

**An Ado/aptive Reading and Writing
of Australia
and its Contemporary Literature**

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Dedication

This doctorate is a salute to that generation of adoptee subjects who never spoke themselves; because of the conspiracy between those closest to them and the wider Australian public and its laws, they lived their entire lives without ever knowing who they really were. They may have been 'relinquished' but the closed-record adoption system stole their identities in the process, withholding them for the duration of whole lifetimes. In particular it is a tribute to one of my high school teachers who served as my only adult model for a 'grown up' in the closed-record adoption system. I also recognise that 'for many orphans, refugees, and others whose loss of familial past is accompanied by much more material loss than most adoptee's experience, adoptee's consciousness of difference may seem like a luxury.'¹

¹ Marianne Novy, ed. 'Introduction' in *Imagining Adoption; Essays on Literature and Culture*, University of Michigan Press Michigan 2004 11

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I say that society by sealing birth records, by cutting adoptees off from their biological past, by keeping secrets from them, has made them into a separate breed, unreal even to themselves.

Betty Jean Lifton, PhD, *Twice Born; Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter*.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about discovering the self by solving an identity puzzle. It is a work of creative non-fiction in the genre of the 'new biography': life-writing in the post-modern age.² It is a literary document about life experiences that have historical significance and can contribute to a fuller understanding of Australia's cultural heritage. It is what happens when life intrudes so much into the research and writing of critical analysis that it takes over the subject matter and objective scholarship becomes suffused in emotion and self-discovery.

For a closed-records adoptee caught up in the reunion processes sparked by the 1990 changes to the Adoption Act, critical readings of Peter Carey and Janette Turner Hospital developed into the invention of the Adopted Body, the Subject Adoptee and a new way of seeing: ado/aptive reading and writing. Perhaps in the field of ado/aptive theory, the stolen generations, intercountry adoptees and the white closed-record adoptees of Australia can re-invent themselves, develop their identities and create a genre of academic theory unique to Australia.

The Ethics of Writing the Subject Adoptee

Even though all mothers may be said to be 'adoptive', as even a birthgiver must engage 'in a social, adoptive act when she commits herself to sustain an infant in

the world'³, in relations of adoption, the constructed nature of such relationships is foregrounded. Whereas the significance of 'work in kinship' is increased⁴, the experience of being an adoptee might also be said to involve an experience of familial intimacy different to that of the biologically grounded individual, because of the absence of biological connection over time.

One way of creating intimacy is through intellectual connection. 'Life writing', a broad category that includes 'analytical and reflective writing that take "self" or "selves" as its focus', while making intellectual enquiries into 'the role of narrative and the formulation of identity,'⁵ also has the benefit of connecting intellectual subjects, and can allay the heightened sense of loneliness experienced in the development of the subject adoptee. Unfortunately, the very nature of closed-record adoptee status can preclude the pleasure of such intimacy as soon as the ethics of life writing are confronted. Considerations brought up in the recent debates over the ethics of biography, autobiography and life writing,⁶ such as the naming of real people in life stories largely fabricated, or the responsibilities regarding writing about the deceased who cannot defend their reputations, apply to writing the adopted body. However, in every turn of

² This definition comes from the Publications of the Modern Language Association of America's 1997 conference call for papers.

³ Sarah Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking* Ballantine New York 1990 51

⁴ Judith Modell, *Kinship with Strangers: Adoption and Interpretation of Kinship in American Culture* University of California Press Berkeley 1994 229

⁵ Mary Besemeres and Maureen Perkins, "Editorial" in *Life Writing; Exploring the Contemporary Meanings of Life Narrative* Vol. 1 No. 1 Australian Public Intellectual Network Perth 2004 vii

⁶ See Paul John Eakin *The Ethics of Life Writing* Cornell University Press Ithaca and London 2004

legislation in the development of the closed-record adoption system, and the cultural ethos of secrecy that worked symbiotically with it, the rights of adoptees to know themselves were railroaded in the consideration of such ethics. To protect the privacy and reputations of all adult parties, the adopted infant was forbidden the development of the most basic understanding of self; to intentionally remove that ability is a denial of the human rights of the subject.

Once adoptees have been returned that right, and given access to some degree of factual information about their biological origins, they must suffer a second substantial imposition in the telling of their stories. The very personal anxieties that surround the naming of things that are, for so many people involved in adoption, always unspoken, can prevent writing. Senses of loyalty and of duty, the fear of causing pain or offence to loved ones, the desire to protect others as well as the self, can prevent writing. For the adoptee was adopted because of the unspoken, the painful, the taboo: infertility, infant death and society's abandonment of young pregnant women. These are things that many people do not wish to be reminded of and yet the alternative is that the subject adoptee will always be a silent subject. If the adoptee prioritises concern for others, she very probably will not write, for fear of being unable to predict the consequences.

Regardless, the conviction that adoptees have been deprived of intimacy with other human beings in a way that the biologically grounded individual cannot

understand, drives my writing of my self, on behalf of other adoptees who cannot speak, not because our stories will be the same, or even remotely similar, but as a gesture of intimacy. Terry Eagleton reminds us of the benefits and risks of reaching in from the borders:

To be inside and outside a position at the same time - to occupy a territory while loitering skeptically on the boundary - is often where the most intensely creative ideas stem from. It is a resourceful place to be, if not always a painless one.⁷

Through the creation of text and theory I can formulate an intimate space for a family of adoptee subjects I might never know via our participation in a new discourse in Australian academia.

For the reader, if a non-adopted subject caught up in the closed-record adoption system, reading the Life Writing of a subject adoptee should be more rewarding than painful, for it is the intellectual subject, not the emotional body, which is reaching out to the reader. If there are emotional responses they must always be tempered by the acknowledgement of artistic license, the artist's prerogative. The adoptee, especially, has lived her own kind of fiction, provided by others, and writing the body is her response, a fictional work, partly fact, mostly experience.

For all readers, if culture is a way of 'marking the distinction between sameness and difference'⁸, reading life writing can delineate 'which aspects of our lives are universal, which are shared, and which are unique to ourselves.'⁹ Reading the writing of adoptees is also a way to learn about yourself as the reader, regardless of your emotional reaction as a possible player in and around the adoption triangle.

In my introduction I define adoption as it is used in this dissertation and detail the subject, as adoptee. Methodology in line with theories of embodiment,¹⁰ subjectivity and detachment are provoked in this interrogation of the adoptee subject, which must not be mistakenly termed 'the adopted subject', although 'the adopted body' is not misleading. I reverse the term 'adoptee subject' to prevent this inclination as it is the body of the infant which is adopted, not the developing subject, which is an orphan. I write in the French tradition of *l'écriture du corps*, or *écriture féminine*, fulfilling the predictions of feminist criticism by blending experiential testimony, the expression of female experience via a metaphor of the body, with textual analysis and creative thinking about reading and writing. Clément herself wrote of plotting and exposing the h(er)stories that

⁷ Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* Perseus Books Group New York 2003 40

⁸ Robert J.C.Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. Routledge London 1995 55-89

⁹ Ibid viii

¹⁰ See, for instance, Beth Spencer's unpublished PhD thesis, *The Body as Fiction/Fiction as a Way of Thinking* in which she shows how the new field of psychoneuroimmunology 'supports the notion that the cells and the systems of our bodies, not just our brain, have the capacity for storing memory.' Ballarat University 2006 60

died, unrecorded, with the people who expressed them...¹¹ but what of those true histories forbidden even before expression? A thousand histories stolen from a generation which died without ever being known, let alone uttered, by their owners, their one and only expression an unfamiliar name recorded on an unseen birth certificate, entirely detached from the subject adoptee. The adopted body has parents but the subject adoptee is an 'orphan', a term which has etymological roots which better describe the experience of adoption than the roots of the term 'adoptee'. Probably before 1300, the term 'orphan' was borrowed from the Late Latin for 'parentless child', and the Greek, for 'deprived'¹² and 'bereft'.¹³ Interestingly, in Proto-Indo-European, the hypothetical reconstructed ancestral language of the Indo-European family from about 5,500 years ago, 'orphan' has origins as meaning 'bereft of father' and 'deprived of free status', both from the base 'orbh', which might well be the best definition of the modern subject adoptee: 'to change allegiance, to pass from one status to another'. This meaning comes closer to describing the experience of the subject adoptee than the etymological roots of the term 'adoptee', which, ironically, comes from the stem of 'adoptare' meaning 'choose for oneself'.¹⁴

¹¹ Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément *The Newly Born Woman* trans. Betsy Wing University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis 1987 6

¹² *The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology* ed Robert K Barnhart Harper Collins and H W Wilson Company New York 1995 528

¹³ *The Concise Oxford dictionary of English etymology* [electronic resource] ed T.F. Hoad <http://opac.library.usyd.edu.au/record=b2992479> accessed February 16, 2008

¹⁴ See <http://www.etymonline.com> accessed January 28, 2008

If the adoptee is an adoptee to the relinquishing and adopting parents, but an orphan to itself, the voice of the adoptee, through adoptee life-writing, is a voice everyone can recognize, the voice of the dis/connected unconscious that we all have:

What does it mean to be alive? What does it mean to breathe? What am I? ...

The child is a metaphysical being. As in the case of the Cartesian *cogito*, parents have nothing to do with these questions. And we are guilty of an error when we confuse the fact that this question is 'related' to the parents, in the sense of being recounted or communicated to them, with the notion that it is 'related' to them in the sense of having a fundamental connection to them. By boxing the life of the child up within the Oedipus complex, by making familial relations the universal mediation of childhood, we cannot help to fail to understand the production of the unconscious itself, and the collective mechanisms that have an immediate bearing on the unconscious... For *the unconscious is an orphan*, and produces itself within the identity of nature and man. The autoproduction of the unconscious suddenly became evident when the subject of the Cartesian *cogito* realised that it had no parents, when the socialist thinker discovered the unity of man and nature within the process of production,

and when the cycle discovers its independence from an indefinite parental regression.¹⁵

As a model for the unconscious, Deleuze and Guattari proffer the body of the schizophrenic; 'A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch.'¹⁶ They quote the schizophrenic Artaud, 'I don't believe in father/ in mother,/ got no/ papamummy.'¹⁷ I argue that, rather than the schizophrenic, the subject adoptee, the adopted orphan, is the better model. By retaining a communicable reason the adoptee is a model of the unconscious that may be understood by more than those trained in the psychoanalytic analysis of the schizophrenic.

In chapter 1 I provide a sociological history of the closed-record adoption system in Australia and introduce the concepts of the changed adopted body, the closed-record adoptee post-revelation and reunion. I sketch my own identity as one of these ado/aptive subjects and argue for the promotion of the intellectual study of the adoptee in Australia. Chapter 2 expands and details the metaphor of the adopted body in Australia, tracing the production/construction/birth of the adopted body; the production/construction/birth of the adopted body in Australia; secrecy provisions and the denial of human rights; and the advent of

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* transl. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane Viking Press New York 1972, 48-9

¹⁶ *Ibid* 2

the vetoed and post-reunion adoptee. I end this second chapter by actualising the subject adoptee as a literary tool for reading Australian texts.

Putting the closed-record adopted body as metaphor into practice in my third chapter, I unearth a Discourse of Detachment as a neurotic symptom on the body of the Australian community, a return of the repressed. I take a brief look at contemporary adoptee writers of Australian Literature but then turn to a reading of a selection of contemporary Australian fiction to illustrate the function of ado/aptive reading. Chapters four, five and six provide ado/aptive readings of Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*;¹⁸ Janette Turner Hospital's *Due Preparations for the Plague*¹⁹ and Luke Davies' *Candy*²⁰, three remarkably different contemporary Australian texts. Carey's novel was chosen for literary analysis at the beginning of my research because of its national significance, long before I had discovered I would be, and in a way already was, writing about adoption. Hospital's was chosen later as a response to my experience of September 11, 2001, and the Bali Bombings of October 12, 2002, and my analysis of the adoptee character in this novel began to complicate my reading, not only of the novel, but of myself. By this time my experience with the 'reunion' process – the discovery of and meeting with biological kin – had left such an emotional residue that I

¹⁷ Ibid 14

¹⁸ Peter Carey *True History of the Kelly Gang* University of Queensland Press St. Lucia 2000

¹⁹ Janette Turner Hospital *Due Preparations for the Plague* Fourth Estate Harper Collins Sydney 2003

²⁰ Luke Davies *Candy* Allen and Unwin Crows Nest 1997

could no longer pretend that it was not severely distorting my research, so that I was researching and writing something different altogether.

As my focus was completely split between the tumultuous journey of my personal familial narrative and my reading of Australian literature, I realised I could no longer prevent these two entirely separate undertakings from merging together in the body of the PhD. By the time I got through most of it, the emotional journey had left me so exhausted that I chose Davies' novel as a kind of 'dark' light relief, reflecting my curiosity with, and experience of, the urban grunge culture of the early 1990s, which glamourised drug-use as an act of rebellion but enabled addiction, as the body's blind attempt to self-medicate against the persistent and frightening tug of the repressed and the unknown. Using the art of writing to uncover these hidden traumas heals the soul through the discovery and knowing of the self in a way addiction does not, while it is present in the body. The thesis is thus organized like a growing, developing subject, a body of ado/aptive theory in its embryonic stage, recording one aspect of the birth of the detached subject into intellectual discourse, at a time when a young nation turns back to the past and says 'sorry' for its history of child removals from Indigenous families.²¹

A definition of adoption.

The aspect of the birth of the intellectual study of the subject adoptee that I enact in this thesis considers, primarily, that form of adoption that is 'of predominantly white Australian infants by approved and unrelated couples, with the consent of the relinquishing parent or parents, formalised by an order of adoption under the relevant legislation.'²² Until recently, this form of legalised adoption included secrecy provisions which, along with its incurrence of social taboo, radically limited adoptees' access to information regarding their identity. The 'closed-record' adoption system created an original birth certificate for the adoptee which, like other birth certificates, included the name or names of biological parents, but was also stamped 'not for official use'. Remarkably, adoptees were forbidden by law access to this document for the duration of their lives.

