} she uses the German word \textit{Sehnsucht} as a word for longing, or nostalgic desire, to express aspects of her life. As a feminist writer, she draws on the notion of ‘romanticism’ to critique modernity, technocracy, bureaucracy, and in particular, patriarchy. As with the Welsh word hiraeth, there is no exact translation for \textit{sehnsucht} into English.

\textsuperscript{215} Here, I am referring to my cousin Iona’s attempt to translate the word ‘hiraeth’ on my grandfather’s gravestone, in Waen Pentir, North Wales.
The Welsh have a terrible ‘hiræth’ for what is lost – a deranging nostalgia which seeps through the soul. The ham-fisted English offering of ‘longing’ as a translation misses the point – typically. ...[t]he relationship between England and Wales has been a persistently colonial one: patronising incomprehension on the top and angry acquiescence from below. Wales has a third world quality in its relation to England. The anger of dependence is always there, along with a sense of shame at our own complicity... What was kept was the only important thing in a country’s identity – a language ...Anglo-America may be culturally global, but the English can’t be defined any more by their language. Wales still can. The only important thing in 20th century Welsh politics was the establishment of Plaid Cymru... The National Eisteddfod as that peripatetic assertion of will for a people unsure of their home has come to rest for a week of word play. This is the only country in the world whose central national ritual is the coronation and enronement of a poet.

The political content of this letter to the Editor of the _Guardian_ articulates a national pride centred around the importance of language, beside a very strong anti-English sentiment, which sits in opposition to my upbringing in Tunbridge Wells. When reading this, I understand the postcolonial issues, yet feel a strange ambivalence and discomfort contained within my own skin. Nonetheless, it highlights the significance of language to Welsh speakers as expressed by my father’s family, who mostly live in the Bethesda, Waen Pentir, and Llanfairfechan area, in Gwynedd. Welcomed into the family as William’s daughter, _their_ ambivalence lay in the fact that I symbolised the ‘other’, not only through my lack of language but, through my adoptive acculturation. I was instantly accepted, but my ‘early’ Englishness was a disruption to their nationalistic assumptions, yet their sense of relatedness was paramount and triggered an immediate inclusion of me, as family. They were very generous, even enthusiastic to pass on stories of

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217 This form of acculturation is different from the non-Welsh speaker living in Wales and of Welsh decent. In the 1900s, an enforced ‘Anglo-Welshness’ was introduced into schools, as directed from London. If children were caught speaking Welsh they were punished and made to wear the ‘Welsh Not’ sign around their necks. Because of this policy, the number of Welsh speakers declined drastically in a country where, previously, the majority of its citizens were primarily Welsh speakers. Following the _Welsh Language Acts_ of 1967 and 1993, Welsh was put back on an equal footing with English. Now, to hold a public position or any government job, Welsh must be spoken. The Welsh language has been under siege since the 1500s – since England’s _Laws in Wales Acts_. It is not surprising that language is political and an anti-colonial force in Wales. It was, I think, my ‘voice’ and my upbringing in South East England which, to my father’s family, ambiguously placed me as both family and ‘foreigner’. For further reading regarding ‘Anglo-Welshness’ within Wales see, Davies, D. (1994). Anglo-Welshness: the semantics of hyphenation. _The Nation: Myth or Reality_, K. Cameron. Bristol, Intellect Books: 23-9.
family, place and mythology. All were associated with a localised sense of cultural belonging and identity.

In 2003, before my exhibition at Murdoch and five years after finding my brother and my father’s family, I was reminded of this ambivalence again, but this time, back in Australia, I felt more comfortable about it. Whilst spending time at a clinic in Perth, I grabbed a rather dated ‘waiting room read’ entitled *Hovel in the Hills*. It was a thin paperback, and I thought easy to consume in a couple of hours. To my surprise, it was set in a mountain village in North Wales, close to where the family live but written by an English settler, Elizabeth West. She writes of her experience:

Yet in spite of the unstinting friendliness showed to us, we have no illusions of ‘belonging’. We live alongside these people, but we are not of them. I think that a Welsh community is so close-knit that a stranger could join it only by marrying into it. It must be good to repair a stone wall that you know your great-grandfather had built, and to share common rights upon the mountain with your neighbour whose forefathers shared those same rights with your forefathers. What secure feelings of ‘belongingness’ and continuity this must give you.218

I thought again of what it might mean for me to ‘belong’ in Wales, and their inclusiveness of me into their sense of family belonging in spite of my formative years in England. In less conservative circles, postcolonial discussions on the state of Wales today carry a much more inclusive, multicultural and pluralistic attitude.219 My understandings of the history of Wales, the development of Plaid Cymru, the split in the Welsh Nationalist Movement, the formation of the Welsh Language Society (Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg) and the state of a post-colonial Wales today still feels very limited, but is slowly expanding. Interestingly, I began to see the parallels between the ‘in-between’ nature of adoption, and the particularities of Wales as a nation trying to assert it’s identity over past imperialist attitudes. As mentioned earlier, adoption is inherently in-between. As a constructed liminal space, adoption situates the adopted person between both notions of ‘heredity’ and heritage. Here, I take the OED definition of ‘heredity’ to be the passing on of physical or mental characteristics which are generally transferred through DNA from one generation to another, and ‘heritage’ as

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219 The areas of concern are recognised as being varied and multiple.
anything that is, or may be, inherited by heirs in law. According to the OED, ‘heritage’ is anything that is regarded as worthy of cultural preservation. In ‘closed adoption’, the adopted person is cut off from information about their birth, knowledge of genetic inheritance, birth family social history, and cultural heritage, but gains heritable status without genetic continuity within another family history – that of the adoptive family story. In cross-cultural and intercountry adoption the social and political complexities are compounded. In the next chapter, I expand upon intercountry and cross-cultural adoption in relation to international policy, transnational agreements, and accusations of neocolonialism. Within the social institution of ‘closed adoption’, appropriation, legitimation and (re)naming were the norm. ‘Wales’ today has taken back its name. I regard the process of translating hiraeth as an ongoing, critical device for excavating personal, social and cultural silence within closed and cross-cultural adoption. Translating hiraeth employs the making and reception of art as a crucial mediatory practice – a ‘proximal act’ of translation from within the present which enables the fluid renegotiation of the ‘self’. As Katie Gramich and Andrew Hiscock write in their introduction to Dangerous Diversities: the changing faces of Wales:

Like many countries in a colonial or postcolonial condition, Wales seems to be perennially in search of a stable identity. That search is equally doomed to fail. For what do we mean by a stable identity? A sense of identity, of selfhood is often perceived as essential both in the individual and in the nation to which that individual – if s/he is lucky – feels a sense of allegiance. And yet, definitions of what constitutes that identity vary bewilderingly, not only from age to age and from person to person but also within the same person at different times and in differing circumstances.

Following this fluidity within both personal and cultural identity, in the next chapter, I highlight this ‘transience’ in relation to the social, political and cultural changes underpinning adoption as a social institution over time. Having outlined

221 As mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, Cyfrwng is a Welsh word meaning, ‘medium, a means of communication with, between’ – as translated by Ogwen Jones, Secretary of the Welsh Society, Western Australia, 2004.
my meanderings within this broad methodological framework, I have endeavoured to show how my praxis and understandings of this creative project as a mediating process have been influenced, and have developed over the time frame of this journey. In ‘Adoption: A social institution on the move’, I negotiate a broad overview of sociological and legislative changes beside new cultural understandings and paradigm shifts within adoption thinking, to see how they have both emerged and changed during this same period.
Adoption: A social institution on the move

Synopsis

Over the last 50 years, adoption has become one of the most complex and contested areas within social politics. In this chapter, I offer a broad socio-historical overview of institutional changes to adoption within the Anglo-American world, from the earliest legislative frameworks underpinning ‘closed adoption’ ‘locally’, to the beginnings of humanitarian intercountry adoption following WWII, leading into the current period of ‘open adoption’ and the present entangled political and global complexities, encompassing ‘alternative family formation’, within which adoption is now firmly placed.

Setting the scene today

Having made clear in the previous chapter, my opposition to arguing the ‘linear’ thesis, I do want to emphasise the value of a longitudinal time frame for this research. Not only have there been radical paradigm shifts in ‘Western’ thinking surrounding (il)legitimacy since my own adoption took place in the UK in the 1950s, but since I began this project there have also been enormous influences upon adoption thinking, in Australia and overseas, as a direct result of increasing globalization. This chapter is in no way an exhaustive study of adoption in what has become an increasingly complex global practice, but does offer an indication of the historical and social complexities condensed within the past/present of today’s adoption milieu. In this section, I draw on and critique some of the significant changes in policy and moves in cultural thinking over time, in order to imagine a deeper picture of both ‘local’ and intercountry adoption as it is now in
2010, particularly here in Australia and within the UK, New Zealand, Canada and the US. I have highlighted the introduction of international regulation by focussing mainly on *The Hague Convention*, and both local and global influences which have effected hegemonic change. Through my creative praxis, I have enlarged upon my own understandings of the adoption experience, during which time I have been able to record my interactions with, and responses to, this very active period of change.\(^{223}\) By attending several national and international adoption forums, taking part in a range of events within the broader community, noting international media announcements and responses to adoption issues, and by trying to keep abreast of current research both here in Australia and mainly in the United States, I have become aware of the increasing power struggles within this contested site over a relatively short period of time. To open a ‘closed’ adoption or to have a reunion across cultures today, after years of silence, not only presents a personally emotional challenge but brings the past into a complex global political minefield.

In 2008, at the time of writing into an earlier draft for this section, I was preparing to present *Translating Hiraeth* at the 9th *Australian Adoption Conference* in Sydney, where, with the exception of some few international presenters, most of the delegates were Australian. As I write this, in 2010, I have just returned from an adoption conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in Boston, which specifically examined the relationship between adoption and culture with a focus on cultural theory, film and the creative arts, rather than on clinical practice *per se*. At this forum, entitled ‘Adoption: Secret Histories, Public Policies’, I was able to contextualise *Translating Hiraeth* within a North American adoption environment. According to sociologists Engel, Phillips and Dellacava, the 2000 US Census indicated that 2.1 million children in the United States were adopted, which then constituted 2.5 per cent of all children under the age of 18.\(^{224}\) I am conscious of the adoption industry, particularly in America, the

\(^{223}\) In the Addendum, IRI, I document my own attendance, contribution, and responses to a range of major forums on adoption related issues, over the last ten years or so. See, D21, D30, D31, D34, D52, D56, D57-1, D60, D63, D67, D70, D79, D82.

lack of stringent regulation in many states, and the fact that the US, in 2007, was responsible for 80% of all intercountry adoptions.\textsuperscript{225} In 2010, the number of intercountry adoptions per capita in Spain now follows closely behind the US. To address growing international concerns regarding corruption and the trafficking of children in intercountry adoption (ICA), \textit{The Hague Convention} convened a Special Commission in June 2010 to review the practical operations of the Convention. In September, 2010, Canada hosted the first ever ICA Summit to discuss the findings from the Hague Commission, with representatives from 25 member countries. \textit{The Hague Convention} was set up in 1993 as an international tool, primarily to protect the ‘best interests’ of children adopted from overseas – to standardise the processes between countries, and to prevent adoption abuse and the trafficking of children in what appeared to be an expanding social practice.

In \textit{Adoption Nation}, Adam Pertman, adoptive father, journalist and campaigner for open records in the US, celebrated the fashionability of adoption and its renewed form of openness, rather than its former construct within an era of secrecy and shame.\textsuperscript{226} In spite of the option for ‘open adoption’ at the local level in America, to date, only 12 out of the 50 states, have opened their past adoption records, thus legally enabling birth relatives in the US to search for, and contact, one another. Conversely, in Australia, adoption is highly regulated and in many ways can be seen as a more progressive system.\textsuperscript{227} Here, open records are now the norm across the country as a result of changes to the adoption laws brought about by the adoption reform movement and advocacy groups. Along with the UK, at present Australia has one of the lowest adoption rates in the Western world. In spite of this position, and in contrast to what we have learnt from past policies – in particular from the stories of \textit{The Stolen Generation} – Australian pro-adoption lobby groups now seem intent on following America’s example in an increasing

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid. Australia implemented \textit{The Hague Convention for the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption} in 1998 and America followed in 2008. Eighty-four countries have signed the Convention to date, not all have implemented it. For more information on the \textit{Hague Convention} see, \url{www.hagueconvention.org}


\textsuperscript{227} In terms of ICA, the lengthy waiting period for adoptable children, due to the stricter regulatory system, has attracted strong criticism from celebrity advocates for prospective adoptive parents, such as Deborah Lee-Furness.
push for more intercountry adoption. In response to growing pressure from adoptive parents in Australia, the prime political move came in 2004 from Bronwyn Bishop MP, who chaired two major inquiries as part of the Howard Liberal Government’s conservative push. This apparent paradigm shift and subsequent pro-adoption endorsement by the federal government resulted in two prominent reports. The first was the Inquiry into Overseas Adoption in Australia, which looked at expediting the process of intercountry adoptions into Australia; and the second, The Winnable War on Drugs: The impact of Illicit Drug Use on Families, which proposed a policy for the adoption of local children in ‘care’ whose parents suffer from drug and alcohol addiction. This report is very similar to the Clinton administration’s Adoption and Safe Families Act, passed in 1997. Both reports claim that the child’s best interests are ‘paramount’, yet both affirm the repositioning of power within adoption politics by rationalising the economic and social stability associated with privileged middle-class adoptive families who want to adopt, over disadvantaged, poor, and/or often dysfunctional parents in need of help and a range of skilled resources. Here, there is an implicit assumption that middle-class families make better parents, when in fact they may not be, notwithstanding more opportunities offered to children because of their economic and social positioning.

In contrast, when I began the search for my own birthfamily, in 1989, the discursive space for action in Australia was at the tail end of the ‘closed adoption’ era. There was a growing acknowledgment of loss for all involved in adoption.

228 The Stolen Generation was retrospectively named to describe the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families following colonisation in accordance with assimilationist policies of the time. I will discuss The Stolen Generation and the adoption of Indigenous children, later in the chapter.
229 This push, mainly instigated by adoptive parents, comes at a time when birthmothers overseas have neither agency nor an international voice.
230 Standing Committee on Family and Children Services (2007) The winnable war on drugs: The impact of illicit drug use on families, Canberra: The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. This report made the controversial recommendation that children of drug-addicted parents should be adopted out, and that adoption should be the default option for children under five in cases concerning illicit drug use. See also, Quartly, M., K. Murphy, et al. (2009). "Political Representations of Adoption in Australia, 2005-2007." Adoption & Culture: The Interdisciplinary Journal for the Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture 2(Special Issue: Encountering New Worlds of Adoption): 141-151.
231 I intend to discuss the Paramountcy Principle and the ‘best interests of the child’ later in this text.
and a recognition of the pain inflicted through family separation, as opposed to past popular assumptions which tended to focus on the creation of ‘happy families’. In 1997, the Australian psyche was particularly affected by the ‘National Inquiry’ into and the stories told by members of the *Stolen Generation*.\(^{232}\) As well as ‘closed adoption, this inquiry directed attention towards others disaffected by past imperialist policies such as the British Child Migrants, and later the institutionalisation of children within the ‘care system. Not only was there endorsement for ‘open adoption’, but there was also increasing support for the importance of reuniting the now adult ‘children’ with their birth families.\(^{233}\) At the *1997 Australian Adoption Conference*, previously disempowered birthmothers gave witness to their own stories, whereas adoptive parents, at that time, appeared to have little voice.\(^{234}\) Today, adoptive parents have a strong political lobby, particularly with regard to intercountry adoption.\(^{235}\) Today, interpretations of what is in ‘the child’s best interests’ have shifted – become more complex – perhaps more ambiguous. Following the recent inquiry, new ICA opportunities are now being followed up in Australia. This policy, although instigated by the now former Howard Liberal Government, has also been acted upon by the Rudd Labor Government, and we are yet to find out where Labor, under Julia Gillard’s leadership, will stand on adoption and the difficult issue of child protection. The renewed governmental position on adoption is/was also supported by the right wing Christian faction of the former liberal government, known as the Lyons Forum, of which Tony Abbott, the current Leader of the Opposition, is a prominent member.\(^{236}\)

In order to situate my work today, in light of recent change, I need to draw on past thinking and include a socio-historical overview of ‘closed adoption’ as a fluid


\(^{233}\) If that was their wish, and if both parties were in agreement.

\(^{234}\) Refer to, D 30.

\(^{235}\) This has also been influenced by the many high profile celebrity adoptions by, for example, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, Madonna, Deborah Lee Furness and Hugh Jackman, Sandra Bullock, and others. Their lives are constantly being promoted through the international media.

\(^{236}\) Tony Abbott is known for his anti-abortion/ pro-adoption views and has not been popular with many feminists.
social institution, at the ‘local’ level, following the Westminster system, whilst also mentioning the political, ‘racial’ and cross-cultural complexities surrounding adoption within Australia and elsewhere within the former ‘British Empire’. I will then consider how adoption has become part of a global institution which is very much in ‘vogue’. By rethinking adoption and Australia’s colonial past – the removal of Indigenous ‘children’ from their family networks and culture – I link the ‘new’ ‘global’ adoption movement back to the ‘local’, drawing on Homi Bhabha’s call for a ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’. I also place some of the ideas put forward at the 9th Australian Conference, regarding permanency for children in the foster care system ‘at home’. I then touch on recent research which positions ICA as a major form of ‘migration’, as well as other political influences which compound understandings of international adoption today.

Alongside the extensive media ‘push’ which has promoted overseas adoption within Australia, over the last few years there has also been an increasing academic engagement with adoption, beyond the health sciences. Additional areas of interest are in cultural studies, art, English, ethics, law, political science, history, demography and social geography. As such, these critical research projects are contributing to a vibrant and contested area of study. There is growing ‘debate’ around intercountry and transnational adoption worldwide, creating a substantial body of transdisciplinary knowledge. Following trends in the United States, interpretive/theoretical studies on ‘adoption’ here in Australia are gradually being mobilised towards a formal ‘disciplinary’ area of study. In July 2009, the Schools of Political and Social Inquiry and Historical Studies at Monash

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239 Refer the the later section in this chapter, under the heading ‘Children in care at ‘home’.
240 It was in 2004 that I first came across the journal, Alliance for the Study of Adoption, Identity & Kinship, produced by The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, in Association with staff in the English Department of Kansas State University. www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/asaik. The Alliance’s Listserv is maintained through a member at Southern Methodist University in Texas.
University, in Victoria, held a joint symposium on adoption-related research, in a move to formalise scholarship on adoption within Australia.¹⁴¹

Much of the research today is carried out through the more particular performances of adoptive parents, adult adoptees and, to a lesser degree, birthparents. As could be expected, when *intercountry* adoption has a high profile and when most birthmothers now come from distant locations and disadvantaged backgrounds, there is an obvious lack of academic engagement from the birth parents of the ‘now’ generation of overseas adoptees.²⁴² The book *Outsiders Within* (2007) was conceived by its editors, both adult intercountry adoptees, as a form of ‘corrective action’ which challenges the rational decision making by both ‘sending’ and ‘receiving’ countries, whilst examining life on the borderlands of racial, national, and cultural identities.²⁴³

Before engaging ‘performatively’, in *Chapter 4*, with my own practice, and by examining the experiential process of opening a 1950’s ‘closed’, cross-cultural adoption, from within the ‘global’ present, I feel that it is necessary to contextualise this process not only within the past, but within the present broader,

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¹⁴¹ Other Adoption Studies Centres are, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute which is now in joint partnership with the Centre for Adoption Studies at Illinois State University. In the UK, the University of East London offers a Masters degree in Adoption Studies.

²⁴² Many of these women and young girls live in poverty and lack agency within their own countries although, in a rigidly Confucian culture such as in South Korea, a now wealthy country but still strongly patriarchal, a revolutionary feminist movement is gaining strength. Rallies are held, particularly by artists, who are voicing their experiences and protesting against Confucian dogma resulting in the epidemic proportion of female infanticide through selective abortion as well as the disproportionate number of girls given up for adoption in Korea and abroad. See, Dorow, S., Ed. (1999). *I wish you a beautiful life: Letters from the Korean birth mothers of Ae Ran Won to their children*. Minessota, Yeong & Yeong. For an in depth account of *ICA* in China, see Dorow, S. (2006). "Racialized Choices: Chinese Adoption and the 'White Noise' of Blackness." *Critical Sociology* **32**: 357-379. In-country adoption is slowly being promoted by the governments of both South Korea and China and ICA numbers have declined. Xinran, an Australian Chinese journalist, offers heartrending stories in her book Xinran (2010). *Message From an Unknown Chinese Mother*. Australia, Random House.

²⁴³ There is a growing critically informed contribution by the now 30 and 40 something adoptees born in Korea, Vietnam and elsewhere. In this recent US publication, the 30 personal essays, research-based studies, poems and accompanying artworks offer a more provocative view by trans-national and ‘trans-racial’ adoptees. Trenka, J. J., J. C. Oparah, et al., Eds. (2006). *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*. Cambridge, MA, South End Press. See also www.koreanquarterly.org, where many American Korean adoptees publish.
overlapping framework of ‘alternative family formation’. I hope to show the major paradigm shifts – how the political complexities have grown in significance and how underlying ideologies have become entangled. By raising some of the socio-historical factors supporting ‘closed adoption’ on the domestic front, I will lead up to, and include, some of the external influences circulating through globalisation which have, in turn, impacted on this recent political push within Australia for an increase in inter-country adoption, alongside a now international market for gametes and surrogates for the creation of infants using ‘assisted reproductive technologies’ (ART).

As I consider, with some difficulty, the complex, conflicting motivations and ethics behind all these current drives, I am inspired by Laurie Anderson’s words of the early 1990s when critiquing the speed of change. She said, “I want to look at things well, not to change them”. In light of this, I also feel that it is important to try and identify some of the forces underpinning this fluidity. While trying to avoid the dichotomy of ‘adoption – good or bad’, I also want to avoid the pitfall of projecting a universalizing or totalizing perspective. I cannot deny my own positioning and I am, in fact, critical of those who do not declare a personal involvement in adoption research so that the work can be read in context. Situated moments of reflection over a particular timeframe can, I propose, draw attention to the silences and complexities within the ‘speed of change’. Given my own experience of (re)stor(y)ing across cultures within the UK, from Australia, after living in Africa, I began to imagine the challenges facing an overseas adoptee in a similar, but usually more complicated, situation. It was due to my experiences in North Wales when trying to reconnect with my birthfather’s family, who are Welsh speakers and highly committed Welsh Nationals, that I thought of the linguistic, cultural and political complexities others may have to confront. In order to make sense of my own performance, and the performance of others involved in rebuilding their life stories and sense of identity from within today’s ‘global’ adoption environment, I find it necessary to try to contextualise the past within

this unstable and constantly unfolding present. As I consider this process, I have become increasingly aware of these shifting struggles within the site of adoption over this timeframe, and I see parallels and patterns emerging between the past and the present – the ‘local’ and ‘global’.

In this chapter, I unravel some of these political issues in order to charter a fluid context for my praxis, through which I hope the more ambiguous aspects of adoption (re)stor(y)ing will gain ‘visibility’. It is my intention that both Installation works, *Fy Mam* and *Translating Hiraeth*, quietly interrogate some of the normalised assumptions which come to the fore when opening up the past within the present. Art has the ability to expose ambiguity and raise questions from within the presence of the past by drawing the density of living into current public consciousness. In order to understand past silences within adoption from today’s perspective, it is necessary to draw attention to the imperialistic ideal which supported the former system and is perhaps raising it’s head again under another guise. As past policies are examined by historically and culturally locating them from within current thinking, it is possible to see how they have been shaped by the ideologies underlying the practices of those times. Each historical ‘moment’ requires a certain timeframe to enable a more reflective objectivity.

As mentioned in the last chapter, past colonial practices are associated with notions of appropriation, dislocation, renaming and assimilation – an ideology and rationale which can be applied to past ‘closed adoption’ and to international adoption today. It is in light of Australia’s past imperialist policies that I am cautious of the current political push within Australia for more inter-country adoptions (ICA), even though the motivations for such a push may be contained within humanitarian ideals.245 Both the *British Child Migrants Scheme* and ‘closed’ adoption were born out of colonial thinking, although, in the former, the

245 In their introduction, the editors of *Outsiders Within* racialise themselves as a subversive, political tool to critique intercountry adoption. See, Trenka, J. J., J. C. Oparah, et al., Eds. (2006). *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption* Cambridge, MA, South End Press.
‘racism’ here was the intention that white ‘orphans’ boost the white population, and it was mostly illegitimate white babies who were renamed and adopted into privileged white families. Given the complexities of transnational and intercultural adoption, I hope through the creative project to emotionally deconstruct, in part, and to highlight the identity issues and feelings of dislocation those ‘children’, as adults, may have when reconnecting with their birthmothers, in particular, other birth family members, and their ‘birth cultures’ – within their countries of origin.

Initially, I will draw on ‘illegitimacy’ and offer some background to the early institutionalization of adoption and the introduction of legislation. It should be noted that although adoption laws here in Australia are largely modelled on the Westminster system, each state has its own laws on adoption and child protection, as opposed to central governance as it applies in the UK. Ironically, family law has been governed federally here, but administered locally, allowing for gaps in communication and disparities between federal family law and the states and territories’ adoption and child protection laws. Since 2009, following recommendations from Bronwyn Bishop’s senate inquiry, inter-country adoption now comes under the federal Attorney-General’s Department (AGD) although it is administered locally by the individual states. Before I enlarge on the ‘global’ complexities of adoption today, I will turn to the rationalisations which came out of the Enlightenment, and the Victorian moral determinants underpinning the growth of ‘local’ adoption as a social institution.

**Illegitimacy and the institutionalisation of adoption**

Informal adoption has taken place throughout history in various forms although, in Western industrialized nations, legislative frameworks started to emerge in the late 19th century in an attempt to protect children from illegitimacy, and from exploitation in the workplace following the industrial revolution. Illegitimacy was seen as a region of social taboo, which was reflected in the conventional 19th
century picture of the ‘bastard’ as criminal and degenerate. Any exception to this was perhaps the ‘love child’ born to a member of the nobility.\textsuperscript{247} Popular English literature of the day included many adoption narratives, whilst offering political commentary on social change brought about through both industrialisation and institutionalisation. In George Eliot’s \textit{Daniel Deronda}, Daniel is brought up as ‘an English gentleman’ by Sir Hugo Mallinger, but discovers his Jewishness and that his ancestors lived in the Spanish city of Ronda before the Jewish expulsion in 1492.\textsuperscript{248} After searching for his mother, he embraces his new-found Jewish heritage and takes on the Jewish cause. As Marianne Novy rightly points out, “adoption plots dramatize cultural tensions about definitions of family – adoption makes ambiguous the definition of parenthood and other important terms such as family, kinship and identity”.\textsuperscript{249} In \textit{Silas Marner}, Eliot continues to explore prejudice using another adoption story, this time, critiquing the class divide in England.\textsuperscript{250} Similarly, Charles Dickens famously exposes the inhumanities of the 19th century workhouses, or poorhouses – as in \textit{Oliver Twist} – whilst attacking the stigma associated with illegitimacy.\textsuperscript{251}

In \textit{The Name of the Mother: Writing Illegitimacy}, Marie Maclean examines the double alterity or ‘othering’ of the illegitimate female, beside the revolutionary potential within taking and keeping the name of the mother.\textsuperscript{252} In a patrilineal, patriarchal society, following Enlightenment thinking, women were devalued against the notion of male unity, superiority and stability. Their ‘position’ was therefore further reduced if they were a member of the lower classes, an unmarried mother or, worse still, an illegitimate female ‘other’.\textsuperscript{253}

\textsuperscript{253} I drew on Mary Maclean’s thinking in \textit{Mother. Mary. Martry. Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyr(Fy Mam)}. This work was presented with my Honours project, \textit{Loss Adoption and Desire}. See IRI, D24 and D24-1.
The mid-19th century saw the beginnings of change and the introduction of ‘social institutions’. As one of these institutions, adoption was deemed to be the ideal solution to a huge social problem. This rationalisation not only came out of Enlightenment thinking, but also sat well beside Victorian moral values. New ordered mechanisms became a form of social regulation, where those with specialised training exercised their ‘expert’ knowledge over ‘the local’ in a particular area. This governmental form of intervention into the personal lives of the populace heralded the later development of what became known as the ‘welfare state’. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Trish Harris gives an in-depth deconstruction of ‘expert knowledge’ and the regulation of private life, in which she employs Foucaultian theory to deal with questions of agency, resistance and change within social institutions. She examines texts in social work, psychology and medicine to show how expert knowledges also impinge on care of the self and intimate others, particularly in the ‘home’.254

The medicalization of birth and infertility undoubtedly boosted the area of adoption in the late 19th to mid 20th centuries, and beyond, together with the psychological implications projected onto the unmarried mother as being irresponsible and unstable. Along with her perceived pathologies and inadequacies to parent, often combined with lack of economic and social support, women were coerced into being ‘responsible’ citizens for the good of their illegitimate child, by relinquishing the baby to ‘suitable’ parents, that is, to a middle-class, married couple. Here, it is evident how the constitutional powers of ‘expert’ knowledge can both reposition authority and strip the subject – that is, the unmarried mother – of agency, eliminating notions of ‘choice’. The emergence of ‘experts’ was a major source of behavioural control.255

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255 Recent Liberal conservative moves towards the ‘default’ removal of children from their drug dependent parent(s), for adoption, following Bronwyn Bishop’s report on The Winnable War on Drugs, plus the ‘coercion’ of parents to relinquish their children already under state care for adoption, could be seen to echo past forms of governmental control over the ‘family’, although issues of child protection from harm have a high profile here. I will discuss the proposed introduction of the 15/22 model later in the text – a policy which echoes models in both America and the UK.
Under past industrialisation, powers held by the church and the monarchy gave way to the secular powers of the court system and its judges. As the welfare state established itself, the medical, psychiatric, and ‘helping’ professions, together with the institutions formed through modern bureaucracy, were positioned alongside of the judiciary. During the early to mid industrial period, the religious judgements of sin and evil were reconstructed through legislation as ‘crime’ and illegality, and “[o]ut of this environment the notion of social work was firmly linked to bureaucracy and the state”.256 As social workers were seen to be in positions of authority, their professional knowledge as ‘experts’ was privileged over personal experience. This was particularly so in the case of the vulnerable single mother. In the late 19th and early to mid 20th centuries, the prescribed ‘good fortune’ of adoption was seen as the solution to protect all parties from shame and pain. The responsible single mother followed the advice of the ‘expert’ and was often coerced through the notion of guilt to give up her infant. Her ‘compliance’ cancelled her agency, and in ‘closed adoption’ this included any future lines of resistance, or contact with her child. Following Foucault, this action would be considered a ‘disciplinary technology’ characterised by the capacity to produce ‘docile’ and ‘useful’ bodies.257

‘Closed adoption’ as legislated, can be measured as a ‘normalising’ strategy which assessed, categorized, renamed, legally transformed, and translated the illegitimate child, through the court system, into a ‘normal’ subject. As a legitimate member of society, in the form of an adopted child, s/he could now be seen in light of future potential by both Church and State. The unmarried mother was brought into line, divested of motherhood, subjugated and (re)formed from the ‘bad’ immoral mother into the ‘not’ mother.258 It was assumed that she would

forget her baby and her identity as a mother, and get on with life. In the past, little mention was made of the birthfather. There was both a lack of inclusion, and a lack of responsibility, imposed on him by law.

