

Performing adoption, translating the self: Postmodern quest or diasporic inversion?

Judy Durey

Abstract

In contemporary 'Western' culture, 'reunion' following the silences of 'closed' / cross cultural adoption, provides an emotional, critical and performative site for examining ruptures within identity formation, and the problematics of 'family' and 'belonging' when an insider /outsider dichotomy is assumed. Through story, I reflect on the process of tracing and reconnecting with my birthmother in Llanelli, and my father'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. This piece of performative writing, engages with a contingent yet ambiguous process of articulating the 'self' across discontinuous and dispersed identities. I draw on my praxis through the Welsh word 'Cyfrwng' (trans. 'medium / a means of / communication with / between'), to reflect on the experience of creating and presenting installation works in Australia, an '(im)placement' project in Wales, and other significant 'events' - as autoethnographic performance, an 'insurgent act' of (re)storying, and means of cultural translation.

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



Murdoch W. Centre



Translating Hiraeth



Inside W. Centre

It was 41degrees - the hottest November day on record. I was setting up Translating Hiraeth, a video installation 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's a multicultural, interdenominational centre for worship – a particular place to many, and yet a social space signifying a range of cross cultural meanings.

IM Issue no. 1 2005. <Performing Adoption, translating 'hiraeth': Postmodern quest or diasporic inversion?>. <Judy Durey>. © IM/NASS 2005

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.



DIGWYDDIAD



TRANSIENCE

When the work was installed, I positioned two bags at the entrance – on either side of the door. One had the word DIGWYDDIAD (chance) printed on it, and the other TRANSIENCE. I'll tell you about the bags in a minute.



HIRAETH

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 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 decent, recited a poem entitled 'Hiraeth'. 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".² For me, the poignancy of the word 'hiraeth' as a signifier has been amplified within each act of translation - on my part. Semantically, 'hiraeth' now registers a range of somatic meanings, which I've gathered over time.

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'.³

I would like to foreground my initial introduction to 'hiraeth' as a text. 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.



‘Bureaucratic initiative’

In ‘closed adoption’,⁴ 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 resulted in a ‘radical’ translation of the infant – into another story. Following the 1926 Act, in the 1950s,⁵ the now, new parents were told to take the infant home “as if” born to them in wedlock.



Adoptive Birth Certificate

The child was renamed, a new birth certificate issued, and all previous records of family and cultural history sealed. At this time it was mostly white illegitimate babies who were placed with white middle class infertile couples. The ‘difference’ within this initial, translation was officially rendered invisible.⁶

Until recently, adopted people were not allowed access to their original birth certificates and the second birth certificate was only available to the adoptee, and the adoptive parents – not the birthmother or her family, creating a discontinuity within the birth family, and a perceived genealogical continuity within the adoptive family. As a constructed, liminal performance, ‘closed adoption’ is inherently in-between – quite literally. Social norms and behavioural constraints helped maintain the silence.⁷

Jon McKenzie’s ‘liminal norm’ draws together Judith Butler’s theory of ‘performative normativity’ in subject formation, and Victor Turner’s concept of ‘liminality’ in performance theory, where the performer occupies an in-between space when performing ‘as if’... My use of creative performance highlights the normative forces of institutionalization inherent within the silences of ‘closed adoption’. Together with the actual or ‘radical’ construction of a liminal subject position, which crosses, and also sits between families and their cultural backgrounds, the concept of a ‘liminal norm’, here, is amplified.⁸



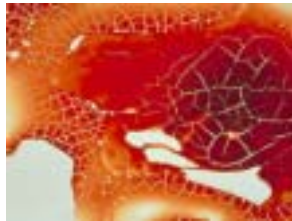
Twice Born

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.⁹



'Origins'

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'.¹⁰ I felt that I wanted to touch her. I needed to know the 'truth'.



Cartographies

'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 – and an intergenerational sense of story ... 'theories of 'authenticity' perhaps?... 'a basic human need perhaps, or perhaps some thing most people take for granted? Any notion of a singular answer was quickly dispelled.



Excavation



DISLOCATION

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

In 1991 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 a collection - it was a gift.