The closed-record adoption system operated in Australia from the 1940s to the 1990s and was largely deconstructed between 1984 and 1994, when states and territories enacted adoption information legislation which opened up adoption records²³ (over a decade later than the United Kingdom's 1975 Children Act²⁴), returning the right of adopted persons over the age of eighteen to have access to their secreted birth certificates, and so, most probably, the identity of their biological parent or parents and the name they were given by them. Today

²¹ The newly elected Prime Minister of Australia said 'sorry', officially, to the Stolen Generations on February 14, 2008.

²² Audrey Marshall and Margaret McDonald, *The Many-Sided Triangle; Adoption in Australia*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 3

²³ Ibid 3

adoption in general has dramatically declined and is of a different nature than in the past, involving predominately inter-country adoptions. This means that the subjects affected by the closed-record adoption system in Australia can be seen as forming their own demographic, like their famous predecessors and contemporaries, the children removed from Indigenous Australian families known as the 'Stolen Generation'.

The closed record adoption demographic is investigated in this dissertation with the authority of a subject who has directly experienced it. Hence other groups and sub-groups of adoptees in Australia, such as Indigenous Australian adoptees, intercountry adoptees, adoptees with special needs and older child adoptees, as well as, for example, British child migrants and the Vietnamese babies airlifted out of Saigon during the closing days of the Vietnam war, are not investigated in this exploration of the subject adoptee as a metaphor for reading and writing Australia and its literature. Such projects, however, would make fascinating connections, of correspondence and difference, with the following thesis.

The methodology of detachment

In this thesis I use a variety of methodologies and critical theories but my understanding of the subject adoptee is based on Nancy Newton Verrier's *The*

²⁴ Ibid 13

*Primal Wound; Understanding the Adopted Child.*²⁵ An adult product by an adopted child reading an adult subject's theory about adopted children might seem to be a roundabout way of getting to the point but getting to the point is precisely what I wish to do and Verrier seems to be one of the few people trying to get there. Like me, she began her journey from deep within the matrix of adoption relationships, in her relationship with her own adopted daughter, where any 'attempt at bonding was sabotaged by provocative, destructive behaviour on her part, as she tested and retested our love and commitment:'

If anyone had told me when we brought home our three-day-old daughter on Christmas Eve, 1969, that rearing an adopted child would be different from rearing one's own biological child, I, like many new and enthusiastic adoptive parents, would have laughed at them and said, 'Of course it won't be different! What can a tiny baby know? We will love her and give her a wonderful home.' My belief was that love would conquer all. What I discovered, however, was that it was easier for us to give her love than it was for her to accept it.²⁶

Verrier was told by an adoptee therapist that 'all the hoopla is the child trying to connect with the mother':

²⁵ Nancy Newton Verrier *The Primal Wound; Understanding the Adopted Child* Gateway Press Inc Baltimore 1999

²⁶ Ibid xiii

I was to discover during my ten years of research that this testing-out behaviour was one of two diametrically opposed responses to having being abandoned, the other being a tendency toward acquiescence, compliance and withdrawal. Although living with a 'testing out' child may be more difficult than living with a compliant child, I am thankful that our daughter acted in such a way so as to bring her pain to our attention...²⁷

Verrier's theory emerges from the psychoanalytical school of attachment theory, instigated by John Bowlby, which prioritises infant bonding. The rise of this theory in the 1970s had an effect on intellectual attitudes towards adoption and, along with the growing vocal dissent from those in the 'many-sided'²⁸ adoption 'triad', contributed to the plummeting in popularity of adoption in subsequent years by providing a theoretical basis for the empirical experience of adoption as a traumatic event. Beforehand it was believed that, if adoption took place at birth, the usual symptoms of attachment disorders present in children with multiple caregivers would be avoided. According to Verrier: 'although these symptoms may be more evident in children who have had previous multiple

²⁷ Ibid xiii-xiv

²⁸ The paradoxical phrase, 'many-sided triangle', is taken from the title of Marshall and McDonald op.cit.

caregivers, my research has shown that *they are also present in those children who were permanently placed at or near birth.*²⁹

Theories that suggest removals of infants from their mother's bodies after birth are traumatic for the infants subvert the dominant discourse surrounding adoption and have been popularly suppressed in the broader Australian community even to this day. This is because Australian history has involved a downplaying of the importance of infant bonding and blood ties in its enthusiasm for the reassignment of children. Verrier points out that the widespread trivialisation of post-birth bonding has repercussions far beyond the adopted body: 'the anxiety felt by so many people signals a greater incidence of childhood trauma than we would like to admit.'³⁰ Many other bodies that have suffered separation from the mother after birth for an extended period, such as premature babies in humidity cribs, the children of alcoholic or drug-addicted families, the children of 'surrogate' mothers, will find they have more in common with the adopted infant body than the biologically grounded one when they look for meaning in their difference. Verrier writes:

My clinical work has shown me, however, that most of these same issues are present in people who have been placed in incubators or have otherwise been separated from their mothers at birth, even though they

²⁹ Ibid 7

were reunited with the original mother. The consistency of the presence of these issues among adoptees and 'incubator babies' suggests that it is the experience of feeling abandoned which causes that wound.³¹

It is thus conducive to the building of identities of all such bodies who have suffered abrupt and lengthy separation from their mothers after birth, and conducive for connectedness amongst these bodies, that the adoptee speaks out. Also, how adoption is represented in the literature and media affects how adoptees construct themselves:

even if they experience adoption in their own lives, the way they experience it - and the ways they imagine the experience of those at other positions in the adoption triad - may be shaped in part by the cultural images of adoption they know.³²

It is vital for adoptees themselves that they participate in the historical construction of their own subjecthood and they can do this through the process and art of telling their own stories, *writing* their own bodies, revealing their unique way of seeing and *reading* the Australian nation, its history and its literature.

³⁰ Ibid 70

³¹ Ibid 8

³² Novy op.cit. 7

Detachment and language

If the subject adoptee is separated from itself in its pre-symbolic state by the loss of its mother's body, then one might theorise it will develop a unique relationship to language:

In their extreme physical closeness, mother and child constitute a double body that obfuscates any clear distinction between one person and another, one category and another, and is therefore incompatible with the operations of adult language insofar as these pivot on principles of separation, classification and compartmentalisation. Kristeva argues that there is a close analogy between the process through which the child separates itself from the mother and the process through which it acquires language... At first the infant relates to the maternal body as if it were part of its own body that could never be taken away. Gradually it realizes that, in fact, the mother may withdraw, go away, and that it must learn to cope with the possibility of her absence. The very structure of language is based on this early experience.³³

Where does one insert the subjective experience of the infant adopted at birth into this psychoanalytical theory of language? What if, after birth, the infant was

never able to relate to the maternal body as if it was part of its own, because it is absent? Is its experience of itself, then, based on the unfamiliar body of the adoptive mother or simply an experience of the loss of self? If both of these are part of the adoptive experience, will not the infant then experience itself, not only as more lost, more diminished than the maternally bonded body, but also as something unfamiliar? Does the infant experience itself as caught in an abyss between an absent maternal body, the intimate substitute body of the adoptive mother, and the absence of language - simply existing, suspended in grief? Or is it possible that the infant adopted at birth discovers the world as distinct, as Other, earlier than a maternally bonded infant?

One of the most traumatic aspects of the subject's entry into language coincides with its separation from the maternal body. This is rendered inevitable by the fact that we need to perceive the world as distinct, as Other, in order to be able to relate to it and to other people.³⁴

Might an adopted infant develop language a little differently, approach it like a baby crying for its lost mother, its lost self, perhaps, and develop a unique, an intense, relationship with language itself? Does the adoptee wish to talk, to write, as a desperate act to compartmentalize itself, to own the grief and strangeness it understands within? Another side of the adoptee infant's relationship to

³³ Dani Cavallaro *French Feminist Theory; An Introduction* Continuum London New York 2003 84-5

language might, however, be discerned, for 'at a certain stage of its psychosexual evolution the subject might well feel trapped by the maternal body and perceive it not as protective but rather as oppressive and engulfing.'³⁵

The adopted body, already free of the biologically linked maternal space, may simply not experience the maternal body, which has been substituted by the unfamiliar adoptive mother, as oppressing or engulfing. Its experience of early grief, then, might be synonymous with an infant experience of liberation and welcoming. Furthermore, Kristeva writes of all infant bodies as 'wounded' bodies and if this is the case cannot the subject adoptee offer itself as a model for all wounded subjects seeking liberation?

Against the Oedipal and Oedipalised territorialities (Family, Church, School, Nation, Party), and especially the territoriality of the individual, *Anti-Oedipus* seeks to discover the 'deterritorialised' flows of desire, the flows that have not been reduced to the Oedipal codes and the neuroticised territorialities, the *desiring machines* that escape such codes as *lines of escape* leading elsewhere.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid 84

³⁵ Ibid 84

³⁶ Mark Seem 'introduction' to Deleuze and Guattari op.cit. xvii

If the schizophrenic is a subject detached from reality,³⁷ cannot the infant adoptee be a similarly liberating model, a desiring machine that escapes the Oedipal codes because it has so early escaped from its mother, and from part of what it knows as its world? Is the adoptive body a line of escape leading elsewhere, its language a kind of *ado/aptive* discourse?

What makes the process of self-differentiation particularly painful is the fact that when the child first experiences the urge to distinguish itself from the other, it is not yet in possession of adult language and is incapable, therefore, of articulating that urge. As a result, the child expresses its efforts to create a boundary between itself and others *through the body*. These efforts often manifest themselves in violent ways, as frustration, fear, anger and, primarily, a visceral resentment against the physical *stuff* that threatens the body's self-containedness, such as milk, slime, blood, ooze and tears. The child's sense of disorientation is amplified by its fear that all attempts at separation may be vain and that it may become indistinguishable from the murky and polluting materials it longs to shed. What is hard to ignore as this anguished psychodrama hurtles towards its denouement, is that identity is only ever achieved at great cost and that its attainment does not exempt us from an ongoing subjection to both external cultural forces, which aim at shaping us in particular ways, and

³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari op.cit. 23

no less oppressive internal forces, such as intense feelings of self-fragmentation, depression and horror. These effects can never be fully tamed because they are basic components of our being and it is precisely this realisation, for Kristeva, that makes the speaking-subject a *wounded body*.³⁸

The infant subject adoptee, then, is an exaggeration, an amplification, an elaboration, an adaptation, of the experience of being wounded, which is the experience of everyone, and if the very structure of the language of the adopted body is based on, or affected by, his or her adoptive experience, is not the writing of the adopted body an exaggeration, an amplification, an elaboration, an adaptation, a *certain kind of adaption* of language itself?

Although a hyper-wounded body, in the world of the producing unconscious the adopted body speaks a liberating language. This thesis is an example of adoptive life writing that undertakes adoptive readings of three early twenty-first century Australian texts, providing lines of escape for the productive unconscious of the Australian imaginary.

Memories 'link us to place, to time and to nation: they enable us to place value on our individual and our social experiences, and they enable us to inhabit our own

³⁸ Cavallaro op.cit. 85

country'.³⁹ So, remembering the closed-records adopted body in Australian society links it to its own discourse, to place, to time and to nation, building a stronger identity for a demographic of subjects with stolen identities. In Australia, some have suggested, 'the ordeals and triumphs of the Stolen Generations are now being exposed but there has also been a great silence about their white Australian contemporaries.'⁴⁰ In a recent South Australian enquiry into adoption from overseas the victims of the 'closed-records adoption system' are noticeable for their absence:

Experiences such as those of the British Child Migrants sent to Commonwealth countries particularly in the immediate post World War II period, the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Australians, the children of the Canadian Native Residential Schools, the children of the Disappeared in Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s, and some of the children of the Vietnamese Airlift demonstrate that standards of practice that have a minimal focus on the best interests of the child, and that are conducted with questionable rigour, can have profound and lasting negative outcomes on those children who were subjects of such practices, as well as on their families and communities.⁴¹

³⁹ Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton 'Introduction' to *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia* eds. Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton Oxford University Press Melbourne 1994 1

⁴⁰ Kate Shayler *The Long Way Home; The Story of a Homes Kid* Random House Sydney 1999 Back cover

⁴¹ Submission by the Government of South Australia to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services *Inquiry into adoption of children from overseas* September 2005

Perhaps the persistent breaking of this silence by closed-records adoptees, through their interaction with the national literature, might work as a point of entry for some readers into a deeper understanding of an Australian culture that, for a period, encouraged and coerced the relinquishment of its own children who were in little danger of abuse or neglect, when it was not enforcing it on an Indigenous Australian population whose experience of child stealing has entailed the loss of so much more.

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/adoption/subs.htm> 2 For the full report see <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/adoption/report.htm> Last viewed 27 March 2007.

CHAPTER 1

The Subject Adoptee or Writing the Adopted Body

The history of the bastard, which is crucial to the history of adoption, needs to be understood as a social history as well... The history of dealing with illegitimacy is the history of an ordering code – the Poor Law of 1834, for example, or the founding of the modern adoption agency.⁴²

Closed-record adoption in Australia was ‘the latest arrangement in a five-hundred-year-old legal debate’⁴³ within the history of illegitimacy designed to control women and reproduction. In England in 1834, the Poor Law Amendment declared men would no longer be responsible for their illegitimate children and that only the mother would be. It was argued that if the father was not absolved of financial responsibility he would be likely to persuade the mother to perform infanticide, and that easing the financial burden of bearing a bastard - as the baby was frankly referred to throughout the debate⁴⁴ - meant the woman would be insufficiently punished for her lack of chastity. Today, the concept of illegitimacy emerges

⁴² Garry Leonard ‘The Immaculate Deception; Adoption in Albee’s Plays’ in *Imagining Adoption; Essays on Literature and Culture* ed. Marianne Novy University of Michigan Press Michigan 2001 118

⁴³ *Ibid* 115

out of a number of sites of cultural production, including the law and the judicial system (legislation relating to child custody and property inheritance, for example), popular culture (film, television, women's magazines and popular music), literature (autobiography and fiction), state administration (employment and training schemes, provisions for social assistance), the parliamentary process (debates about welfare fraud) and religion (doctrinal emphases on chastity and purity).⁴⁵

As a body first declared 'illegitimate', and then declared 'legitimate' by the closed-records adoption system in Australia, my background as a practitioner of *l'écriture du corps*, and *écriture féminine* as advocated by Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, provides the theoretical foundation for this exercise in life writing, as the seeking to write that for which no language yet exists - 'namely, the silenced the marginalized and the repressed'.⁴⁶ 'One consistent feature of the debates about the Poor Law Amendment is that while a great deal is said about the bastard, the bastard never speaks.'⁴⁷ It also involves the inscription of the female body in textuality and discourse as required by the theory of the French feminists,

⁴⁴ Ibid 114

⁴⁵ Gail Reekie *Measuring Immorality: Social Inquiry and the Problem of Illegitimacy* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1998 13. See also Jenny Teichman's account of how various social institutions produce the legitimacy/illegitimacy distinction: Jenny Teichman *Illegitimacy. A Philosophical Examination* Oxford Basil Blackwell 1982

most famously, Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous. Each of these women, in distinctive ways, argued for the particularities of the female body to be considered when speaking of establishing a discursive space for women. The maternity and sexuality of women's bodies were taken as metaphors for a distinctively female mode of writing and thinking.⁴⁸

What I am arguing is that the particularities of the adopted body must be considered when establishing a discursive space for the subject adoptee.