‘Closed adoption’ and early legislative frameworks

Adoption was initially legislated in the State of Massachusetts, USA, in 1851. New Zealand introduced adoption laws in 1881, and here in Western Australia, the Adoption Act was implemented in 1896. Interestingly, here, ‘closed adoption’ only became law in the 1920s.

In Western Australia, in 1896, there was no provision for confidentiality of adoption details. Children retained their original name and added the adoptive parent’s name, thus creating ‘double barrel’ surnames. It was not until 1921, following pressure from adoptive parents, that the Act was amended to allow adoptive parents to change the child’s surname. In 1926 a further amendment was made which introduced the practice of issuing a second birth certificate and prevented adoptees from obtaining a copy of their original birth certificate. The second birth certificate was only available to the adoptive parents and adoptee.

Britain passed ‘closed’ adoption laws in 1926. This initial legislation was slightly amended in the 1950s with the introduction of the welfare state. As in Australia, under the ‘closed’ scheme, adopted people could not obtain a copy of their original certificate, giving access to their birth name or their birthmother’s name. The second birth certificate was only available to the adoptee and their adoptive parents, under the guise of promoting privacy for both the birthmother and the adoptive family. For the adopted person, this situation created a perceived genealogical continuity with the adoptive family and a discontinuity with the birth family. In actual terms, the child was intentionally and permanently separated from his or her birth family, story, and sometimes ‘birth culture’. The adopted


person was cut off from any knowledge of their genetic inheritance and any heritable status within the birth family, and gained heritable status without genetic continuity within the adoptive family. In this era, the legal silence was complete, and the official imagination excluded any notion that the adopted ‘child’ may, in the future, want to know about his or her ‘origins’. The birthmother had no further claim to her child, nor was she notified in the case of death. Through this bureaucratic silencing, the infant legally and ‘literally’ became a *tabula rasa*.\(^{262}\)

S/he was symbolically (re)born through the issuing of the new birth certificate, thus ‘becoming’ the legal fiction which New Zealand family lawyer Robert Ludbrook referred to 1997.\(^{263}\)

Robert Ludbrook is not against ‘permanent care orders’ – that is, to secure care for children in need – and he promotes a form of legal guardianship or a ‘parenting order’. In such cases, the child is not cut off from the birth family network by law but is placed with a safe alternative, within a family setting, until the age of majority. Ludbrook points out that, although seen as part of family law, adoption law actually, has more in common with property law and the transfer of ownership. According to the *Maquarie Concise Legal Dictionary*, “adoption is the legal process by which a child becomes the child of the adopting parents and ceases to be the child of any person who was a parent before”.\(^{264}\)

*The Australian Oxford Dictionary* cites the verb to ‘adopt’ as, ‘to take as one’s own’. As Robert Ludbrook rightly points out, this dates back to liberal humanist ideas of the 19th century when children were under the absolute control and authority of their parents and seen as possessions. Just as a person who has sold land has no right to enter that land after the transaction, a person who had ‘agreed’ to ‘closed adoption’ had no rights in relation to the(ir) child, and in this sense, the new birth certificate was seen as legal confirmation of the adoptive parent’s ‘real’ or actual entitlement. In this instance the baby is renamed and takes the adoptive family

\(^{262}\) I counter this ‘condition’ in Chapter 4, through the work of anthropologist, Thomas Csordas.


\(^{264}\) As quoted by Robert Ludbrook at the conference in Wellington.
surname although, unlike a land transaction, the previous ‘owner’s’ name is not mentioned on the certificate. This symbolically denies the existence of the child prior to the adoption. Writing about the literal power of naming, Jean-Paul Sartre incorporates past, present and future inscriptions of a name onto the body. He also writes: “[a]n individual who belongs to several groups at the same time (by way of naming) is simultaneously and entirely each of these groups.

Later in this text, I return to the concept of ‘own’ and ‘ownership’ of children in adoption, alongside other dichotomous questions being asked today as a result of the increasing number of ‘open adoptions’, and past adoptions being ‘opened’. Contemporary anxieties as to who is seen to be the ‘real’ or ‘natural’ mother have been defended through both essentialist and anti-essentialist arguments. The concept of ‘owning’ children sits in opposition to any notion of mutual trust, that is, between the birth parents or between birth and non-birth parents. Western individualism does not condition us to share our children, as reflected in the social organization that exists within indigenous cultures where ‘adoption’ is more about an ‘augmented’, rather than ‘replacement’ parenting. It seems that Western concepts of both ‘closed adoption’ and ‘open adoption’ can cover up, and/or reveal insecurities surrounding parental identity.

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267 Ibid. p. 43. The text in parenthesis are mine. Sartre’s words validate an argument for open adoption records.
If past ‘closed adoption’ saved the unmarried mother from the shame of being seen as the ‘bad’, or immoral, mother, the ‘infertile wife’ was saved from the shame of being seen as the ‘not’ mother, and the child born out of ‘wedlock’ from being shamed as the illegitimate ‘other’. 270 “[T]he basic experience connected with shame is that of being seen, inappropriately, by the wrong people, in the wrong condition”. 271 In the first half of the 20th century, the ethical rationale which accompanied the rising ‘middle-classes’ during the 18th and 19th centuries was still evident, in that great emphasis was laid on moral superiority and self-discipline. The desired behaviour or “capacity to maintain good order” was covertly couched in religious principles. 272 Few unmarried mothers had social support, financial means, or the strength to stand against societal attitudes. 273 This thinking was still relevant during the post-war era and beyond, when my own adoption took place. I would also suggest that where there is secrecy and shame, there is also pain. At the Sixth National Adoption Conference, in 1997, I presented video documentation of the Installation, Fy Mam. This was accompanied by a paper in which I explored affect, loss, and silence through Julia Kristeva’s ‘unspeakable’ and Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger’s notion of the ‘unsayable’. 274 The pain and tension felt at this forum was palpable. 275

To put this discussion in context, the contraceptive pill was only developed in the 1960s and the supporting mothers’ benefit for single mothers in Australia was introduced in 1973. 276 There are familiar stories of girls being sent away and/or being badly treated in institutions for unmarried mothers, before returning home.

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270 In the past, infertility was invariably seen as the wife’s problem.
275 As I write this, President Barack Obama has just had his Health Plan approved in the US. This reform gives single mothers unprecedented support, which will no doubt reduce the number of currently babies available for local adoption.
to ‘normality’ after ‘relinquishing’ their infants.\textsuperscript{277} Such a phenomenon is quite alien to indigenous cultures where communal care systems are customary, but is more relevant in ‘post Confucian’ countries today, where shame is one of the key issues behind ‘abandonment’ and relinquishment of children born outside marriage. In a relatively wealthy country such as South Korea, patriarchal attitudes are strong and feminism is young.\textsuperscript{278}

In the ‘West’, formal adoption increased in popularity during the 1930s and 40s following the onset of ‘psychoanalysis’, and Freud’s ‘family romance’.\textsuperscript{279} After WWII, there was an even greater emphasis on the nuclear family and on traditional family values. A woman’s place was firmly back in the home as wife and mother. The unmarried mother and her child were still seen as devalued, marginalised ‘others’. The institutional authority of both Church and State was still strong, as was social coercion. In the 1950s, the Victorian individualist notion of owning children took on a new emphasis. Instead of being viewed as objects, children were viewed more as ‘objects of concern’, and subjects of social welfare and the State. The thinking behind this terminology reflects the ‘paramountcy principle’, previously flagged, which means, to work ‘in the child’s best interests’. Since the 1950s, meanings associated with ‘the best interests of the child’ have gained in complexity and have been viewed from a variety of political perspectives.\textsuperscript{280} It is evident how the semantics within language alter historically as attitudes change and move into new, unimagined social contexts, as can be seen from within today’s global milieu of adoption and ART. The ‘child’s best interests’, in the 1950s, were still seen to be with a married heterosexual couple.

\textsuperscript{277} One of the church-run institutions in Western Australia was The Home of the Good Shepherd. The 2002 film, \textit{The Magdalene Laundries} by Peter Mullan, graphically depicts the appalling conditions that girls had to endure at the Roman Catholic Magdalene Asylums for ‘fallen’ girls, in Ireland and elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{278} Since the Korean War, South Korea has had a strong history of intercountry adoption.

\textsuperscript{279} As a poignant aside, according to Freud, as a way of coming to terms with any negative feelings about their biological parents, non-adopted children sometimes fantasise that they are adopted and that their real parents are elsewhere. Freud, S. (1959). Family Romances. \textit{Complete Psychological Works}, London, Hogarth.

\textsuperscript{280} The ‘best interests of the child’ was questioned again by Robert Ludbrook, in 2004, this time in relation to the vexed area of parental rights and legal responsibilities for children being conceived and born as a result of multiple reproductive procedures offering, in some cases, a range of potential ‘parents’ as a result of surrogacy and /or ART. Ludbrook, R., C. Phillips, et al. (2004, March). ”New Issues in Legal Parenthood: A discussion paper.” Retrieved 1/07/04, from www.lawcom.govt.nz/Documents.
within what has become labelled as the heteronormative family model, as opposed to being ‘disadvantaged’ with a single, unmarried mother, or with a same-sex couple. The relinquishment and placement of children for adoption, in England, was overseen by welfare professionals who often, again, subtly coerced young mothers to relinquish their infants by offering no alternative.\textsuperscript{281} The new policies, based on the revised legislation of the 1950s, were embedded in the ‘welfare principle’, but the decision to adopt out a child was, more often than not, still based on financial constraints and issues of morality, given that extra-marital sex was ‘secret’ and, if ‘found out’, shameful.\textsuperscript{282}

Home for Baby, the British Pathe clip played with Translating Hiraeth, shows how, in the 1940s and 50s, ‘closed adoption’ translated the negative connotations of shame into ‘good fortune’, particularly for the child and for the infertile couple who were encouraged to take the baby home, ‘\textit{as if} born to them in wedlock.’\textsuperscript{283} In most instances, the body was ‘essentialised’ and the majority of white infants born outside marriage were adopted under the ‘closed’ scheme by white, middle-class, infertile couples. The ‘parents’ and infant were physically ‘matched’ as closely as possible, creating an \textit{invisible} difference.\textsuperscript{284} This notion of ‘invisibility’ became more convincing when the baby was taken home and ‘reflected’ by the couple, to all intents and purposes, as their biological child.\textsuperscript{285} Garry Leonard points to the complicated sub-text within such a performance:

‘Closed adoption’ especially in the 1940s and 50s, was seen as ‘the same as’ having biological parents: ‘it served to inaugurate and protect the myth that once a baby was placed with a family there was no difference between this placement and a biological birth, though it has obvious good intentions, it is not without

\textsuperscript{281} Refer to the (scanned) note written by the social worker at the National Adoption Society, following her interview with my birthmother’s brother, George Morgan, prior to Mary’s first visit to the agency. See ‘Performing Adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’.

\textsuperscript{282} In line with the ‘welfare principle’, the State did now have powers of intervention for the protection of children who were in abusive or neglectful situations.

\textsuperscript{283} (1950, Vols. 14 and 15, Chapter 26.). British Law Reports and Statutes.

\textsuperscript{284} The introduction of overseas adoption following WWII led to the term ‘colour blindness’ where \textit{visible} difference, in some families, was unacknowledged. Instead of communicating an inclusive acknowledgement of difference, colour is seen to be absent, or ‘white’, and despite a form of denial being meant as an inclusion. Colour blindness can be associated with racism as it raises the question: could the child be loved as much if s/he was perceived as black?

\textsuperscript{285} “When I was three my family moved from London to Tunbridge Wells and arrived complete”. This reflexive line is taken from the Installation Translating Hiraeth and refers to my own arrival in a new town as part of a typical nuclear family.
The ‘myth of sameness’ was supported by social silence and behavioural constraints so that the adoptive family could be read as the heteronormative ‘real’ family. As discussed in Chapter 4, the ‘as if’ policy becomes the key to ‘performing’ ‘closed adoption’. If illegitimacy was held by society as culturally ‘unnatural’, ‘closed adoption’ creates a legitimating force for ‘becoming’ what appears to be the ‘natural’ family. As ‘closed adoption’ covers up and seals all knowledge of the infant’s life lived before the adoption, it also hides the reality and identity of the birth parent(s). Closed records are responsible for compounding the density of silence over time for all involved. When past records are opened in the face of silence and/or denial, the emotional temporal collapse within this past/present can often expose unresolved, and sometimes unacknowledged, losses and complexities for all, thus transgressing the normative behavioural dynamics in place, and revealing two ‘other’ real parents. During the 1950s and 60s, adoption was usually kept as a private family matter, and was, unlike today, rarely mentioned in the media. The secret within adoptive families may not always have been that a child was adopted per se although, the legal silence imposed on a family as to where their child came from still compounded over time. As Anne Else implies when reflecting on the effects of ‘closed adoption’:

It is a fallacy that birth mothers rapidly recover and forget about the adopted child, that adopted people usually grow up completely unconcerned about their origins and totally accept the substitution of the adoptive family for the birth family, and that adoption is a ‘cure’ for infertility and its associated distress.

287 In the case of an ICA, an infant or child is removed from language, community, culture and country. This creates a complex gap between the birth family culture and the adoptive situation, thus making any possible future relationship with the original family or community much more difficult.
The legal formalities of ‘closed adoption’ were settled in the Juvenile Court and symbolised a ‘clean break’ with the birth family, and legitimated a ‘rebirth’ into the adoptive family. However, following the reform movements, and from 1975 onwards, the word ‘illegitimacy’ was not to be used on any legal documentation in Australia and in the 1970s, the US Supreme Court removed the Common Law disabilities attached to ‘bastardy’. Nonetheless, when reading the word ‘illegitimate’ in my own English adoption file, in 1989, the force of the ‘original’ word, and its associated prejudice, was still resonant.

The impact of the Civil Rights movements on adoption

If I return to Foucault’s *History of Sexuality: Care of the Self*, the technologies of the self were by this time creating active subjects involved in their own self formation by exercising agency. Following the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and 70s and the rise of second wave feminism, Betty Jean Lifton was one of the first post-war adoption activists in America to voice her experience. She articulated the psychological issues facing adopted people who are denied the right to know their birth family ‘origins’. She initiated an active push for open records and changes to constitutional rights in the United States. In New Zealand, in her book, *Death by Adoption*, Joss Sawyer wrote about the pain of maternal loss for the birthmother. She was one of the first activists to take a political position on behalf of birthmothers. Single unmarried mothers previously silenced by society, as were other disenfranchised minorities, gradually gained agency and started to find a political voice. At this time, the misery and torment of infertility started to go ‘underground’, with the rising voice of the relinquishing mother’s pain and the voice of the adult adoptee articulating the losses of separation and lack of constitutional rights in accessing the past.

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289 To offer an example of the speed of change, the US census 30 years later showed that 40% of children were born to ‘unwed mothers’.
292 As I write this, it is important to reiterate that only 12 out of the 50 US States have opened their past records to date. At the MIT conference in Boston, the issue of adoption records in many States still being ‘closed’ today, was noticeably on the political agenda.
In 1975, following this active time-frame, the adoption laws in the UK were amended, allowing adopted people in England and Wales to access their birth records providing they received mandatory counselling within the UK. At this time, I was living and working in the Kalahari as a welfare sister. Any news from the UK was spasmodic, and somehow I missed, or did not register, this piece of information. The Adoption Reform Movement in Australia began in the following year, with the First Australian Conference on Adoption being held in Sydney in 1976. I migrated to Australia in 1980. It was not until 1991 that the British laws were amended further so that those like myself, who had been adopted from within the UK and were now living overseas, could receive the mandatory counselling from within their country of residence. Surprisingly, birthmothers in the UK could not officially search for their children until the Act was finally changed, in 2004, and implemented in 2005. Between 1926 and 2004, in the UK, 875,000 infants had been adopted out.294

In Western Australia (WA), the number of local adoptions between 1896 and 1991 was approximately 22,000. Out of that 22,000 approximately half were step-parent adoptions; therefore 11,000 of the total adoptions were ‘stranger adoptions’.295 In 1987, in WA, adopted people were able to obtain their birth certificates if they first received mandatory counselling. Between 1987 and 1991, about 10,000 people had applied for their information, which prompted changes to the law in 1994, which brought about ‘open adoption’ in 1995.296 This means that the birth certificate of an adopted child now names both sets of parents – the birth parent(s) (that is, if the birth father’s identity is given), and the adoptive parent(s). The adoptive parents have legal custody and take parental responsibility for the child. An adoption plan in the form of a contract is drawn up between both sets of parents to negotiate the degree of ongoing contact between the birthparent(s) and the child, and what form that might take.

294 Bennett, R. and A. Fresco (2004). Law to lift curtain of secrecy on adoption: Parents who gave up their children will now be offered help to find them The Times, London.
296 Colin Keogh, Head of Adoptions, DCD, WA and Adoption Research and Counselling Service (ARCS WA) records.
So far, I have been reflecting on ‘closed adoption’ without discussing the fate and/or research associated with the many indigenous ‘children’ removed from their families across the former ‘British Empire’. This history of oppression, as well as the treatment of African Americans in the US, has undoubtedly impacted on current adoption thinking at both the ‘local’ and ‘global’ level, in relation to transnational and ‘transracial’ adoptions, within Australia and the US. Given that American culture greatly influences popular thought in Australia and elsewhere, I suggest, it is important to identify some of the assumptions we ‘are open to’, in light of our different social and political histories.

Historically, American domestic adoptions have been complicated by the political, racial and cultural issues associated with the oppression of African Americans. Following the Civil Rights Movement, in 1972 the National Association for Black Social Workers (NABSW) was formed in the United States. The NABSW issued a proclamation opposing ‘transracial’ adoption of black African American infants by white middle and upper-class Caucasian Americans. The NABSW claimed that “Black children should be placed only with Black families in order that they receive the total sense of themselves and develop a sound projection of their future”. Due to the history of oppression by white colonisers, ‘transracial’ adoption has been particularly politicised and resisted by the NABSW, which has stood by its policy for ‘racial’ matching, arguing that ‘transracial’ adoption within America could be viewed as a form of cultural genocide. The NABSW’s policy of ‘matching’ could be seen as a strong ‘voice’ in response to ‘colonialism’ and entrenched racism. An African American ‘self’ based on racism could also be seen as highly Eurocentric and rooted in hegemonic racial thinking – thinking which has been projected onto an African American sense of self after years of oppression. However, when an argument is defended on ‘racial grounds’, rather than on issues of class or ethnicity, ‘race’ can be read

299 I should acknowledge here that such colonial patterns of thought are not limited to the US.
as fixed and immutable and can be critiqued as essentialist. Instead of addressing the unavailability, ‘at home’, of suitable placements for African American children needing permanent care, the argument seems to be stuck within issues of racism and within the binary of a black and white divide.

In the intervening years, huge numbers of African American infants and children have been locked into the foster care system without permanency, thus serving the political ideals of adults, instead of meeting the ‘best interests of the child’. To help counter this situation, in 1994, The Multiethnic Placement Act enabled the US Government to deny funds to any agency which prevented an adoption on racial grounds. For many, the Act was seen as a positive move, although it did not please some black social workers and also attracted a backlash from extreme right wing white conservatives who feared an increase in “cross racial dating and marriage”.

Since Barack Obama’s election, the situation has perhaps become more hopeful. Under the Democrats, Obama’s Health Plan will offer new opportunities to those who are disadvantaged in America. There are huge numbers of African American children needing permanent care although, until recently, there has been little active recruitment of African Americans to adopt infants in the US, or

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300 Supporting the defensive views of the NABSW, several States, including Louisiana, banned ‘transracial’ adoptions, that is, the adoption of African American children by white couples. Reflecting this racial policy, the adoption of African American children by Caucasians, or vice versa, is still referred to in the US as a ‘transracial’ adoption, or if one parent is white and the other is black, the child is referred to as ‘biracial’. ‘Transracial’ adoption forms, in the US, what is known as a ‘biracial’ family. To relate this discussion to ICA, between 1953 and 1962, US citizens had already adopted 15,000 infants from other countries under the umbrella of humanitarian aid. Engel, M., N. K. Phillips, et al. (2007). “International adoption: A Sociological account of the U.S. experience.” The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy 27(5/6): 257-270.

301 In the intervening years, interpretations of what is ‘in the child’s best interests’ appear to have shifted again. There appears to have been a dominant move away from the bio-maternal model of mothering with the often disadvantaged birth parent(s) towards the more traditional family, favouring social parenting within an economically secure adoptive family environment. Engel, M., N. K. Phillips, et al. (2007). “International adoption: A Sociological account of the U.S. experience.” The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy 27(5/6): 257-270. It should be noted that the ‘miscegenation’ laws were only repealed in 1967.

302 According to the United States Department of Labor, via the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for ‘blacks’ is twice as high as it is for ‘whites’ and in America, medical insurance is covered by the employer. See, www.bls.gov/
financial assistance to help them do so. In the past, the US Government has done little to assist single mothers, particularly those who are unemployed and have no medical insurance to cover their own maternity and labour costs. Opposing the NABSW’s position, pro-adoption activist, adoptive mother, writer and white lawyer, Elizabeth Bartholet, entered the debate.\textsuperscript{304} Bartholet argues that the promotion of ‘matching’ creates separatism through families and contends that “the family with a ‘transracial’ adoption becomes the family model of common humanity”.\textsuperscript{305} Within her definition of ‘transracial’ adoption, it is unclear whether she includes children of ‘colour’ from overseas. Bartholet claims that her position is one against racism, although, she may be collapsing the political history of African American oppression at the level of the ‘local’ with the ‘global’ politics of intercountry adoption. This means that children with very different national, cultural, historical and linguistic backgrounds, from distant geographic locations, are possibly being ‘racialised’ on arrival to embody an idealized potential within a ‘model of common humanity’– particularly in America. Bartholet also neglects to make the point that the majority of these children ‘of colour’ are being adopted into white middle and upper-class American families, within the dominant culture, and that those children will therefore be acculturated within that culture, even though they may have some knowledge of their country and culture of origin. Her ideal of ‘transracial’ adoption becoming the model for ‘common humanity’ could also be read as racist, and as a form of assimilation, as she is speaking from within a privileged position and acting from within the dominant culture.

Indigenous Americans under the Native American Indian Movement, following the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights movements, founded the Native American Tribal Council, which sought to have the adoption of American Indian children by non-Indigenous people banned. Under the 1978 \textit{Indian Child Welfare Act}, adoptions of Native American children were thereafter ‘favoured’ to tribal

\textsuperscript{304} Bartholet works in the area of intercountry adoption and ‘transracial’ adoption and is an adoptive mother to two boys from Peru. 

members over other potential adoptive parents. Here in Australia, in 1997, *The Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From their Families, Bringing them home* (HREOC, 1997) documented past colonial assimilationist policies and racial practices which accounted for the forcible separation of an estimated 100,000 Indigenous children from their families, across Australia. The majority of Aboriginal children who were removed were put into church run missions such as Sister Kate’s and Hermannsberg although, some infants were adopted or fostered by white families.

In his address at the 8th *Australian Conference on Adoption* in 2004, William Brian Butler expressed strong opposition to the adoption and fostering of Aboriginal children by non-Indigenous adopters. He describes the traditional Aboriginal family as:

> [a] collaboration of clans composed of mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties, brothers, sisters, cousins and so on… You may think that there is nothing unusual or different from contemporary non-Indigenous family groups, except that, in Aboriginal clans, the structure gives rise to inter-relationships and generational responsibilities that make it unique. Many of you would know that, to give you an example, the brother of a deceased man, in some clans would assume parental responsibility for his brother’s children… Much of the upbringing of the children relies heavily on the grandparents, but more specifically the grandmother.

In a 2003 article in *The West Australian* newspaper, Neila Penny’s story tells of one extreme adoption dislocation. As a Noongar ‘infant’ originally from Western Australia, she returned to Perth after living in England for 35 years with her English adoptive family. A birth relative said that, “Neila’s birth parents were

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307 Prior to 1969, the report suggests that most of these children were taken as part of the government’s assimilation policy, rather than for reasons of child protection. (1997). *Bringing them home: Report of the national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*. H. R. a. E. O. C. (HREOC). Sydney: Commonwealth of Australia. Similar colonial policies were carried out with the adoption and fostering of Inuit infants in Canada, and American Indian children in North America.

working out bush and came to Narrogin for the birth. They left her in hospital because she was very sick...and then she got taken”. On 13 February, 2008, Kevin Rudd, as the new Labor Prime Minister, presented a National Apology to the Stolen Generation. This eventuated 11 years after the release of the Bringing them home report. Canada’s formal apology to its Indigenous Inuit people followed in June of the same year. One can only be heartened that some reparation from our imperial past is happening, but as a direct intergenerational consequence there are huge social problems within indigenous communities, resulting in higher infant death rates, higher morbidity levels and shorter life expectancy. Amongst Aboriginal Australians, the number of Indigenous children reported ‘at risk’ and needing care, due to neglect or abuse, is eight times higher than for non-Indigenous children. In 2001-2002, the total number of Australian young people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, reported to be at risk was 30,500. Intergenerational attachment issues relating to earlier abuse and/or ‘removal’ are being passed on unintentionally, by parents and carers, to the next generation. This translates, again, directly into poor attachment issues today and reflects the social and emotional damage inflicted in the past. In the case of Australia’s Indigenous population, the extent of this damage is being followed up after the former Rudd Government’s commitment to ‘closing the gap’, which extends the Council of Australian Government’s (COAG) ‘Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage’ (OID) Key Indicators Report. Aboriginal child health is the focus of several ongoing research projects into Indigenous health, racism and welfare, although as I write into this chapter, in 2010, there is keen evidence that the gap has yet to be bridged.

310 AIHW, Child Protection Australia, 2001-02.
With regard to the adoption of Indigenous children today, the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle lays down strict guidelines when Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children cannot be cared for safely by their birth parents. When they need to be placed elsewhere, care is taken to respect their family, communal and cultural connections. This echoes policies laid down in the US regarding the adoption of Native American Indian children. If the extended family cannot care for the child, the Indigenous community is looked to, after which other Indigenous carers are sought. If none of these options are available or appropriate, Indigenous children may be adopted by other families. If this is the case, “in Western Australia and Victoria, legislation permits the birthparents to specify the type of adoptive family they would like for their child”. Over the last 15 years, there have only been 72 adoptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children Australia-wide.