The words on the bags felt evocative. I'd formed lists from my diary. It was the range of emotions over time that surprised me.¹¹ 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.¹²

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, she says, we change our place of residency according to personal circumstances, in search of opportunities or fulfilment. In fact Heller says that we have become 'geographically promiscuous' (cited Chowers, 2002). 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(s). Heller appears to be taking a view of opportunism or privileged choice, and as Chowers rightly points out that having a multiplicity of homes is not the same as having no home. There are many economic, political and traumatic reasons as to why 'dislocation' has become part of the 'postmodern condition'. Multiplicity of movement and cultural change between temporary 'homes' within time and space can, I believe induce a 'floating self' not quite belonging anywhere, consequently, the 'popular present' to me, seems to be obsessed with the activity of 'belonging'. Those of us who are migrants, talk about putting down 'roots'. Paul Gilroy emphasises the need for coming to terms with our 'routes'. Christopher Hampton, in *White Cameleon* 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'. But what of those through today's 'technologies' may never know their 'roots'? What sense of gravity will they have? ¹³

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.



File: June Elizabeth Morgan

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



Postcards

I documented a 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.



Falling Postcards

In 1993, I sent one hundred and fifty Postcards from Wales, back to Perth.¹⁴ They referenced my walk, but this time I was documenting the particular experience of being in my mother's house.¹⁵



Inhabited space



Inhabited space

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.

Anthropologist, Thomas Csordas discusses the nexus of culture and experience as a standpoint of being in the world, requiring what he calls a 'cultural phenomenology' – the process of synthesizing the immediacy of embodied experience within space, with the multiplicity of cultural meanings and interpretations.¹⁶



Reunion meal (table setting from installation)

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 – and I imagined I'd known them all my life.¹⁷

Drawing on Naomi Quinne and Claudia Strauss's work with schema theory and connectionism,¹⁸ I examine how motivation, emotion and caring affect how a new situation is registered - how we distinguish between an explicitly remembered, familia situation and aspects of a new cultural setting.... But what happens when we go back to a place that is both 'familiar' and strange?



Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyres. Installation PICA

The emotional content of the postcards became another piece of work which I showed in 1996. The installation took the form of a table setting in an enclosed room. The audience was invited (in English and Welsh) to enter the space and join a reunion meal - of sorts. My mother's eyes looked up from each place setting, and the serving mats celebrated a past family meal. A low light focused on a plate of congealed text.



Raspberries

This held corporeal significance within the narrative, and was 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, provided a sensory environment for a collage of images and voices.



'I could feel the fruit pressing against the roof of my mouth'... (Text taken from Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyres. PICA 1996).

It felt a vulnerable space - a visceral inscription of a bureaucratic process, offering palpable reminders intended to prompt implicit memory. The work was to do with the body and proximity - an immersive, intersemiotic space, where perhaps a rhythmic re-enactment of loss became productive in the gaps.¹⁹



FFYDDLONDEB (loyalty)

In 1998, I continued with the bags. I took fifty back to Wales. I'd had the words translated literally into Welsh then printed each 'new' word on the reverse side of the bags. Walter Benjamin warns us against literal translation.²⁰

Many of the now Welsh words felt difficult to pronounce. Although their image drew me in, any meaningful association, felt remote.

This time, I had an '(im)placement' project in mind - a more thoughtful, deliberate act - not obsessive excavation.²¹ I wanted to leave evidence - bilingual traces - to add density to meaning, as I experienced the place.

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

'Translation demands 'acts' of negotiation'.²²



Bryn Celli Dda

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

In 'Fate of Place', Edward Casey talks about (im)placement as an issue of being in place differently – of experiencing its eventfulness otherwise.

TIRLUN and TIRWEDD**TIRLUN (landscape)****TIRWEDD (landscape)**

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.

Where the minutiae of morphology and tradition are preserved as idiom, dialect, proverb and lore. Where history is experienced as contemporaneous, and the past still operates on the present. A ground level experience, landscape not as scenery but as social construct.. .marked and renamed by the actions of ancestors.²³

..... a layered archaeological knowledge of a place.

My first introduction to these words was in 1998 when I attended 'Points of Contact: Performance, Places and Pasts' held by The Centre of Performance Research at the University of 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. 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 character 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 had changed – how they as farmers had adapted to that change over the years. He recounted many intimate details from the layers of social knowledge that made 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, and the documentation, created a bodily, intervening space for translation. This textual, kinesthetic act marked each place, and helped bring the Welsh words into 'being'. If language is somatic, these new meanings, were becoming somewhat solipsistic.