My 'life writing' is an exploration of the psychological bind of the subject adoptee, the influence of that bind on a subject's perception and, more specifically, on this subject's process of reading and writing Australian literature. If 'memory is dependent on metaphor - more specifically, metaphors of the body - to actualise remembered experience'⁴⁹ then by reading and writing the adopted body I participate in the 'recovery' of memory for a nation 'keen to ... facilitate the production of more and more inclusive histories - and to bring into the public domain the many conflicting interpretations of the past'.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Dani Cavallaro *French Feminist Theory; An Introduction* Continuum London New York 2003 119

⁴⁷ Reekie op.cit. 115

⁴⁸ Fiona Giles 'Milkbrain: Writing the Cognitive Body' *Australian Humanities Review* Issue 43 December 2007 <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-December-2007/Giles.html> accessed February 23, 2008

⁴⁹ Graham Huggan 'Cultural Memory in Postcolonial Fiction: The Uses and Abuses of Ned Kelly' in *Australian Literary Studies* Vol.20 No.3 2002 143

⁵⁰ Paula Hamilton 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History' in *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia* eds. Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton Oxford University Press Melbourne 1994 10

If in writing an adopted body one wished to situate it in its own story, to provide it with *context*, such as the recording of that usual signpost of identity - the ancestral histories that led the subject into being - then writing the adoptee's body is far from simple. In writing an adopted body one cannot relate beginnings in ancestral lines nor does the construction of the adopted body involve an assemblage of genetically related kin and their stories to construct the wider family. Stories of the history of the adoptee's genetic lineage, because they go beyond the point of origin of the subject into the past, cannot be called upon by the subject adoptee because those stories have been forbidden to them and others provided in their place. They have been, historically speaking, suddenly situated 'smack-bang' in some other family's story. Despite the deeply-held feelings of the adopted body that it has somehow suddenly sprung out of nowhere, the politics of the adopted body are very much grounded in a long and complex history of child-removals, illegitimacy and social control by legal authorities and governments.

Adoption identity

The familial stories that first surround the infant adopted body can be said to have little relation to the subject adoptee except by an order of law and for the understanding of the adopted family. One of the first existential questions to occur to, and thence confuse, the 'closed-record' subject adoptee is the question

of how far the adoptee is expected to adopt these stories as truths about themselves? Raised with the ancestral tales of the adoptive family they face the first of a thousand quandaries: although I accept that my adoptive parents are now 'my parents' and that their parents are now 'my grandparents', should I consider those great, and great, great grandparents who died before I was born, my ancestors also? Am I to understand that the costs my adoptive parents incurred in adopting me should somehow be balanced with my acceptance of all of their history as my own? Is the adoptee expected to accept that, in the realm of story, the metaphysical and the spiritual, the worldly declarations of law have meaning and effect? If so, how do I reconcile this with the simple fact that, when I say 'this ancestor of mine did such and such in such a such a place', it feels so much like... I *know*... I'm lying.

If a closed-record adoptee wishes to tell her history she must become complicit in the fiction about herself or simply not speak, as if she had no history at all, because to say the history has been stolen is to accuse everyone involved in making my body 'adopted' of stealing or being complicit in a stealing. When the choice of expressing the self is one between lies or silences, the quandary of the adoptee becomes a metaphysical anxiety. If there is a spiritual realm in what way could I possibly figure out my allegiances? Which mother is my spiritual mother? Do I have to make the choice between two families who will never really be truly

enamoured of one another, also being strangers to one another, or will I simply be unwanted, and unable to want any of them, be alone even beyond existence?

Such metaphysical *worries* might trouble an subject adoptee who might feel she or he cannot ask the questions that an 'unadopted' subject might ask about themselves, nor even assume their spiritual beliefs, because the answers are incohesive, inexplicable, and threatening. If there is to be any cultural formation of a spiritual life for the subject adoptee to whom do they turn? What would the Catholic priests to whom I confessed have replied if I'd asked them these complicated theological questions? Garry Leonard terms my anxiety 'adopteestentialism':

I'm amending, of course, Sartre's term *existentialism*, but even that term arose from, in part, Sartre's fascination with the experiential world of Jean Genet, another adoptee - a fascination Sartre detailed exhaustively in his biography of Genet, *St. Genet*. Adopteestentialism is a peculiar form of alienation... It is borne of terror, envy, anger, and contempt at the mundane details of what passes for reality in the world where people know their biological origin. These details, treated thoughtlessly as facts

by the biologically grounded individual, as simply 'what is', appear in a very different light as reminders of exclusion to an adoptee figure.⁵¹

The space in my mind that allows such metaphysical concepts to flourish is best not visited by the subject adoptee because it produces anxiety; the memory of ancestors simply does not exist in the adopted descendent, existentially they are quite unmoored.

If, on the other hand, the adoptee does gain access to some of the stories of their genealogical history these will always end with the same event that brought the entire metaphysical quandary (being) into being: 'and then the family, after this final child came to be born, which is me, adopted me "out" of the said family.' For both, whichever of the two histories I choose to relate, end in adoption, either 'in' or 'out' of a family. And that's pretty much where 'I' begin.

The answers to such existential questions regarding the pre- and post- history of the subject adoptee, then, take on a stronger social dimension. 'I' am defined, as the concept of the adopted body is defined, as much or as little as by either family's histories: the truth of my genealogical history, of which I have been deprived, or the crop of pseudo-ancestral stories with which I have been supplied that include me within the adoptive family. So much so that the

⁵¹ Leonard op.cit. 124

individual adoptee's conceptual history becomes, not so much the ancestral history of the adoptive family, which the adoptee cannot quite entirely understand as its own, nor its own genetic history, which it might never know and from which it has been rejected, but, rather, the history of the practice of child reassignments in society. In this way the historical adoptee is forever a child of the state rather than of human parents, conceptually 'unwanted' but provided for by the larger society through the institution of adoption, so giving her or him seemingly 'random' parents, drawn together by the forces of desire and need but not of genealogy, and dislocating them from their biological origins. The adopted body, then, has the larger parents of society and its laws, no 'true' history but the history of the development of this practise of child reassignments, and the sum of all adopted bodies becomes, then, a 'family' of adoptees

An infant body, when declared an illegitimate body, extracted from their mother's body and legally declared adopted, enters, as well as into the adoptive family, a unique 'family of adoptees' that has evolved out of a matrix of discourses. The really surprising thing is the extent to which closed-records adoptees have been prevented from meeting and knowing other members of this greater family, except, perhaps, by the provision of adopted siblings. Even between siblings this added dimension of 'sisterhood' or 'brotherhood' may never have been discussed. This enforced isolation was the direct result of the

dictates of a variety of taboos and stigmas and the popular conception of what was best for the child. Closed-record adoption was defended with the rationale of the 'clean slate', but the clean slate is the convenient fiction for the functioning and maintenance of taboo.

This unique 'family' of closed-record adoptees was born into an environment of legal and social 'secreting' that was rapidly developed in compliance with a matrix of taboos and stigmas surrounding women and reproduction: the powerful taboos surrounding infant deaths and abandonment which still exist today, as well as the stigmas of infertility and 'unresolved' extra-marital intercourse. Whether the secrecy laws were designed to protect the two adult mothers concerned in the adoption exchange from these taboos and stigmas at the expense of the child's knowledge of itself, or whether these provisions were enforced by these very taboos and stigmas is a question, the child's rights were done away with by the rationale of the clean-slate, that the child will remember nothing, and will not need to know. The matrix of taboo and stigma surrounding women and reproduction was a proscription that ensured the silence and secrecy for the development of the subjectivity and identity of the closed records adoptee of the three or four decades before the changes in legislation.

The closed-records adopted body is the product of, and the antidote to, this matrix of taboos and stigmas controlling women and reproduction, and is also

the final depository of these discourses' silences - the concentrating of these repressed discourses in the body of an infant, male *or* female.⁵² In the blind⁵³ and silent world of the adoptee this matrix was to have its end in the single stigma of the adopted body: the stigma of being adopted. In the Australian community, the sexist taboos and stigmas in place to control women and reproduction served to keep the maternal bodies that formed outside the patriarchal⁵⁴ definition of motherhood silenced, ensuring any grief suffered was experienced in devastating isolation, unsupported by the wider community of Australian society. The adoptive condition has been, therefore, a condition of a silenced body surrounded by silent bodies. This makes this adoptee ask: who was doing all the talking?

The birth of the modern subject adoptee is a story about the implementation of modern adoption practices, and its identity is formed amongst the ancestral stories of the development of the discourse of child reassignments, the development of adoption law and the matrix of taboos controlling women and reproduction. The adopted body thus has an exceptional relationship to society, to the law, and to the concept of family. Constructed as a silent body, for a closed records adoptee to finally speak, to write, is to directly attack the contemporary

⁵² Further research is required into the likelihood of adoption into the closed-records adoption system based on the gender of the infant.

⁵³ Oedipus, the mythical precursor of the adopted child (and then, under Freud, the mythical precursor of all modern subjects in the nuclear family), abandoned then adopted as an infant, put out his own eyes when he discovered the truth about his origins.

construction of ideal motherhood, and the social mores in place that seek to control women and their fertility. And to write an adopted body is to contribute to the conceptual construction of a unique and alienated family of human beings who were prevented, for a long time, from getting to know one another, let alone themselves.

Adaptive bodies

Because the parties within the adoptive triangle do not present themselves as case studies 'it is the adoptee who presents as maladjusted.⁵⁵

Closed-record adoption might be said to impact upon the subject in roughly three phases. There is the effect upon the subject in utero, if the emotions and thoughts of the mother as she considers the relinquishment of her child are seen in any way to impact upon an embryo.⁵⁶ I will not be considering this phase although it is intriguing to wonder if a developing foetus might intuit a sense that it is undesired and form an antipathy to life. The second phase is the immediate removal after birth of the child's body from contact with the mother and the absence of bonding. If the bonding period is delayed or absent the baby begins to experience a grieving process.

⁵⁴ 'Patriarchal values exist in societies where men, lacking true authority, settle for mere power' Declan Kiberd *Inventing Ireland The Literature of the Modern Nation* Vintage London 1995 391

⁵⁵ Leonard op.cit 119

Babies who are separated from their mothers demonstrate several stages of grief, which correspond to those seen in adults but are more difficult to discern. The initial response is one of protest and an urgent effort to recover the lost mother ... This is the stage at which babies have been administered phenobarbital in order to quiet the anguish and rage ... Next comes despair. Although there is still longing for the lost mother, the hope of being reunited with her diminishes. The child stops crying and, instead, becomes withdrawn, depressed, and detached.⁵⁷

This withdrawal, depression and detachment might, indeed, form the foundation for the development of the adoptee's personality, as their initial experience of being in a world outside the womb.

In Australia, during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, as well as in some other western countries at the same time, popular opinion did not seem to consider the instantaneous and permanent separation from the mother's body after birth to be particularly traumatic for the baby (or if so, this might have been considered the price it had to pay for the crime of its illegitimacy), perhaps believing that birth itself must be a traumatic experience, and as a widespread 'wishful' reaction to the trauma of World War II. However the post-birth bonding period with the

⁵⁶ See TB Brazelton 'Pre-birth memories appear to have lasting effect.' *Brain/Mind Bulletin* 7(5) 1982 2

mother is now read as nature's 'antidote' to the birthing experience, immediately soothing and providing a sense of secure comfort. Nancy Verrier, in *The Primal Wound; Understanding the Adopted Child*, claims that babies' cries are 'authentic' cries of pain.

Babies know more than they are supposed to know. Minutes after birth, a baby can pick out his mother's face – which he has never seen – from a gallery of photos ... The newly discovered truth is that newborn babies have all their senses and make use of them just as the rest of us do. Their cries of pain are authentic. Babies are not unfeeling; it is *we* who have been unfeeling.⁵⁸

Even if this had been earlier understood to be the case, there was the additional perception that such an experience of pain would have little or no long-term effect on the subject, as it was generally believed that people had no memory of their early childhood. Scholarship around this time did little to contradict such popular perceptions and did little to consider the effects of relinquishment:

Some of what we know isn't necessarily new but, to my knowledge, hasn't been applied to relinquished children. John Bowlby, in talking about the behaviour of children who have suffered the loss of a parent through

⁵⁷ Verrier op.cit. 40-1

death, described the various responses a baby has to the disappearance of the mother. He claimed the child's behaviour reflects an immature attempt at mourning and is 'a legitimate product of bitter experience.' In my opinion, the comparison to relinquishment is valid because for the child abandonment is a kind of death, not only of the mother, but of part of the Self, that core-being or essence of oneself which makes one feel whole.⁵⁹

Following the Adoption Information Act (NSW) of 1990, which for the first time allowed people adopted under the closed-record adoption system in NSW access to their true identities, I was able to obtain hospital records from St. Margaret's Hospital for Women in Darlinghurst, the place where I was born. These noted that, each night for the week I was held there in January 1972, after my immediate removal from my mother's body, I 'appeared satisfactory', although most of these entries were qualified by comments that indicate a certain level of distress in my infant being. On the third of January my entry read 'not sucking well', on the fourth, 'remains slow to feed', on the fifth, 'unsettled and screaming all night - glucose offered with little effect' and on the sixth, 'appears satisfactory although extremely difficult to settle during the night.' On the eighth of January I 'cried most of early night - not relieved by glucose water. Small amount only

⁵⁸ David Chamberlain *Babies Remember Birth* Ballantine Books New York 1988

⁵⁹ Nancy Newton Verrier *The Primal Wound; Understanding the Adopted Child* Gateway Press Inc Baltimore 1999 6

taken at am feed. Appears satisfactory'. On the ninth, one week after I was born and removed from my mother, I was discharged to St. Anthony's Home for Unmarried Mothers⁶⁰, placed in the same taxi as my birth mother, and, upon arrival, it was expected by all concerned, except probably me, that we were never to be with each other again.