At the New Zealand Conference on Adoption and Healing, in 1997, Harry Walker, a Maori birthfather and a sociologist at Victoria University in Wellington, presented an important paper. His area of interest is adoption and Maori kinship formation. Due to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 by Maori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown, Maori customary law and practice as it relates to the family has, unlike Australian Aboriginal customary law, remained outside mainstream jurisdictions in New Zealand. The Adoption Act of 1955 confirmed the rights of Maori peoples to adopt according to their customs and values. At the New Zealand conference, Harry Walker discussed whangai, that is, ‘adoption’ under Maori law where a child is given by the parents to another family member to raise. The child remains aware of who s/he is and who his or her birth parents are, and what their whakapapa is. The whakapapa is a person’s genealogy and cultural identity: ‘It is the glue that holds the Maori world...”

313 AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection. Table 3:11, Number of Indigenous children adopted by Indigenous status of adoptive parent(s), 1994-95 to 2008-09.
314 Cross reference with IRI, D31.
315 However, large numbers of children were still adopted by non indigenous families when only one parent was of Maori decent.
together”.316 As a Maori, Harry Walker is against both transcultural and intercountry adoption as well as the practice of ‘closed adoption’. According to Maori lore, a child is not ‘owned’ but held in trust for the community. Maori kinship practice was consulted at length for the New Zealand, *New Issues in Legal Parenting: A Discussion Paper* (2004), mentioned earlier.317

Instead of being conditioned into Western individualist notions of ownership and property rights, as already outlined, we could acknowledge a form of parenting which is beyond ‘ownership’, claiming, and renaming, and has more to do with augmented parental responsibility and the legal guardianship of vulnerable children. With increasing globalisation and the demand for, and number of, children and gametes being translocated around the world, traditional kinship networks and communal care systems seem to sit in stark, and perhaps somewhat idealistic, opposition to these new trends.318

**Globalization and adoption**

As well as ‘local’ trends and political tensions, there are obvious external influences on shifts in hegemonic thinking. At a meta-level, these external influences can loosely be attributed to globalisation, improved communication, increased reportage on international conflict and natural disasters, foreign aid policies, competitive trade affiliations, new federal alliances, and within ‘Western’ thinking, a widening circulation of ideas relating to the ‘politics of family’ via the traditional news media and the internet. In the second part of this chapter, I will now attempt to highlight the growing political complexities surrounding adoption and alternative family formation – not only the growing

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316 See also Walker, H. (1997). *We are born to our people: The unseen ties that bind the forces of kinship*. Adoption and Healing, Victoria University, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, New Zealand Adoption Education and Healing Trust. p. 10-19.


emphasis on ‘parenting rights’ and ‘reproductive choice’, but also the very apparent influence of the ‘religious right’ – to show how adoption has become enmeshed between humanitarian aid and a form of cultural imperialism which appears to be intertwined with both the language used for, and the political advancements in, assisted reproductive technology (ART).

Today, 61% of all adoptions in Australia are ‘intercountry’ (ICA), or transnational adoptions. Unlike a domestic adoption, where the adoptive parents and the child are of the same nationality and country of residence, intercountry adoption is seen as that which involves a change in the child’s habitual country of residence, whatever the nationality of the adoptive parents. The term international or transnational adoption applies to an adoption which involves parents of a nationality other than that of the child, whether or not they reside, or continue to reside, in the child’s habitual country of origin. Thus, a Chinese infant born in China and adopted by Australian parents living in Australia is both intercountry and transnational.

Intercountry adoption began as a humanitarian response to orphaned children following WWII. Americans, in particular, but also families in Canada, Europe and Australia, adopted orphans from Germany, Italy and Greece, and to a lesser extent from China and Japan. As early as 1957, The International Conference on Intercountry Adoption issued a report on the problems inherent in ICA and criticised its lack of regulation. In the late 1950s, missionaries Bertha and Henry Holt set up the Holt Adoption program. As adoptive parents, they advocated both ‘transracial’ and international adoption in the US. They argued

320 Peter Dodds’s memoir was one of the first to be written by a post WWII German born adoptee in the US. His story is one of rejection when returning to Germany as an American soldier trying to find his mother. Dodds, P. (1997). Outer Search / Inner Journey: An Orphan and Adoptee’s Quest. US, Aphrodite Publishing Company. I heard Peter Dodd’s emotionally charged story at the New Zealand National Adoption Conference held at Lincoln University, Christchurch in 1998. See IRI, D35.
against having trained social workers managing their organisation’s adoptions, on
the grounds that faith in God and altruism were an adequate basis for placing
children. Following the Korean War, the Holts adopted eight children from
Korea. They believed that adoptions could be undertaken by proxy without
adoptive parents needing to travel to any court outside the US although, by 1962,
they did agree to hire a professional social worker to assess the suitability of
adoptive parents.

Susan Soon-Keum Cox was one of the first babies to be adopted into the United
States from Korea and she now works for the Holt International Children’s
Services (HICS). As a more enlightened advocate for intercountry adoption, she
supports ICA, but only after following the strictest guidelines and regulations, as
set out under the 1993 Hague Convention. She writes:

An unfaltering commitment of adoption should be that it is intended as a means
to provide families for children, rather than children for families. This is
especially critical in international adoption where it is the children of one country
being taken to another. The simplistic assumption that a poor child in a
developing country will have a preferred life with a family in a ‘rich’ country is
misguided, imperialistic and overlooks the sacrifice and loss, not only for the
sending country, but to the child.

After the Korean War, the numbers of infants adopted increased dramatically.
This time not only orphans were adopted, but also a large number of children who
had been fathered by American GIs. In 1975, at the tail end of the Vietnam War,
‘Operation Baby Lift’ raised the profile of overseas adoption in Australia when
292 Vietnamese children were air-lifted from burning Saigon. Children adopted
into Australia during the 1970s and 1980s were predominately from Asian

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322 Ibid. p.2.
323 Ibid.
324 Susan Soon-Keum Cox is a writer and child advocate who speaks publicly on ICA. She is the
Vice President of Public Policy and external Affairs for the Holt International Children’s Services
(HICS). This international adoption and child welfare agency has also had adoption programmes
325 For a detailed outline of the multilateral treaties drawn up by the Hague Convention, see
www.hcch.net.
Generation Born in Korea and Adopted to Other Countries. St. Paul, MN, Young & Young Book
Company.
countries. In 1983, Hanoi declared a moratorium on further overseas adoption. In the lead up to the Seoul Olympics in 1988, South Korea was on the world stage and, ashamed that it could not care for its own infants, temporarily reduced the number of children available for intercountry adoption, although war in Eastern Europe and the plight of children in Romania boosted the numbers once again. After the fall of Ceausescu and the exposure of the terrible orphanage conditions in Romania, more than 10,000 children had been sent overseas. Following the disbandment of the USSR, and China’s introduction of its one child policy, Russia and China also began supplying large numbers of infants for overseas adoption, filling what was only a temporarily shortfall from South Korea.

By the late 1980s, an increasing number of children were being sent to ‘Western’ countries for adoption. Given that there was still no international regulatory system in place, the incidence of child trafficking and adoption abuse was also on the rise. By 1989, ‘the best interests of the child’ came under the scrutiny of the United Nations. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was created in 1989 and is now the most widely ratified human rights instrument. This Convention includes principles against wrongful international adoption which are to be adhered to in any child placement policy. America is one of two countries which, so far, has signed but not ratified the UNCRC. The United States Constitution ‘recognises’ child rights although, to date, there is no legal federal protection of children in relation to adoption, and general child protection operates at a state level, which varies greatly. The signing of the Convention was delayed in the 1990s due to intense lobbying against the federal regulation of adoption. Some pro-adoption advocates, ‘for profit’ adoption agencies, religious

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328 The number of children sent from South Korea to Australia can seen to be on the increase again between 1999 and 2009. See the AIHW chart A10. For current information regarding ICA into Australia, see also the Attorney- General’s Office website www.ag.gov.au.
329 According to UNICEF, the US Government under Obama has signalled its intention to ratify the Convention, as of 07/2010, www.unicef.org. The only other country which has not signed is Somalia.
organisations, and politically conservative groups were amongst those who protested.\textsuperscript{330}

\textsuperscript{330} As reported on the ABC’s Foreign Correspondent on 02/03/2010. See also, UNCRC, via the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights website, [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org). The United States have ratified the two optional protocols. One protocol is against children being used by the military and the second protocol is against the sale or prostitution of children.
In his paper, 'Transnational Reproduction and its Discontents, Robert Saunders gives an in-depth discussion on just how embroiled intercountry adoption has become in international politics. In some areas, there is evidence that, indirectly, children have been, and are being, used in the best interests of adults and of
international relations.\footnote{See, Saunders, R. A. (2007-8). "Transnational Reproduction and its Discontents: The Politics of Intercountry Adoption in a Global Society." Global Change and Governance 1(1): 1-23. See also Sarah Dorow’s work on adoptions from China Dorow, S. (2006). "Racialized Choices: Chinese Adoption and the ‘White Noise’ of Blackness." Critical Sociology 32: 357-379. An important recent addition to this debate is the afore-mentioned work by Marre, D. and L. Briggs, Eds. (2009). International adoption: Global inequities and the circulation of children. NY, New York University Press.}{331} An example of this is the conflict which arose between the United States and the European Union (EU) over Romania’s intercountry adoption policy in the late 1990s. These two major powers have very different philosophies on ICA. Accession talks for Romania to join both the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) laid down conflicting conditions. The European Union stipulated Romania’s membership as being dependent on the cessation of intercountry adoption, whereas the US put pressure on Romania to continue releasing its children for adoption to the United States if it hoped to join NATO.\footnote{At the time of the NATO negotiations, 20 or so couples in America were actually in the process of adopting children from Romania.}{332} Motivations and ethics within the area of ICA have continued to be contested areas. At this juncture, I would like to introduce Homi Bhabha’s call for a ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ and its relevance to the discussion thus far.

Homi Bhabha distinguishes between two forms of ‘cosmopolitical’ thinking.\footnote{Here Homi Bhabha revised the introduction to his 1994 publication, Bhabha, H. K. (2004). Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition. The Location of Culture. London and New York, Routledge: x-xxv.}{333} Within the now broadly used term ‘globalism’, he identifies the practise of a ‘global cosmopolitanism’ as carried out by those who see the planet as ‘a global village’ within a cosmopolitanism of privilege supported by neo-liberal politics, and free market forces based on competition, and supply and demand. In poor, unprepared countries where there is inadequate regulation and lack of infrastructure, ICA is open to corruption.\footnote{Some of the countries where ICA has been suspended and/or where corruption has been detected and reported on recently are, Guatemala, Romania, Cambodia, China, Ethiopia and Haiti, to name a few, and according to the Hague Evaluation website www.hagueevaluation.com Liberia is now on the cusp of an adoption boom. At this stage, following the war, it is unlikely that Liberia has the necessary infrastructure to put strict regulations in place.}{334} In terms of our global progress in addressing inequality, Homi Bhabha suggests that globalisation should begin at home through what he defines as a ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’.\footnote{Bhabha, H. K. (2004). Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition. The Location of Culture. London and New York, Routledge: x-xxv.}{335} He claims
that ‘real’ global attitudes are also dependent on how a nation deals with its ‘differences within’, at their local and regional levels – how they deal with diverse minority groups and their indigenous communities. He has questioned America’s attitude to its African Americans and First Nation, American Indian Peoples. Extending my previous discussion relating to African American adoptions within the US, it is now also common knowledge that hundreds of infants of African American descent have been and, are being adopted out of the US into countries such as Canada, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium and England, where their ‘racial’ history is less politicised. According to a 2004 article in The Christian Science Monitor, sourced on the internet, ‘Caucasian infants within the States cost approximately $40,000.00’ to adopt, ‘Biracial infants cost from $18,000.00’ and African American infants $10,000 to $12,000. Apparently African American boys are the hardest to place. As one of the wealthiest Western nations, with the highest rate of ICA, this trend reflects both entrenched racism in North America and an increasing demand by wealthy individuals elsewhere in the ‘West’ to adopt.

In the hope of reducing adoption abuse and tightening international regulation, there has been an increase in the number of countries becoming signatories to, and subsequently implementing, the Hague Convention for International Adoption (HCIA), including America (2008). Some, such as Elizabeth Bartholet, would claim this has slowed down the intercountry adoption process, making fewer children available to ‘caring families’, and resulting in an increasing number of

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336 Since I began this project and within the last two years, Barack Obama, as the first African American President, has made significant changes to the health system, to help those who are disadvantaged, in spite of strong opposition from members of the Republican Party. It is hoped that his policy making will influence the situation for the better, reducing the large number of African American people unemployed and homeless, and the large number of African American children entering the welfare system across America.


339 Since the Multiethnic Placement Policy, in the States, there has also been an increase in ‘transracial’ adoptions within the US. Ibid.
infants being placed in under resourced orphanages overseas.\(^340\) This may be so, but Bartholet’s comment is naïve given the level of corruption being uncovered in both the US and the sending countries.\(^341\) Others would support more community aid abroad, increased in-country adoption with better internal regulation, and community support structures.\(^342\) Either way, the fluidity of children being circulated worldwide is ongoing, and adoption abuse and the trafficking of children is an urgent problem. The major reason for the forthcoming Summit in Ontario is to review the efficiency of *The Hague Convention*, thus maximising ‘the best interests of the child’.

Homi Bhabha is critical of the status of Aboriginal peoples here in Australia. He quotes from Aboriginal Australian writer Kim Scott’s *Deakin lecture* in 2001, ‘Building the Nation: Embracing the World’:

> Insecurity, uncertainty, doubt. I still hear that phrase surrounding Native title discussions, and purportedly its use in reference to economic contract. No, it’s insecurity, uncertainty and doubt about something more important than that. Much deeper. About the foundations of the nation. About who belongs. About who we are.\(^343\)

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\(^341\) There have been claims of extortion by prospective adoptive parents paying escalating costs in the US. Serious ethical violations have been discovered between some private US agents and their counterparts in ‘sending’ countries, involving money laundering, visa fraud, falsified documentation, child theft and the sale of children. There is evidence of women being paid to be potential ‘relinquishing mothers’ for trafficked children and the ‘recruitment of poor birthmothers to exchange their children for small amounts of money, or a bag of rice – often under false pretences and the belief that they will have an ongoing relationship with their children’. See [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) [www.hagueevaluation.com](http://www.hagueevaluation.com). From now on, private adoption agencies in the US will require HCIA accreditation from the Department of State (DOS), agency budgets and fee systems will be audited, professional standards of staff will be supervised, board members must meet HCIA requirements, as must prospective adoptive parents. For more information on adoption fraud and corruption refer to [www.hagueevaluation.com](http://www.hagueevaluation.com).


William Brian Butler, whom I have previously mentioned, also linked the continued dependence of Aboriginal peoples with the widespread socio-economic disadvantage and the still limited nature of Indigenous rights. He addressed the following complex issues associated with *The Stolen Generation* – ‘cultural genocide’, ‘institutionalised racism’, ‘institutionalised colonialism’ within the welfare system, and the destruction of family networks through ‘removal’. Homi Bhabha suggests that, “[t]he hegemonies that exist at ‘home’ provide us with useful perspectives on the predatory effects of global governance however philanthropic or ameliorative the original intention might have been”.  

In his critique of foreign aid in a globalised economy, Homi Bhabha also points out that monetary solutions to inequality, poverty and debt alleviation provided by those such as, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank create dual economies where vulnerable countries are tied up in a global culture of conditionality. Monetary loans, in the form of aid, are often subtly dependent on ‘reciprocal’ policies. Homi Bhabha would refer to this form of negotiation as ‘coercive conditionality’ thus influencing any sort of equitable outcome. In 1992, at the *Expert Meeting on Protecting Children’s Rights in Inter-country Adoptions, and Preventing the Trafficking and Sale of Children*, held in the Philippines, Dr Marie Francoise Locker-Babel spoke out about the political pressures being placed on countries in need of aid, associated with meeting the demands for international adoption.

This ‘need’ for children has put a very strong pressure on governments and institutions in Third World countries, obliging them to respond quickly to the growing demand without always having the necessary infrastructure and administrative mechanisms to proceed properly. In this context abuses have burgeoned with foreigners seeking to obtain a child corresponding to their wishes without having to wait too long.  

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346 Ibid.  
In this vein, Locker-Babel also points out that a supply-and-demand situation encourages adoption abuse and corruption, both within countries and between countries. Within a hegemonic discourse of transnational trade and debt alleviation by the major power brokers, the ‘demand’ for infants by the wealthy ‘West’ is also being met by inadequate solutions to poverty in disadvantaged communities within underdeveloped countries. The large sums of money offered by some agents of adoption far exceeds the annual wage in many sending countries.

*The Hague Convention* has helped to reduce corruption at the local level between sending and receiving countries by setting regulatory guidelines for the assessing and the sending of children overseas, but as inferred earlier, there are many loopholes, and continuing corruption has led to the forthcoming intercountry adoption summit which aims to tighten existing international regulations.\(^{348}\) Prior to Australia’s ratification of *The Hague Convention*, in 1998, the Commonwealth, States and Territories negotiated *The 1998 Commonwealth-State Agreement for the Implementation of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption*. It was a renegotiation of this agreement which led to the recent *Australian Inquiry into Intercountry Adoption*, in 2004. The subsequent report, mentioned earlier, contained 27 recommendations designed to ‘improve’ the process of intercountry adoption within Australia, supposedly to speed up the system, in line with America.\(^{349}\) In Australia, unlike America, it is illegal for private agencies to arrange adoptions; instead, adoptions are processed through the States and Territories.\(^{350}\) Exceptions to this rule occur when an adoption is processed in the sending country, that is, before the child leaves for Australia.\(^{351}\) In this case, adoptive parents apply for the child’s Australian citizenship through the Federal Ministry of Immigration.

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\(^{348}\) Refer to the conditions laid down by the *Hague Convention* at [www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net).

\(^{349}\) The North American system may be faster but it is far less regulated and therefore open to malpractice.

\(^{350}\) The ICA peak body now overseen by the AGD is heavily represented by adoptive mothers and does, I suggest, require a more balanced representation.

\(^{351}\) Refer to Table A13 where the full adoption order is processed in the country of origin. Usually a child enters Australia under a Guardianship order.
The following table shows a dramatic growth in ICA between 1998 and 2004, particularly by the United States and Spain. Huge numbers of infants and children, from a large range of countries and backgrounds, were being translocated across the globe, to be adopted by prospective adoptive parents in Western industrialised nations. According to demographer Peter Selman, from Newcastle University in the UK, in 2004, the ‘demand’ for adoptable children was met by approximately 45,000 children being translocated world wide. Just fewer than 23,000 of these children were adopted into the US.

### Table A13: Number of intercountry adoptions from Hague countries, 2008–09, by type of order under which the child entered Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Full adoption order in country of origin</th>
<th>Guardianship order</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China(1)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Hague intercountry adoptions</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>138</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Per cent of total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>53.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Excludes Special Administrative Regions and Taiwan Province.

Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.
Receiving countries with the highest number of inter-country adoptions, 1998-2004.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receiving Country (a)</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>15774</td>
<td>16363</td>
<td>19237</td>
<td>15,774</td>
<td>19,237</td>
<td>22,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3777</td>
<td>3597</td>
<td>3094</td>
<td>3551</td>
<td>3995</td>
<td>4079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2233</td>
<td>2177</td>
<td>2225</td>
<td>2225</td>
<td>2772</td>
<td>3398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2222</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>2181</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1487</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3428</td>
<td>3625</td>
<td>3951</td>
<td>5541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>1044</td>
<td>1107</td>
<td>1046</td>
<td>1109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>1122</td>
<td>1130</td>
<td>1154</td>
<td>1307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium b</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland c</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus c</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>31667</strong></td>
<td><strong>32627</strong></td>
<td><strong>36068</strong></td>
<td><strong>38339</strong></td>
<td><strong>41248</strong></td>
<td><strong>44872</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2005, Elizabeth Bartholet described international adoption as ‘the transfer of children for parenting purposes, from one nation to another’.  

Bartholet’s comment hovers ambiguously between what was originally, clearly a child rights issue and form of humanitarian aid, but is now increasingly driven by a perceived ‘right’ of adults to parent. No longer limited to the ‘local’ by distance, communal ties, ethnicity or culture, ICA is a global phenomenon and, following Homi Bhabha, can largely be seen as an international industry coordinated through mass technological communication and IT innovation, linking parents in the ‘West’ with infants located at the periphery. By 2006, demographer Peter Selman considered the numbers of intercountry adoptions to be so high as to form a significant portion of the worldwide migrant demographic. In the same year, political scientist Robert Saunders from the State University of New Jersey wrote, “that despite its controversial nature, international adoption has become a touchstone for globalization in the 21st century”.

Recent research is revealing a notable prejudice between understandings of intercountry adoption and perceptions of migration as played out in, for example, Spain, which is now a growing entry point for immigrants from South America. Not only does Spain have one of the highest rates of intercountry adoption, but many of those children also come from South America. The adopted infant is taken into his or her new family within the ‘receiving’ country and is acculturated through the ‘family’ into the dominant culture. Even when respect is paid to the ethnicity of their birthfamily and country of origin, seen as ‘over there’, the adopted child is not positioned as a migrant, political exile or as a member of a poor and disadvantaged community. They have been incorporated into the dominant culture via the ‘family’ in a nationally and often much more inclusive

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354 At the recent MIT conference, I noticed that the term ‘childhunger’ was used several times. I will comment on this later.

355 An exception to this would be the situation between the US and Canada. America now can be seen as both a sending and receiving country.


sense than is the child of a migrant family, also living within the receiving country. As Diana Marre’s title suggests, and Homi Bhabha’s ideas affirm, this type of ‘globalism’ is very selective.358

Undoubtedly, there are many children who do benefit from ICA, but not all child advocates see intercountry adoption as the solution. Organizations such as UNICEF, ICRC and WORLD VISION are not pro intercountry adoption, and regard ICA as the last option if a suitable outcome cannot be found within the child’s family, local community or country. Traditionally, the extended family and village community would care for its orphaned children. In some instances, poverty, profiteering intermediaries combined with social and political pressures to adopt out or abandon children, plus poor internal regulation, have created a situation where some governments have all but relinquished their social and financial responsibilities to their children in need. In saying that, many of the 84 signatories to the Hague Convention are trying to implement internal change and reduce the number of children being sent overseas by encouraging domestic adoption, that is, for those children who are actually legally available for adoption. Thousands of children do still remain in orphanages, and there are those who remain powerless to change their domestic situation.

At this point, I would like to digress a little in order to enlarge upon the issue of ‘parenting rights’. As outlined at the beginning of the chapter, adoption was originally legislated as a child-centred policy to overcome the stigma of illegitimacy and the exploitation of children in the labour force following industrialisation. Today, due to the influence of the Civil Rights movements, the rise of feminism, the growth of ‘identity politics’, and now ‘parenting rights’, adoption sits well within the ‘politics of family’, appearing, in many ways, to share a similar political space as ‘assisted reproductive technologies’ (ART). In

the ‘global’ arena, intercountry and/or transnational adoption can now be placed within the ‘technologies of reproduction’ from a sociological and cultural studies perspective. Here, I move between the areas of sociobiological human reproduction in ‘assisted technologies’, where gametes and surrogates can be sourced across cultural and national borders, to the social production of cross-cultural families through intercountry adoption.

Motivation and Ethics

The rate of social and technological advancement has become so rapid within the ‘globalised’ world that critical and ethical frameworks are struggling to keep up with that change, particularly in the areas of biomedicine and reproductive technology. At the same time, mass communication through internet access is being employed as a major organising tool for disseminating information, and for galvanising political action worldwide. Those privileged with internet technology have immediate access to power, and the ability to influence hegemonic thinking at a ‘global’ level, as opposed to those who lack education, are poor, suffer distress and are vulnerable.

As flagged earlier, there has been an ‘apparent’ rise in infertility in ‘Western’ industrialised nations, amongst both men and women. Many younger women are following long-term career choices before making a decision to have children, and/or leaving pregnancy too late. The brief era of a surplus supply of babies on the domestic adoption front, post WWII, “has left a legacy that it is possible for those who want children to obtain them”.\(^{359}\) It is this desire, or ‘childhunger’, combined with the advances in reproductive technology and a renewed push for overseas adoption which is, I suggest, stretching ethical frameworks in alternative family formation, given the notion of ‘reproductive choice’ and the perceived ‘right’ to parent. I first heard historian Karen Balcom refer to the term

‘childhunger’ during her presentation at the MIT conference on ‘Adoption and Culture’. I consider, in this era of ‘global’ practices, the word contains an ethical dilemma and ambiguity within itself, particularly when used to describe waiting adoptive parents. The humanitarian response to ‘hunger’ is that of providing food, usually for the ‘hungry’ in underprivileged countries. ‘Childhunger’ ‘asks’ for the alleviation of a particular ‘hunger’, within a privileged context, and can be aligned with the idea of humanitarian aid, that is, the alleviation of child hunger through intercountry adoption (ICA). Here, infertility and the concept of starvation have been cleverly collapsed within notions of human survival, whereas, the answer to actual hunger is food not necessarily ICA.

In his book, *Children on Demand: The Ethics of Defying Nature*, Tom Frame examines the ethics of various forms of alternative family formation, including adoption and ART. He sees adoption as a valid alternative to infertility, although he does acknowledge that “the need to relinquish children is always and everywhere regrettable”. Frame considers ‘open’ domestic adoption, as it is in Australia today, more a long-term custody arrangement because the prospect of reunion remains open. This may be so; however, long-term custody arrangements can also be implemented through the court as ‘legal guardianships’ or ‘parenting orders’.

**Globalisation /Assisted Conception**

Since completing my Honours project in 1996, ‘parental rights’ and the ‘politics of family’ have become central to this discussion. In 1995, I was invited to give a short presentation to a seminar on donor insemination (DI) run by the Health Department of Western Australia. The forum was held to examine the effects of silence on identity formation regarding ‘open’ or ‘closed’ donor insemination

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361 This comment is slightly ambiguous as ‘open adoption’ means some sort of ongoing contact which is more often than not a ‘face-to-face’ meeting. Ibid. p. 191.
One of the speakers, Joanna Rose, was conceived in a Harley Street clinic in London as a result of DI and has since become an advocate for ‘openness’ in the area of ART. Joanna realised the similarities and connections between the ‘silences’ of ‘closed adoption’ and the lack of access to her own records concerning her biological father. She later voiced the need to establish adequate records and a ‘donor’ register for people born through DI. In 2002, she returned to the UK and made a ‘demand’ of the High Court in London to revoke decisions of anonymity made by the 1984 inquiry which led to the UK Human Fertilization and Embryology Act of 1990. The 1984 inquiry was chaired by Mary Warnock, and subsequently became known as the Warnock Report. In an interview with The Times newspaper, following the 2002 revocation, Lady Warnock said:

I think I got it wrong. I would now advocate removing anonymity from donors. The number of conditions that we now think are genetically linked is so enormous that children do need to know…The debate on the rights of donor offspring has many parallels with the debate in the late 60s about the rights of adopted children.

As an ‘expert’ in the social, legal, and ethical issues behind fertility treatments, Mary Warnock changed her mind and acknowledged that many of the identity issues facing those born as a result of ART through the use of ‘donor material’ strongly parallel aspects of ‘closed adoption’. Not only did she change her mind, but in the same year she published her own book, Making Babies: Is there a Right to have Children?