GOLYGFA (view through a window)

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.



DIWYLLIANT (culture)

I filled a bag in Aberystwyth, Porthmadog, Cearnarfon, Bangor, and Llanberis Pass.



Snowdon

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.



Quarryman's cottage

After a series of accidents and serendipitous meetings, I unexpectedly found my father's family.²⁴ 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.



William Williams

My father was dead – his biography more complex than I've got time for here. The photograph I had, wasn't him - yet 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.



St Cedol's grave yard, Pentir

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, 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 - and more'.

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 catalysis one's own otherness'.²⁵



COF (memory)

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.²⁶

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' lead towards contingent understandings - towards the next piece of work and so on. I feel that there are distinctions between the productive, material processes of embodied, cognitive understandings that Raymond Williams describes, and Thomas Csordas' 'cultural phenomenology'. Williams seems to be describing a generative, kinaesthetic performance leading towards new levels of cognitive understanding by 'actively' employing the body, whereas Thomas Csordas outlines more of an environmental monitoring of phenomenological 'recognition', based on past perceptual experiences and their related understandings, combined with new experiences and cultural meaning.

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. He said, 'it's just as well you've come via Australia'.

According to Elspth Probyn, 'if you think about belonging you are already outside'.²⁷ 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 and attachment to place - ashamed by my classist judgments and their acceptance of me - their strong bond of family.



Chapel Hymn Book, Waen Pentir, Rhiwlas

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 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.



Chapel Pew

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, the Penhryn Quarry - riding in my father's fire truck, and life between the mountains.



Working the Quarry

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.



The Great Hall, University of Wales, Bangor

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. 'Cyfrwng' means media, medium – a means of – communication with - between.

With particular reference to 'Translating Hiraeth', this reflexive paper will focus on process, story, and my praxis.²⁸ The conference theme is Wales and the world.

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.



Digital still from Translating Hiraeth

Translating Hiraeth' is installed for the duration of the conference.

If translation is a necessary performance of passage, and Hiraeth a word embedded in Welsh culture and notions of (be)longing - and not quite translatable - my project explores contingencies and complex 'understandings' from a liminal (subject) positioning, through an embodied arts praxis within cross-cultural performativity .



Grave yard

Whilst setting up the work, Alart, the technician, who's about my age, is reading this 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 ...

¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 7.

² 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, as translated by J. D. Frodsham, 2003.

³ Cited in, Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary feminist Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p.1.

⁴ According to 'Westminster' Law.

⁵ As in the 'Amendments to the 1926 Act', cited in the *British Law Reports and Statutes*, 1950, Vols. 14 and 15, Chapter 26.

⁶ Foucault said that '[t]he essence of being radical is physical.... The essence of being radical is the radicalness of existence itself'. Initially cited in Susan Bordo, 'Bringing body to theory', *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Donn Welton, Massachusetts, USA and Oxford, UK, Blackwell Publishers, 1998, p.96. From, Michele Foucault, "Clarifications of the Question of Power", in *Foucault live (Interviews, 1961-1984)*. Translated by Lysa Hochroth and John Johnson, ed. Sylvere Lotringer, New York: Semiotext(e), 1996, pp. 255-263. Here I use 'radical' to emphasize the corporeal and existential density within the textual action of 'matching' files by the 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 '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. See Arendt's 'Introduction', in *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin*, ed. Hannah Arendt, New York, Schocken Books, 1969, pp 1-55.

⁷Jon McKenzie, "Genre Trouble: the Butler Did it," in *The Ends of Performance*, ed. Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, New York and London: New York University Press, 1998, pp. 217-236.

⁸ In this piece of writing, I reflect on my art praxis over a fifteen year period and discuss an auto-ethnographic performance that weaves together aspects of life experience, creative response, critical reflection and social interaction. The two particular works mentioned draw on various modes of creative production to form multi-vocal performance based, video installations. Both pieces discussed here are an accumulation of archival material, visual documentation, theoretical research, creative

memoir and performative events. Neither works are simple linear narratives and each piece reflects different aspects of the process through its form. *Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyres* focuses on the reconnection with my birthmother through the 'sensory' and 'preverbal'. The piece has an intense repetitive circularity about it, whereas *Translating Hiraeth* is more about longing for belonging, language, place and identity. This work reflects a fluid excavation and rewriting where the 'finished' form is unresolved, and open ended. Since the initial making, each site specific presentation has been revised in some way, reflecting the contingent nature of the process.