The third phase of experience for the adopted infant begins with their arrival in the home of the adoptive family which they know, through the functioning of their senses, is not their own. I have often felt that a very modern metaphor for the adoptive experience in Australian society is provided by genetic engineering, as if my body is a cell which has been spliced out of a string of DNA and grafted elsewhere, with completely new connections to which I had to adhere and grow. For this reason I collapse the two terms '*adaptive*' and '*adoptive*' gesturing at an experience much larger than that defined by the legal process of adoption. A third area in which the term 'adoption' is used most commonly in the public arena is in relation to celebrity adoptions, which are frequently discussed by the tabloid media and reinforce the triviality applied to the subject by a general public that still fails to question the deeper ethics of adoption and the effects of it upon adopted children.

⁶⁰ Ward Report for Baby Girl, St. Margaret's Hospital, Medical Officer: Dr. Grace, 1972

This third phase is the 'life work' of ado/aption. It includes the socially sufficient and efficient suppression of the experience of trauma, loss and grief and the inheritance of an anxiety over the possibility of further abandonment, implied by her or his original status as an 'unwanted'. It includes the construction of identity under new arbitrarily assigned conditions, with the added 'primary reading difficulty' caused by the genetic unfamiliarity of facial expressions, smells, etc, of unrelated kin. These are the difficulties of the infant and later, the child, in its attempt to successfully bond with, and in the formation of love within, the new family but complicated by the dearth of true, and the scaffolding of mis-, information. These are the falsehoods, fantasies and silences, no matter how discreet or subtle, necessary to cover up the question of origin.

This life path of the adoptee might, for some, take the radical turn toward the determined search for truths regarding themselves that, if pursued, would render the adaptive body again illegitimate, by rendering it a criminal body under Australian law, if its search brings it up against existing laws such as the contact veto system that allows people to prohibit contact from other parties involved in the adoptive process. Even the public naming of biological relatives is legally controlled, opening up the adopted body to prosecution. So, ironically, this third phase of the adoption experience, designed to make a (legitimate!)

body, declared illegitimate at and before birth, so it can be 'declared' legitimate, may include it becoming, once again, illegitimate by becoming criminal.⁶¹

In the provisions of the Adoption Act 2000 a Contact Veto Register was created for adopted persons and birth parents who do not wish to have contact with another party to their adoption. When an application is made to the Family Information Service of Adoption and Permanent Care Services for a Supply Authority, and a veto is found to exist, the applicant will be supported by phone by a 'caseworker'. The applicant will also receive any information left for them on the Contact Veto registration form. The applicant will be required to sign an Undertaking Not To Make Contact with the person who has placed the Veto, before the Supply Authority can be released. The undertaking is legally binding and acknowledges awareness of the Veto and the applicant's agreement not to make contact and not to ask anyone else to make contact on their behalf. If the undertaking is breached and contact is made, they may be liable to a fine of \$2750 and /or twelve months in gaol.⁶² Luckily for this adoptee, my birth father refrained from having his name placed on my birth certificate, perhaps hoping this would make separation more permanent, but in fact made him illegible to place a veto on contact from me. If this has not been so, my curiosity to know my

⁶¹ There is also that idea that an adoptee might choose criminality in protest rather than just as the accidental byproduct of the search for self-knowledge.

⁶² 'Fact Sheet: Contact Veto Register' Prepared by the Family Information Service, Adoption and Permanent Care Services February 2003

biological father could have seen me placed in gaol for up to twelve months, my body, one again, illegitimate.

To be so adaptive in infancy and early childhood is a lot to ask of any child but the really extraordinary aspect of the subject adoptee's work is their being faced with the widespread social denial of their experience. Society coupled the adoption experience not with an insurance of understanding but, because of the immense pressure placed on individuals to believe child removal was the best outcome for the subject, *a general denial of possible damaging effects* to the subject. A denial that cost the subject adoptee, and the adopted parents struggling to rear them, the support that they may so desperately have required. For some closed-records adoptees:

They have been made to feel that to want to know about themselves will be hurtful to others. And so we have this extraordinary situation where children are forced to keep their most basic feelings about themselves hidden from their parents.⁶³

Things have changed somewhat for the subject adoptee in Australia today who are more likely to be adopted under an 'open adoption' system where their true identity is provided to them, although there is still controversy about physical

access as well as the restriction upon adoptees under the age of eighteen. There is still a general denial in most Western societies, however, that adoption may not be what is best for the child, and relinquishing mothers, especially the youngest, may still may be subject to manipulative familial power relationships that maintain the mother's sacrifice is a noble one and best for the child. Society's reinforcement of this familial power is easily evident in its 'fashionableness,' as celebrity rainbow families in Hollywood and the entertainment world adopt third world children, and adoption websites are saturated with 'goody-goody' feel-good language, perpetuating the trivialisation of the process to encourage a multi-million dollar industry. Such sugar-coated websites run by the adoption industry contrast starkly with home-made websites by adoptees themselves, such as the Alt.adoption usenet newsgroup⁶⁴, where debates about Verrier's 'Primal Wound' theory are conducted and which gave birth to 'Bastard Nation', <http://www.bastards.org/events/index.html>, a group who organize political activism for the promotion of adoptee rights. Public denial is reflected in parliament as Federal Government policy, as the Minister for Health Tony Abbott, attempts to counter the gains made in understanding the debilitating experiences of the child unwanted by its own relatives, by trying to reduce the number of terminations of unwanted pregnancies, as if encouraging mothers to give birth to unwanted children will have the consistent effect of making them wanted after birth, rather than increasing the numbers of adoptions which have

⁶³ Joss Shawyer *Death by Adoption* Cicada Auckland 1979 43

dramatically fallen over the past decade. Ironically, this same minister has his own 'adoption controversy' when it was discovered an adoptee, Daniel O'Connor, who came forward under the instigation of his birth mother, was actually *not* his biological son.⁶⁵ Abbott's Catholicism directs his ideas and the Catholic Church was one of the leading exponents of the adoption system in Australia.

Closed-record adoption in Australia

When adoption legislation was added to the statute books of the Australian Capital Territory in the 1930s, the new legislation became available throughout Australia.⁶⁶ Over the next thirty years all the Acts were subject to minor amendment but the basic common features remained little altered and, in the 1960s, more or less uniform adoption legislation was introduced throughout Australia, leading to increased regulation of adoption practice, a major aspect of which was the outlawing of privately arranged adoption.⁶⁷ The 30-day period for revocation of consent, and the reinforcing of secrecy provisions 'were also major features of the uniform legislation.'⁶⁸

⁶⁴ <http://www.bastards.org/events/aa.htm> last viewed 22 February 2007.

⁶⁵ See <http://www.smh.com.au/news/Letters/Its-a-wild-ride-on-Abbotts-adoption-rollercoaster/2005/03/22/1111254024476.html> Last viewed 29 March 2007.

⁶⁶ Audrey Marshall and Margaret McDonald *The Many-Sided Triangle; Adoption in Australia* Melbourne University Press Victoria 2001 31

⁶⁷ Ibid 5

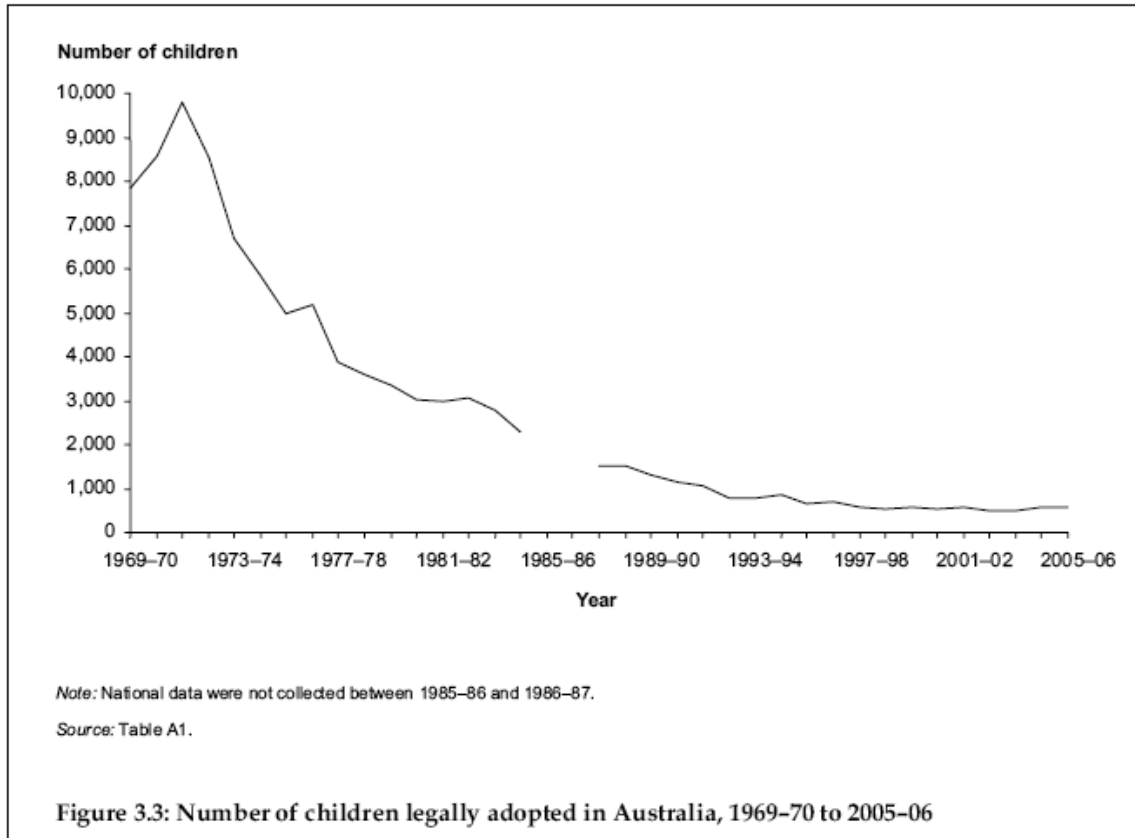
⁶⁸ Ibid 35

In New South Wales, 'between the time adoption legislation was first passed in 1923 until the 1965 Act, more than 58 000 children had been adopted, echoing a similar growth in other states.'⁶⁹ In the 1960s adoptions continued to increase but changes occurred; 'official' advice was given in regard to the 'telling of the secret of adoption' to the adopted and the replacement birth certificate became more 'imitative' of the original, the adoption certificate was also *adapted* to make it as similar as possible to the birth certificate.⁷⁰ 'Ironically, as it appears in retrospect, the legislative changes that took place throughout Australia during the 1960s were bringing adoption practice under effective control on the cusp of massive social change.'⁷¹ Adoption placements would continue to increase for five years or so as a prelude to a steep decline.

⁶⁹ Ibid 6

⁷⁰ Ibid 38

⁷¹ Ibid 38



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While the total number of adoptions has remained relatively stable over the last nine years, there has been a 17-fold decrease in adoptions since the 1970s. This can largely be attributed to a decline in adoptions of Australian children. (In contrast, the number of intercountry adoptions has tripled over the last 25 years with a dramatic proportional increase over this period: from 4% of all adoptions in 1980-81 to 73% in 2005-06.)⁷³ From today's perspective, the number of adoptions during the 'peak' years represent an astonishing statistic. Best estimates suggest that more than 400,000 Australians are presently affected by

⁷² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2006. Adoptions Australia 2005-06. Child welfare series no. 39. Cat. no. CWS 27. Canberra: AIHW 10

⁷³ Ibid vii

adoption in some way either as birthparents, adoptees or adoptive parents⁷⁴ but it is 'part of the general ambiguity surrounding adoption that no one knows how many people are personally affected by the institution.'⁷⁵

The 'belief in the value of adoption went virtually unchallenged until late 1970s'⁷⁶. Significant changes in society affected women: sexual relationships outside marriage more tolerated, unmarried pregnant women faced far less censure, and their children 'in theory at least no longer bore the stigma of being illegitimate.'⁷⁷ In 1973 the Supporting Mothers Benefit was granted to single women with children representing not only a little financial security, but, of equal significance, a measure of social acceptance but it was also the beginning of a public backlash against adoptive parents.⁷⁸ During the 1970s the status of 'illegitimacy' for children born outside of wedlock, largely disappeared the term itself replaced by 'ex-nuptial' in adoption law.⁷⁹

In Australia, the thirty years between the 70s and the 90s has been the period of greatest change in the law and practice of adoption during the past century⁸⁰ and had dramatic consequences, ending the era of adoption secrecy, 'long practised

⁷⁴ Tom Frame *Binding Ties; An experience of adoption and reunion in Australia* Hale and Iremonger Alexandria NSW 1999 8

⁷⁵ Marianne Novy, ed. 'Introduction' to *Imagining Adoption; Essays on Literature and Culture* University of Michigan Press U.S.A 2001 7

⁷⁶ Marshall and McDonald op.cit. 9-10

⁷⁷ Ibid 9-10

⁷⁸ Ibid 9-10

⁷⁹ Ibid 39

and expressly confirmed by the uniform adoption legislation of the 1960s.⁸¹ As a result, there has been an explosion of knowledge about the lived experience of adoption, creating 'a darker and more complex picture than that generally prevailing during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, which represented the peak of adoption placement.'⁸² 1972, the year I was adopted, saw the highest number of adoptions in Australia, with 9 798 babies and children adopted, and at the time of writing the members of this 'peak' generation, to which I belong, have reached adulthood and are into their third decade.