Ironically, just as the social implications of ART were being acknowledged and compared to the complexities of ‘closed adoption’ through the British court system, here in Australia and in other national jurisdictions, semantically, and in some instances actually, ‘adoption’ was/is being drawn into some of the

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362 See IRI, D22.
‘processes’ in, and the marketing of, assisted reproductive technology (ART).\textsuperscript{366} In an age of ‘global’ networking, it is now common to find gametes, embryos, surrogacy, and children ‘available’ for adoption advertised on the internet. Most of these photo-listings for infant ‘local’ adoptions are advertised through agencies within the US, although both the US and the UK now use internet photo-listings to promote children within the foster-care system awaiting adoption and/or permanent family care.\textsuperscript{367} Commercial sites for surrogacy and gametes no longer seem remarkable.\textsuperscript{368}

The advancements in and availability of ‘assisted conception’ have fostered a ‘push’ by prospective parents towards legislative reform recognizing ‘parental rights’ beyond the ‘traditional’ family model. In 1978, Louise Brown, the world’s first in vitro fertilization baby was born in England. In 1980 the first IVF babies were born in Australia and in the United States. The first frozen embryo baby was born in 1984. In ART, the complexity surrounding conception, and, by extension, the complexity of the genetic and social ‘relatedness’ between the donors and recipients to the ‘offspring’ – when often multiple parties are involved – is only just beginning to be fully negotiated. In the Addendum, I reference my involvement in two of the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) forums held by the Health Department in Western Australia. I found, in particular, the second conference, \textit{Life after ART: Developing Families in 2001}, raised complex ethical challenges surrounding future constructions of ‘family and notions of relatedness’.\textsuperscript{369} These factors, combined with high rates of divorce and relationship breakdown, make the clarification of ‘parental’ rights and responsibilities towards the ‘offspring’ or children ‘produced’ vital. As an Anglican bishop, academic and adoptee, Tom Frame challenges what \textit{really} is in

\textsuperscript{367} See \url{www.adoption.org.uk} and \url{www.adoption.org/adopt/us-adoptive-photolisting.php}.
\textsuperscript{368} Refer to, \url{www.affordablesurrogacy.com} and \url{www.surromomsonline.com}.
\textsuperscript{369} See the Addendum, IRI, D21 and D57-1.
the child’s best interests, and calls for an ethical reconsideration of these issues in alternative family formation today.\(^{370}\)

In “Relationship Diversity and the Law”, Catherine Caruana examines how the law has, in fact, accommodated to some of these challenges within Australia.\(^ {371}\) For those who can afford it, any disparity between state, national or even international law is overcome by ease of travel and improved communication. This gives prospective parents unprecedented ‘reproductive choice’, through what is known as ‘jurisdiction shopping’. This challenges the effectiveness of ethical and legal boundaries within Australia (or any other country) thus highlighting the need, as in adoption, for international agreement. In many places, including Western Australia (WA), adoptive parenting ‘rights’ have been extended to single, de-facto and same-sex couples. In 2001, WA introduced Gay Law Reform legislation to allow same-sex and de-facto couples the same rights as single parents and married couples to adopt a child.\(^ {372}\) When viewed from the ‘parental rights’ perspective, it is easy to collapse debates surrounding adoptive parenting in domestic and intercountry adoption with the issues surrounding fertility and ‘reproductive choice’. Both debates are now plainly positioned within the ‘politics of family’. Obviously, the adopted child already exists before the adoption, having been born into one kinship network or community before being adopted into another, whereas the baby born as a result of assisted technology has been ‘designed’ before conception by the ‘commissioning parents’.

As previously mentioned, many issues resulting from ART associated with identity, silence, ‘openness’, and the law, are similar to and resonate with adoption issues. There are, of course, the fundamental differences between them, but, with the increasing use of donor embryos and surrogacy, ART and adoption are also becoming linguistically intertwined within surrogacy contracts. For


\(^{372}\) Under the same legislation, de-facto and same sex couples will have access to the Family Court to settle property disputes.
example, in the UK, ‘commissioning parents’ using surrogacy must now apply for a ‘parenting order’ to adopt their biological child after the baby is born. In the US, the surrogate mother relinquishes all parenting rights before the surrogacy contract is signed; that is, before conception. On 26 June 2008, surrogacy laws were passed in Western Australia although, unlike in the US, any financial transaction is illegal. As I have argued earlier, the necessary debates on parental rights and responsibilities brought about as a consequence of ‘assisted technologies’ seem to have also broadened ‘popular understandings’ around ‘parenting rights’ in traditional adoption, which is now viewed by many as a form of family planning – thus overtly repositioning the interests of ‘children in need’, to the needs of ‘parents wanting children’. I consider that the politicisation around ‘reproductive rights’, the low number of local adoptions, and the politics of family and ‘parenting rights’ have all impacted on attitudes towards, and created a greater demand for, intercountry adoption. This was apparent in light of the 2004 demands on the Australian Government to ‘boost’ intercountry adoption numbers. As I touched on earlier, the other strong pressure group agitating for increased intercountry adoption on humanitarian grounds is the, so-called, ‘religious right’.

The influence of the religious right on adoption

At the University of Western Australia, in 2001, in opposition to the freedoms which many young women in Australia and elsewhere now take for granted, Bob Connell highlighted the fact that, in many parts of the world, there has been a ‘right wing’ backlash against the rise of feminism, where cultural and political groups argue that women’s advancement is seen to be damaging to the family, to children, and/or to religion. In this group he includes the ‘religious right’, particularly in the US. It seems that ‘backlash ideas’ are now being given wide publicity at international forums and through the international media. Within recent years, in terms of politics, the major players in the ‘coalition of the

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willing’, George W. Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard, powerfully represented this moral conservative push. Through the media there has been a growing awareness of the ‘religious right’ and its link to Liberal Party conservative politics here in Australia, including strong associations with the anti-abortion, pro-adoption push mentioned earlier. The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) has “established effective political relationships in both State and Federal Governments”.

In 2004, the ACL put forward a favourable submission to the government enquiry into ICA, led by Bronwyn Bishop. The Attorney-General’s Department (AGD) has since outlined its strategic plan to speed up the process of intercountry adoptions into Australia.

In the US, the Christian Alliance for Orphans plays a major role in adoption politics. The Christian Alliance is made up of over 45 organisations and churches across the US, of which Focus on the Family is a member. Focus on the Family, and Focus on Family Action, are Religious Right organisations that are opposed to the separation of Church and State. In 2007, the US Adoption Summit was held for the first time by Focus on the Family. Representatives from government agencies, adoption services, and churches were present, including a large presence by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, more commonly known as Mormons. The advertised feature for the summit was to build an alliance between state foster care and local churches to encourage the adoption of children in care on a national level, to offer them greater permanency.

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375 Updated information concerning recent developments in intercountry adoption in Australia can be obtained from the Attorney General’s office, [www.ag.gov.au](http://www.ag.gov.au) Australia has ICA programmes with 14 countries. They are either Hague signatories or countries which Australia has previously had a bilateral agreement with. Recently the AGD investigated the possibility of establishing programming with 30 new countries, but indicated that 22 of these countries have barriers to establishing a programme. Refer to, (2010). Adoptions Australia 2008-09. Child welfare series, Canberra, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), p. 3. This result suggests that these countries are either under regulated, do not meet the demands of the Hague Convention, or are resistant to sending children to Australia.
376 Refer to, [www.focusonthefamily.com/about_us/profile/dr_james_dobson.aspx](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/about_us/profile/dr_james_dobson.aspx)
377 Its founder and chairman, Dr James Dobson acted as a political advisor to the White House under both Bush administrations and now runs internationally syndicated Christian radio programs. His ‘commentaries’ are heard by more than 220 million people every day, including a translation on State owned radio stations in the Republic of China.
378 Interestingly, our new Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, announced herself as an atheist.
through adoption or legal guardianship. However, on the Focus on the Family website, I found this statement supporting their application to host the 2007 summit:

[1]he summit was birthed out of the biblical mandate to ‘look after orphans and widows in their distress and is a practical step toward mobilizing the evangelical community worldwide to accomplish that goal….most importantly, the visible decline in the number of ‘orphans’ will be due to active and intentional adoption of children into forever families’.

This does have undertones of a worldwide recruiting campaign and it is important to reiterate that a large percentage of infants adopted as ‘orphans’ do often have one parent and/or other family members living and have been relinquished or abandoned due to poverty, coercion or political circumstance. One of the main stipulations of the Hague Convention, is to trace any known relative who may be able to care for the children. A case in point is that of the US Christian Group charged recently with the abduction of 33 ‘orphans’ in Haiti following the devastating earth-quake. A spokesperson for the Haitian Social Welfare Department later stated, “most of these kids have family”.

Today, the two prominent political groups in the campaign for ‘parenting rights’ appear to come from opposite ‘camps’ as they form a tenuous link in the push for increased overseas adoption, and greater reproductive choice. On the ‘right’, the neo-liberalist humanitarian approach, just outlined, supporting the anti abortion, ‘right to life, pro-adoption lobby sits beside the more ‘progressive left’ assertion for ‘parenting rights’ for infertile de-facto heterosexual couples, prospective single parents, and same-sex couples. I do acknowledge that many people occupy a moderate position and I am not suggesting that all prospective adoptive parents

379 Legislation to this effect has been implemented in the US. This was a key topic of discussion at the 2008 Sydney Conference and was enlarged upon by guest speakers from both the UK and US.
380 The italics shown in this quote are my addition. See www.focusonthefamily.com for more information.
381 See www.hcch.net
383 Extending UNICEF’S definition of the word ‘orphan’ where only one parent may be dead and the other parent and/or family members still alive, popular usage also appears to have translated the word into a generic term for any child separated from their family through war or other major disaster.
are politically motivated or necessarily belong to the ‘religious right’ or the ‘progressive left’, but in addition to those links, there are complex cultural ambiguities in play connecting ‘child hunger’ and humanitarian aid – the power of affluence, desire and altruism – even lifestyle choices and notions of fashionability.

**Children in Care ‘at home’**

In Australia in the 1980s and 90s, in an effort to counter past adoption practices and the forced removal of Indigenous children, social welfare policies tended to keep families together at all costs, sometimes with disastrous results. As mentioned earlier, as I write this in 2010, there is renewed discussion towards early intervention where children are at risk of violence and/or neglect due to drug and alcohol abuse, and if necessary for parental dispensation allowing, in some cases, for the adoption of children who come under State care. These new moves towards the issuing of ‘permanent care orders’, and in some cases adoption, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, follow trends in the UK and US. No system is infallible. Expert practitioners make their decisions based on current policy, which is laid down by laws legislated and/or amended in response to the electorate, lobby groups, government inquiries, current research, new waves of hegemonic thinking, and so on. As mentioned previously, what is seen to be in the ‘best interests of the child’ changes in relation to a particular population group and/or with each new paradigm shift – thinking which is both historically and socially specific.
Many children in care have suffered not only abuse but multiple separations from a parent or principal care-giver. In the past, there was limited knowledge about the sociobiological development of the brain. The long term neural damage caused by early trauma, institutionalisation, and multiple separation can now be monitored, worked with therapeutically, and built upon positively, except in very severe cases.\(^{384}\) Multiple placements and therefore multiple separations experienced by some children in the care system are obviously very disruptive to a child’s emotional and physiological development and can cause severe attachment disorders and developmental retardation.\(^{385}\)

\(^{384}\) As mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, important discoveries in the area of neurophysiology associated with the neuroplasticity of the brain means positive changes can be made by creating new neural pathways which can be recorded, seen on a functional MRI screen, and also measured biochemically.

\(^{385}\) At the beginning of Chapter 4, I extend the discussion on the dramatic advances in sociobiology and neurophysiology over the last 10 years and contextualise some important aspects in light of (re)storying in adoption through creative production.
Today, welfare assistance and the change in social mores give most single women in Australia who give birth as the result of an unplanned pregnancy the choice to keep their babies. The low number of newborn babies being placed for adoption here is also largely due to advances in contraception, access to safe and legal abortion, youth sex education programmes and the availability of the pension for single parents. In Australia today, instead of being the solution to an ‘illegitimate’ birth, adoption is now an option for parents who are unwilling or unable to care for their child, and it is seen by practitioners as the most extreme form of ‘out of home care’.  

In spite of the global financial crisis, Australia continues to live in an era of prosperity at home, and is part of the economic expansion abroad by the West. Whilst middle Australia experiences growing levels of comfort and wealth, there is, however, at ‘home’, a growing divide between those who ‘have’ and the disadvantaged. Due to increased levels of family breakdown, a record number of children are under the care of the Department of Child Protection. Drug and alcohol dependency is a growing social problem. Cyrenian House is a corporate-funded organisation in Perth which aims to keep mothers and their children together. By providing child care for children at risk, and parenting programmes which support re-unification between mothers impacted by drug and alcohol abuse with their dependant children, the programme monitors the state of mother-child attachment, and the psychological and social development of the child. In Western Australia alone, roughly 3,000 children are registered, with an estimated

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increase to 4,000 by the year 2011.\footnote{387} I suggest, following the corporate initiative of Cyrenian House, that there is a very strong case for more state-run support structures and residential intervention programmes for young mothers, particularly where children are at risk.\footnote{388}

In the United States, following the \textit{1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act}, where abuse, drugs and alcohol put children at risk, a permanency decision favouring adoption must be made for a child who has had to be in foster care for 15 out of 22 months.\footnote{389} In contrast to Australia, a young mother with an unplanned pregnancy in the US can ‘choose’ adoptive parents for her child before birth, from advertisements in the media and on the web. A contract is signed, and the prospective adoptive parents pay for the antenatal care, medical expenses and the birthing costs, the general assumption being that this ‘choice’ also gives the young birthmother agency. Due to the lack of regulation in the ‘adoption business’ however, there have been many reports of coercive practice.\footnote{390} Negotiations take place and contracts are signed early in the pregnancy, giving little chance for the birthmother to legally change her mind after the baby is born. As an adoptive mother in a local, ‘open’ adoption in the US, Susan Bordo has written two

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\item \footnote{387} A disproportionate number of these children are Indigenous. This information was noted in personal correspondence with the Office for the Minister for Child Protection, in Western Australia.
\item \footnote{388} One program being run by the State of California is in reaction to the 15/22 policy, and is promoted in Sheila Ganz’s film, \textit{Moms Living Clean}. Sheila presented her work at the MIT conference on adoption, in May 2010. The film documents the stories of six women with substance abuse issues. “They are determined to turn their lives around and keep their children. The story begins when they enter an innovative three year residential treatment program where they learn recovery, parenting and life skills. Interwoven with the film are the punitive drug laws and policies aimed at pregnant and parenting women with addictions, and the subsequent legacy of the mother’s imprisonment and/or foster care on their children” is made clear. See, http://www.momslivingclean.org also www.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/hans35.nsf.
\item \footnote{389} As communicated by psychologist, Juanita Miller Berry, Murdoch University. For more information refer to the Centre for Family Development, NY web-site, where Dr Arthur Becker-Weidman, Director of the Centre for Family Development, Buffalo, NY, gives a more in depth outline of the program. \url{www.center4familydevelop.com}. From the time a child is apprehended and put into ‘care’ for being at risk, a plan working towards successful long term unification with the birth parent(s) must be put in place by offering parenting programs and therapy by the regional child care authorities. Once the child has been removed, the strength of the unification commitment by the State is unclear, as shown in Sheila Gantz’s research.
\item \footnote{390} As pointed out on the following blog sites, \url{Pregnant and single? Coercion in adoption is alive and well in the USA and Coercion in adoption practice in US Christian Adoption Agencies}. The popular film, \textit{Juno}, paints a light-hearted picture of young love with the perfect solution to an unplanned pregnancy. Refer to \url{www.exiledmothers.comopenadoption} and \url{www.sott.net}. adoption-coersive-practices-of-christian-adoption-agencies.\end{itemize}
empathetic, autoethnographic accounts of her relationship with the young birthmother of her adopted daughter. She writes about the young girl’s actual lack of agency within public perceptions of ‘choice’. Avoiding the pitfall of one mother being ‘real’ where the other is not, Bordo bypasses the dichotomy altogether and describes a more ethical relationship between the two mothers, based on trust.

Just as ‘identity politics’ is dependent on the way questions about the ‘self’ are constantly being rearticulated, and reflectively theorised from within the present milieu, new cultural determinations within rapid social change can act as a form of ‘democratic repression’ that influences which individuals at any particular time are given agency, and, in turn, can determine which ‘new’ silences are to be kept from public consciousness. I suggest that the relinquishing mothers within the many ‘sending’ countries are now the ones being silenced.

I would like to return to the beginning of this chapter, and my reference to experiencing complexity within ‘situated moments of reflection’. The conference at MIT, the 9th Australian Adoption Conference and the 2004 Australian Adoption Conference were three of those ‘moments’, not only from the perspective of assessing policy and practices nationally and internationally, but more in terms of observing the constantly shifting nature of adoption at both the local and global level. At the 2004 Australian Adoption Conference, there was a strong push and support for ICA by researchers and adoptive parents. At the 2008 Australian conference, Julie Selwyn from the Hadley Centre said, “[i]n the UK we don’t really do ICA”. Her emphasis was on adoption and permanent care for those children in the domestic care system. At the Alliance for Adoption and Culture

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393 Cross reference with IRI, D80.
Conference, at MIT in 2010, there was a strong emphasis on exposing and arresting the corruption within ICA, endorsement for ‘transracial’ adoption at ‘home’, and great support for helping drug dependent mothers heal their addiction whilst living with their children in residential treatment programmes, as opposed to the enforced parental dispensation and adoption outcomes from the 15/22 model mentioned earlier. As seen here, social policies seem to run in reactive waves. Over the last 15 years or so, due to the ‘local’ and ‘global’ factors outlined in this chapter, power structures have shifted within adoption discourse and many of the normative silences experienced in the past have been lifted or have been subtly realigned, creating significant paradigm shifts within a relatively short period of time. The fluidity of this project reflects how the ‘personal’, and therefore my praxis, has intersected with, or (re)acted within the wider sociopolitical frame.

When opening a ‘closed’, cross-cultural, or transnational adoption today, meanings within acculturated assumptions associated with family, sense of place, and belonging, can be severely challenged, and call for a renegotiation. The silences and separations within cross-cultural adoption split popular understandings of, for example, ‘ethnicity’. According to Gareth Griffiths, ‘ethnicity’ draws together a group or category of people who have a common ancestral origin and the same cultural traits – a sense of peoplehood, and group belonging.394 To return to one’s ancestral ‘home’ as a ‘foreigner’ who has been acculturated elsewhere, can promote an experience of an intimate liminal strangeness, as I will discuss in the next chapter. The dichotomies exposed when renegotiating the ‘personal’ within adoption (re)stor(y)ing amplifies many of the broader cultural issues being debated today. Popular media programmes such as Who do you think you are? and Can we help?, currently being aired in Australia, are amongst the many ‘tracing’ programmes which highlight our current obsession with life stories, our ancestral pasts, and a desire to belong. As the various TV guests reconstruct their pasts during the course of the programme, they are often challenged by their newfound cultural heritage, and issues of family

identity, ethnicity, gender inequity and class. Adoption stories cut to the core of these concerns.

Returning to the question of Wales, in the following chapter, I reflect critically on my practice and my own (re)stor(y)ing process during the tracing of, and (re)connection with, my birthmother’s family in Llanelli, South Wales, and my birthfather’s family in North Wales – ‘my’ family, who are welcoming but dislike the English, are ‘Welsh speakers’, and strong Welsh Nationalists. Through story I engage performatively with the contingent and ambiguous process of translating the ‘self’ across families, cultures, countries and pasts.
CHAPTER 4

Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as a form of mediation

The function of art is to restore palpability to the world, which habit and familiarity otherwise obscure; its task is to restore the liveliness to life. Thus it must make the familiar remarkable, noticeable again; it must render the familiar unfamiliar.  

Synopsis

In ‘Performing adoption, translating the self’, I reflect on aspects of my praxis and art as a form of mediation over this extended time-frame. ‘Opening’ a ‘closed, cross-cultural adoption provides an emotional, critical and performatively site for examining the complexities of ‘family’ – the dialogic nature of translating live silences across cultures, places and pasts. Through story, I examine the interrelationship between lived emotional experience, creative production, critical reflection, and social interaction, as I navigate the contingent, yet ambiguous, process of articulating the ‘self’ across discontinuous and dispersed identities.

When bringing the past into the present, I draw on my understandings of translating hiraeth as a process, and as a particular form of ‘critical nostalgia’ as outlined in my methodology chapter. Here, I negotiate the experience of ‘return’ through proximal ‘acts’ of translation from within the present, to reflect on the mediatory processes enmeshed within the tracing and reconnection with my birthmother’s family in Llanelli, and my father’s family in North Wales. In this

work, I attempt to reveal an ongoing hermeneutic practice underpinning the processes of translation, transformation and communication. My earliest contribution to this chapter was in the form of a short performative paper specifically created for Cyfrwng, a bilingual media conference held at the University of Wales, in 2004. I was invited to Bangor to participate in a panel presentation offering a taste of artistic practices associated with Performance Studies. The theme of the conference was ‘Wales and the World’. The title of my paper then, was, ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Postmodern quest or diasporic inversion’. As a result of ‘opening’ a ‘closed adoption’ following a double migration from England to Africa, then to Australia, my desire to ‘return’ to Wales from Australia in search of my ‘Welshness’ grew. By employing the agentic qualities within the Welsh word cyfrwng, I reference previous works in Western Australia, an ‘(im)placement’ project in Wales, and a range of significant ‘events’, to reflect on creative praxis as a vital force of expression, a form of mediation, and means of cultural production. In the following pages, I hope to show evidence of the generative, hermeneutic processes in play as the project expands and spirals out with, and beyond, the personal concerns. This chapter augments the creative component of my thesis by conveying, I hope, the ongoing complexities within the processes of translating hiraeth at any particular point in time.

The story begins with a reflection on Translating Hiraeth, the Installation, in Murdoch University’s Worship Centre, in 2003. After weaving back and forth, revealing various convolutions within my praxis over the last decade or so, I return to Cynhadledd Cyfrwng, in Bangor, a year later, when Translating Hiraeth was also exhibited at this forum, in 2004. I have since extended and written into the earlier version of the text, and revisited this performative piece on several occasions, adding new realisations and other layers of meaning through a range of disciplinary and theoretical negotiations. Some of these thoughts have also been placed in other chapters. I have decided to keep the earlier performative

396 Lisa Lewis invited myself and Mike Pearson to give a joint panel presentation to the conference. Lisa is currently Head of Drama at the University of Glamorgan in Cardiff, and Mike Pearson is Professor of Performance Studies at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth.
presentation in *italics* to indicate how the process has evolved, and to differentiate between the earlier writing and my ongoing investigations, which now appear in ordinary font.

Since I began this research, much of my own (re)stor(y)ing experience and subsequent understandings, using creative performance as a form of mediation, have now been ‘validated’ through an explosion of neurobiological research into memory and neuroplasticity. I begin this chapter by outlining the two major areas within the project of adoption (re)stor(y)ing, as I now understand it, before situating relevant aspects of contemporary neuroscience and memory research within the work.

**The (re)stor(y)ing project**

As the creative project weaves between personal experience, an embodied art practice, and critical reflection, each ‘significance’ gathers a range of somatic meanings through the complex processes of mediation, translation and understanding. The (re)stor(y)ing project, as I see it, falls into two major areas of embodied ‘understanding’. Firstly, there is the process of making sense of, and acknowledging the experiences associated with, the prior ‘relatedness’ to and the subsequent loss of, and separation from, the mother before adoption. This time has to do with sensory perception, where responses are recorded according to the flow of positive and negative affect. This early form of memory is ‘non-declarative’ or implicit, and involves the direct encoding of emotional, behavioural, somatic and perceptual experience into non-linguistic representations. These are laid down as early pre-symbolic cognitive representations. Developmental psychologist Daniel Siegal maintains that these early interactions are not only associated with security and survival, following Stern, but also form the foundations of attachment through the ‘mutual attunement’ between infant and caregiver.397 This enables an ability to thrive

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emotionally, and, according to recent research into interpersonal neurobiology, lays the groundwork for future dyadic relationships.\textsuperscript{398} The adopted adult has no remembered language for their earliest experiences as they fall into the ‘pre-verbal’.\textsuperscript{399}

During ‘search’, at ‘reunion’, or even during random events, the adopted person can unexpectedly experience intense emotional responses from the past, which can be triggered by a ‘familia’ experience within the present.\textsuperscript{400} These bodily responses may be difficult to place or put language to. Using a range of sensory triggers, the creative and performative arts can recall the past by connecting with bodily ‘understandings’ of unconscious mental life, in the form of sensations, sound, smell, touch, proximity and ‘images’. These scientific developments into implicit and ‘non-declarative memory’ can also be positioned beside Julia Kristeva’s work on the ‘maternal’ and pre-symbolic and Ettinger’s discussion on the Matrixial Gaze. Ettinger extends Lacan’s notion of ‘desire’, and draws on Merleau-Ponty’s theory of phenomenology, to discuss the function of art in understanding.\textsuperscript{401} The making and reception of art can facilitate understanding by making sense of an experience, and by then putting a form of language to it. Later in this chapter, I bring the earlier audio-visual Installation, \textit{Fy Mam} (1996), into

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\item \textsuperscript{399}Even if the child is old enough to put language to the pre-adoption experience, these memories can literally be ‘lost in translation’ if a second language is involved, or lost as a result of the experience not being validated, or built upon, as part of the child’s life story. Memory can also be lost due to early trauma, the experiences of institutionalisation, neglect and/or multiple separation.

\item \textsuperscript{400}In adoption discourse, ‘search’ and ‘reunion’ are accepted terms when referring to the process of birth relatives searching for one another, and (re)uniting.

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focus as it draws heavily on sensory affect, the ‘preverbal’, and the notion of the ‘maternal’.

The second area of embodied (re)stor(y)ing appears to be an inversion of the first. As a result of an adoption ‘search’, the person ‘searching’ is often confronted with an excess of language, literally, in terms of a ‘new’ family story and particular facts about identity, but has no progressive emotional life-experience to link this information to, and no associative ‘hook’ to hang it on. This is especially so if a new language has to be negotiated. Creative kinaesthetic devices can be very valuable when trying to (im)place oneself within a ‘new’ familial and cultural story.

By interacting with the new environment in a creative and meaningful way, phenomenological associations can be made by connecting particular ‘events’ in the present to new ‘significant’ others, family ‘monuments’, places, and their pasts. I have found that the bodily act of creating a simple, repetitive, ephemeral memorial at strategic locations across Wales, through a performative action – in this case, the filling of labelled geological sample bags – has not only enabled a more embodied understanding of the significance of each place in relation to story, it has also provided the experiential hook necessary within memory, upon which to hang new information in the future.\textsuperscript{402} Such an act becomes a ritual, performed then documented with a photograph, video, a drawing, a piece of writing as a point of location on a map, or other action. As a marker for each chosen family site, this act associates a range of different sign systems, including sensory affect, with new meaning. This registers what is called a ‘dispositional representation’, or accumulation of personal associations, which can link new significant people and places through experience with knowledge of past events and family story.\textsuperscript{403}

\textsuperscript{402} I discuss my (re)mapping of Wales, and the filling of sample bags through the (im)placement project, later in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{403} This includes any cluster of actions which trigger a sensory ‘dispositional representation’, that is, music, movement dance, planting a tree, creating a circle of rocks \textit{et cetera}.  

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There is now a recognised link between repetitive action and the recording of somatic sensation through the body, to Freud’s ‘talking therapy’, which, of course, draws on narrative. Given the poor economic positioning of the humanities within the academy, in terms of funding, it seems ironic that the recent findings in areas such as neuroscience and sociobiology are now offering ‘functional’ scientific ‘truths’ to ‘validate’ long-standing philosophical and social theories such as phenomenology. Following the dichotomous thinking produced through the Enlightenment, the arts and sciences are now being drawn together again, influencing new areas of study, for example, the philosophy of mind and evolutionary psychobiology. As mentioned earlier, the relevance of Eric Kandel’s work to my Honours project in 1996 was, and still is, of particular interest. As a psychoanalyst, psychotherapist and neurobiologist, Kandel was one of the first, following Freud’s earlier intentions, to actually bring social theory into contact with biology. Kandel studied the conversion of short-term sensory memory into long-term memory, and its storage within the body. Interestingly, his particular area of study looked at the registration of negative affect and anxiety, which links directly, in terms of this project, to early separation and trauma.

New and important clinical work associated with trauma and memory is that of neuropsychotherapist Allan Schore, neuropsychologist Bruce Perry, and developmental psychologist Daniel Siegal, amongst others, who affirm the

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408 In 2000, Eric Kandel’s work with ‘memory’ won him the Nobel Prize for Medicine.
neuroplasticity of the brain in relation to not only the effects of childhood trauma, but also in relation to the rebuilding of new neural pathways — that is, towards the healing of trauma and attachment disorder.409

When using creative production as a form of (re)stor(ying), there are at least three types of cognitive representations to be considered, which interact to form associative memory. These are, the ‘symbolic linguistic’ or semantic meaning associated with words, the ‘symbolic pre-linguistic’ which takes the form of images or ideas, and the previously mentioned pre-symbolic, which has to do with sensation.410 In this context, a performative or creative action which employs the body with mindfulness creates a physical repetitious act of embodied connection, or, as previously mentioned, a ‘dispositional representation’ between a present sense of self, and the new, but ‘original’, family culture and story. These findings could also be positioned next to Raymond Williams’s earlier ideas on the function of art in the area of ‘practical consciousness’, as mentioned in Dwight Conquergood’s outline of Performance Studies, as quoted earlier and further discussed in this performative section.

It was 2003, and the hottest November day on record. I was setting up Translating Hiraeth, in the Murdoch Worship Centre, in Western Australia. This building is an affiliated space governed equally by Church and University, yet stands on Aboriginal Wadjuk Nyunga land.

As a contemporary, rammed earth structure it is a multicultural, interdenominational centre for worship – a particular place to many, and yet a social space signifying a range of cross-cultural meanings.

It was the first time this space had been used for creative performance, although performative ritual is part of its daily routine. The Installation had to be carefully timed - it was Ramadan, and Mass was to be held in the morning.

When the work was installed, I positioned two bags at the entrance – on either side of the door. One had the word DIGWYDDIAD printed on it, and the other TRANSIENCE.\textsuperscript{411} I’ll tell you about the bags in a minute.