⁹ 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, pro-monarchist family who leaned towards English stereotypical views of the Welsh. There was the rather 'romantic' Wordsworthian image of the Welsh countryside, the villages were "quaint" and the language "fascinating". Attitudes towards the people were often pejorative and 'we' were shocked when Welsh Nationalists' burnt the English holiday homes during the early 80's. This 'rupture' within my sense of identity set up a 'particular' tension between 'known' experiential self-knowledge and 'new', 'unknown' - identifying information intimately tied to a different 'self', about the self. In adoption restor(y)ing the process of re-situating one's self often creates the feeling of a 'split' self. Growing up without 'knowledge' of one's birthfamily and their history excludes an ongoing inclusive acknowledgement of difference within identity, and within the particular 'family' formation. In order to restore past silence into the present, the process of 'translation' is now being reversed through a physical act of agency on my part. In acknowledging evidence of a life lived before adoption, I also have to confront the 'erasure'. Returning to the idea of a 'radical' or physical translation, it may be possible to imagine the emotional force experienced when the 'original' birth records were retrieved and 'read' by a now adult 'self'. This archival material announces my birth into a different family, to another mother – from a different culture. Emotionally, the distance *between* the two birth certificates now becomes the 'active' metaphor for my earlier physical transfer. Each 'official' certificate represents 'evidence' of a birth – my birth, as two different 'lived' events. One 'voices' a time, history and early corporeality, but heralds the symbolic death of a 'future identity'. The other certificate announces a legal fiction which holds the symbolic potential within another future. When I 'read' the certificates side by side for the first time, the 'significance' within the 'translation' was manifested through the full affective force of the metaphor. See the reference to Benjamin's use of 'significance' in relation to 'concrete' sensory perception, within the function of the metaphor, as opposed to an abstraction. See *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin*, p.13.

¹⁰ A piece of performative text taken from the Installation, *Translating Hiraeth*.

¹¹ The words referenced, and therefore triggered a range of sensory memories when read, heard or spoken. Photograph of '*DISLOCATION*' by Bill Shaylor, Perth, 1991.

¹² Between 1973 and 1980 I led a fairly itinerant lifestyle in Central and Southern Africa with my husband, an exploration geologist. In the Kalahari, as well as pursuing my creative interests, I worked as a welfare sister. On the one hand I really enjoyed living in the 'bush', the people, and the open spaces, but it was here on a personal level that I first experienced feelings of 'placelessness' and discontinuity.

¹³ Eyal Chowers, 'Gushing Time: Modernity and the multiplicity of temporal homes', *Time and Society*, London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi, Vol. 11 No. 2/3, 2002, pp233-249. Here, Paul Gilroy's well known reference to 'routes' as opposed to 'roots' is relevant, in *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1993, as is the mention of 'no roots' in Christopher Hampton's, *White Chameleon*, London, Faber, 1991. See also Helen Cixous', *Rootprints: Memory and Life writing*, London, Routledge, 1997, First published in French by Editions des femmes, Paris, as Photo de Racine 1994.

¹⁴ Manipulated digital still by J. Durey, taken from performative 'Footage'. Video by Tanya Visosevic.

¹⁵ Here, I am referring to my birth mother. At *Performance Places and Pasts*, an itinerant conference organized by the Centre for Performance Research, Aberystwyth, Wales, 1998, John Barrett spoke of the need for 'inhabited' material such as narrative and performance, to 're-member' the past/present. He said, '[r]ecords are a series of events in time. Memory

changes time'. When adoption records are reopened, their 'reading' and interpretation calls forth the past from within a 'situated' and embodied present. The project of repositioning one's self within, and between both stories, following 'new' information, using creative performance, is a mediated 'act' of recovery which is both personal and political.