⁸⁰ Ibid xii

⁸¹ Ibid 3

⁸² Ibid 3

Table A1: Number of children legally adopted, by state and territory, 1968–69 to 2005–06

Year	NSW ^(a)	Vic	Qld ^(b)	WA	SA	Tas	ACT ^(c)	NT	Total
1968–69	1,715	1,789	1,448	540	797	348	100	36	6,773
1969–70	2,346	2,031	1,500	703	834	243	102	61	7,820
1970–71	3,275	2,057	1,562	301	879	289	122	68	8,553
1971–72	4,539	1,768	1,774	457	776	303	127	54	9,798
1972–73	3,315	1,765	1,678	717	649	268	121	29	8,542
1973–74	1,936	1,557	1,458	783	558	268	120	25	6,705
1974–75	1,799	1,168	1,394	528	551	243	123	33	5,839
1975–76	1,449	1,032	1,112	531	549	211	87	19	4,990
1976–77	1,770	908	1,014	497	658	185	82	74	5,188
1977–78	1,068	951	660	417	506	164	55	46	3,867
1978–79	1,020	956	563	380	415	173	56	40	3,603
1979–80	853	914	450	387	475	148	85	25	3,337
1980–81	794	711	454	305	505	140	74	35	3,018
1981–82	855	753	467	261	396	119	81	39	2,971
1982–83	926	692	555	270	424	117	59	29	3,072
1983–84	698	686	517	250	438	87	51	43	2,770
1984–85	623	631	331	293	222	97	74	23	2,294
1985–86 ^(d)	n.a.	n.a.	359	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1986–87 ^(d)	n.a.	n.a.	334	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1987–88	280	114	309	191	416	120	36	28	1,494
1988–89	335	288	353	147	221	85	47	25	1,501
1989–90	360	212	278	128	174	71	50	21	1,294
1990–91	329	258	210	136	103	61	25	20	1,142
1991–92	310	185	232	120	112	58	23	12	1,052
1992–93	209	101	222	87	111	23	20	10	783
1993–94	188	112	206	85	106	37	21	9	764
1994–95	260	145	179	127	108	12	18	6	855
1995–96	204	131	170	75	48	17	19	4	668
1996–97	263	123	129	56	79	30	26	3	709
1997–98	200	114	111	69	48	19	15	1	577
1998–99	185	102	94	64	53	25	16	6	543
1999–00	154	122	105	79	59	19	24	4	566
2000–01	166	98	62	74	53	24	27	10	514
2001–02	207	110	49	79	62	20	23	11	561
2002–03	122	82	67	76	72	21	25	7	472
2003–04	115	120	65	59	79	26	33	5	502
2004–05	154	161	84	49	77	23	20	17	585
2005–06	149	131	82	62	72	35	30	15	576

(a) Data on adoptions by step-parents for New South Wales are not included from 1987–88 to 1993–94.

(b) Data for 1986–87 and 1987–88 differ from previous reports due to updated figures.

(c) Data for 1998–99 differ from previous reports due to updated figures.

(d) National data were not collected in 1985–86 and 1986–87.

Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.

Changeling bodies

The changing of the secrecy provisions relating to adoptions has created a remarkable sub-category of adoptees. Before the changes, adoptees are likely to have lived their entire lives in enforced ignorance about their true identity which, despite the obvious identity issues, had serious repercussions for health and medical issues, in regards to likely hereditary illnesses and blood donors. Since these legislative changes, new adoptees are likely to have access to their true identity all their lives and not be subject to veto provisions, which only apply to Order of Adoptions made before 26 October 1990. In between both these earlier and later categories, there is a this sub-category of adoptees who began their lives as the former and at some random point in their lives become the latter. I think of this subcategory as the 'changeling' demographic - for the first part of our lives we existed as our adoptive identities with little hope of knowing anything else about ourselves, then at a later point we experienced a reversal of the situation, gaining information about our pre-adoptive identity. Two identities in one lifetime, marked not by a gradual transformation but through a sudden swapping, a psychological switch that mimics our physical switch in the crib.

The adoptees who lived through these legal changes, if they pursued the new freedoms the legal changes provided, experienced these changes in the very fabric of their own bodies by being provided with what can be described as an

'accelerated identi-kit'. This identi-kit had the dramatic dual effect of suddenly and radically devouring portions of the old identity, especially the fictional ones, while simultaneously providing new remnants of truths that served to inspire a flood of new and previously unthought of questions regarding the subject's true identity. Bits of what is true and what is false about the self are revealed with the quality of revelation, not a slow life-long construction of a sense of self. The difficulty certain subject adoptees have had in dealing with this sudden identity make-over, perhaps even meeting the mother, father and kin they never knew they had, can be compared with the experience of psychological 'break-down', especially if the adoptee had not even been aware, previously, that they were adopted. This sub-category of the adopted body might be said to be a somewhat fractured body, having suffered a violent remake of its identity, at a random point in its psychological development.

My adopted body falls into this sub-category and, as a result of legislation, contains psychological and emotional aspects that have been radically transformed within the space of my own lifetime. As societal attitudes and Australian Adoption Law radically changed so did my psychological body, which began its development under one of many myths, that once the baby was placed with a family, there was no difference between this placement and a biological birth.

In the kind of adoption dominant in the mid-twentieth century... adoptees could learn little or nothing about their heredity. Closed adoption – its symbol the birth certificates that replaced the original names with the adoptive parents' name – went virtually unchallenged. Often, adoptees and their parents were expected to be silent about the very fact that they were an adoptive family. If adoption agencies succeeded in their ideal of matching the appearance of new parents and children, the adoption might well be invisible.⁸⁴

Under this, what has been termed, 'myth of sameness',⁸⁵ the subject adoptee grows up in a culture that contradicts their experience of difference, so the effect is one of living in a kind of cocoon of psychological isolation within the family, and reinforced by the wider community by being mirrored in legislation. For example, the West Australian Adoption of Children Act of 1896 reads: '*When an order of adoption has been made, the adopted child shall, for all purposes... be deemed in law to be the child born in lawful wedlock of the adopting parents.*'⁸⁶ With small variations this form of wording was to be used in all the State and Territory Adoptions Acts, including that of South Australia in 1925, and in the adoption provisions of the New South Wales Child Welfare Act.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Novy op.cit. 5

⁸⁵ Leonard op.cit. 111

⁸⁶ West Australian Adoption of Children Act 1896 S7

This declaration in legislation that the adopted child was the 'same' as a biological child, 'for all purposes', extended into the culture surrounding adoption, so that in many cases the adopted child was *expected* to be the same as a biological child. This denied the reality of difference by reason of both genetics as well as the fact of the adoptive status. The goal of 'invisibility' for the phenomena of adoption in Australia meant that, unlike members of most other minority groups in Australia, the adopted child was kept isolated from others who might have identified with their experience. So any sort of natural community that would likely have arisen amongst adopted people was completely forestalled. The experience of the closed-record adopted child growing into adulthood is one which includes a profound instinct of their own difference, either consciously or via instinct and personal experience if even the fact of their adoption is hidden from them.⁸⁸ But it also included a contradicting denial of this difference by all concerned (even if difference is noted it might be unlikely to be mentioned), and therefore the development of subjecthood and identity in the loneliness of a certain kind of solitude.

So, simultaneously with the changes in Australian society and its adoption laws, my adopted body underwent radical translation, despite the stability of my life within the adoptive family. In my early twenties I gained new information about

⁸⁷ Marshall and McDonald op.cit.25

⁸⁸ This was the case for Ian Smith from the Australian soap: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/TV--Radio/A-new-lease-of-life/2005/03/13/1110649056266.html> Last viewed 29 March 2007.

myself, who I was and where I came from, firstly from receiving 'non-identifying information' provided by the adoption agency; then acquiring my original birth certificate, which I found stamped 'not for official use'; and, later, from meeting my biological mother and other relatives. For the first twenty or so years of my life I was Catherine, but later my original birth certificate informed me my name is, *unofficially*, 'Marianne', my biological mother is Ann Mary and my biological father, as named by Ann, is Serge. I discovered that my biological mother had been twenty years old and studying at the University of Sydney, and my biological father, twenty-two at that time, was also studying at the same University, when I was conceived in 1971, in the absence of Serge's parents at their regular game of Bridge.

This kind of 'accelerated identi-kit', experienced with the quality of revelation, precipitates a psychological revolution. The subject adoptee is not suddenly 'cured', suddenly 'unadopted', but must yet work to reintegrate all the new elements that spiral out in all directions from these snippets of information, reevaluating their experience of truth and fiction, recasting truths as lies and silences and silences and gestures as truths. The changeling body must start again, from the beginning, a second 'ado/aptive' life, as they reorganize new relationships, and new concepts of relationships, to society and its members, for a second time begin grafting itself onto and into someone new. If this psychological labour of the subject adoptee is not managed well, then the result will certainly end up somewhere between confusion and psychosis, something managed by many in the Changeling community, such as the writer Robert Dessaix, the actor Ian Smith, who plays Harold⁸⁹ on Neighbours, and Suzanne Chick, the daughter of the writer Charmian Clift, by becoming *artistic* bodies.

My experience as an Australian changeling meant my subjectivity moved from a sense of being cocooned within a kind of suspended scaffolding of discourses designed to control and protect me, an unarticulated and thus *invisible* structure around me that yet acted like real walls to reinforce my 'I' as an isolated cell, and

worked to detach and keep me detached from any depth of involvement with other human beings, existing as an ego dictated by the wishes of others in control of knowledge about myself, as if the adoptive phenomenon were *part* of my psychological body:

we find little to fear from the biologically decontextualised adoptee, whose body, in the absence of any known - or, rather, any legally knowable - origin, can be chopped until it fits a Procrustean fantasy space, the dimensions of which are shaped by other people's self-delusions.⁹⁰

From being defined by 'other people's self-delusions', suspended in a 'fantasy space' dictated by society so I seemed to float in stasis, my psychological body is suddenly switched so that I lose all this definition and find myself adrift as an unmoored amorphous subject, in a panic frantically grabbing at the bits and pieces of truth suddenly allowed to me, as a way of 'hanging on' for dear life.

The adoptive phenomenon in my life changed from an interior isolating scaffolding to an exterior spoken, written, and *publicly discussed* aspect of my adult identity, connecting me to other adoptees and, in increased self-knowledge, to other human beings. Is it any wonder the Australian changeling has had little time to do anything else in its motivation to achieve the most basic sense of self? Is it any wonder the Australian changeling becomes a writer, an actor, an artist,

⁸⁹ Ibid. Smith's adoptive mother's deathbed confession was the catalyst for a mental/emotional breakdown.

to forestall the madness provoked by the absurdity of growing up within the confines of the closed record adoption system, and then being 'freed' from it? Just as they had to accept the absurd nature of being declared 'illegitimate', then 'legitimate', then 'illegitimate' and 'legitimate' again, a bastard, or adopted? 'I am none of these things.

The intellectual study of the adopted body in Australia

During debate on the 1965 Adoption of Children Bill, Mr. Bowen, a member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, stated:

If we could get a society in which the unmarried mother could continue to look after the child, there would be less than half the adoptions there are these days. Society deplores the unmarried mother as an adulteress. Hence she is a victim of society. Many an unmarried mother would be better able to maintain her child than adoptive parents if she had some measure of security. Of course it cannot happen and we recognise it.⁹¹

How could Mr. Bowen have imagined that within a decade that which he thought impossible had become a reality?⁹² How was anyone to know that society would come to decide so quickly that the stigma of being *adopted*

⁹⁰ Leonard op.cit. 116

⁹¹ NSW *Parliamentary Debates* 1965 3021

⁹² Marshall and McDonald op.cit. 34

outweighed the stigma of being illegitimate? Few people in intellectual circles, even in the field of psychoanalysis, have been interested in the study of the adopted body, stigmatised as it has become in a way that adoption itself was designed to avoid:

there still seems to be something which is not being recognised, an intangible something, which permeates even the best of adoptive relationships. Donovan and McIntyre⁹³ pointed out that their finding has been a 'striking consistency of behaviour problems among adoptees whether the family is functional or dysfunctional.' This, to me, indicates that there is something intrinsic in the adoptive relationship which is unique and inevitable, no matter how stable the adopting couple is to begin with. In my quest for this 'intangible something' I found the adoption literature to be lacking, except by implication. No one spelled it out.⁹⁴

This lack of 'spelling out' of the impact of adoptive relationships has not been helped by the lack of intellectual and academic interest in the subject in Australia. This lack of interest is due to antiquated clean slate ideas, stigma and taboos on the one hand and the fact that the adopted body itself has been so silenced in legally and socially imposed secrecy provisions. This is compounded

by it being, after all, a *minority* body, which rapidly became more 'minor' after its peak of generation. Most women in Australian society, even in that time of the greatest number of adoptions, kept their 'illegitimate' babies. In New South Wales, in the period from 1959 to 1976, when numbers of babies being adopted peaked, 60 per cent managed to do so.⁹⁵ Now the changeling bodies of Australia, born under secrecy provisions and then empowered with access to their true identities, are a 'closed-book' demographic. In maturity now, the changeling adoptees have to tell their stories so that they will be a 'remembered' demographic within Australian history.

The lack of intellectual and academic interest in the changeling body in more recent years has been encouraged by the denial, even by adopted people themselves, that the changeling body has been a disadvantaged, or psychologically *disabled*, body. The effects of the Poor Law Amendment in England were still being felt in Australia over a century later and, by adopting out a child, birth parents were led to believe they had fulfilled their responsibility toward their offspring. By placing it in the proper legal channels that guaranteed it a home they were exempted from all financial and emotional responsibility for their 'mistake' and sufficiently punished for it. So a patriarchal state made

⁹³ D. Donovan and D. McIntyre *Healing the Hurt Child* New York W W Norton and Company 1990

⁹⁴ Verrier op.cit. 3

⁹⁵ WC Langshaw 'National Adoption Standards, Policy and Law' in *Australian Social Work* vol 29 no 4 1976 49. See also J. Kraus 'Historical Context of the Adoption "Crisis" in New South Wales' in *Australian Social Work* vol.29 No.4 1976.