\textsuperscript{411} Digwyddiad is Welsh for ‘chance’.
At the opening, Vijay Mishra, spoke about various meanings of ‘return’ and my use of ‘nostalgia’ as a reflexive and critical device – a device which I find contingently rearranges my present interpretations of identity. In his own words, he articulated a sensitive understanding of my process.  

Before the screening, John Frodsham, who is of Welsh descent, recited a poem entitled ‘Hiraeth’ (in Welsh). He offered a translation, with notes, and a reminder that Wales is England’s oldest colony. “‘Hiraeth’ has,” he said, “a range of meanings, all connected with the poignancy of yearning”. For me, the poignancy of the word ‘hiraeth’ as a signifier has been amplified within several

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412 Vijay Mishra is Professor of English Literature at Murdoch University, Western Australia. At this stage of the writing, I had not deconstructed the term ‘critical nostalgia’ sufficiently to be dissatisfied with it as a term for my methodological process, nor had I conceptualised the usefulness within this context of using translating hiraeth as my own term for the critical and reflexive praxis of (re)storying in a ‘closed, cross cultural adoption.

413 John Frodsham is Murdoch University’s Foundation Professor of English and Comparative Literature.

414 Yearning for one’s lover, for one’s family and friends, for one’s homeland, for lost opportunities, and above all, yearning for might have been, as translated by J. D. Frodsham, 2003. I have included a copy of the poem in the Appendix.
acts of translation – on my part. Semantically, ‘hiraeth’ now registers a range of somatic meanings, which I’ve gathered over time.

Here, I would like to foreground my initial introduction to ‘hiraeth’ as a word. It too came with an approximate translation – it was in Pentir, in North Wales, in 1998, although much had happened before I actually read the word.

Now, as I look back again, to make sense of possible futures, I think of Gertrude Stein when she said, “[I]t’s great to have ‘roots’ as long as you can take them with you”.

In ‘closed adoption’, the initial act of translation was performed by a social worker as she matched a particular file with the textual requirements of another. This bureaucratic initiative results in a ‘radical’ translation of the infant into another story.

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416 In accordance with ‘Westminster’ law, (1950, Vols. 14 and 15, Chapter 26.). British Law Reports and Statutes. This action is clearly illustrated in the Pathe News clip, *Home for Baby*, shown with the Installation.
Following the 1926 Act, in the 1950s, the now, new parents were told to take the infant home “as if” born to them in wedlock.\textsuperscript{418}

\textsuperscript{417} This letter was in my adoption file. It is a referral from one social worker to another at the National Adoption Society in Knightsbridge, following an initial interview with Mary’s brother, George Morgan.
When referencing the meaning of the word ‘radical’, Michel Foucault writes that, ‘[t]he essence of being radical is physical…. The essence of being radical is the radicalness of existence itself’. Here, I use ‘radical’ to emphasize the corporeal and existential density within the textual ‘matching’ of a mere file by a social worker. Through cancellation of the previous name and family history, the infant becomes the object of translation, when s/he is physically transferred to a new family ‘site’, name, and story. ‘Translation’ is used as a ‘live’ metaphor in this context, and the ‘translation’ itself becomes a metaphorical trope. In its original sense, ‘metaphor’ is ‘metapherein’ which means ‘to transfer’ (OED), and, as Hannah Arendt points out, the accepted use of a metaphor generally is to offer a connection which is sensually perceived through the body.

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In ‘closed adoption’, the child was renamed, a new birth certificate issued, and all previous records of his or her family and cultural history sealed. In the past, it was mostly illegitimate white babies who were placed with white middle-class infertile couples. The ‘difference’ within this initial translation was officially rendered invisible.

As a constructed liminal performance, ‘closed adoption’ sets up a subject positioning which is inherently in-between – quite literally. Social norms and behavioural constraints helped maintain the silence. Following Foucault’s notion of the ‘radical’, in light of the physical translation of the infant into another story, my use of creative performance explores the normative forces of

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institutionalization inherent within the silences of closed adoption’s liminal norm.⁴²²

In 1989 I read my original birth certificate for the first time. I knew it was real but I couldn’t touch it completely. I remember the shock as I saw each of my birth certificates position my life differently – twice born, an appropriate legal fiction.⁴²³

It was at this point that I realized both my birth parents were Welsh, that there was another family history, and that I too, was of Welsh descent. I was ‘raised’ in a middle-class, English family which leaned towards stereotypical views of the Welsh. There was a rather ‘romantic’ Wordsworthian image of the Welsh countryside where the villages were “quaint” and the language “soft and melodious”, although the attitude towards the Welsh people themselves was

⁴²² The concept of closed adoption’s liminal norm has already been enlarged upon in Chapter 2, Autoethnographic Performance as Epistemological Practice.
⁴²³ This is an excerpt from Fy Mam 1996.
rather pejorative and ‘we’ were shocked when Welsh Nationalists burnt the English holiday homes in the North, during the early 1980’s.

This ‘rupture’ within my sense of identity set up a peculiar tension between ‘known’ experiential self-knowledge and the now new ‘unknown’ identifying information, intimately tied to a ‘different’ self, about the self – me?

In adoption restor(y)ing, this process of re-situating oneself can create the feeling of ‘being’ a ‘split’ self. Growing up without ‘knowledge’ of one’s birth family and their cultural history excludes an ongoing, inclusive acknowledgement of difference, not only within the ongoing process of identity formation, but also within the culture of the adoptive family group.

In order to re-story past silence into the present, the official, bureaucratic ‘translation’ of the ‘closed adoption’ was now being renegotiated through a physical act of agency on my part. Returning to the idea of a ‘radical’, or a physical translation, it may be possible to imagine the somatic force experienced when the ‘original’ birth records were retrieved and ‘read’ by a now adult ‘self’. When acknowledging evidence of a life lived before adoption, I also had to confront its ‘erasure’:

‘As I read my mother’s name for the first time – and the name she’d given to me, it was the reading of her name with date and place that particularized her body and materialized my birth. I could feel this evidence bringing her erasure to life’. I felt that I wanted to touch her. I needed to know the ‘truth’.

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Each certificate or archival document (re)presents official, material ‘evidence’ of my birth, but as two separate, lived, historical events. One certificate ‘voices’ a time, history and early corporeality, but heralds the symbolic death of any future identity. The other certificate announces a legal fiction which holds symbolic potential within another future.


426 The word ‘Adopted’ was hand written in the far right hand column of this certificate.
When I read the ‘distance’ between these two official forms, side by side, for the first time, the significance within the ‘translation’ was emotionally manifested through the full affective force of this active metaphor, that is, in its deference to the earlier physical transfer. Walter Benjamin uses the term ‘significance’ in relation to the concrete sensory perceptions within the function of a metaphor, as opposed to a vague abstraction. I suggest that the adoption experience can remain vague, dislocated, and abstracted until a bodily (re)connection is acknowledged, and made.

‘Adoption search’ is often described in essentialist terms, as a search for origins – a need for roots. The language used does often suggest a ‘foundationalist’ quest for an ontological truth.

Whether due to bodily desire, a political response to silence – or perhaps the ‘necessity of living’ that Homi Bhabha refers to – I felt a need for particular truth(s). I did want to know who I was connected to by ‘blood’, quite literally, in a palpable sense, and who my father was. I wanted evidence of certain continuities – a genetic, intergenerational sense of story … theories of ‘authenticity’ perhaps?...‘a basic human need’ perhaps, or perhaps something most people take for granted?

Any singular answer was quickly dispelled.

I have never found the process of excavation, making, or understanding, linear, but I have found my praxis contingent.

428 Ibid.
A series of dead ends – bureaucratic full stops led towards the bags. I felt a practical need, to say something physical about memory, emotion, and feelings of dislocation.

It was a bag of red sand from Karratha that initiated the collection - it was a gift.

429 Blood lines, a photographic image used in Fy Mam, 1996.
The words on the bags felt evocative. I’d formed lists from my diary. It was the range of emotions, and memories over time, which surprised me. I wondered about my mother in Wales. I questioned the notion of ‘home’ – my mother in England – her silence – my transience – Africa – Australia – identity – place – timing, and disorientation.

431 The words referenced, for me, a range of sensory memories based on past experiences, when read, heard or spoken. See, IRI, D9.
In his paper, ‘Gushing Time’, Eyal Chowers cites Agnes Heller’s claim that the ‘individual’ of late modernism ‘no longer experiences place as the anchor of identity’, where we live out the contingencies of life within the one locale. Now, Heller says, we change our place of residency according to personal circumstance, in search of opportunities or fulfilment. In fact, she says that we have become “geographically promiscuous”. Taking the notion of travel a stage further, she says that we now enjoy the “absolute present within global culture as the centre of identity”. With virtual space and instant time travel “we have a multiplicity of spatial and temporal homes, which calls for a new flexibility of selfhood, one that is able to incorporate multiplicity and welcome the ensuing ‘homelessness’ within one’s own home”. The ‘virtual’ lifestyle espoused by Heller’s encompassing ‘we’, reflects a view of privileged choice where, as Chowers rightly points out, having access to a multiplicity of virtual homes is not the same as being homeless, or, I would add, being separated from those closest to you, or, being forced to leave your cultural homeland due to disaster. There are many economic, political and traumatic reasons as to why dislocation and destitution have become part of the ‘postmodern condition’, in many parts of the world.

The multiplicity of movement and ‘geographical promiscuity’ that Heller refers to can, I suggest, also lead to a feeling of not quite belonging or being ‘at home’ anywhere. This is constantly being played out in the media. The ‘popular present’ seems obsessed with the notion of relationship, and the activity of ‘belonging’. Those who are migrants talk about putting down new ‘roots’. Stuart Hall however, emphasises the need for “coming to terms with our ‘routes’”. In White Chameleon, Christopher Hampton writes, “[p]erhaps the person with roots takes them for granted, while the person with no roots whatsoever is vividly aware of them, like some phantom ache in an amputated limb.” And what of

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434 For example, the SBS television programme, *Who do you think you are?* and the Australian ABC’s *Can we help?*
those who through today’s ‘technologies’ and sociological upheavals may never know their ‘roots’? In an itinerant world, what sense of gravity will they have? In a world, where a growing demographic is affected by the speed of change, dislocation, and disassociation, Gertrude Stein’s words carry even greater import.437

I filled 400 bags in all from geological sites around the state – each bag weighed 20kgs. I’d printed a word on each bag – now, every sample evoked something meaningful. Such a physical, repetitious act felt constructive at the time – though for the sake of exhibition, any placement of the words was random. A completed form filled the space. A mass of text offered chance encounters within a construct of memory.438


Twelve months later, ‘they’ found a record of my file, although it actually arrived the following year.

I documented my daily walk as I waited.

This walk became a meditative, kinesthetic act for thinking……..

…which I still use for writing.

I talk into a tape as I’m walking.
In 1993, I sent one hundred of these postcards from Wales, back to Perth. They referenced my walk, but this time I was documenting the particular experience of being in my mother Mary’s house, in Llanelli.

We make sense of a new situation based on previous experience, this includes the cognitive connections we make, plus the sensory – the pre-verbal – the sights, smells, sounds and so on. I breathed into the space.

As my adoption records are ‘re-opened’, their ‘reading’ and interpretation calls on the past from within a ‘situated’ and embodied present. The project of repositioning myself within this past/present, and between family stories, draws on and incorporates new information within a new social and cultural situation. Using creative performance, this process becomes a mediated act of recovery.

‘Records are a series of events in time and space…..

....Memory is random.... Memory changes time.’

This form of (re)membering is poignant and reaffirms my ongoing engagement with ‘inhabited’ space as I form a series of works associated with my birthmother’s house. Anthropologist Thomas Csordas discusses the nexus of culture and experience as a standpoint of being in the world, requiring what he calls a ‘[c]ultural phenomenology’. This is the process of synthesizing the immediacy of embodied experience within, for example, a new space, with the

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440 The postcards originated during my involvement in the collaborative project, Footage, in 1993. They have undergone many incarnations. These are documented in IRI D13 and beyond.
441 I heard John Barret speak these words at Performance Places and Pasts. Documentation of this conference and my research in Wales during 1998 is more fully explicated in IRI D38 onwards.
442 In May 2010, I returned to the empty house, in Llanelli, one more time before it was sold later in the year.
multiplicity of cultural meanings and interpretations that we already bring to that experience.\textsuperscript{443}

Csordas has examined the variants between a number of cultures, and how their understandings of ‘the body’ are constructed. The difference in his findings echoes the notion that at birth we are always already inscribed culturally, and historically, and are not just material or biological entities. In his theory of ‘cultural phenomenology’, Csordas draws together ‘theories of representation’ and a phenomenological approach to ‘being in the world’. This is particularly useful when pointing out that the adopted infant is not a \textit{tabula rasa}, as projected by colonial attitudes underpinning ‘closed adoption’, but is a responsive, perceptual and social ‘being’ at birth. In order to separate the body \textit{per se} from the processes of embodiment, Csordas draws an analogy with Roland Barthes’ distinction between the text and the book as object on the shelf, and textuality, the indeterminate field which exists within discourse. Csordas compares the body, as an object in space, to embodiment, as an “indeterminate field of perceptual experiences and a way of being in the world”.\textsuperscript{444}

By extending Thomas Csordas’s idea of a ‘cultural phenomenology’ with schema theory and connectionism, I look to Claudia Strauss and Naomi Quinne’s work and consider how \textit{motivation, emotion and caring} affect how a new situation is registered, and how we distinguish between an explicitly remembered, familia situation and aspects of a new cultural setting.\textsuperscript{445}

“This was the first meal we’d shared since my mother’s death, and my first meeting with the family following my birth. They welcomed my reappearance –

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{444} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
and I imagined I’d known them all my life.”

But what happens when we go back to a place that is both ‘familiar’ and strange?

The emotional content of the postcards became this next piece of work – which I showed at PICA 1996. The Installation takes the form of a table setting in an enclosed room. The audience is invited (in English and Welsh) to enter the space and join a reunion meal – of sorts. My mother’s eyes look up from each place setting, and the serving mats celebrate a past family meal. A low light focuses on a plate of congealed text.

This holds corporeal significance within the narrative, and is a tactile reminder to the visitor of the bodily responses held within the processes of self revelation. The displaced smell of rose petals, wine and the decomposing jellied letters, provide a sensory environment for a collage of images and voices.

It feels a vulnerable space – a visceral inscription of a bureaucratic process, offering palpable reminders intended to prompt implicit memory. The work is to do with the body and proximity – an immersive, inter-semiotic space, where perhaps a rhythmic re-enactment of loss becomes productive in the gaps.

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446 This text was taken from the earlier work, *Mother, Mary, Martyr. Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyrse* (Fy Mam) an audio-visual Installation which I showed at PICA in 1996 as part of the Art Medicine and Body Project. The actual experience is referenced in IRI, D16.

447 See IRI, D24.

448 Through reflection, translation and projection, the ‘visitor’ becomes a co-creator of the work.
Following the processes of making and articulation, a potential relationship is formed between the artist, the work, and the viewer within the Installation space. The process of communication itself involves an act of meaning-making and ‘embodiment’ by the ‘visitor’, within the Installation space. An intensely intimate environment can envelop the viewer (or not), and involve them in a process of reception, not as voyeur but as an active participant, where their own interiority creates a ‘reading’, as they experience the space.

>In 1998, I re-engaged with the bags. I took fifty back to Wales. I’d had the words translated literally into Welsh then printed the ‘new’ word on the reverse side of each bag. Walter Benjamin warns us against literal translation.  

449 Still image from *Fy Mam*, PICA 1996.
According to Benjamin, translation is a ‘mode’ which can never be completed within a single word – literally, because the relationship between the content and language is quite different in the original than it is within the new context of the


451 ‘DIWYLLIANT’ (culture) was placed on my brother Arthur William’s ‘small-holding’ in Llanfairfechan, North Wales. Cross reference with IRI, D43-45.
translation. He says, translation is “a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages”.452

Many of the now Welsh words felt difficult to pronounce. Although their ‘image’ drew me in, any deep association felt remote. This time, I had an (im)placement project in mind – a more thoughtful, deliberate act – not obsessive excavation.453
I wanted to leave evidence – bilingual traces - to add density to meaning, as I experienced each place.

In the past, maps have been used universally, to textualise the spatial reality of the ‘other’ – to appropriate – to rename. Now, I wanted to recover language, and place myself within the other story.

I listed events – points of contact with Wales, family monuments and houses, significant places, mythological sites – and worked out a journey.

As Mary Besemereres suggests, translation demands acts of negotiation.454

I chose, and filled, a sample bag at every site. At these points of contact, the English and the Welsh word on each bag became geographically and geologically ‘tied’ to each new situational experience.

453 Here, I have borrowed Edward Casey’s term ‘(im)placement’ to describe part of my own process. See Edward Casey, The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History. California and London: University of California Press, 1997, p. 337.
As I ‘listened’ to the words, the intonation and rhythms of the Welsh language resonated for me. It was ancient and modern, remained ‘other’, yet felt close. I could hardly pronounce the words let alone place them. It was this desire to inhabit aspects of language in connection with story that fuelled the (im)placement project of the bags, in Wales. I ‘felt’, at the time, a kind of lost ‘authenticity’.

In Translating Oneself, Mary Besemeres discusses feelings of inauthenticity experienced by the second language migrant when speaking about the ‘self’ in their non-‘native’ language.\(^{455}\) She draws on Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtin’s account of how individuals evaluate the many social and familiar exchanges they have internalized throughout their life experiences, which are in turn linked to their “native, or first language”.\(^{456}\) Through my own experiences of adoption reunion, I feel that an emotional dialectic can be set up. Close connections may be sought with immediate birth family members, who have not shared remembered life experiences, grown up in the same country, shared the same social and cultural upbringing, or spoken the same ‘native’ language. Close relatives share the same family history.\(^{457}\) As well as my desire to reconnect with ‘people’ and ‘place’, I found research reveals that a genetic predisposition, shared physiognomy, recognisable mannerisms and vague similarities, can all promote a strong force of attraction.\(^{458}\) Interestingly, the technical, philosophical term for an indefinable ‘similarity’ between two entities is referred to as a ‘family resemblance’.\(^{459}\)

\(^{455}\) This scenario could be placed alongside the adopted person’s experience when returning to their country of origin, and attempting to speak the language with family members, or members of the community.


\(^{457}\) I was adopted at three months of age. Today, many infants and children adopted from overseas are older and already have strong language skills developed in their countries of origin.


In ‘Fate of Place’, Edward Casey talks about (im)placement as an issue of being in place differently – of experiencing its eventfulness otherwise.\(^{460}\)

*TIRLUN* and *TIRWEDD* are Welsh words for landscape. ‘Tirlun’ refers to a superficial scanning of the land, perhaps a tourist’s view when passing through a place for the first time..... whereas, a site of familiarity and identification is inferred by the term ‘tirwedd’ – where the scenery is not separate from the lives lived there....

My first introduction to these words was at *Performance, Places and Pasts*, in Wales. This conference examined the convergences of landscape and memory, history and autobiography, and was very pertinent to my own site specific project which was already under way.

Mike Pearson describes ‘tirwedd’ as a place “[w]here the minutiae of morphology and tradition are preserved as idiom, dialect, proverb and lore – [w]here history is experienced as contemporaneous, and the past still operates on the present – a ground level experience where landscape is not seen as scenery but as social construct – marked and renamed by the actions of ancestors”. There is a layered archaeological knowledge of the place.\(^{461}\)


In his performance ‘Nothing to see here’, Roger Owen drew on these two words in a moving work at his family’s farm in Aberporth. We, the audience, in a sense, were tourists scanning the farm and the empty cow sheds. As he stood within the space a sound track of his voice offered memories from his childhood – quirky stories about the characters of particular cows, and other anecdotes handed down. We had a feeling of his deep attachment to this piece of land. He talked about farming methods and how they have changed – how they, as farmers, have adapted to that change over the years. He recounted many intimate details from the layers of family and social knowledge that make up his place.

After the conference, I continued with the bags. I was writing myself into the landscape. The choosing, the filling of the bags – the documentation, created a bodily, intervening space for translation. This textual, kinaesthetic act marked each place, and helped bring the Welsh words into ‘being’. If language is somatic, these new meanings were becoming somewhat solipsistic.462

462 Cross reference with IRI, D43.
If the link between language and landscape connects people to places over time, this proximal act of translation was trying to enter the narrative – and access the past, through a compensatory performance within the present.

This act of mediation creates an embodied connection, which still links me to my birthfamily, their places and their story – a story which has been enriched and has

463 ‘GOLYGFA’ (to view through a ‘frame’). Still image from Translating Hiraeth.
grown with me, and with them, since then, and will continue to do so in the future. ‘Dispositional representations’ have been established through the performative ‘ritual’ of choosing an ‘appropriate’ Welsh word and the filling of each bag, with a ‘mindful’, bodily, awareness.464 Yet this connection to relatives, their places, and their pasts within the landscape, however strong, can only ever be partial and ongoing. The past/present experience of landscape, not as scenery but as social construct, through an archeological knowledge of a place, is, as Mike Pearson describes through the Welsh word ‘tirwedd’, gained by an ongoing acculturation within that community – by living its language, customs and lore, whilst growing up within that place. Their embedded socialization will always be just beyond my recall, as will mine be for them. Nonetheless, the bags are an act of mediation, embodiment and agency on my part and, following Bhabha, “it is this inbetween space which innovates and interrupts the performance of the present”.465

I filled a bag in Aberystwyth, Porthmadog, Cearnarfon, Bangor, and Llanberis Pass. There was still snow on the mountain. It was cold. I was in search of a quarryman’s cottage where my father was born – I wanted to fill a bag there – feel the place – document the event. I had a vague address. I was looking for William Williams near Bethesda, in North Wales.

After a series of accidents and serendipitous meetings, I unexpectedly found my father’s family. I’d wanted to research their past. I hadn’t anticipated them in the flesh. It was the fire brigade who tracked them down, and organized the meal.

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466 Mount Snowdon, North Wales.
467 It would take too long here, to recount this unexpected series of events. See, IRI D43-1. Horace Walpole coined the term serendipity in 1754 in reference to the Ceylonese fairy tale, The Three Princes of Serendip. The princes were always making valuable discoveries by accident, of things that they were not directly in quest of (O.E.D).
My father was dead – his biography more complex than I’ve got time for here. The photograph I had wasn’t him – yet the details from my file couldn’t have been anyone else.

The family didn’t seem surprised at my existence and immediately drew me in. I met a brother I didn’t know I had, then found I was one of five siblings.

468 The quarryman’s cottage where my father was born in Howe Street, Glasinfryn
The following morning I was standing rather shell-shocked in St Cedol’s graveyard, listening, as my ‘new’ cousin Iona read the Welsh inscriptions from four generations of family graves. Before reading, she positioned each relative within the family, then, their relationship to me. I could feel a generosity as she attempted to place me within their story, but I sensed an ambivalence in the ‘act’ of translation itself. Right at the start, she’d announced – ‘this is Welsh Wales – we are very political’. ‘Hiraeth’, she said, with pride, reading a particular epitaph, ‘there is no exact translation for ‘Hiraeth’ into English. It means quietly longing for ... something like that ... pining for the land ... yearning – but more’.

469 The Pentir Graveyard, Gwynedd, North Wales.
It was then that I grasped another complexity within this already complex situation. ‘Translation brings you closer to something’, but as Lyn Hejinian points out in ‘Forms of Alterity’, “it also catalyses one’s own otherness”.

I stood at the graves of my father’s brothers and sisters – my uncles and aunts, great uncles, great aunts, my grandparents, even my great grandparents. Each grave stone read ‘Er cof’, which means in Welsh, ‘in memory of’. The emotional loss I felt at this reunion was hard to explain. There was an untranslatability within myself, marked by complex feelings – this ‘new’ language, and an absence of memory.

Raymond Williams talks about the structure of feeling caught between experience and language as tensions in a state of unfinished relations that have not yet found the terms for their own reflexive self comprehension.

Here, Raymond Williams not only places language within the historical processes of social relationship, he positions signification in relation to people’s emotions, needs and feelings, where “tensions or ambiguities occur as part of a living process on the edge of semantic availability”. According to Williams, these “structures of feeling”, or tensions, are a form of ‘cultural hypothesis’ and can be derived through attempts to understand. Interior struggles are often exposed and expressed through the function of art. Specific articulations move towards new understandings, which are discovered through the material processes of making, as ‘palpable pressures’, at a level of ‘practical consciousness’. These ‘works’

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lead towards contingent understandings – towards the next piece of work and so on.

I feel that there are distinctions between this intentional awareness which employs a productive, material process of embodied, cognitive understanding – that is, through active repetitious making and forms of mediation that Raymond Williams describes – and Thomas Csordas’s ‘cultural phenomenology’. Williams writes of a generative, kinaesthetic performance leading towards new levels of cognitive understanding by actively employing the body through awareness, or mindfulness, whereas Csordas’s concept is more an environmental monitoring of phenomenological ‘recognition’ based on past perceptual experiences and understandings, in relation to the new situation, adding new associated meaning. I consider both concepts valuable understandings within the (re)stor(y)ing process, particularly so in the case of a cross cultural-reunion.

Over lunch, a girl in the village pub remarked – in Welsh, “I see you have a ‘foreigner’ with you”. Arthur, my brother, quickly replied, “No, this is my sister”. I told him I was thinking of learning Welsh. “It’s just as well you’ve come via Australia”; he said.

According to Elspeth Probyn, “If you think about belonging you are already outside”. The desire to belong propels. I wondered about the impact of my arrival – I hadn’t imagined the politics of language would be our fragile meeting point. Here, we celebrate plurality. There, language was paramount to my father’s family’s sense of national identity.

I remember being shocked by my ignorance of Welsh politics, and their singular view of nation, yet ashamed by my sense of ‘privilege’, classist judgments – their acceptance of me and their strong sense of family.

It’s mid afternoon. I’m sitting in the family chapel at Waen Pentir. Iona is playing the organ, and Megan Wyn and Mia are singing the 23rd Psalm – for me – in

474 My father’s seat in the family chapel at Waen Pentir (Rhiwlas), North Wales.
Welsh. Iona, then reads from the family bible before translating various inscriptions from the front of hymn books donated to the chapel, in memory of members of the family.

Individually, relatives are briefly brought to life as Megan Wyn walks to each of their chapel seats in turn, and offers a small anecdote by way of introduction. Emlyn tells me stories about chapel and the Penhryn Quarry – riding in my father’s fire truck, and life between the mountains. Eurwin, my father’s brother’s wife recited poetry whilst sitting at her kitchen table. She’s performed at many Eisteddfods in the past.

Iona tells me that our grandfather, a quarryman, had a Bardic name.

It’s 2004 and I have been invited to join a performance panel at Cynhadledd Cyfrwng, a bilingual, media conference to be held at the University of Wales, Bangor. Each of us will present a short performance piece to those gathered at the forum. With particular reference to ‘Translating Hiraeth’, this reflexive paper will focus on process, story, and my praxis. The conference theme is ‘Wales and the world’.

475 Here, I would like to return to Foucault’s use of the word ‘radical’. Within this context, performance praxis as part of Performance Studies, challenges the heart of the academy’s enlightenment rationale. As an epistemological practice, Performance Studies is a mode of cultural production which is focused through the physical body. See, Conquergood, D. (2002, Summer). "Performance Studies: Interventions and radical research." The Drama Review 46(2): 145-157.
Imagine how tentatively I return to Wales to ‘perform Welshness’. Through story, I awkwardly balance the immediacy of family, heredity – ‘their’ ethnicity, ‘my’ close relatedness to Wales – with a history of silence, dissonance and distance.

‘Translating Hiraeth’ is installed on site for the duration of the conference.

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476 The Great Hall, University of Wales, Bangor.
Whilst setting up the work, Alart, the technician, who’s about my age, is reading the above image and staring at the screen. He says, “17 Bro Rhiwen - I knew your grandmother. We lived next door in Rhiwlas. She wore clogs…”

...and so it goes on ...

If translating the self is a necessary performance of passage, and hiraeth a word embedded in Welsh culture and notions of (be)longing, which are not quite
translatable, I employ a cross-cultural performativity and embodied arts praxis as a form of mediation to refigure the past within a contingently evolving present – whilst interrogating the liminal, in-between space or subject positioning brought about by a ‘closed’, cross-cultural adoption.
CHAPTER 5

Point of Departure

‘Art is the realization of complex emotion’.\(^{477}\)

Not wanting to fix the process at this point of departure with a conclusive statement, I would rather reflect on the project thus far and look forward. As this creative endeavour has passed through various incarnations towards *Translating Hiraeth* and beyond as part of an ongoing process, I find, as would be expected, that the initial inquiry has become more expansive. Inspired by Cixous’ productive use of emotion, my Honours Installation, *Fy Mam*, began with the most basic of existential questions – ‘who am I?’. In the making of this earlier piece, I centred the work around ‘loss’ and reconnection to the ‘maternal’ – the politics of ‘the name’ – and the name and the body of the one who named me. *Translating Hiraeth* begins with another clichéd yet fundamental question – ‘[w]here do I come from?’.\(^{478}\) In this piece, the emotional focus is not only on the unexpected cultural complexities of finding my father’s family, but on further feelings of loss and dislocation – feelings which promoted a necessity for story whilst, at the same time, highlighting the liminal subject positioning of adoption. Through the embodied, kinaesthetic processes of *translating hiraeth* I have inhabited the in-between spaces of language, culture, place and family as closely as possible, as enlarged upon in the previous chapter.