¹⁶ Thomas Csordas, "Embodiment and Cultural Phenomenology", in *Perspectives on Embodiment: The Intersections of Nature and Culture*, ed. Gail Weiss and Fern Haber, New York and London: Routledge, 1999, p. 143. As an anthropologist, Thomas Csordas has examined the variants between a number of cultures in how their understandings of 'the body' are constructed. His findings echo 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 of '*being in the world*'. This is particularly useful when pointing out that the adopted infant is not a *tabula rasa*, and is a responsive, perceptual and social 'being' at birth. In order to separate the body *per se* from the processes of embodiment, Csordas draws an analogy with Roland Barthes' distinction between the text or the book as object on the shelf and textuality, the indeterminate field which exists within discourse. Csordas compares the body as object in space to embodiment as 'indeterminate field of perceptual experiences and way of being in the world'. In my own research I also want to acknowledge recent findings in the area of neurobiology in an attempt to position aspects of scientific discourse besides social theory. Here the work of Eric Kandel and his team is particularly interesting. As a psychoanalyst and neurobiologist, Kandel is one of the first following Freud's earlier intentions, to actually bring social theory in contact with biology. See Kandel, "Biology and the future of Psychoanalysis: A new intellectual framework for Psychiatry revisited", in *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 156, no.4, 1999.

¹⁷ This text was taken from an earlier work, *Mother. Mary. Martyr. Fy Mam. Mair. Merthyres.*, an audio visual installation which I showed at PICA in 1996 as part of the *Art medicine and Body Project*.

¹⁸ Claudia Strauss and Naomi Quinn, "A Cognitive / Cultural Anthropology", in *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Robert Borofsky, New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc, 1994. Claudia Strauss and Naomi Quinn, *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning*, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

¹⁹ Following the processes of making and articulation by the artist, a potential relationship is formed between the artist, the work and the viewer within the space, through the act of communication itself – the act of meaning making, and 'embodiment' by the 'visitor' within the installation'. At what stage does an intensely intimate environment envelop the viewer (or not), and involve them in a process of reception, not as voyeur but as active participant, where their own interiority creates their 'reading', as they experience the space? Through reflection, translation and projection, the 'visitor' becomes co-creator of the work.

²⁰ 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 in the translation. He says, translation is 'a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages'. See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", *Illuminations*, pp.69-83. See also Shoshana Felman's engagement with Paul de Man on Walter Benjamin's work in "After the Apocalypse" in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 153-164. In this context, both words on the bags became geographically 'tied' within experience, but a disjunction remains, that is, between new meaning created through the 'translation', and the memories associated with the original.

²¹ 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.

²² In *Translating One's Self: Language and Selfhood in Cross-Cultural Autobiography*, Bern: Peter Lang Publishers, 2002, pp 29-35. Mary Besemeres discusses feelings of inauthenticity experienced by the second language migrant when speaking about the 'self' in their non 'native' language. She draws on Bakhtin's account of 'how individuals evaluate the many social and familiar exchanges they have internalized through life experiences', which are in turn linked to their 'native language'. Besemeres says her use of 'inauthenticity' is not meant to set up a contrast to the Romantic notion of

'authenticity'. However, in my experience of adoption reunion, an *emotional* dialectic is often set up. Close connections may be sought with immediate birth family members, who have not shared remembered life experiences, the same 'native' language, or cultural background. They may have a very different outlook on life, but can be intimately connected through the birthing process, and sensory experiences of early infancy. They share the same genetic predispositions, family history and often physiognomy. A shared physiognomy offers a very strong force of attraction. In my own case, I experienced an emotional 'desire' to reconnect with what I 'felt' at the time was a kind of lost 'authenticity'. As I listened to family members talking, the intonation and rhythms of the Welsh language resonated yet remained other. I felt excluded from meaningful interpretation. I could hardly pronounce the words let alone place them. It was this desire to inhabit aspects of language in connection with the family locale, which prompted the (*im*)placement project in Wales. Although the work *did* create valuable ongoing connections between family, place and language, when I try to speak Welsh I still feel self conscious and have a sense of falsity.

²³ Mike Pearson, in Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre / Archaeology*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 139.

²⁴ It would take too long to recount this unexpected series of events. 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. OED.

²⁵ Lyn Hejinian, 'Forms of Alterity', *The Language of Inquiry*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, p. 303.

²⁶ Raymond Williams, 'Structures of Feeling', *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 128-135..

²⁷ Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belonging*, New York: Routledge, 1996, p.8.

²⁸ 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 Dwight Conquergood's paper, 'Performance Studies: Interventions and radical research', *The Drama Review*, Vol.46, issue 2, Summer 2002, pp. 145-157.