'children' out of its own adult citizens, labeling them wayward, chastising and then helping them to 'rectify' their mistake against patriarchal law and religious mores. But if the little package is damaged in the delivery, as some claim, who is responsible? Certainly there have been no offers of compensation from governments for those born into the closed-records adoption system. The adoptive family may pay for some of that damage when confronted with any dysfunctional behaviours in the adopted child, and the birth parents may pay for it in terms of loss, regret or grief, but there is no doubt the primary payee is the subject adoptee.

What is experienced before conscious perception in the subject may have repercussions in the development of its consciousness and the issues of the adult parties, although seemingly resolved on a legal and social level, may be internalized in the psychological body of the child, enmeshing in a complication of identity forming under the effects of the new adoptive environment. It is a case of the problems of adults and society being internalized in the body of an infant, resolving the problems on an exterior level, but depositing them into the body of a baby. The adopted body may not always be a *stolen* body but in every way, as must be acknowledged, it has experienced the stealing of a particular lifetime.

For the adoptee, in 'the place of real answers to the many questions, myths are created. The most pervasive of these is the myth of the "chosen child."'⁹⁶ The idea, so often promulgated to the adopted child, that the adoptive family 'wanted' them in particular is a myth easily recognized by the adopted child who soon realises the adopted family pretty much got what was given to them - a baby, *any* baby. A life of love goes far to compensate for this knowledge but to be adopted is to know one was unwanted or to be in denial about it. The adult 'adopted' subject must accept the fact that she was unwanted by her own kin, even if only because society forced her to be unwanted. The adopted child might come to see herself, in the absence of being 'chosen', as a 'living mistake', or a 'walking abortion', in the mind of its biological family.

Abortion has still not been legalised in Australia but common law rulings, such as the Menhennit ruling in Victoria, under which abortions are allowable in circumstances where the mother's physical or mental health is deemed by a doctor to be endangered, provide the 'loophole' for most current abortion practices. It was not, however, a legal solution for unwanted pregnancies in Australia before the 1960s and 70s. At Federation in 1901, abortion remained governed by the British Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 which made it illegal under any circumstances but judicial interpretations changed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, so that abortions were not subject to criminal prosecution

⁹⁶ Arthur D Sorosky, Annette Baran, Reuben Pannor, *The Adoption Triangle: The Effects of the Sealed*

if necessary to preserve the mother's health. In New South Wales this occurred in the 'Levine ruling' of 1971 and, along with changes to abortion laws, as well as the advent of the widespread availability of the reliable contraceptive pill, it meant that having sexual intercourse did not have to lead to likely compulsory maternity, a situation described by Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1971), as the most oppressive thing in women's lives.⁹⁷ Two years after the Levine ruling in 1973, the supporting pension was granted to single mothers. The changeling body was mostly created before the changes in abortion law, the widespread availability of the pill and the acquirement of single mothers' pensions, and lived through the dismantling of the secrecy provisions in the 1990s. I was born at the peak of adoption placements for Australian children, the year after the changes to abortion laws, and the year before the introduction of the pension for single mothers, and was in my twenties at the removal of secrecy provisions. As a demographic the rise and demise of the changeling body is directly defined by legislative changes in Australian society and they are, therefore, highly *malleable* bodies especially subject to the vagaries of changes in law and society.

Closed-record adoptive bodies are also *disabled* bodies because they must either deny the truth about their status or protest against the contract to which they are

Record on Adoptees, Birth Parents, and Adoptive Parents Anchor Press/Doubleday New York 1978 87

bound for life but to which they were never signatories, and that is to protest against *everyone*, reconsigning the adopted back into life as an outcast. To be in a position where one must accept the fictions of society, or be forced to offend, might be seen as a disadvantageous position, even if the effects of birth-trauma are denied.

Among students of culture, the body is an immensely fashionable topic, but it is usually the erotic body, not the famished one. There is a keen interest in coupling bodies, but not in labouring ones... This trivialization of sexuality is especially ironic. For one of the towering achievements of cultural theory has been to establish gender and sexuality as legitimate objects of study, as well as matters of insistent political importance.⁹⁸

The study of bodies with disabilities is not particularly fashionable and this is exacerbated in the case of the adopted body because their psychological disabilities can remain unseen, while the practical advantages of being looked after financially by the adoptive family are so visible. If the adoptee complains about any difficulty it is easy to see how they might be perceived as 'ungrateful' for not recognizing that if they had not been adopted, they would have been worse off. But if the disadvantages of being adopted can openly be recognized

⁹⁷ Carole Ferrier 'So, What Is To Be Done About the Family?' http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-September-2006/ferrier.html#_edn4 footnote 2 Last viewed 10 March 2007.

and discussed the pressure is off, so to speak, for the subject adoptee who might then be free to work on the *advantages* of being an adopted body. The study of the adopted body is the study of an impaired and labouring body as well as of a political subject that is situated at an explosive juncture of discourses of gender, sexuality, reproductive technologies, class, culture, religion, race, identity and nation. This topic can tell us so much about power, is a highly-charged emotional issue, and one ripe for intellectual consideration.

While the number of locally born children surrendered for adoption is at an all-time low, there remains a strong demand, even with advances in IVF and the improved acceptance of families without children. This demand is more and more being met by adoptions of children from overseas countries, mostly third world. Having reached a certain level of affluence where low income earners can afford to terminate unwanted pregnancies or to feed the children that they do want, Australian citizens now look internationally for 'unwanted' children. Like adoptions made under secrecy provisions before the 1980s it is by now a well entrenched practice that remains controversial, especially as the children in third world orphanages might be abandoned there because of poverty and not the death of the parents. However, the current unprecedented world wide movement of peoples from developing countries due to natural calamity, armed conflict, deprivation and poverty creates a market for the adoption of children.

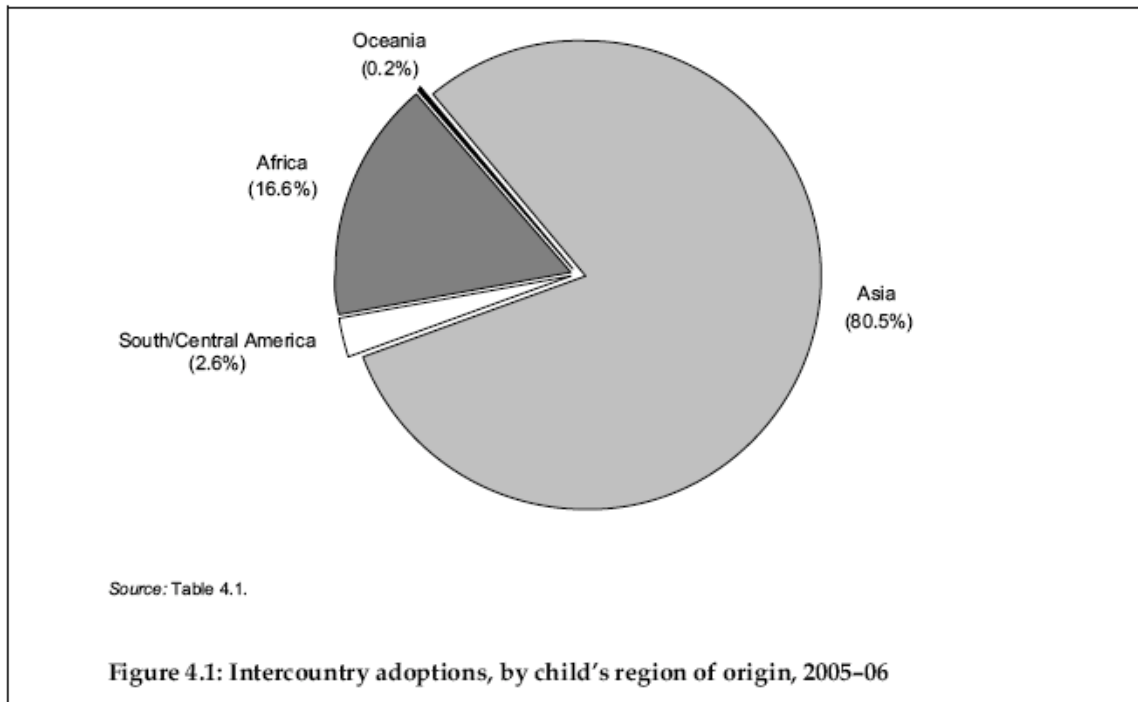
⁹⁸ Terry Eagleton *After Theory* Basic Books Perseus Books Group New York 2003 2-3

Australian families adopt third world babies to save them from poverty while the main structure of global inequality that renders these children 'unwanted' remains entrenched. If the effects of global warming are going to have more and more impact on the orphaning of children Australian policy will have to revisit its concept of the 'rights of the child', for the 'bright light of social enquiry has not shone quite so piercingly on this process.'⁹⁹

The recent closures of intercountry adoption programs with Kakinada in India, Cambodia and Guatemala, are examples of the outcomes of proven corruption in those programs in which children were shown to have been stolen from their families or removed under false pretences and then sold into the intercountry adoption market, even though it may have appeared that the processes were properly sanctioned. The recent suspension of the programs with Romania and Belarus demonstrate that even apparently properly established programs may be affected by allegations of corruption and mismanagement... The tragedy of the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 led to the displacement of thousands of children in the countries affected. The vulnerability of these children to international exploitation led the governments of Sri Lanka and Indonesia to declare in the first days after the tsunami that these children would not be available for intercountry adoption and indeed Indonesia placed a ban

⁹⁹ Marshall and McDonald op.cit. 15-6

on the movement of children offshore in the period immediately after the tsunami.¹⁰⁰



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Nor does the public debate regarding adoption by same-sex couples ever address the basic ethical premises of adoption in the moves to create equal rights for gay and lesbian couples. The absence of discussion about the ethics of adoption is further shrouded and forestalled by the coating of glamour adoption is given in the media, with such high-profile adoptions as those in Hollywood, by Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise and, earlier, Mia Farrow (in whose case the emotional dangers of adoption were so blatantly enacted in the absconding of

¹⁰⁰ *Inquiry into adoption of children from overseas* Submission by the Government of South Australia to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services September 2005 <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/adoption/report.htm> Last viewed March 27 2007.

one of her inter-country adopted daughters with her husband Woody Allen).¹⁰² Madonna has supposedly had conflict with Angelina Jolie, and been asked for advice from Kylie Minogue, about the adopting of third world children, and Nicole Kidman already has two. When these adoptees reach adulthood they will be fascinating people whose sense of isolation will have to be integrated with, perhaps, a public celebrity status.

In contrast to the media's trivialization of adoption (as also reflected in fictional portrayals of adoption in television soap operas) is the very real need of some children to be adopted out of threatening environments, when drug-addiction and mental illness create parents ill-equipped to deal with the rigours of child-raising. Traditionally it was not, however, these children that were adopted out. It would seem that it is precisely because the issues surrounding adoption are so ethically controversial, thanks to their weighty emotional power, that such issues, so in need of consideration, remain so undiscussed. It is this emotional weight, and the consequent high potential for emotional harm, that is, perhaps, the main factor in discouraging the intellectual, and accompanying ethical, study of the adopted body. Nobody wishes to open Pandora's Box.

¹⁰¹ AIHW op.cit. 12

¹⁰² The phrase 'rainbow family' appears to have been coined by the high profile American-Parisian performer Josephine Baker who adopted twelve multi-ethnic orphans during the 1950s whom she called her 'rainbow tribe' http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephine_Baker Last viewed 29 March 2007.

As late as the era in which I was born and adopted the idea of passing unwanted children onto the next of kin was considered 'fraught with dangerous possibilities.'¹⁰³ At the first adoption conference in 1976, a group of men, professors and judges, discussed the dubious merit of relatives adopting:

The future discord between the child's mother and her parents, of confusion, emotional disturbance and a conflict of loyalty in the child is so real that I cannot feel satisfied that it would promote the child's welfare.¹⁰⁴

This raises the question as to why it was not considered that the child's confusion, emotional disturbance and conflict of loyalties might be greater if placed amongst strangers. 'There is no evidence to suggest that a child would be damaged by knowing her natural mother, but plenty which suggests that the opposite is true.'¹⁰⁵ 'In the Cook Islands where children were still adopted into the local extended family group, research has shown that absolutely no identity crisis is experienced by these children at all.'¹⁰⁶ Far more 'dangerous possibilities' existed for the child adopted under secrecy provisions into the houses of strangers, if only in the lack of knowledge of biological kin increasing the risk of 'accidental' incest. Added to this is the risk of incest from within an

¹⁰³ David Hambly 'Balancing the Interests of the Child, Parents and Adopters: A Review of Australian Adoption Law' *Proceedings of the First Australian Conference on Adoption Sydney 1976*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁵ Shawyer *op.cit.* 48-9

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* 43

adoptive family, who may be unrestrained by notions of genetic relation, and, for the changeling adoptee, the newly reported risk of incestuous sentiments in reunions, characterized experientially by a romantic search for attachment followed by a recognition of oneself in the other.¹⁰⁷ Psychoanalytically speaking, the changeling body might have to negotiate sexual maturity under an unconscious, but three-fold, incest anxiety.

Seven years before I was born, in 1965, the New South Wales Adoption of Children Act gave 'high priority' to 'the strengthening of legislative control over the circumstances of the placement of children'¹⁰⁸ in an attempt to eliminate privately arranged placements. This was not easily accomplished and the impact was perhaps most acutely felt in New South Wales.¹⁰⁹ In the 1965 Act it suddenly became required that 'no child could be placed unless the parents had been independently approved by the Department as well as by the agency'.¹¹⁰ As 'the major effort had to be directed to the assessment and approval of parents...hospital nurseries filled up with babies awaiting placement.'¹¹¹ It would be most useful to have a survey of the relationship between the length of the 'holding' period, during which one presumes the baby, when not unattended, was cared for by a number of different people, all of whom would

¹⁰⁷ M. Greenberg and R. Littlewood 'Post-adoption incest and phenotypic matching: experience, personal meanings and biosocial implications' *British Journal of Medical Psychology* Leicester 1995 vol.68 (1) 29-44

¹⁰⁸ New South Wales *Parliamentary Debates* 1965 2229

¹⁰⁹ Marshall and McDonald op.cit. 36

soon also permanently withdraw from the adopted body, and its impact upon the subject adoptee. It would also be helpful for subject adoptees to be provided with information as to how long they were held in interim, under what conditions and by whom, as well as what regulatory practices were in place to safeguard the babies during this vital period.