\(^{478}\) Here, I was also drawn to Cixous’ writing on her own identity. Cixous, H. (1997). "My Algerian: in Other Words to Depart not to Arrive from Algeria." *TriQuarterly*(100, Fall): 259-279.
In this dissertation, I support the notion of an embodied arts praxis as a contingent and dialectic process. The medium becomes a means of exploration, expression, reflection, understanding, and communication, opening an emotional and critical space for analysis in both the making and in the reception of the work. This process of *translating hiraeth* has therefore become an ongoing epistemological practice. In terms of the creative work, my first challenge was to find a fluid form through which to show the complexities and emotional ambiguities within this (re)stor(y)ing project, but where the narrative lifted the piece beyond the personal. Secondly, I wanted to position the work within a specific socio-political-historical context whilst still highlighting its relevance in today’s world. Thirdly, I wanted to create an ‘event’ which would empathetically draw the visitor into an intimate social space through aspects of their own lives – where the experience of art is entered into by both the artist and the audience participants.

As mentioned in the introduction, I have now installed *Translating Hiraeth*, the creative component of this submission, within a number of different social spaces. I have been interested in the way in which the work seems to shift with each Installation – how different ‘textual’ meanings interact with a specific social site and how the signifiers offered within each space highlight certain ‘readings’ and the various cultural aspects within story. As Adam Getzy points out, there is no such thing as an empty space – one that is acultural or neutral.479 I have expanded on these and other responses in the *Addendum*.

Since completing *Translating Hiraeth* and during the writing of this dissertation, I have had time to reflect on the overall process. Ross Chambers talks about the necessity for *Loiterature* in critical ‘work’ – loitering with intent.480 As stated elsewhere, throughout this project it is the ‘process’ which has become evidenced as the ‘thing’ under investigation. Whilst the dissertation unravels issues of agency and (il)legitimacy in both adoption and arts-based research, my

performative/Installation praxis acts as a critical mode of (de)legitimation in adoption, as it validates creative production as a form of academic research. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I contextualise my arts practice within Performance Studies and the broader arena of contemporary art, before drawing on performance theory to outline closed adoption’s liminal norm.

Thinking with and through the body, as opposed to a purely cerebral approach to research, augments the process of adoption ‘(re)stor(y)ing’ as it makes sense of the experience. At the beginning of Chapter 4, I reference recent scientific findings in neuroscience and sociobiology where understandings of sensory affect regulation, and the effects of early trauma on right brain development, are now changing adoption thinking and post adoption ‘work’. The new area of neuropsychoanalysis and other forms of mind-body work emphasize the value of creative, kinaesthetic performance, where somatic responses can evoke past experience and act as a vehicle for ‘transference’. The embodied, sensory processes of mediation in the making and reception of art, particularly within an affective spatial environment such as narrative Installation, inherently offer this form of understanding and communication.

In order to contextualise both my praxis and my adoption experience within adoption discourse today, it was necessary to locate adoption as a fluid institutionalised practice socially, culturally, historically, economically and politically. In keeping with Laurie Anderson’s words quoted in Chapter 3, I needed to ‘look at things well’ in order to draw out the tensions and challenges inherent within the adoption process, over time. In ‘Adoption: A social institution on the move’, I attempt to situate both my life process of being adopted, and my arts praxis centred on adoption, alongside ongoing legislative changes in the ‘West’ and the various paradigm shifts in adoption thinking. Today, the complexities within the term ‘alternative family formation’ encompass

481 For further information about, for example, ‘Hakomi’ in Australia see, www.hakomi.com.au.
adoption as both a local and a global practice which now includes aspects of legal surrogacy and new reproductive technologies world-wide. By analysing agency and (il)legitimacy within adoption practice I also found hidden agendas within notions of ‘doing good’, revealing new vested interests, adoption abuse and underlying ideologies. Visionary frameworks promoting ideal solutions to support children in need and their families often fly in the face of actual material and political problems on the ground. I suggest there is the need for a huge global effort to enforce the Hague regulations, prevent adoption abuse, and to provide social and economic support to communities in need.

This work is in no way a conclusive study of adoption, but I consider that much of the relevance within this performative autoethnography lies in the fact that it documents a (re)stor(y)ing process over a longitudinal time-frame during a period of rapid social change. The work does, I believe, show how legislative reform and the various paradigm shifts in adoption thinking have impacted not only on the performative process but on the wider politics of adoption over a relatively short period – revealing the complexities of opening up past silences and reconnecting with family across cultures, places, and time. As I also point out in Chapter 3, this research shows how intercountry adoption and increased globalisation have grown hand-in-hand with changing, and mixed, public perceptions of adoption. This is largely due to internet access, and increased communication via this world-wide-web. I am hoping that this project, although it is a particular account of (re)stor(y)ing in adoption, may work towards an understanding of others who have been separated from family, whilst highlighting the personal impact, for all involved, when ‘past’ silences are brought into the present – and perhaps, encourage those who are, or have been, rebuilding their life stories over a protracted period of time.

It is now 17 years since I contacted my birthmother in Llanelli. I find that I now reflect on this project with broader philosophical and existential questions. For example, in her novel, Home, Marilynnne Robinson implies that there is a link
between the process of forgiving others and notions of understanding oneself. Taking this idea further, I consider the connection between greater knowledge of oneself and the possibility of feeling ‘at home’.

Drawing on Agnes Heller’s work in Chapter 4, I suggest that in our postmodern, postcolonial, and virtual worlds, notions of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ are becoming more elusive. Within a ‘new flexibility of selfhood’ there are multiple ways of being and belonging, and numerous understandings of what is meant by feeling ‘at home’. As I (re)position this process today, I consider the notion of ‘home’ to be one of the key concerns at the heart of translating hiraeth.

According to Elspeth Probyn, “if you think about belonging you are already outside”, but, as I said in Chapter 4, it is the desire to belong which propels. In Chapter 2, I critique contemporary uses of ‘nostalgia’ to renegotiate understandings of (be)longing that are closer to yearning – perhaps as close as I can get to a cluster of ‘meanings’ that to me represent hiraeth.

If hiraeth describes this need to ‘return’ – a desire for re/union predicated by the loss of separation, I find Roberta Rubenstein also discusses the recuperation of ‘nostalgia’ and mourning in women’s literary practice as a device for renegotiating matters of home, longing and belonging. However, in this performative project, as proposed throughout this dissertation, it is the embodied, mediatory processes within artistic practice which help to bridge the gap between longing and belonging, and have prompted my musings about ‘home’.

My desire for Wales is now grounded in a complex emotional registration – a resonant marker within my life story for which I have formed strong associations

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that will always be part of my future but not where I feel totally ‘at home’. ‘Home’ in England is not something that I struggle to maintain, but I keep in contact with. Occasionally, I defend my Englishness, which surprises me. My eight years in Africa will always feel transient, sometimes intoxicating and certainly not empty, but always far from ‘home’. Perhaps the greater part of me feels more ‘at home’ now, at least more than I can remember of that sentiment elsewhere, but what does this really mean existentially?

As referenced earlier in the work, Heidegger offers an in-depth existential philosophy on ‘dwelling’ which is closely connected to ‘being’, and is linked to the broader idea of connection and caring for a place. It was a need for connection and the necessity for story which brought me to the beginning of this project. As in Eliot’s Little Gidding, we cannot cease from exploration and, although, by its nature, this last chapter is linked to my starting point it is the process of exploration which has moved me well beyond the initial existential question. Janette Winterson sums up the generative nature of the creative process, when she writes, “[a]rt is an energetic space that begets energetic space”. Art by its nature is always a little restless.

Leila, my adoptive mother passed away in England, in 2006. I was with her at the end. She was ninety-one. After her death, I organised the funeral, gave the eulogy, and started sorting out our family house where I grew up, in Tunbridge Wells. She’d lived there for fifty four years and as far as I could see, thrown little away.

Boxed in the attic, I found all my school reports, music certificates, every childhood drawing, letters written from various school camps and holidays, every postcard, birthday card and Christmas greeting. Stored in her bedroom in another box were all my letters from Africa and Australia – postcards from Bali, Queensland and Margaret River....

In May of this year, I returned to Mary’s home in Llanelli. John is gone and the family house is to be sold. Empty of furniture, the building now stands as a lonely monument to four generations – a memorial to past family spaces. As new evidence, I documented each empty room as my last physical engagement with this affecting place.

At this point of departure I feel closer to both my mothers. There is more to know, and much that has been left unsaid. Both Aquarians, one was born on January 26th, the other on January 27th.

They both died in the early hours of May 22nd.

I’m a great believer in synchronicity, and serendipity. Perhaps that’s the next piece of work.

486 From the attic window.
ADDENDUM

Interactions Reflections Innovations

In order to indicate, succinctly, how the interdisciplinary process of exploration has evolved and impacted on the development of my praxis over a longitudinal timeframe, I am drawing on, and writing into past journal records using a table format. In this section, I am documenting some of life’s interventions beside reflections from a range of creative and cross-disciplinary forums and workshops I have attended, or taken part in, before and during my candidacy. As a chronological reflection on relevant professional interactions and personally meaningful events over the last decade or so, I am able to cross-reference the progression of my praxis based research against major paradigm shifts which have become apparent within adoption discourse during the same time-frame.

Through a variety of intentional, serendipitous, and sometimes invitational cross-disciplinary encounters, I have engaged with a range of research areas, creative projects, seminars, conferences, and workshops. The meandering nature of this project denounces a linear progression towards expectations of an answer, and may appear to some as purely rhizomatic, but although my practice is discursive, it tends towards a hermeneutic spiral, around which a core of central concerns are valorised.487 I often revisit a particular piece, idea or event from a new perspective, adding other layers of meaning to the overall concept of the work. For this reason, I have included earlier influences on my practice, particularly

those interactions and exhibitions which I can now identify as significant ‘points of change’, or nodes of production. My practice not only feeds into personal understandings of adoption, but extends the wider cultural studies project.

As mentioned in my methodology chapter, it is through my involvement with some of the more objective fields of clinical and scientific social research, that I have become more aware of how certain disciplines regard what actually counts as research. Some of the more traditional forums have in fact inspired new works, and/or encouraged me to take greater creative risks along interventionist lines. I have also found other gatherings reaffirmed the value of art within a wider cultural role of social healing. Within a ‘post-colonial’ context, the significance of storytelling has been reinvested with political import by many subaltern groups, and now government ‘truth’ commissions attempt to address past wrongs as they listen to individuals bear witness against past government policy. An outstanding example of the power of story in the healing of Australia’s recent history was the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. Many stories by members of the ‘stolen generation’ were given as evidence before the Royal Commission, and later published in the Bringing them Home Report.

Several forums held by the Institute of Advanced Study (IAS) at the University of Western Australia (UWA) have inspired me and nudged me towards areas of research that perhaps I would not have engaged with, thus offering different perspectives and new layers of meaning. There have been some performance workshops which have been invaluable in keeping my research strongly focussed

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488 See D21, 1995 RTC Forum. The resultant work, *Fy Mam*, was politically motivated. See D23.  
489 Joseph Beuys saw the healing potential in art, not only associated with his own wartime trauma but following Steiner and Jung, as a form of universal spiritual healing through creativity. Warr, T. and A. Jones, Eds. (2000). *The Artist’s Body*. New York, Phaidon Press.  
490 Particularly D30 and D63. In 2002, I was invited to show my work and to give a paper at the 1st National Conference on Mental Health: Aspects of Persons Affected by Family Separation.  
492 In particular, Catherine Nash’s presentation in July 2000, at IAS UWA: *Land, Place, Culture Identity*, see D53.
through the body. Here, I have included a detailed reflection on Cristina Castrillo’s workshop in 2001 as I feel that it was very affirming in relation to both my work and experience.\footnote{D58, Teatro Della Radici.}

When presenting a paper, or aspects of my praxis, before a new discipline, I feel the necessity for a degree of re-contextualisation, and a questioning of what that specific field may have to offer my research, and what I may be able to offer them. The questions I usually ask of myself are, where and how will my thinking and praxis fit with this forum? How will I introduce the work when I am not familiar with the discipline’s discourse? What will the work mean in this context? How will the presentation of my personal story be received in a more ‘objective’ environment? Will it be valued? It is often at these interstices or points of connection, through a re-articulation of my work and the ensuing discussion at a particular event, that I notice a shift in my own understanding.

By drawing on Richard Schechner’s inclusive, multifaceted definition of Performance Studies as outlined in my methodology chapter, there is an obvious historical relationship to Dick Higgins’s earlier term, ‘intermedia’, which emerged through the creative experimentations of Fluxus, and Joseph Beuys’ ‘Social Sculpture’. Feeling an affinity to Performance Studies’ emphasis on the body, I have largely ‘grown’ my project through selected inter-disciplinary contributions, which have, in turn, helped to extend the breadth of my creative praxis, whilst stretching the area of critical thinking.

The list presented here has been abbreviated, and is chronological. This section can be read as a diary, hence the abbreviated coding, D1-D82, although my primary intention is to employ this format to cross-reference various events within the body of the text, to contextualise my artistic practice, and to draw attention to particular markers which have been poignant during the development of the
project. I find this a useful tool when perhaps lengthier recall is required, as opposed to a footnote. My responses in italics are edits from past journals, whereas recent commentary appears in ordinary font.
**Postgraduate Survival Seminar** at Murdoch University. This reflective presentation was adapted from a 1997 artist’s talk to a group of Murdoch media students at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA) following the showing of *Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyres* (*Fy Mam*) in 1996. The 1998 PG seminar initiated the idea of a diaristic overview as I traced the beginnings of my current project back to the 1970s. Rather than reproduce something for the presentation which read like a CV, I wanted to explicate an ongoing connection between ‘art and life’. *For the last ten years, the work has been based on issues associated with identity. This has been focussed by my experience of family reunion following the opening of my own ‘closed/cross-cultural adoption’. This has been amplified through life experiences such as giving birth, parenting, and a double migration. The uncovering of gaps and silences has radically shifted previously held beliefs about ‘self’, forcing a reframing of identity. For me, the interweaving of experience, practice and theory, provides an ongoing site for negotiation. During my honours project of 1996, and more particularly during the making of *Fy Mam*, I became aware of the fluidity within my own process, and the performative, interdisciplinary nature of my praxis. In adoption, the areas of interest for me lie at the points of intersection and ambiguity between the processes of self revelation and visceral ‘memories’ of loss – between a bodily need for ‘knowledge’ of genetic continuity, and the depth of social inscription. It is somewhere within these unregistered borderlines that, I suggest, loss activates desire (1996). My current project on (Re)storying has evolved from this desire for reclamation.*

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<tr>
<th>D1</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th><strong>Postgraduate Survival Seminar</strong> at Murdoch University. This reflective presentation was adapted from a 1997 artist’s talk to a group of Murdoch media students at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA) following the showing of <em>Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyres</em> (<em>Fy Mam</em>) in 1996. The 1998 PG seminar initiated the idea of a diaristic overview as I traced the beginnings of my current project back to the 1970s. Rather than reproduce something for the presentation which read like a CV, I wanted to explicate an ongoing connection between ‘art and life’. <em>For the last ten years, the work has been based on issues associated with identity. This has been focussed by my experience of family reunion following the opening of my own ‘closed/cross-cultural adoption’. This has been amplified through life experiences such as giving birth, parenting, and a double migration. The uncovering of gaps and silences has radically shifted previously held beliefs about ‘self’, forcing a reframing of identity. For me, the interweaving of experience, practice and theory, provides an ongoing site for negotiation. During my honours project of 1996, and more particularly during the making of <em>Fy Mam</em>, I became aware of the fluidity within my own process, and the performative, interdisciplinary nature of my praxis. In adoption, the areas of interest for me lie at the points of intersection and ambiguity between the processes of self revelation and visceral ‘memories’ of loss – between a bodily need for ‘knowledge’ of genetic continuity, and the depth of social inscription. It is somewhere within these unregistered borderlines that, I suggest, loss activates desire (1996). My current project on (Re)storying has evolved from this desire for reclamation.</em></th>
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<tr>
<th>D2</th>
<th>1977</th>
<th><em>In 1977, my husband, Hugh Durey, a geologist, was working with German archaeologist, Gudrun Corvinus whilst excavating the inland marine river terraces of the Orange River in Namibia. Within the stratified layers, she was dating dinosaur remains, he was locating alluvial diamonds. I was interested in surface findings – early mining equipment – signs of previous inhabitation.</em></th>
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<th>D3</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th><em>We moved from Namibia to the Northern Territory, Australia, and made our home in Tennant Creek.</em></th>
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| D4 | 1981 | *From Tennant Creek we moved to the Perth Hills in Western Australia. Over the next few years, I accompanied Hugh on many trips to the Eastern Goldfields. I was always in search of memorabilia and new evidence of times past.* |
BA. in Visual Arts, Curtin University of Technology, WA. Interested in how found objects offer up evidence of the past within the present, I began to use mining as a metaphor in my work. Through my involvement with a feminist discussion group, plus my early readings in the area, I began to examine gender issues and power structures within Western society. I drew on the work of Adrienne Rich, Judy Chicago, Lucy Lippard, Mary Kelly and Helene Cixous, amongst others. I cast found domestic objects to develop some sort of didactic statement about women’s position in society – particularly in male dominated professions such as mining. On reflection, I realised that it was my own subjectivity that was in question, and my past which was under investigation.

I heard artist Rosalie Gascoign speak at the Sydney Biennale. She said, “Seek your identity in your environment, draw on the knowledge in your bone marrow. It’s a terrible thing to make somebody else’s art. Go deep inside your self and you somehow go universal. Recognition has to do with the self”. Her words created a conscious shift in my thinking and in my work. I thought about silence. At the time, I was becoming interested in existentialism through Sartre and the work of Francis Bacon in particular. It was the intensity of perception, depth of feeling, plasticity, and ambiguity within his figurative forms that drew me to the work. During this period, my own practice was prolific. I recorded the process of reading, writing and making in my journal. The work was focused, introspective and private. Again, I started to question the past – the links between silence, emotional expression, and the creative impulse were important to me.

I produced a series of mixed media drawings as I worked with evocative, mostly negative, words from my diary such as control, manipulation – confrontation. I focussed each word through a walking meditation, stopping occasionally to produce a quick gestural drawing in response to a particular feeling associated with each word. I tried to defer conscious aesthetic judgments as I worked each ‘symbol’ in a semi-automatic way towards a completed image. At the time the results were disquieting, although a more informed ‘reading’ following psychoanalysis would have labelled them as ‘psychosexual’. These drawings, more than anything else at the time, cleared a space for the next body of work, for which I mostly drew on the plasticity of clay as a form of expression, and process of drawing which engaged the whole body.

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494 Rosalie Gascoign was speaking at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1988.
Visiting painter and writer, Roberta Allen walked into my studio. She wants to tell me about Clarice Lispector’s work…. She seems to know the value of such writing. Roberta’s exhibition at PICA and her book, ‘Travelling Woman’ affects me greatly. Her work captures the ephemeral nature of identity, and life’s enigmas. I relate to her thinking, and start to play through my own writings.

NOW IS WHERE WE ARE AT, BUT HAVE WE ARRIVED?

WHEN SOMETHING CHANGES WHAT HAPPENS TO THE WAY IT WAS BEFORE?

WILL LOOKING CHANGE WHAT SHE SEES?’

DOES THE PAST LOOK DIFFERENT FROM THE FUTURE?

HER SECRET WAS THAT SHE HAD ALWAYS KNOWN

SHE DISGUISED WHAT SHE KNEW SO THAT SHE WOULDN’T KNOW

IS THERE A PICTURE OF NOTHING?

At the time, I was working with the idea of absence. I made several more trips to the Eastern Goldfields between 1989 and ‘92 – all valuable. I took plaster casts from the dry salt pans, collected found objects and formed a body of photographs recording my findings. The ‘winder’ foundations near Leonora became a scene of remembrance – as a solid, already contained assemblage from the past.

I sent a copy of Australian artist Sally Morgan’s book, *My Place*, to Leila, my (adoptive) mother in England. The book follows Sally’s search for her Indigenous heritage. As my birth name also happens to be Morgan, my mother was, I think, shocked into bringing my original birth certificate out to Australia. She had not told me of my Welsh heritage.

*I read my original birth certificate for the first time.* Seven years later, through my Honours project, I reflected on the significance of the name. I was conscious of my affective response to the experience at a bodily level. To gain another layer of clarity, I engaged mainly with the work of Marie McLean, Derrida, Sartre and Jean Genet.\(^{496}\)

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<th>D8-1</th>
<th>1989</th>
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<td></td>
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<th>D9</th>
<th>1991-2</th>
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<td>Artist in Residence at the Tresillian Centre, Perth, WA. I had two major Installations in the one year: <em>Subject and Object</em> and <em>Dislocation</em>. I use a more considered sense of space. The significance of scale, monumentality and presence are paramount... The physicality of the making is important. Large drawings employ my whole body whilst the repetitious sound of Kitaro’s Silk Road plays ‘in the Silence’. I become more aware of a bodily relationship to the work, and the experience of the viewer moving within the space.</td>
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<th>D10</th>
<th>1992</th>
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<td>Dec</td>
<td>In October, I entered a large mixed media work, ‘The Absolute and the Relative’ in the <em>National Mandorla Art Award for Religious Art</em>. It was an abstract work through which I attempted to incorporate a metaphysical element of my search.</td>
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<th>D10-1</th>
<th>Dec</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Social Services in Westminster, London have located a microfiche record of the missing adoption file. It seems evidence of my early life does exist.</td>
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I am walking, thinking, talking into a tape as I’m walking each morning – transcribing, writing – waiting for the file, as if waiting to hear who I am!

The file arrives in April. The accompanying CD of my Honours dissertation, *Loss Adoption and Desire*, explores this in more depth.

*Footage* was a valuable collaboration between eight women artists over an 18 month period, culminating in an exhibition at the CCWA Gallery (now *Form*), Perth 1993. The artists involved were: Rosemary Whittaker, Jude Van de Merwe, Myral Staffa, Coral Lowry, Cathy Gordon, Mora Doreopoulos, Holly Story and myself. *Over the time frame, each of us invites the rest of the group to a particular event from which further work is made*. Holly Story holds a Victorian tea party. Cathy Gordon invites us to participate in a large collaborative drawing in her studio. Trish Little requests us to make body prints to hang on coat hangers. I share the meditative ritual of my daily bush walk, and ask each to document the experience in their own way. The final exhibition includes documentation of the walk and marks the beginning of the *Postcards*.

*Postcards* On the front of the cards, I print a projected negative image of myself ‘walking the walk’, over which I reproduce an acetate copy of one of Mary’s letters sent to the adoption agency following my relinquishment. On the reverse side of the card, I place a faint 10 percent print of Mary’s image, over which I can write. I have 500 postcards printed. These cards gather impetus as they generate other works. See D16, D17, D19, D23, D58, D65, D71.

Mary Morgan is still living at the same address in Llanelli, where she was pregnant with me.

April 16 – An intermediary speaks to my birthmother, Mary, in Wales. She transcribes the conversation for me. Mary is frightened – doesn’t want anyone to know about my birth. Doesn’t want me to turn up on her doorstep, but is happy to correspond.

April 16 – On the same day a letter arrives from my adoptive mother, Leila, in England. She talks about the need for privacy. She
doesn’t want anyone to know that I am adopted. She would be happy if I would keep it that way.

I write difficult letters to both my mothers.

| D15  | 1993 | May 21, George Morgan, Mary’s brother, rings to say she would now like to see me. |
|      |      | May 22 George rings to say Mary died during the night. |

| D16  | 1993 | June. I visit Mary’s house in Llanelli, for a reunion meal of sorts. |
|      |      | I experience her house. I eat raspberries, grown and cooked by her. I see the raspberry canes in her garden. I feel her clothes and touch her belongings. Gaston Bachelard talks of how we evaluate or absorb inhabited space in a phenomenological sense. I find Merleau-Ponty’s work on ‘perceptual bodily awareness’ relevant, also Drew Leder’s work on the Absent Body. \(^{497}\) I feel somewhat voyeuristic in her absence, surrounded by her belongings, yet this intimate space is full of her presence. I gain a palpable understanding of our connection. I feel a strong sense of loss. In Wales the retrieval of significant archival papers, photographs, objects, plus my own documentations, and the writing of the postcards, for me, evidenced her materiality and made a significant contribution to her role in my story. How do ‘new’ social knowledges become part of a felt sense of self? I drew on the intensity of these moments. I sent 100 cards back to Perth. When home, I collected up the ‘postcards’, reconstructed the raspberries, and documented the act of eating them. The raspberries felt so significant. I waited until I was ready to write and wondered how I could adequately (re)present such a visceral experience. |

| D17  | 93-95 | I have begun working with the postcards and with other photographic documentation. |
|      |      | The National Mandala Religious Art Award The theme this time is ‘The Prodigal Son’, and so I work the theme to my advantage. |

The digital construction of the diptych, ‘Silent Mother – Tawaddog Mam’ relies heavily on idealized, iconographic imagery, prompted by a print of the Mona Lisa on Mary’s lounge room wall in Llanelli! I position this image beside a textual ciberchrome of her writing. Again, the overlaid tracing of Mary’s ‘hand’ provides a corporeal point of connection to my own. Artist Anna Maria Maiolino talks about ‘the performing hand’ as the essence of daily domestic gestures and rituals. I construct a collage from Mary’s recipes, and cook one of her meals.

The performative reconstruction and the eating of the raspberries becomes visceral excess, resulting in a series of performative ‘stills’. The raspberries overflow onto the cloth. They become a powerful metaphor – a liberating commitment to the generative process of working.

The material processes of reworking the postcards, and ‘making’, draw me physically towards an understanding which encourages a felt sense of connection to events concerning the beginnings of my life, contradicting previous ‘truths’ about my past. I manipulate present and past imagery towards meaningful photographic condensations. During this process, thought provoking and evocative images emerge – seemingly by chance.

I return to the UK to visit Mary’s house in Llanelli for the second time. I also visit my mother Leila in Tunbridge Wells, in the house where I grew up.

Heresay is a collaborative project which brings together writers, performers, musicians and visual artists, in an exploration of the histories and spaces associated with the site now occupied by the Fremantle Arts Centre (FAC), the former Lunatic Asylum. I am one of six artists working on the ‘Snapshot’ project. “The act of ‘Snapshot’ is superficially one of recording – a likeness – a mental

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state…..it points to the gap between what we see and what we are told (in the labelling) highlighting the intervention played by the camera when recording events, and revealing the role of the photograph as constructed evidence”. Here, I find an institutional connection to my project, and to the labelled photograph inside my adoption file – number 16348. This image provides ‘concrete’ evidence of my existence before adoption – for the benefit of a court. During the years that the Arts Centre functioned as an asylum, ‘Gallery 3’ served as a maternity ward for ‘unwed mothers’. See D75.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>D20</th>
<th>1995-96</th>
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| **Art, Medicine and the Body** | As a smaller group of artists, we had been meeting since the beginning of the year. The actual project evolved towards a significant regional exhibition, over an eighteen month period, finally bringing together the following twenty eight visual, and performance artists from around Western Australia: Margaret Aiscow, Daniel Argyle, Sharon Barker, Andrew Britton, Aadje Bruce, Kate Campbell-Pope, Susan Flavell, Andrew Frost, Rick Hadlow, Nick Horn, Jenny Loverock, Coral Lowry, Steve Martin, Cass McDonald, Deborah McVeigh, Annie Q. Medley, Carey Merten, Christine Poller, Louise Monte, Mona Neumann, Holly Story, Rod van Der Merwe, Matthew Ngui and the co-ordinator and artist Michele Theunissen, and myself as an exhibiting artist and assistant co-ordinator. Some of us also had a medical connection. The project culminated in a month long exhibition at PICA, a two day performance programme, and a two day forum to which speakers were invited.

Given that Renaissance artists explored similar territory to that of medicine, our project grew out of the increased interest in, and examination of, the different ways of representing the human body today, ideas which arose out of Enlightenment thinking within Western philosophy, placing liberal Humanism on the one hand and a positivist scientific objectivity on the other. Our project set out to examine these different ways of ‘languaging’ the body, and the now two discursive systems of Art and Medicine. Decartes’ famous dictum, “I think, therefore I am”, encouraged the ‘separation’ of mind from body – emotion from rationality – the fragment from the whole – one system from another.