St. Anthony's Home for Unmarried Mothers appears to have been my new home for about three weeks, during which I can only suppose I was attended to by a variety of guardians and probably kept in a large room full of other grieving babies. In my quest to construct the story of my origin, a story most people take for granted, I have been informed quite abruptly over the phone that no records of the babies' progress were kept and 'hung up' on. I have yet to take this line of enquiry any further, this attempt to discover how I was cared for, and by whom, because of such discouragement.

People who are not adopted spend money and time trekking the world in search of their ancestral heritage, usually when they are starting to think of death, and sometimes a lot earlier than that. Family trees are pored over, endless journeys made by people who *know* who they are but still cannot resist the temptation to climb back even further into the ancestral branches. We don't think that's strange or unhealthy, and yet adopted

¹¹⁰ Ibid 36

people, clutching at nothing more than a handful of what would be to us insignificant snippets of information mount the same intensive and seemingly hopeless search, and are treated unsympathetically, even cruelly for their efforts. They are simply people who want basic information about themselves that the rest of us take for granted.¹¹²

Kept by strangers for a number of weeks in an institution, presumably run by members of the clergy, I have no idea of the conditions in which I was tended to, who I was tended by, if I was well-cared for and given affection, or if any abuse occurred. As an adolescent with certain emotional, psychological and physical attributes I was, and still am, left to wonder if these were the effects of simply being removed from my biological mother's body, or this period immediately afterwards, or a combination of both. It has never seemed to occur to any member of my adoptive or biological families, nor members of the wider public, that I might have a right or need to know what happened during this period.

The levels of blind trust in such institutions exhibited by the generations that adopted out children is frightening to later generations, in view of the kinds of abuses we now know occurred in some institutions in Australian society. Sexual abuse in religious orders, institutionalised bullying in school systems, racial discrimination amongst the police, and the most recently publicised 'culture of

¹¹¹ Ibid 36

abuse' within the immigration detention systems, are cases in point. Whatever the cause of the symptoms read upon my adopted mind and body, in my adopted 'life', this is a time about which I was and still am kept entirely in the dark, a gap in my life in which anything and nothing may have occurred, when strangers I, my adoptive and my biological parents do not know, had complete possession of me and all information regarding me. It is a piece I am missing, and yet another pound of flesh withheld in the construction of my identity. Writing the adopted body becomes a 'fleshing out' of a body that lacks identity, and a balm to cover the knowledge that for three weeks in my earliest infancy neither I, nor anyone I know, knew what was happening to me, but had a level of blind trust invested in institutions that I do not share.

One of the most valuable outcomes of the contemporary opening up of adoption has been that Australian adoptees are now increasingly writing about adoption. Not only are they deepening our understanding by telling their stories, but by reflecting on their own and others' experiences they are also creating a variety of frameworks for making sense of what it means to be adopted, and of the impact that adoption has on lives.¹¹³

In any case, no matter what length of time an infant is held in interim after birth, its birthmother's body is dead to it. In the first few weeks of his or her life the

¹¹² Shawyer op.cit. 4

subject adoptee experiences 'the very worst that can happen to a developing child: separation, loss, grief, mourning.'¹¹⁴ When the bastard infant acquires language it may, indeed, have something to say about adoption.

¹¹³ Marshall and McDonald op.cit. 205

¹¹⁴ Betty Jean Lifton *Twice Born; Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter* Penguin Melbourne 1977 152

CHAPTER 2

The Metaphor of the Adopted Body or The Australian Changeling

Ideally the wicked changeling would be gone when the mother awoke, and in her place would be the good, sweet, obedient child, all curly haired and dimpled like Shirley Temple. Of course, the real child was never returned, for adopted children are permanent changelings ...¹¹⁵

If the infant body is a discursive construct, a 'conceptual category produced by specific discursive operations that can be analysed and described',¹¹⁶ then how much more so, and how much more a recent construction, is the closed-record adopted body? How can one theorise this adopted body, and where does one seek its articulation, for the infant, from the Latin *infans* 'not speaking', is defined by her or his inability to speak.¹¹⁷ And so the 'adopted infant', formerly 'fillius nullis', 'nobody's child', is defined not only by her or his inability to speak but also by the absence of his or her birth parents to speak *for* him or her. As infants the closed-record adoptees are defined by certain adult experiences, undergoing 'premature ego development' and negotiating emotional and psychological issues normally experienced by adults, and yet, after growing up into speaking

¹¹⁵ Ibid 16

¹¹⁶ Anthony Purdy 'Introduction' ed. *Literature and the Body* Editions Rodopi BV Amsterdam 1992 5

and writing subjects, as adults they continue to be defined as infant bodies, without knowledge and without voice, as Lifton famously declared, 'the adopted child can never grow up. Who has ever heard of an "adopted adult"?'¹¹⁸

Even after the disintegration of the closed-record system in Australia, when some adoptees choose to go through the 'reunion' process, they discover that their own birth parents, informed at the time of adoption that they would never see their children again, have retained a perception of them as infantile. The infant body 'is not an *expressive* body but rather one which is produced by adults through representations; that is, it is not written and disseminated by the child but by the adult.'¹¹⁹ So it is even more vital that the adopted body *as adult*, participate in the construction of its similarities and differences to the biologically grounded infant body, in a way that it has been prevented from doing in the past by the secrecy imposed by taboo and the legal provisions of the closed-record system.

The production/construction/birth of the adopted body

As early as Locke and Rousseau the child was conceived as a 'natural' body situated 'outside of' or 'prior to' the social and the cultural¹²⁰ but the invention of childhood has been situated in the early Renaissance, a product of the same

¹¹⁷ Jo-Ann Wallace 'Subjects of Discipline: The Child's Body in the Mid-Victorian School Novel' in Purdy, *op.cit.* 59-76 73

¹¹⁸ Lifton *op.cit.* 3

¹¹⁹ Wallace *op.cit.* 73

¹²⁰ Purdy *op.cit.* 7

classifying urge described by Foucault in *Les Mots et les Choses*.¹²¹ Historicising the adopted body, we discover its production, similarly, to be an ‘invented’ one:

Closed-record adoption needs to be historicised as a relatively recent way of dealing with the very old problem of bastardry and illegitimacy. If, as Foucault claims, the modern asylum grew up in tandem with the success of Cartesian rationalism – that is to say, if the banishment of irrationality from philosophy was mirrored in the social management and institutionalisation of mental illness – then the modern adoption agency grew up in tandem with what Foucault calls ‘bio-power’, or a bureaucratised power over life designed to optimise the capabilities of the body, simultaneously enhancing its economic utility while ensuring its political docility.¹²²

The social historian Phillipe Ariés argued that the rise of the bourgeoisie and the privatisation of the family are important factors in the evolution of the discourse of childhood, connecting the emergence and development of the concept of childhood with that of the modern family.¹²³ In England, the formation of the middle class family coincide with that of the industrial working class, drawn

¹²¹ Michel Foucault *The Order of Things; an archaeology of the human sciences* transl. *Les Mots et les Choses* Tavistock Publications London 1970

¹²² Garry Leonard ‘The Immaculate Deception; Adoption in Albee’s Plays’ in *Imagining Adoption; Essays on Literature and Culture* ed. Marianne Novy University of Michigan Press Michigan 2001 121

from a peasantry who were used to living in extended families in the countryside.¹²⁴ In lieu of a labour source that must necessarily dwindle, the rise of the nuclear family ensured the reproduction of this labour force:¹²⁵

The 'nuclear family' as an ideal and as an actual institution developed in Europe around the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was evolved by the mercantile middle class as an institution appropriate to its social and economic needs and aspirations. The 'nuclear family' is the creation of the bourgeoisie and its extension to other classes in society is a measure of the control of that class over the means of production and social relations; we can say that acceptance of the ideal of the 'nuclear family' by other groups is an indication of their perception of inclusion within the capitalist system.¹²⁶

Ann Summers in her 1975 study of the colonisation of women in Australia,¹²⁷ paraphrased Ariés and Eli Zaretsky, arguing that two ideas that were crucial in the evolution of this middle-class family were the development of privacy and the concept of childhood:

¹²³ Philippe Ariés *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* transl. Robert Baldick, Vintage Books New York 1962

¹²⁴ Ann Summers *Damned Whores and God's Police; The Colonisation of Women in Australia* Allen Lane London 1975 168

¹²⁵ Sandra Bloodworth 'The Poverty of Patriarchy Theory' *Socialist Review International Socialist Organisation* Melbourne Winter 1990 Issue 2 5-33 10

¹²⁶ Summers op.cit. 166

¹²⁷ Ibid

Previously sociability was literally enforced on people: home and work were not always physically separated, married couples and their children coexisted within larger households and there was little physical separation of houses into rooms with particular functions ...

With the middle-class family came the desire to separate family groups from the wider society and to enshrine the nuclear group in its own private world. Thus it was seen as necessary that each family have its own house and land, that rooms be allocated for specific purposes, that they be separated from each other by corridors, that special quarters be built to accommodate servants. This retreat to privacy was motivated by economic considerations: a market in land and housing was quickly developed and became the source of great wealth to those who specialised in property. With the development of middle-class family private property - as distinct from feudal estates owned by a few noble families and common land held by whole villages or communities - came the desire to accumulate property, as a source of speculation and added wealth, to signify the owner's affluence to the world at large.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Ibid 166-7 Summers credits her description to Philippe Ariés *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* transl. Robert Baldick, New York Vintage Books 1962 and to Eli Zaretsky 'Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life' Part 1 *Socialist Revolution* January-April 1973 69-125

The notion of childhood as a period of existence separated from the adult world 'entailed the development of new institutions to accommodate young people during their period of transition from infancy to adulthood. Principal among these were the "school" and "the family"'.¹²⁹ 'Family and school together removed the child from adult society'¹³⁰ when previously there had been 'no clear separation between childhood and adulthood and therefore no concept of childhood as a preparatory period for adult life in which young people are seen as inferior and denied many of the civil rights which adults possess. Children were regarded merely as small people.'¹³¹ A necessary accompaniment to the concept of childhood was the idea that each child was unique and irreplaceable, and that there should be equality between children and the mourning of infant deaths mourned more, rather than accepted as part of the scheme of things.¹³² The child was now seen by the middle class as a helpless and malleable creature and 'the family ceased to be simply an institution for the transmission of a name and an estate - it assumed a moral and spiritual function, it moulded bodies and souls.'¹³³

Necessarily, however, this concept of the 'malleability' of the infant in the modern world paved the way for the production of the closed-record adoptee,

¹²⁹ Ibid 166

¹³⁰ Ariés op.cit. 413

¹³¹ Summers op.cit. 166-7

¹³² Ibid

¹³³ Ariés op.cit. 412

whose bodies were randomly 'moved about' and whose identities were removed, replaced and shaped. Illegitimate children were a problematical by-product in this 'moral and spiritual' system of family, born outside capitalism's oedipalised territories (Family, Church, School, Nation, Party).¹³⁴ The discourse of the bastard body posed a new problem for the nuclear family and was an undeniable symbol of resistance against state control over bodies and their reproduction.

From the sixteenth through the nineteenth century, the bastard had to bear some sort of stigma; otherwise the mother would be insufficiently punished, and the legal system, based on patriarchal blood relations, would be seriously undermined. So the bastard in history has a paradoxical relationship to the law - clearly outside of it and yet, at the same time, helping to maintain its hegemonic force by exemplifying the unenviable fate of defying the law of God and humanity in favour of anarchic passion. As the bastard Edmund in *King Lear* put it, "thou, nature, art my goddess. To thy law/ My services are bound" (1.2.1-2). Born outside the rules, bastards are feared because they seem in a position to make their own rules in defiance of the accepted order. Indeed, they have no choice but to do so, since their connection to the accepted order is highly conditional. The paradox, then, is that illegitimacy must be taken

¹³⁴ Mark Seem 'Introduction' to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri *Anti-Oedipus; capitalism and*

account of and must be subject to socially sanctioned rules, but not in a way that legitimates it.¹³⁵

Under the capitalist system, subjects born outside of the strict definition of the 'morally respectable family' continued to be produced and so these subjects became necessarily defined by the nuclear family as 'unwanted'. The presumed 'wanting' of children by childless couples, who likewise were marked by stigma, was also a product of the idea that having no children at all fell short of the nuclear ideal. The illegitimate body thus becomes an 'unwanted body' and thence a 'wanted' body by virtue of becoming an 'adopted' body under capitalism, constructed out of the pressures to conform to the ideal of the nuclear family, and defined by its malleability and mobility: out of one non-nuclear family and into another to form two 'complete' nuclear families, the tidy transaction instituted by the State.

What was needed, therefore – understood as early as the Renaissance, but never institutionalized – was some process for reintegrating bastards into the legitimate community as a way of containing their subversive power. The trick would be getting the bastard to accept the very laws that persecuted him. In this way, 'society would force the bastard to accept his role as victim. A figure thus brainwashed would consolidate the

legitimate hegemony. Texts which speak out in favour of illegitimacy do so with a consciousness of how useful it could be and with the imposition of clear conditions so as to channel its energy in support of the status quo.¹³⁶ Certainly Gloucester can be seen, by the careless way he humiliates Edmund in front of Kent, as someone who has complete confidence that the arrangements he has made for Edmund will contain him. But as Edgar neatly summarises at the end of *King Lear* for benefit of the dying Edmund, 'the dark and vicious place where thee he got / Cost him his eyes' (5.3.162-63).