Over the first six months we invited the guest speakers to talk to us about different aspects of the body, art and medicine. Some of the

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499 Melissa Harpley, Project Coordinator, Heresay, Catalogue, Fremantle Arts Centre, Western Australia, October 1995.
topics covered were, mental illness, cancer, holistic health, Aboriginal health, identity, masculinity, femininity, sexuality, perception and reproductive technology. The talks generated discussion, stimulated ideas and identified working areas of interest for us, both individually and/or in groups.

The performance programme coordinated by Matthew Ngui, “(di) the section and the (W)hole”, articulated an interesting tension between the fragmented body of medical discourse against a fragmented body of ‘postmodern’ discourse.

In the early stages of the project, I was developing ideas towards a non-linear Installation. I wanted to create a sensory environment – a more implied space where the audience could experience a ‘real’ situation through an evoked response – through the kind of gut reaction which precedes mental association. I had been working with the visceral content of the raspberries and taking photographic slides from sections of mucus membrane in the anatomy laboratory at UWA. I was researching smell, and pre-verbal memory as part of my Honours project, and wanted to develop a range of elements towards the work.

| 1995 | During this time frame, I was also invited to take part in a panel presentation at a **Reproductive Technology Council (RTC) Seminar on ethics associated with donor insemination (DI)**, here in WA. I felt that the ‘technological imperative’ was strong. DI clinic practitioners were in favour of anonymity to keep up the supply of donor sperm, and there was little recognition given that people born as a result of reproductive technology might want to search for their biological backgrounds, or have subsequent questions about their genetic family identity, as many have done in the area of adoption. I felt that those representing the technological aspect, and clinical research, in fact, silenced ‘the emotional’. This forum has been organised to discuss whether ‘Donor’ records should be ‘open’ or ‘closed’. As an advocate for open records, and someone who has experienced ‘closed adoption’, I have been asked to speak about the emotional impact the silence surrounding my own adoption has had on my life. I know the audience will be mixed, and the subject contested. I feel a vulnerability within what I have been asked to do. I want to speak with a sense of immediacy, and remain open ‘as if’ it is ‘me’ – and yet could easily be one of them...

...The style was awkward for a clinical setting – the words felt too close to me, although the impact was strong. It was the strength of their response, which surprised me.

| 218 | Looking back on the RTC presentation, although short, it had a performative tone. I wanted the listener to feel a proximity to what I was saying, but in no way did I want to appear a victim of circumstance myself. I wrote the words carefully. In fact, I hid behind the performative text, giving detail but using restrained emotion. It wasn’t an easy piece to write, particularly as I knew the reception...
would probably be mixed. As anticipated, the ‘emotional’ was pathologised by those running the sperm banks, and favouring anonymity. It was the first time that I had spoken about my experience of adoption in public, and although many appreciated what I was saying, I felt over exposed.

It was this experience above all others that made me realise the political value of personal story, and influenced a more narrative approach in my work. I had just completed a performative chapter as part of my Honours project, and decided to develop it further. I worked towards a ‘textual’ layering within a sensory environment as I began employing a more political use of emotion in my work. Engaged with Cixous’ writing, I worked towards the Installation. It felt unlike anything that I had made to date, and I included many of the sensory cues that I had been working on. (See also (D 79), where I note a return to more objective studies, or ‘neutral research’ within social practice, and a shift back towards a notions of “expert knowledge”).

In 1995, I traced my father, William William’s birth certificate, by tracking down his date of birth from his war time pay roll records, which I obtained through the Home Office in London. This was triggered by information given by my birthmother in my ‘file’. I first contacted the Military War Museum at Lambeth Bridge for the Fire Service records. He was a fireman. After working at the Penrhyn Quarry, then the Slate Quay in Bangor, he joined the National Fire Service in Bethesda, North Wales. From there he moved to South Wales.

D23 1996 The performative Installation piece that I finally developed for Art Medicine and the Body was ‘Fy Mam. Mairs. Merthyres. Mother Mary Martyr’, (Fy Mam) The Installation took the form of a table setting within an enclosed room. The ‘visitor’ was invited in English and Welsh to enter the darkened space – to take a seat at the table and join a reunion meal of sorts. My mother’s eyes looked up from each place setting and the image on the serving mats celebrated a past family meal. A low light focussed on a plate of congealed jellied text. These blood red raspberry letters held a visceral significance for me, which unfolded as the story progressed, and were intended as a tactile reminder to the viewer of the bodily responses held within the processes of self revelation. In the corner, a drift of scented rose petals collected over time, acted as a personal reference, yet offered a symbolic gesture to longing. Using extracts from the 1950 British Adoption Act, official documents retrieved from my ‘sealed’ adoption file, letters written between my (birth)mother Mary and the agency following my relinquishment, my own writings, other writings, including those of Dylan Thomas, Sartre, Kristeva and Cixous. I pieced together a ‘heteroglossic’ collage using voice, projected imagery, and sound in an attempt to reveal the complex social constructions and emotional complexities hidden within the system of ‘closed adoption’. Large projected images were dissolved, and a
‘polyphony’ of voices spoke from the corners of the darkened room. Using this spatial, sensory, kinaesthetic and textual framework, I hoped to take advantage of the palpable vibrations between sign systems and encourage those uncanny openings where memories can be evoked. Each sensory perception acts as a reminder of some previous experience.

In a documentary sense the still photograph gives a series of clues, a sense that something might have happened there; a social context. There is a narrative which can be read into. For the photographer ‘something’ of that object or place has been captured. For the viewer s/he investigates the enigma of that ‘something’. The photograph carries much weight. It can carry clues to distant continuities. It can drive desire through recognition and it can exaggerate difference. It can condense time by bringing the past into the present. The photograph acts as a tangible structure with which to flesh out time, fill in lost years – expand individual roles, and ‘rewrite’ family stories.

Victor Burgin maintains that from a psychoanalytical perspective, photography can be compared with the structure of the fetish as the camera image marks the look, an illusion of presence that opposes the object’s real absence although, in this sense, perhaps the animated or dissolved image attempts to recorporealise the absent mother. There are tensions within the notions of preservation, the ‘truth’ of the image, memory, and imagination.

D23 1996

For my Honours project, Loss Adoption and Desire, I researched the following fragments or Postcards: The power of the Name, The Name of the Mother, Self as Foreigner, The Gift and The Sacrifice, notions of property and propriety, and the ‘Abject and the Maternal Space’. Although the images are a reflection of these concerns, I feel they fall into the broader yet interrelating areas previously mentioned – the ‘unspeakable’ and the ‘unsayable’.

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| D24 | 1996 | During the making of *Fy Mam*, I was invited to speak to 2nd and 3rd Year Visual Art students at Curtin University, on *Identity and the Ephemeral*. I attempted to bring together the ephemeral nature of identity and the ephemeral nature of Installation, and the performative work. |
| D25 | 1996 | Whilst the exhibition was installed at PICA, I gave a floor talk within the space to Murdoch Gender Body and Performance students. We discussed the physicality of the work, the different sensory triggers, and the construction of the piece in relation to the space. The presence of the body, yet the ‘absent body’, and the notion of ‘body memory’. Story. My ideas were more organised regarding the ‘feminist project’ and the political use of emotion. The work was both an evocation and excavation of loss, through an exploration of the sensory. |
| D26 | 1996 | As previously mentioned, the ‘psychically unsayable’ has more to do with the pre-linguistic psychic traces between the mother to be, and the developing infant in utero and immediately after birth. Art provides a space for imagination and speculation – an opening to the affect of others. Here I infer the emotional role of art and the underlying social mechanisms of silence and in/visibility. |
| D28 | 1997 | Australian Postgraduate Award (APA). Beginning of PhD candidature. |
| D29 | 1997 | Lecture for Gender, Body and Performance, School of Arts, Murdoch University ‘Working with Installation’: I showed a documentary video of the A/V Installation, *Fy Mam*, and reflected on my Honours project before discussing the various theoretical areas and directions the new project might explore. I began thinking more about ‘embodiment’ through the works of Merleau-Ponty, Ettinger, Kristeva and Drew Leder. At this stage, I framed my prospective research in the direction of perceptual bodily awareness – |
how the language of art can interact with pre-verbal memory and our affective responses.

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<td>D30</td>
<td>The Sixth Australian Conference on Adoption: Separation Reunion Reconciliation, Brisbane, QLD.</td>
<td>I presented the video documentation of Fy Mam augmented by a paper extracted from Loss Adoption and Desire. I have been keen from the outset of my candidacy to recontextualise my arts-based research, within the clinical setting. There were over 300 delegates made up from a varied demographic, and there was keen support for the arts. An accompanying art exhibition, Separation Reunion Reconciliation tied in with the conference. I submitted the diptych, ‘Silent Mother/Tawaddog Fam for this event. Two months prior to this conference, the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families – Bringing Them Home, had been issued. The theme for this particular conference, Separation, Reunion Reconciliation emphasised the pain of separation, and the possibilities for reunion and reconciliation. The forum acknowledged the pain of separation for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Democrat politician Cheryl Kernot opened the art exhibition and talked about her role on the Council for Reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. There was quite a strong Indigenous presence at the conference. One of the concurrent sessions was presented by representatives from Link Up, the Aboriginal tracing and support organisation. From memory, there was a very inclusive atmosphere at this conference. There were calls for initiating co-parenting schemes to help birth parents who were not coping with their children. If anything, adoptive parents were being silenced on this occasion. Queensland, at this stage, had not opened its past adoption records and a small group of older adoptive parents were articulating their need for the continuation of ‘privacy’ in adoption. However, the general push was for ‘open adoption’ in Queensland, bringing the state in line with the rest of Australia.</td>
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<td>D31</td>
<td>At the International Conference on Adoption and Healing, Wellington, New Zealand.</td>
<td>I presented a similar paper and the A/V Presentation. This forum had been programmed to follow on from the Brisbane conference and was particularly relevant for professionals working in the area. There was an emphasis on kinship networks and communal care systems as found in indigenous cultures, and again suggestions towards formalising ‘co-parenting’ arrangements and/or new models to replace ‘adoption’ per se. As referenced elsewhere, family lawyer Robert Ladbroke addressed this issue through his paper, ‘Adoption and Healing, Closing the Wound’. His ideas encouraged much discussion regarding future policy.</td>
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<td>D32</td>
<td>Guest Lecture, MA Art Therapy Students at Edith Cowan University, WA: ‘On Performance: The Making and Reception of Art’.</td>
<td>This was more of an informal discussion about phenomenology in research, in which I incorporated my experience, practice and</td>
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theoretical interests. ‘I am currently looking at the concept of ‘hyphenated identities’ through the works of Trihn T Minh-ha and Homi Bhabha’. In particular, I am interested in the pluralities constructed through ‘closed adoption’ around name, family, story, nation, history, language and culture.

At this time, I was also carrying out personal research through the West Australian Genealogical Society – without much luck. But as Catherine Nash’s paper points out, genealogy is very unstable. I started to question the hidden patriarchal and cultural meanings within genealogy itself – the tensions within notions of heritage and understandings of inheritance. See D53.

| D33  | 1998 | National Adoption Conference at Lincoln University, Christchurch, NZ. Now one year into my PhD, I have had time to reflect on the making process and my response to Fy Mam in more depth. I am beginning to realise that time is needed for any exercise in autoethnography – a continuous process of reflection and (re)vision is needed. Here, I gave a two-fold presentation entitled ‘Art, Adoption and Subjectivity’, and then co-ran a workshop with Jennifer Newbould, Manager of ARCS, WA. I felt that I was beginning to draw my theoretical ideas together in what might be a draft chapter. Again, the ‘emotional’ content stood out as being politically important. |
| D34  | 1998 | In March, I was asked to repair and re-install a damaged artwork of mine, in the Curtin Collection. This multiple work had been assembled on Campus and had unfortunately been vandalised. The piece, Subject and Object, had been acquired by the University in 1991. Revisiting this work has prompted a (re)reading of my creative process over the last ten years. The ten rammed earth forms are made with materials influenced by time spent in the Eastern Goldfields and other geological sites, located in Western Australia. I was forced to reflect on my use of geological and archaeological metaphors over a considerable period of time. The complexities embedded within notions of place, time, memory, narrative, and cultural identity become more apparent to me. As I reconstruct my past from within the present, I realize the inter-relationship between my personal process of excavation, artistic practice, theoretical investigations, and bodily presence. ‘Intermedia’ and ‘interdisciplinarity’ are both important to me, and I find myself feeling comfortable within the broader parameters of Performance Studies as a research discipline or umbrella for this project. |
| D35  | 1998 | I have a brief conversation with David George regarding Richard Long’s book, Walking in Circles, and Long’s work in Wales. David George introduces me ‘online’ to his friend and colleague, David Williams, who in turn, points me in the direction of the Centre for |
Performance Research (CPR) in Aberystwyth, Wales, which is fortuitous. I register for the forthcoming itinerant conference, *Points of Contact: Performance Places and Pasts* to be held by CPR later in the year. David Williams thinks this project will take a lifetime!

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<td><strong>D37</strong></td>
<td>I prepare for my fieldwork in Wales. The (Im)placement Project will employ 20Kg, geological soil samples taken at significant locations across the country. I will begin the project, and continue with the work after Points of Contact. I have had fifty of ‘my’ words translated into Welsh and printed a word on the reverse side of each bag. I will take the bags to Wales as planned. The proposed ‘(im)placement’ project’ will be a site-specific response to Wales, on my part. I plan to visit both my adoptive family home in Tunbridge Wells, and my birthmother’s family in Llanelli and Cardiff, as well as parts of North Wales, where I will investigate my birthfather’s country.</td>
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<td><strong>D38</strong></td>
<td><em>Points of Contact 7: Performance, Places and Pasts</em> was held by CPR at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. This itinerant conference examined the convergences of landscape, memory, history and autobiography through performance. This was obviously very pertinent to my project – I couldn’t have chosen a better adjunct to my field work. I enjoyed the conference enormously and really value the contacts made there, particularly performance artist and theorist Lisa Lewis from Cardiff, and contemporary archaeologists Jonna Ulin and Fiona Campbell from Sweden.</td>
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**Journal excerpt, Sept. 11** This is an important trip for me. The itinerant conference is amazingly poignant. We are visiting ancient monuments and archaeological sites in SW Wales. I particularly enjoyed Roger Owen’s performance in the cowshed on his family’s farm at Aberporth, ‘Nothing to see here’. In a powerful sound piece, he drew on the two Welsh words ‘Tirlun’ and ‘Tywedd’ to illustrate two different perceptions or understandings of landscape in Wales.

I learnt from the challenging discussions about Wales in terms of post-colonial theory. I felt ignorant about my knowledge of Welsh history – how Wales has suffered severe cultural erosion under English imperialist governments. Memory is relational, it is also social and political. We visited the Preseli Mountains and walked through Tycanol Woods – a beautiful mossy woodland which reminded me of the temperate rainforests of Tasmania. We also ‘happened’ upon numerous performance pieces en route.

Archaeologist, Ken Brassil, gave an enlightening commentary on Pentre Ifan – “Is this a tomb”? ‘O Foel Drygarn I Garn Menyn’.

**Sept.12** (Sat) Performative lecture at Theatr Y Castell – ‘A Reinactment’ in English and Welsh. We visited Haford, which in
| D41 | translation means summer house, and the landscaped gardens bordered by a 'picturesque' river walk. From there, we travelled to the abbey, Strata Florida near Lampeter. On the Lampeter Campus, Ulf Stronmayer talked of “place, tradition and identity, centred on the notion of events”. He says, “an event as a singular moment in time and space. No material or landscape is devoid of meaning. Reading the landscape offers a sense of place – whose sense of place? Encounter the event that we are. Events leave a trace. We see, listen to and touch traces of the past”. According to Walter Benjamin, “Place holds its own revolutionary potential”. Lisa Lewis then gave a performative lecture in the family chapel. It was a wonderful piece. “New identity from movement, contingently opening ... Difference is neither one nor the other but in between” (following Homi Bhabha). |
| Sept. 13 Paul Carter talked about “Non synthesis, the concept of layers within cultural memory. In the case of the displaced diasporic, when there is no evidence the journeying to an important site can be important. Remembering pasts in terms of (re)membering forward – after Becket”. He, Carter, talked of the polyglot society... the value of creating a ceremonial action to help a right of passage. This felt very weird as I had just started to place my bags around the country, as just that! PC talked about symbolism and recovery in terms of 'mythexix' – a learned participation – as a representation of the ineffable – of displacement, migration and relocation. He spoke of 'metopier', the act of making the past – of stratification – the poetics in the production of performing a new form. Remembering loss as proposition – as a mechanism that will give validity to, or claim, to a site. He talked of the site of dream formation as the 'mythepoetic'. |

| D42 1998 | Following the conference, I spent one night at the Bay Hotel in Aberystwyth on the sea front. I placed a bag on the beach by the wooden jetty. Later, I bumped into Dwight Conquergood who was heading up to Scotland to trace his family heritage. He suggested that I think about presenting a paper at the forthcoming Psi5 Performance Studies International Conference – to be held in Wales in 1999. 

Sept. 14 I visit Llanbarden Church which has been rebuilt on its 6th century site. The following morning, I (re)video the now torn bag strewn along the beach. I can just see the word ‘knowledge’. I catch the train to Newtown to meet Monica, a worker and researcher from the Post Adoption Centre in London. (We have been in contact since the Brisbane adoption conference). I place another bag in... |

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Newtown. The placing of the bags is becoming an important ritual in this navigation of Wales.

Sept. 15 I drive to Colwyn Bay (I fill and place a bag here) and from there to Bangor (bag), then to Glasinfryn, and then Howe Street (bag) to see the quarryman’s house where my father was born. This is the address mentioned on his birth certificate. The narrow road consists of just six slate workers’ cottages which are now under the protection of the National Trust. I video the cottages before I visit the fire station in Bangor. I was told that all the fire service records are now kept in the archives in Caernarfon, Victoria Docks, tel. O1286 679095. Some local records are kept in the University archives at Bangor, tel.01248351151. I contact Thomas Roberts, the archivist. Some of the firemen remember the photograph of my ‘father’ and my article in the Bangor Chronicle on July 16th 1999. The local people are very helpful and interested in assisting me. The Chief Firemen gave me a list of older members who may, or may not, remember something. I decided to stay across the road at Y Garth B&B whilst people were making inquires on my behalf. Val, the secretary at the fire station, has a brother in Glasinfryn, and is able to make enquires in and around the Bethesda area.

Sept. 16 I drove out towards the Penrhyn slate quarry today and explored the village of Bethesda (bag). Trying to be unobtrusive, I was suddenly stopped by two television journalists asking in Welsh – then English, what my views are on the Welsh assembly! The historian at Penrhyn Castle suggested valuable local research avenues. The Castle was built by Lord Pennant, an Englishman who owned the slate quarry and who was disliked intensely. His castle is an ostentatious expression of wealth, in contrast to the poverty of the quarrymen’s cottages.

I drove over the Menai Bridge to Anglesey. Beaumaris is a beautiful town built around a castle from the time of Edward I, overlooking the Menai Straits. The castle was built to contain the ‘marauding’ Welsh in the 1200’s (video documentation)!

The secretary at the fire station, Val, has contacted her brother, who actually knows the family. The fire station staff have located a cousin of mine in Bethesda, Orena Prichard. She is the daughter of one of my father’s brothers, and the principal of a Welsh Junior School in Caernarfon – Ysgol Maes Incla. The children don’t learn in English until they reach the age of seven. Another cousin, Iona Jones, is William Owen Williams’ sister’s daughter, and teaches with Orena’s husband at an all-Welsh school in Llanfairfechan.

William Owen Williams, or WOW as he was called, was the 2nd eldest child of ten – six boys and four girls – all now deceased.

Sept. 17 Stephen Wyn Jones, the leading fireman, came over to Y Garth for breakfast. The family want to meet me. The firemen have organised a dinner at the Eryl Mor Hotel tomorrow evening. I feel somewhat nervous about all this.
I will go to the slate quarry today to video, draw, and think! I drive to Llanbaris Pass and Snowdon (video). There is a dense fog at the summit which reminds me of my last visit some thirty years ago with a school camp, when I got lost.

**Sept. 18** (Fri) Am. I drive over to Anglesey again. Bryn Celli Ddu is a two-thousand-year old passage tomb which Ken Brassil told me about. I arrive as a wonderful shadow is being cast through a triangular window onto the floor of the tomb. I return to Y Garth and find a telephone message from a Mrs Williams who is apparently my sister-in-law, and married to my brother Arthur (61)!

This evening I met Arthur and Joyce Williams, Iona Jones, Orena Pritchard and her mother Eurwen Williams. All Welsh speakers and strong Welsh Nationalists – very chapel. They talk of my father’s reputation and say that they are not surprised about my existence. Nonetheless, they are very welcoming. They have arranged to take me out to lunch tomorrow at the Wean Pentir Pub. The Wean Pentir graveyard is where most of the family are buried! It is all a bit overwhelming really.

I am trying to digest the unexpected discovery of my father’s family, meeting my brother, the language and cultural difference, not to mention the revelations within my father’s story. It is all so relevant to my project, but so unexpected, and something that I need to absorb before any theoretical engagement is possible at all!

I have started to think about parallels between my search for identity as an individual, and the identity of Wales in relation to England, as a nation.

**Sept. 19** Before my tour of the Pentir graveyard, Iona paused and said, “This is Welsh Wales - We are very political”!

….. I have been trying to write.

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<td><strong>February/March</strong> – I have spent ages researching, and trying to write, my ‘forthcoming’ paper, for the Psi 5 Conference. After the emotional impact of my recent trip to Wales, I have had writer’s block – more the feeling of being overwhelmed by it all. I always find the rhythm of Helene Cixous’s writing helpful. If I can unpick the emotional issues and build theoretical and cultural content into the work, I think this paper for the conference in Wales may be a significant breakthrough. I am developing a text towards a performative paper with slides. At the moment my ‘monologue’ feels too narcissistic. I am working on it.</td>
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<td>April 1999</td>
<td>Performative paper with slides: ‘Cartographies of Loss and (Re)stor(y)ing’, 5th Performance Studies International Conference ‘Here Be Dragons: Mapping the Undiscovered Realms of Performance Studies: Boundaries, Hinterlands and Beyond’, University of Wales, Aberystwyth. I am becoming more interested in issues associated with cultural emplacement, and contemporary issues in Wales. The intensity of the project is gradually spiralling outwards towards issues of cultural location, language and history, although I’m still not sure what I am really trying to say here, or will ultimately do with the material. After the conference I spend another three weeks engaged in fieldwork, visiting both families in South and North Wales – (im)placing more ‘bags’. I spend valuable time researching at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, the Caernarfon Archives, the Welsh Film Archives in Aberystwyth, Llanelli Library, and the British Film Institute in London. At the latter, I locate a poignant 1948 Pathe News clip promoting the National Adoption Society. As I was adopted through the National Adoption Society in Knightsbridge, this feels so significant, although, I’m not sure how I will use it.</td>
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<td>Oct 1999</td>
<td>Back in Perth, I continue to work with ‘Cartographies of Loss’ as a performative monologue in which I wear 1950’s clothes, and my birth mother Mary’s jewellery. I video this against a chroma key background with the intention of inserting archival imagery as a floating background. I am not happy with this as a form. It is feeling contrived.</td>
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<td>Oct 1999</td>
<td>Presentation for Postgraduate Seminar, Performance Research Crossings: This was a forum held at PICA and co-hosted by Theatre Studies / Creative Arts at Murdoch University and WAAPA, Edith Cowan University. Here, I reflected on the process of making Fy Mam and the apparent repetitive circularity present within the finished work. I started to articulate a working methodology for the research within the fluidity of Performance Studies. I explored the bodily, temporal and cultural aspects of the unfolding adoption story – the narrative structure, and ongoing interrelationship with my arts praxis. At this point in time, I was also beginning to envisage the development of another Installation work instead of the monologue. I decided to highlight the evolving narrative as ambiguous, and complex relational aspects of autobiography were emerging.</td>
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| February 2000 | Refiguring Postcoloniality: This colloquium was held through the Division of Arts at Murdoch University. This forum provided an opportunity to focus my work on ‘closed adoption’ through a ‘postcolonial’ frame where ‘appropriation’ and ‘renaming’ in adoption echoes the particularities of Wales as a nation, colonised by England. Still reworking ‘Cartographies of Loss and (Re)storying’, I attempt to examine the space between ‘heredity’ and ‘heritage’ whilst mapping my personal links within the broader
areas of culture, language and landscape. Welsh philosopher JR Jones taps into the Bergsonian term, ‘interpenetration’ (cited by Mike Pearson in Eds Hansson) to describe the way in which language and land function to connect time, place and cultural inheritance – in his words, “to create a people”.  

| D50 | 2000-April | On this occasion, I gave a lecture to the ‘Creative Arts’ students at Murdoch in which I discussed creativity and identity as process. I talked of the renegotiation of narrative as an ongoing process, rather than a final achievement. I talked through the process of drawing on surface material, followed by “deep mapping” in an attempt to excavate the different aspects of the personal past, and the often difficult “biographical landscapes of the family”.  

Somewhere between my present understandings of heredity and new notions of heritage, I am reminded of Stuart Hall’s words, mentioned earlier – “not the so called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our ‘routes’.”  

| D51 | 2000-2 | As the narrative project moves forward, I feel the need to fully acknowledge a more dialogic viewpoint within the story by including the other voices. This act feels transgressive as I make difficult ethical decisions as to what to include, and what to leave out. I want to open the content towards a non-judgmental form which encourages empathy for the various subject positions involved in the adoption process.  

As an adoptee ‘(Im)placing’ oneself consciously within the birth family narrative requires a reviewing of the adoptive narrative, and a conscious placing of oneself in and between both family stories. Using photographic imagery creatively, I weave myself between the names, images, and events associated with both narratives.

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| D52 | 2000 May | 7th Australian Adoption Conference, Hobart, Tasmania.  
I presented the project as generative and in progress, at this conference. I expanded on the process of editing, beside the constant (re)editing of one’s life story. I played the now recorded monologue, ‘Cartographies of Loss’, with projected slides plus the recently recorded additional voices in an attempt to represent my birth uncle George, my adoptive mother, my birthmother in Llanelli, and my godmother in Cardiff. At this stage, these other positions have not been edited into the body of the piece. It felt useful to be (re)contextualising the developing work within a predominately clinical setting, and I welcomed the feedback. |
| D53 | 2000 July | As I mentioned in the introduction to this Addendum, I have found many of the forums hosted by the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) at the University of Western Australia, invaluable lateral extensions to this project. Land Place Culture Identity was no exception. In her paper, Catherine Nash, from the University of London, considered the implications of genealogical versions of identity, ethnicity and cultural location, for imagining post-colonial models of belonging in Ireland (she was brought up in Ireland but was not of Irish decent). I found her position an interesting inversion to my own story, and my search for identity from an ‘outside belonging’ – my relatedness to the immediate family and their relationship to Wales. Is it possible to negotiate place-based identity, from outside? |
| D54 | 2000 July | This Life Stories Conference was held by the Department of History at Monash University, Melbourne. The content was very relevant to the project, and I particularly benefited from discussion with Moira Gatens who gave a stimulating paper on ‘privacy and autobiography’. Her work, plus my own feelings about family secrets and the notion of ‘transgression’ initiated the title for my next presentation, ‘The Necessity of Story and the Politics of Privacy’ at Curtin University in 2002. Jonna Haanson, in ‘Unearthing the Local’ talks of family pasts as a landscape full of hidden itineraries of unknown places, objects and desires, confined emotions within compressed landscapes frozen in time and space’ – all relevant.506 |

Dr Jo Hart invited me to talk on ‘Art and (re)storying’ to her students studying English as a second language at Edith Cowan University, WA. The group were all migrants to Australia – many were refugees. All the students came from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds, most had experienced trauma – all felt a sense of dislocation. This session developed into a story telling circle – about giving voice.

**ARCS WA** invited me to give a half day presentation on my practice and research for those personally involved in adoption and/or family separation. I was encouraged by the personal stories, and depth of discussion from participants.

A second half day presentation was organised for those working professionally in the area of adoption, fostering, and children in ‘out of home care’, step-families, child migrants and those working with families formed through new birth technologies and surrogacy. There was a good response to the creative medium, but I felt that there was little engagement with the theoretical positioning.

After writing an article, ‘Habitus 2000 ART’ for the Adoption Research and Counselling Service (ARCS) WA newsletter, I felt the need to refocus my research towards my own practise and the broader cultural studies project.

‘The Future of Gender’ was another IAS seminar held at UWA. Amanda Fernbach from the University of New South Wales presented a provocative paper in which she celebrated the new “multiple mutating possibilities for identity and gender formation, in a ‘post-human’ existence” within a cultural landscape where “the birth of an interspecies human hybrid is foreshadowed by the advent of successfully cloned transgenic animals”. Slightly overwhelmed by her celebration of these possibilities, I sensed a mundane confirmation for my own work, and by extension, validation within the political arena of art as an instrument for social commentary.

One of the highlights of my candidacy has been my involvement with **Teatro Della Radici**. I was fortunate to be able to participate in a six day workshop led by **Christina Castrillo**. Although based in Lugano, Switzerland, Cristina and her company perform and take
May  workshops around the world. Cristina herself was born and brought up in Argentina. She worked with *Libre Teatro Libre*, a politically active theatre company, but was forced to leave Argentina in the late seventies due to the government’s oppressive regime. Much of her work reflects the depths of experience when living under such conditions.

> When Cristina speaks about her work, she says that she does not want to pin her work down to a particular type of theatre, performance, show or ‘thing’. She wants to create work which corresponds with lived experience. She acknowledges that the mental shape and form of experience is different for each person based on their own life. She states the importance of reflection on the work. “Do it and reflect aloud. Value the reactions from different audiences – their affective responses – your reflections”. “As in Umbral I do and reflect, do and reflect…..”

Although, this was a serendipitous opportunity for me, the timing of Cristina’s workshop was actually invaluable. Her workshop on embodiment offered me an important space for reflection on my creative process – the performative works such as the *postcards*, my work with multiples, the printing of the four hundred sample bags, and the (im)placement project of the bags in Wales. My work with her affirmed the significance of working repetitively through the body, particularly in relation to the (re)storying project. Firstly, by using bodily experience we can begin to understand past emotional ‘experience’. Secondly, it is possible to build upon new experience by using repetition through the body, thus creating an experiential hook or, as previously mentioned, in neurophysiological terms, a ‘dispositional representation’ on which to hang new, associated memory, and create a new neural pathway. According to Cristina, “Repetition is about body memory. The body triggers the emotional content. It ‘tells’ your own experience, and then you can build on it”.

This concept of ‘reworking’ was again recently articulated at the 9th *Australian Adoption Conference*. In terms of healing trauma and attachment disorder, some social work practitioners and neuropsychologists are employing the recently acquired knowledge into the neuro-plasticity of the brain in their clinical work. As mentioned and referenced elsewhere in this dissertation, this research is based on the work of sociobiologists, neurologists, neurophysiologists and neuropsychoanalysts such as Allan Schore, Daniel Seigal, Antonio Damasio, Eric Kandel and others. It is possible to build new positive neural pathways in the brain, particularly following separation, poor attachment and past trauma.

In 2001, I was pleased to feel for myself how Cristina’s work validated my own assumptions around experiential practice, and the research process. Cristina’s work draws directly on the bodily relationship between memory and emotion. She examines memory through association with a particular body action or perception, producing a performance which ‘corresponds’ with lived experience. Focusing on the inter-relationship between perceptual awareness, memory and emotion, these methods, for me, endorse, on the one
hand, the role of repetition through performance in accessing past affect in order to express the ‘unspeakable’ and ‘unsayable’ aspects of experience, and on the other, highlight the value of a strategic kinaesthetic creative practice when embodying ‘new’ social knowledges into an ongoing felt sense of self.

Through a series of exercises, I am being introduced to ‘the rules’ of the body. Cristina talks about the philosophy underpinning the Theatro Della Radici. The body moves from a ‘point of attention’, avoiding the safety of cliches.

I am working from the inside out, about things that are close to me. I am sensing the space around me with my body and ‘listening’. I am blindfolded walking, feeling every part of my feet as they touch the floor. Through my feet I am exploring the boundaries of the space.

**Working with objects through personal association.** I have brought in a mirror that I was given. It belonged to my birthmother. I am looking into the image, in search of her face.

I am working my postcards – they are wrapped in brown paper and tied with raffia, thus reduced to one ‘object of importance’. Unwrapping my parcel, I lay the cards out in a grid formation – the text facing downwards, I reach out and randomly turn a card over. I read out a word, then several words taken from the message – another card – another message – more words. When collected, these cards form a ‘diary’ – a diary of responses to my mother’s house – my presence, her absence – her presence. In a child like reference to pelmanism, this awkward ritual builds its own rhythm and intensity. First choosing a card, then reading the words – I’m rewriting the memory. I remember the need to write. As I remember – a fluency moves me to tears.

Cristina talks of an involved focus, and the need for concentration on content. She talks about connections between movement, breathing and voice.

We are kneeling on the ground, resting on our heels – with shoulders forward touching the floor. I can feel the rhythm and sound of my breath. As I increase the pace of my breathing I am conscious of the movement within my body. With an outward breath I sigh the shape of my name. The sound flows out of my mouth. I am breathing my name with my body – I’m not talking from my head.

Standing in a circle we sound our name in any way we want to. The person next to us repeats the sound of our name as we deliver it and says it back to us – always breathing the name with the body, not ‘talking from the head’.
Blindfolded, we locate each other without speaking. We identify each other purely by touch.

Cristina leads each one of us, without warning, individually around the room – very fast. Some resist this intervention and cry out. Others are relaxed and trust her guidance.

Blindfolded again, we are asked to pick out a word from a box of plastic letters – a significant word – something that is meaningful to us. As we feel each letter we are asked to visualise the word in its entirety and to reflect on its meaning for us individually. We are told to concentrate our perceptual awareness on an area of emotional importance, and conceptual interest. I choose the word silence. I can identify the shape of the letters with my tongue. I don’t know why. I create a short ‘proposal’ as I focus on my word.

**Sound exercises with Bruna.** Kneeling on the ground resting on our heels, shoulders resting forward on the floor we feel our breath – rhythm and sound. Conscious of every part of the body we breathe into each part and increase the pace of the breathing. With the outward breath we let the body give out a sound, then we shape that sound to become our name again. With soft mouth, soft eyes we feel where the sound comes from.

Standing in a circle each member makes a sound proposal that is different from all the others before, yet it adds to the quality of the group ‘voice’. Each voice piece is repeated continuously as all members of the circle gradually join in. A chorus is built up. As in the performance ‘Strangers’ Cristina then sings her proposal over the group sound, from outside the circle.

The first person plays with sound until they are sure of their voice proposal, the person next to them takes up their neighbour’s proposal. The first person, when they are sure that their proposal has been copied correctly sits down. The second person now works intuitively with the proposal, gradually feeling their way through sound to find their own new proposal, and so on.

**Movement with Nunzia:** Starting from a ‘point of attention’, often off balance and not using ‘everyday’ posture, the body moves through a lively sequence of beautiful and awkward events often controlled by a variety of paces. Between moves, there is always a return to a ‘point of attention’.

Again, Cristina wants to create a performance which corresponds with lived experience, where the mental shape and form of experience is different for each person based on their own experience.

After each of her performances at PICA, Cristina speaks a reflection on her work – she performs – reflects – performs... There is a
comic sequence with a gun where her clown-like character gets a finger stuck in the gun barrel. This is juxtaposed with an evocative piece suggesting the turmoil of leaving Argentina. In the darkness she lights paper flowers – a synergy within the space is performed using body, voice, music, smoke and light. The piece is highly evocative, and the audience is left feeling something terrible has happened. As viewers, we are drawn into a narrative, where the detail is only imagined.

“I adore Shakespeare because he is a poet and poetry is very close to how I wish to use the body …. I respect Grotovski’s work”. She talks of taking the body beyond the repetition of the everyday gesture. Cristina believes that, “theory should not be just an intelligent choice but something that fits the experience”. This is the strongest endorsement yet of my own process.

D59 2001

It was a Saturday when I visited Lindal Jones’ exhibition at Laurence Wilson Gallery at UWA in Western Australia. I felt as though I had walked in on a drama. There was a tension leading towards a very private yet decisive moment, but at the same time, it was both vague and evocative. The body was present in the video. In my own work the narrative is explicit, yet evokes the body, and the body is absent.

D60 2001

**June - ARCS WA one day creative workshop:** I immediately found aspects of Cristina Castrillo’s work translatable and created a one day creative workshop in a clinical setting, specifically for adopted adults. I focussed on the power of the body, the name, and the ‘embodiment’ of new information about identity, towards a felt sense of self. As well as speaking the ‘birth’ name though the body, as in Cristina’s workshop, we also worked with photographic imagery from the past. We relabelled a range of childhood images and later ‘moments’ captured on camera, with the ‘other’ name, and imagined into the possibilities of that person when occupying a very different social site.

D61 2001

**In July,** I was invited to give a presentation to SSHE Postgraduate ‘Survival Forum. The topic was ‘Communicating Across and Beyond Disciplines: Identifying and Addressing Different Audiences’. By discussing the work to date, I talked through my process
of framing and reframing work for presentations to various audiences, conferences and seminars, using video documentation of the Installation work. This seminar was a very useful exercise for reviewing my own process, and the process of approaching different discourses within which to show my work.

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<td>D62</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
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| D63 | Oct 2002 | I was invited to give a presentation representing my arts praxis to the **1st National Conference on Mental Health, Aspects of Persons Affected by Family Separation**, held at Liverpool Hospital in Sydney, NSW. Members of the organising committee had apparently seen my presentation of *Fy Mam* at the **6th National Conference on Adoption** in 1997 and asked me to contribute to this forum. I screened the composite edit of *Translating Hiraeth* on the one track as this was to be a lecture theatre presentation. I augmented the

screening with the paper, “(Re)storying Disrupted Identities: Privacy and the Public Voice”. This conference was the first of its kind in Australia and brought together politicians, clinicians, professionals working in the area of ‘family’ formation and separation, and those with personal and/or professional associations with the following groups: ‘The Stolen Generation’, child migrants, ‘closed adoption’, CLAN (an organisation set up by ‘children’ who were institutionalised), intercountry adoptions, persons born as a result of reproductive technologies, such as donor insemination, and those separated through the family courts and the prison system. For me, the forum pointed to the resonances and valuable connections between stories, whilst highlighting the dominant hegemonic discourse, the governmentality of the times reflecting the colonialist cultural dynamics underlying these structures of social organization. This forum marked the first broad interdisciplinary examination into the effects of separation of children from their family networks. Ironically, in other sections of the wider community at this time, there appeared to be an increasing awareness of, and push towards, more overseas adoption as outlined in Chapter 3.

| D64 2002 Nov | I attended two excellent seminars held at Murdoch by visiting academic Lorri Neilson, who teaches ‘writing inquiry and literacy’ at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Lorri Neilson promotes the value of creative production as research.  

D65 2002 Nov | For Curtin University of Technology’s Postgraduate Conference, Livable Communities. I presented the composite edit of Translating Hiraeth, but this time, in an Installation space with a good sound system. The work was shown in conjunction with a paper entitled, ‘The Necessity of Story and the Politics of Privacy’. Here, I attempted to examine the ethical dilemmas within autobiographical art work.

> I am presently editing the narrative onto three separate DVD tracks, employing a 4th track for the Pathe News clip. The piece will visually move around the Installation space – sometimes convoluting back on itself. I have incorporated sequences of the postcards falling, and of my laying them out in a chance game of pelmanism referencing the work with Cristina. Another sequence shows the repeated filling of the ‘bags’ in slow motion. In Translating Hiraeth, I am negotiating the bodily issues of cultural ‘(im)placement’ and

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the performative nature of (re)languaging the self into another story. I am attempting to express a physical necessity for story. Using multiple screens, I want to encourage movement within a visual, textual and aural environment. As I mentioned in ‘Finding a Form’: through the intimacy of Installation I want to conflate the idea of experiencing a particular physical space/place with the notion of metaphorically entering the spaces of particular stories – where the visitor, always in translation invokes their own memories which are relevant to their place in the world.

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<td>D66</td>
<td>Murdoch Screen Academy Research Group</td>
<td>I presented Translating Hiraeth on the three screens for the first time, as a work in progress. This was a good opportunity to view the timing and sequencing of the imagery on three separate walls within an Installation space, and an opportunity for some critical feedback. I discussed the work and the site-specific nature of the Worship Centre as a ‘postcolonial’ exhibition space.</td>
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<td>D67</td>
<td>Presentation at Adoption Research and Counselling Service (ARCS WA) workshop, ‘Fathers Matter’</td>
<td>I was asked to reflect on my experience of searching for my father, and to show Translating Hiraeth to the group. The one screen edit shown on a monitor was proving useful for this intimate form of presentation. This men’s workshop was being held specifically for ‘birthfathers’ searching for their ‘adopted out’ children. They were particularly interested in the effort expended during my search, and the cross-cultural complexities associated in locating my father’s family.</td>
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<td>D68</td>
<td>Public lectures series organised by SCASE (Centre for Social and Community Research) at Murdoch’s Rockingham Campus as part of the series, Our Community: Our Stories</td>
<td>Again I presented a lecture/Video presentation using the version of Translating Hiraeth edited for a single screen. My talk was entitled, ‘The necessity of story: performing adoption’.</td>
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<td>D69</td>
<td>Jonna Ulin (formerly Hansson) and Fiona Campbell from the Archaeology Department at Goteborg University in Sweden invited me to show ‘Translating Hiraeth’ as part of their colloquium, Contemporary Archaeology: exploring aspects of creative narrative and performative cultural production</td>
<td>I did not travel to Sweden in person, but sent a composite track of ‘Translating Hiraeth’ accompanied by a short introduction to be read in my absence. As mentioned previously, I originally met Jonna and Fiona at the CPR Itinerant Conference and again at the Psi5 International Performance Studies Conference in Wales. My Psi5 paper, “Cartographies of Loss” was published as a chapter in their co-edited book, Archaeological Sensibilities, published through Goteborg University Press,</td>
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I attend a forum on ‘Transracial Adoption’ held by the Department of Community Development, Western Australia. Unfortunately, I felt that the level of engagement was fairly superficial at a cross-cultural level. The panel speakers were very articulate, although as young people most were still closely associated with the parental home. I felt many issues were not addressed. For example, the complexities when finding and trying to form a relationship with birth family members, and the challenges faced as an overseas adoptee acculturated within the hegemonic culture of, for example, Australia or the US, and returning to one’s country of birth and cultural origins where there is not only a different language and culture but often a totally different political system in place.

Translating Hiraeth was shown at the Murdoch Worship Centre, Murdoch University as my postgraduate exhibition. I am grateful to both the Church Synod and University for allowing me to use this lovely space and agreeing to the removal of all the chairs prior to the Installation. The work was screened in between church events over two days. Chapter 4, ‘Performing Adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’ begins with this event. The Murdoch Worship Centre, for me, brought the religious connotations to the fore. As a spiritual centre it also carries postcolonial meaning within a contemporary Australian context. The repetition of the 23rd Psalm in Welsh was, interestingly, more noticeable here, as were traditional references to ‘the church’ as a powerful social institution. The tour of the Welsh family graveyard focused the family’s intergenerational religious practice. I also found that the rammed earth structure of the Worship Centre provided a link with previous artworks. The building connected somehow with the geological and archaeological connotations carried within the story. As a multicultural contemporary worship space, the Murdoch Worship Centre highlighted the traditional religious nature of the Welsh family chapel echoed in the reading and singing of the 23rd Psalm, in Welsh.

The ‘Intercampus Screen Academy of Western Australia’, held a symposium in conjunction with the 2004 International Documentary Conference as well as a ‘Retrospective Group Exhibition’ by its members at the Fremantle Maritime Museum, WA. I used this opportunity to revisit Fy Mam (1996) to consider the links and progressions from this work to Translating Hiraeth, within
Lisa Lewis invited me to participate on a ‘performance’ panel with her and performance artist and academic, Mike Pearson. Our presentation was part of the Cyfrwng Conference, at the University of Wales, Bangor [‘cyfrwng – media, medium, a means of communication with –between’]. I wrote a short performative paper reflecting on process. I revisited this piece of writing for the Australasian Cultural Studies Conference held in Perth in the December of 2004. Subsequently, an extended version of this paper was published in the refereed online journal IM. Now the ‘process’ has been reworked, layered and written into, and appears as Chapter 4, ‘Performing adoption, translating the self: Art as mediation’. Whilst the Cyfrwng Conference was presented in English and Welsh, I was aware of my own dislocation, itinerance and awkward cultural positioning. Participants seemed interested in and empathetic to my story, my attempt to engage with the Welsh language, and my ‘return’ to North Wales and my father’s family. Whilst headphones provided a translation between the two languages during this conference, I was conscious that I did not fully understand the Welsh discussion at the end of Translating Hiraeth – my own work – further highlighting the in-between nature of my subject positioning. The history of the university, the focus on the significance of the Welsh language, interest shown by delegates combined with the conference focus Cyfrwng, felt very poignant. Much of the imagery shown in Translating Hiraeth was taken within half an hour’s distance of the building, particularly the slate quarry, Bethesda and the family graveyard in Pentir. At the University of Wales in Bangor, I was drawn to the politics of language and questions of national identity. My tentative pronunciations of the Welsh words was very obvious here.

Maureen Perkins invited me to give a lecture for her ‘Life writing’ anthropology unit at Curtin University of Technology, ‘Adoption autobiography: Class gender and ethnicity’. Again, this was a useful critical extension to the work.

I was fortunate to be invited by the 2005 Perth International Arts Festival (PIAF) committee to exhibit Translating Hiraeth at the Fremantle Arts Centre for the duration of the festival. The overall theme for the PIAF festival was Translation and Transformation. Translating Hiraeth was installed in the Main Gallery, and a ‘revisited’ version of Fy Mam was shown in Gallery 3. I digitised the audio visual work and installed the piece in Gallery 3. For the PIAF show, I also displayed archival documents representing the time before the adoption, including letters written by my birthmother, Mary, in response to the social worker, and official forms outlining the bureaucratic process. These papers were lit behind glass and presented as ‘evidence’ in two 1950s museum display cabinets, at the
far side of the room. The scent of roses filled the room via a hidden humidifier and the occasional fresh petal fell on the cabinets. The material presence of the written words trace the performative hand within the official process. As archival evidence, this display in 2005 helped to highlight the emotional and temporal collapse held within the silences of the past/present. The Fremantle Arts Centre, as previously mentioned, is the former convict-built asylum, and Fy Mam was shown in Gallery 3, the one-time labour ward for unmarried mothers. I positioned three comfortable chairs within the space, facing the screen, so that the sound could be listened to privately, through headphones, thus emphasising the interior nature of this work. The original piece shown in 1996 was an audio visual Installation where one hundred and fifty slides where synced with the sound tape to play every seventeen minutes. For the PIAF show in 2005, I edited a selection of images with the sound, onto DVD. Both works were presented on looped DVDs. ‘Fy Mam’ played continuously within Gallery 3 and Translating Hiraeth began on the hour every hour in the Main space. Between screenings, still images sat on each of the three large screens, while the 1948 Pathe News clip, promoting the National Adoption Society, played repeatedly in slow motion, without sound, on a monitor in the corner of the space. This offered an ‘official’ contextual key bringing the past towards the present. I placed dark carpet tiles on the floor in the Main Gallery so that the audience could sit, move, and turn around at will. This also helped acoustically. At the Arts Centre, the technology was more discreet but the institutional aura of the building, and its associated history with the labour ward for ‘unmarried mothers’, felt more apparent. I felt that the institutional nature of this space amplified the governmentality within the system that presided over it. In fact the main gallery felt so cold that I decided to put a low red light onto a vase of heritage roses within the fire place. By trying to ‘improve’ the ambiance, I increased the ambiguity. Many stories have passed through those walls. I was surprised how the starkness of the space allowed the intimacy of the work to come through. The physical pulse of the base could be felt through the body and acted as an emotional key, drawing the visitor from observer to participant. For the PIAF exhibition I also revisited the earlier work MMM for Gallery 3 adjacent to the main space. In this smaller gallery I envisaged a quieter piece and wanted to rework MMM in response to this particular building. I left a trace of scattered rose petals in the fire place of the smaller room and hid a vaporizer effusing rose essence within the space. This olfactory signification provided a subtle sensory connection between the two works but was particularly active within this space. Smell offers a sense of proximity. We breathe smell into our bodies. Somewhere between the inhalation of the breath and the point of registration memory is evoked. Emotion is linked to memory as we read olfactory signs from our own experience.

D76 2005 I returned to the UK to visit my (adoptive) mother, following her fall, and stayed for two months.
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<td>2006</td>
<td>My mother, Leila, had a second fall. I returned to her house in Tunbridge Wells. She deteriorated very quickly after my arrival and died on May 22nd 1993. I stayed in Tunbridge Wells for nearly three months, during which time George, my birth uncle in Cardiff, also passed away. Another departure. I took some time away from my PhD for reflection.</td>
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| D78 | 2006-2007 | **Stories from the Northam Army Camp DVD (launched, May 14, Northam Town Hall)** Through the Centre for Social and Community Research (CSCR) at Murdoch, I was asked to work on a joint research project between the University and the Northam Army Camp Heritage Association (NACHA) WA. I researched, directed and produced a short documentary which juxtaposed the stories of elderly military personnel who trained at the camp before going to war in the Middle East, with the stories of the first post-war migrants and refugees from Eastern Europe who were translocated to this country after WWII, many of whom were initially accommodated at the Northam Camp as the facilities could accommodate 5000 personnel. Although this research project was very different from my PhD, there were valuable points of connection, particularly associated with notions of dislocation, trauma, migration, place, identity, memory, language, and of course, the process of (re)storying. This project really confirmed the positive value of using situated stories as research when capturing the emotional content of life, within a wider social and cultural context. I would like to have involved the participants to a greater degree in the making and reconstruction of their own stories, although many were in their late 80s and 90s and it was challenging enough for many to just tell of their experiences – some details were articulated for the first time.

| D79 | 2008 Sept | I was asked to introduce my project and show the full Installation as a key note presentation for the 9th **Australian Adoption Conference, Sydney.** It was a very wide theatre and the screens were placed across the front of the space. Feedback was very positive. Out of those personally affected by adoption, I estimated that there was a larger representation of adoptive parents to birth parents at this event. This conference is held every four years by one of the states or territories to interrogate current ‘adoption practice’ within Australia, and within the wider global context. The conference attracts a wide demographic, which is usually made up of national and some international representatives, people from a range of government departments and adoption-related NGOs, as well as academics from various fields associated with adoption, including ethics, law, demography and history, amongst others. As would be expected, there was a large representation from clinicians, including social workers, psychologists, psychotherapists and neuropsychologists. Quite a few delegates also had a professional and personal interest in adoption. This year, the conference was organised by the New South Wales Committee for Adoption and Permanent Care, and was held in Sydney. The theme for the conference was based on a quote by Austrian architect and philosopher Hundertwasser: ‘If we do not honour our past, we lose our future. If we destroy our roots, we cannot grow’.
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<td>Dec 2008</td>
<td>On December 31st, my birthmother Mary’s younger brother, John Morgan, passed away in Llanelli. John was still living in the family house that my great grandmother built. Mary lived in this house up until her death in 1993, and it was here that she lived when she was pregnant with me. Since my initial contact, John had taken up genealogy as a hobby and traced a fairly broad family tree back to the early 1700s. He had also put my name on that document just below Mary’s.</td>
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<td>Sept 2009</td>
<td>Guest lecture, ‘Autobiography as History’ for <em>Interpreting Histories</em>, Faculty of Humanities, Curtin University of Technology</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>My presentation at the 3rd <em>International Conference on Adoption and Culture</em> held at MIT, Boston, provided a very timely point of departure for this extended project. With the title, ‘Secret Histories Public Policies’, it allowed me to recontextualise <em>Translating Hiraeth</em> within a North American academic environment. This particular forum placed a focus on creative production associated with adoption. The forum was organised across universities by the American Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture (ASAC). After the conference I travelled to Wales and visited the house in Llanelli for the last time. I had come full circle.</td>
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APPENDIX

This poem was recited by John Frodsham, Murdoch University’s Foundation Professor of English, before the screening of TRANSLATING HIRAETH in the Murdoch Worship Centre.

Hiraeth

(Hen delyneg draddodiadol)

Dwedwch, fawrion o wybodaeth,
O ba beth y gwnaethpwyd Hiraeth,
Apha ddefnydd a roed ynddo
Na ddarfyddo wrth ei wisgo?

Derfydd aur a derfydd arian.
Derfydd melfed, derfydd sidan,
Derfydd pob dilledyn helaeth,
Eto er hyn, ni dderfydd Hiraeth.

Hiraeth mawr a Hiraeth creulon,
Hiraeth sydd yn torri ‘nghalon,
Pan fwy dryma’r nos yn cysgu
Fe ddaw Hiraeth ac a’m deffry.

**Yearning** (Traditional)

Tell me, O great men of learning,
From what stuff is fashioned Yearning?
What material in its making
That it frays not with constant wearing?

Nor gold nor silver may endure,
Nor velvet clothes, nor silk attire,
No apparel long can stay,
But Yearning never wears away.

Huge and cruel is this Yearning,
Breaks my very heart this Yearning.
Nor night, nor sleep provide escape
For Yearning comes and bids me wake.

Translated by J. D. Frodsham
Note:

‘Hiraeth’ is a term with a range of meanings, all connected with the poignancy of yearning. Yearning for one’s lover, for one’s family and friends, for one’s homeland, for lost opportunities, and, above all, yearning for what might have been. It is found elsewhere, among dispossessed peoples, notably in the spirituals of black Americans and the nigunim of the Jewish diaspora.

Since Wales is England’s oldest colony (since 1277), traditional Welsh culture was systematically strangled, especially by Henry VIII, emerging anew in a different and impoverished form in the eighteenth century. Any Cymro or Cymraes must feel hiraeth for the loss of an ancient culture that had endured since long before the coming of the Romans to Britain, surviving, not only over three centuries of Roman occupation, but the blood- soaked, barbarian onslaught of Anglo-Saxons and Danes that followed it from the fifth century onwards.

J.D. Frodsham.
Hiraeth (heeraaith) is a Welsh word that carries the meanings of nostalgia, desire, wish, longing, return and much more.

To long for something requires an act of memory, a return to a time and place (Wordsworth referred to them as spots of time and sense of place) and facing up to whatever is memorially constructed. There are, of course, some things in life that have been silenced because they are too harsh for consciousness to handle; there are some silences too that cannot be recovered because the superego has censored them out so completely; and there are some silences that have been transformed into an aesthetic so that they become an occasion for a certain kind of transcendence. Recall Hamlet’s final words, “the rest is silence” or the modernist “art which aspires to the condition of music and music to silence” where “silence” is a kind of revenant, a return to a haunting and haunted moment of nirvanic bliss or the moment prior to entrophy. Judy Durey’s examination of silence requires us to keep in mind all these readings of silence, but also transform silence into modes of knowledge by which we can live, or in Judy’s own words to performatively translate the “self into another story.” How to write out this silence without becoming too sentimental, without declaring its recovery to be an act of cure, without trivializing the narrative of search itself, are questions that Judy asks. Here I find Judy’s approach particularly revealing and creative.

For yes there is always Wales, the land of rugby players, Dylan Thomas, Richard Burton and Raymond Williams. For a while Salman Rushdie too was ensconced there, enveloped in silence, in the company of Scotland Yard. In a poem he wrote
then he spoke about how the “green hills” of Wales sheltered him from fear, where in the pubs people talked about rugby, holidays and beer with his protectors. Then, about himself, he writes:

As for me, I must hide my face
from farmers mending fences, runners, ponied girls;
must frame in it these whitewashed, thickstoned walls
while the great canvas of the universe
shrinks to a thumbnail sketch. And yet
I love the place. It remembers, so it says, a time
older than chapel, druid, mistletoe and god,
and journeys …

For Judith there is a memory of Wales, in some ways not dissimilar from those presented in the poem. But it was silenced soon after birth through translation, through removal so that memory for her becomes a revenant. But it is how she makes the recovery that I find particularly thought-provoking. For her the act of recovery is not simply a monologic act, a personal meditation, an autobiographical self-analysis; she reimages herself by entering into the dialogic space of multiple projected images; images that also carry traces of many voices, many discourses, indeed of an alterity. *Translating Hiraeth* is about recovering a silence about adoption but it is presented both as a contribution to adoption literature and as a narrative of discovery in which the trajectory of the narrative, the *discours* is as important as the story, the *histoire*, where a critical nostalgia heralds another way of refiguring silence around adoption.

Judith’s presentation is life-writing with a difference; it is a contribution to adoption literature that does not uncritically celebrate the necessity of this particular form of *Hiraeth*. Judith’s heteroglossic collage shows that although longing may be traumatic (and in many cases in the end always deferred because
the original loss can never be recaptured) the archival work of recovery itself, as an aesthetic act can lead to different kinds of social empowerment and individual well-being. To have transformed life-writing from self-pity, loss and denial to a multifaceted engagement with the social construction of the self (where we are against where we are from, a theme that runs through all stories of the revenant) Judith Durey has created a remarkable work. That she has not lost sight of how our lived experiences may in the end look so fictional, as if we are all characters in Dickens’ novels, is something that I, as a person who lives through books, have found especially exciting.

As we explore adoption narratives, fill-out the silences, as we view and read Judith’s own work, we become so much more aware of the sense of “having been there before” as if we are compulsively returning to social spaces, and recognizing an affinity with these spaces although we may have never been there before. The mind plays tricks. Judy’s work opens an in-between world that we occupy in different ways and it is this that makes us, although observers, participants in her work.
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