The problem with Edmund is that, while he may be excluded from the legal order by a law that recognizes him only to the extent it delegitimizes him, nonetheless his knowledge of his situation emboldens him to take what he sees in defiance of a law that says, technically, he does not exist. But what if a bastard had no knowledge of his biological origins? What if the people who raised him were, from a biological point of view, strangers; what if they had no knowledge of his origins as well; what if his biological relatives likewise had no knowledge of his present whereabouts; and what if all this information were kept somewhere under

¹³⁵ Leonard op.cit. 112

¹³⁶ Alison Findlay *Illegitimate Power; Bastards in Renaissance Drama* Manchester University Press Manchester 41

lock and key, with all three parties legally barred from having access?

Then he would have the process of the closed-record adoption system...¹³⁷

The nuclear family as a recent construct can be read as another kind of 'institution' similar to other randomized classifying groups such as boarding schools, prisons and monasteries. The schools shut up a 'childhood' within an increasingly severe disciplinary system, which culminated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the total clausturation of the boarding-school.¹³⁸ George Bernard Shaw once argued a case against prisons, as the puritans once argued against monasteries:

both are unnatural communities, where people of a similar disposition are artificially banded together in an over-intense fashion, rather than being distributed evenly across a community on which they can act, or which can act upon them.¹³⁹

Foucault has noted that the process of schooling can 'be seen as one of 'disciplining,' with the school eventually taking its place beside the asylum and the prison in the social production of "docile bodies" at which the nineteenth

¹³⁷ Leonard op.cit. 113

¹³⁸ Ariés op.cit. 413

¹³⁹ Declan Kiberd *Inventing Ireland The Literature of the Modern Nation* Vintage London 1995 436

century was so adept'.¹⁴⁰ The rigid cloistering and isolation of the nuclear family can also be read as a kind of 'unnatural community', that has produced its own set of problems within the home, lacking the safeguard of being mediated by a close surrounding community, either through action or example. In more communal family structures, if a family member has too many children to care for, the child is passed quite naturally to a next of kin yet can still be a constant presence in the lives of her or his own parents. The isolation of the nuclear family has allowed the more perverse practice of sending children as far away as is humanly possible from their origins (by hiding their true identities from them or physically removing them to the other side of the world) to be accepted as some kind of normal, unquestionable and welcome practice.

Today the idea that babies may be abandoned 'ethically' to the state for adopting out without any access to their true identities has had a resurgence in popularity in the Western world. A proliferation of governments have suddenly reintroduced 'baby hatches' after a century of their being out of use, providing abandoning parents with anonymity and the abandoned baby with a safe and secure environment in which to be 'found', but without an identity. This was common in mediaeval times and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the baby hatch was known as a foundling wheel. It gradually faded out of use in the late 1800s, due to the high rate of abandonments, lack of funds and

¹⁴⁰ Purdy op.cit. 7

continued infant deaths, to be replaced by orphanages, supported in Ireland and England by the Poor Tax.¹⁴¹ As with the legalisation of adoption, ostensibly the reintroduction of baby hatches has been an attempt to introduce protective measures for infants who are otherwise at risk of being abandoned and dying of exposure, but it also encourages the idea that babies may be, ethically and legally, anonymously abandoned to the State, without its accompanying identity. This is a tacit acceptance of the notion of identity as entirely a construct that has no need to have any relation with genealogical ties.

Re-introduced in 1996, since 2000 baby hatches have come into use in many countries, notably in Germany where there are around 80 hatches today. In Germany, by 2005, 22 babies had been left in baby hatches in Hamburg, seven of whom had later been retrieved by their mothers. They are cared for for eight weeks during which time the mother can return and claim her child without any legal repercussions. If this does not happen the child is put up for adoption.¹⁴²

The production/construction/birth of the adopted body in Australia

The reintroduction of baby hatches can be seen as a reaction to some very public instances of child abandonment: the first modern baby hatch in Germany was installed in the Altona district of Hamburg on the 11 April 2000, after a series of

¹⁴¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby_hatch Last viewed 23 February 2007.

¹⁴² Ibid

cases in 1999 where children were abandoned and found dead from exposure.¹⁴³

Like this sudden legal development, the legalisation of adoption in Australia can be read as a reaction to a number of high-profile cases of abandoned and neglected children.

...legal adoption has to be seen in the context of what happened to unmarried women and their children *before* this option was available.

From the first days of settlement in Australia until the early legislation on adoption, poverty, shame and disgrace led some women to desperate measures, including infanticide, and to use of the infamous baby farmers.

There were very few avenues of assistance for women, and adoption, as it developed, provided a safer, more humane and socially responsible solution to 'the problem' than the other dreadful alternatives.¹⁴⁴

The term 'baby-farm' 'seems first to have been used in 1884 by Sir Arthur Renwick to describe an establishment run by a midwife, Mary Ann B, in the Field of Mars Common near the Lane Cove River in Sydney.'¹⁴⁵ Mary Ann B 'employed impecunious unmarried mothers on the property as wet-nurses to babies whom B was paid to take into care. Although uncertified deaths on the

¹⁴³ Ibid

¹⁴⁴ Marshall and McDonald op.cit. 2

¹⁴⁵ Ibid 21

property resulted in inquests, none led to prosecution.¹⁴⁶ Many children in baby farms, usually illegitimate, died in circumstances that led to the belief that they had been murdered or neglected, despite bringing no great profit to the farmers themselves. Around the same time as Mary Ann B, some other high-profile cases did lead to convictions and John and Sarah Makin came to police attention, in October 1892, when workmen uncovered the bodies of two children at 25 Burren Street, Macdonaldtown. Four more bodies were later found and when Police dug in eleven backyards where they had lived since 1890, they recovered thirteen bodies in all.¹⁴⁷ They were tried for an infant murder of 1892 at 109 George Street, Redfern, and John Makin was hanged on 15 August 1893 at Sydney gaol. Sarah Makin's sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life, which she served at Bathurst and in Sydney.¹⁴⁸ Frances Lydia Alice Knorr, another baby farmer, was one of only five women hanged in Victoria following the discovery of the corpses of three infants in premises at Brunswick, Melbourne, that she had occupied. She was convicted in Sydney on 1 December 1893, despite a petition from the 'Women of Victoria', who prayed that 'the killing of any woman by any body of men does not accord with the moral sense of the community', and was

¹⁴⁶ Judith A Allen *Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women since 1880* Oxford University Press Melbourne 1991 321

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/AS10317b.htm?hilite=Makin> Last viewed 28 February 2007.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 'Her daughters petitioned for early release in 1907 and again in 1911. On 29 April that year she was discharged from the State Reformatory for Women at Long Bay to the care of her daughter Florence on the grounds of her great age and declining health. She nursed her eldest daughter through a fatal illness, then lived with her son-in-law. 'Mother Makin', as she had been known during her notoriety, died on 13 September 1918 at Marrickville and was buried with Anglican rites in Rookwood cemetery. Three sons and four daughters survived her.'

hanged at Pentridge gaol on 15 January 1894.¹⁴⁹ 'In her own hand, but not her idiom, she left a letter advising the premier how better to regulate baby-farming so as to protect infant life.'¹⁵⁰

The 1873/74 Royal Commission into Public Charities in New South Wales found the barracks system, the alternative to baby farming 'where large numbers of children were cared for together and subjected to a highly disciplined routine', to be to be failing'.¹⁵¹ As a response, the State Children's Relief Act of 1881 established the 'boarding out system' in its place and in all states 'some form of boarding out provided the pathway to later adoption legislation.'¹⁵² In New South Wales the first orders of adoption, 28 in number, were made by 1924 and by 1925 the secretary of the New South Wales Child Welfare Department was able to report that adopting parents 'rich and poor alike are vying with each other to open their hearts and homes to these derelict children.'¹⁵³ By 1939 orders of adoption had grown to 11 035 and 'thus within 15 years adoption was well established as a practice which attracted substantial public acceptance.'¹⁵⁴

Considering the construction of the infant body as a discursive construction expressed through the discourses of adults, the original construction of the

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/AS10272b.htm?hilite=Knorr> Last viewed 28 February 2007.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Marshall and McDonald op.cit. 23

¹⁵² Ibid 24

¹⁵³ NSW Child Welfare Department *Annual Report 1921-25* 5

adopted body in Australia can certainly be read as a very humane expression of the impulses of compassion and responsibility but there is a definite relationship between the promotion of adoption by the State and its economic concerns. The 1873/74 Royal Commission into Public Charities in New South Wales recommended family care 'by foster parents who were paid an allowance by the state' as the desirable alternative to the so-called 'barracks system'¹⁵⁵ in part because of the 'resulting financial savings to the state, strongly recommended this form of care'.¹⁵⁶ It was, 'despite the lack of formal evaluation, quickly to gain almost unquestioning support.'¹⁵⁷ Governments were quick to recognise the very considerable savings to their budgets which adoption represented; 'During the 1928 Victorian debate it was pointed out, quoting a report from New South Wales, that the 800 adoptions already completed in that state would result in a saving over fourteen years of 300 000 pounds.'¹⁵⁸

In Australia in the 1920s there had been some resistance to this seeming trivialization of the importance of blood ties and even by the 1960s this 'breaking of the blood tie creating instead a new legal bond required a conceptual and practical leap'.¹⁵⁹ This 'leap' was achieved, however, swiftly and relatively silently, made possible because of the manipulability of the nuclear family,

¹⁵⁴ Marshall and McDonald op.cit.30

¹⁵⁵ Ibid 23

¹⁵⁶ Ibid 24

¹⁵⁷ Ibid 24

¹⁵⁸ Ibid 30

isolated as it was in its private world. The 'breaking of the blood tie creating instead a new legal bond' became a kind of legal magic that bewitched the Australian public. The rapid rise in the popularity of adoption and the introduction of what seem to be, from a modern perspective, bizarre secrecy provisions tells a story that seems a far cry from that of rescuing infants from neglect, abuse and/or death. Adoption may well have been an attempt to deflect the worst excesses of the trade and exploitation of children in Australia but its remarkable rise and rapid plunge in use during the 50s, 60s and 70s was not about saving children from death or a fate worse than it. Instead it was a direct product of the rise of capitalism and the nuclear family and its related moral codes. In financial terms, interdependent with these structures and codes, it also arose as a consequence of the minimal income support provided by the state in the period between the wars; 'single mothers were increasingly less able to care for their own children.'¹⁶⁰

In Australia, the nuclear family, 'both as an ideal and as a partially-accomplished reality for large numbers of people, is of comparatively recent origin'¹⁶¹ and 'developed into an idealised institution less than two hundred years ago - since the white colonisation of this country', evolving in order to fulfill 'fairly

¹⁵⁹ Ibid 19

¹⁶⁰ Renate Howe and Shurlee Swain 'Single Mothers and the State 1912-1942' in *Journal of Australian Studies (Women and the State; a special edition)* 1993 31-46 34

¹⁶¹ Summers op.cit. 165

discernible social and economic functions.¹⁶² Summers points out there is a 'contradiction between the existence of "the family" as a *social* institution – serving definite prescribed social functions – and people's perception of it as a *private* world.'¹⁶³

The almost simultaneous development of the 'nuclear family' and of capitalism was not merely fortuitous: this new family form obviously had advantages for the newly evolving economic system and the two have developed an interdependent relationship ... This interdependence had to be fostered – it was not a spontaneous occurrence. Many women resisted being forced into full-time domesticity, just as many men resented being forced to support a number of dependent and unproductive family members. But gradually 'the family' assumed its own imperatives and rationales which encouraged people to view it as a 'natural' institution. The very existence of a closed, private and, as knowledge of birth control spread, smallish family group generated notions of affection and responsibility amongst its members. The male worker gradually incurred the notion that he was responsible for supporting his family (and this was legally enforced late in the nineteenth century) and he was thus provided with a powerful motive to be a diligent and reliable labourer. Schooling was gradually made compulsory and education became a vehicle for

¹⁶² Ibid 165

inculcating masses of young children with the values required by the capitalist system. These values included the ideology of 'the family' as well as submission to authority and were established by the very structure of the education system as well as by the content of the syllabus.¹⁶⁴

Just as the sexism of English society was 'brought to Australia and then amplified by penal conditions',¹⁶⁵ so the 'campaign for the family was even more strident.'¹⁶⁶ In the New South Wales Legislative Assembly in 1866, Henry Parkes theorised 'our business being to colonise the country, there was only one way to do it - by spreading over it all the associations and connections of family life'.¹⁶⁷ 'Colonising the country' brought with it an obsession with population growth¹⁶⁸, so 'the emphasis was on saving the child, at least in the public pronouncements of the various maternity homes and infant asylums.'¹⁶⁹ Ideological campaigns pushed women, men and children more decisively into prescribed roles¹⁷⁰ and these campaigns encouraged the development of notions of middle-class 'respectability' as people sought to justify their better circumstances through a sense of moral superiority.

¹⁶³ Ibid 166

¹⁶⁴ Ibid 170-1

¹⁶⁵ Robert Hughes *The Fatal Shore* Pan Books 1998 258-61

¹⁶⁶ Bloodworth op.cit. 12

¹⁶⁷ Henry Parkes NSW Legislative Assembly 14 August 1866

¹⁶⁸ Howe and Swain op.cit. 31 'From 1880-1915 there was continuing concern regarding the falling birthrate' and when 'the Commonwealth of Australia was proclaimed in 1901, the declining birthrate was seen as a national scandal'

¹⁶⁹ Ibid 35

¹⁷⁰ Bloodworth op.cit. 10

The ability of prospective families to fulfill the nuclear ideal was made more possible by advances in artificial feeding which diminished the importance of the mother to the survival of the child for the growing Australian nation. 'Where the infant life protection campaigns at the turn of the century highlighted the role of the single mother in preserving the life of her much needed child, the principles of scientific mothering, which were so heavily promoted in the inter war years, effectively broke this bond.'¹⁷¹ The effort which went into developing artificial substitutes for human milk 'made it possible for institutions devoted to the preservation of infant life to keep babies alive without their mothers' care.'¹⁷² But taken to the extreme, 'liberation could be so relentlessly modernising as to cut people off from the ways of their ancestors and take away their reasons for living.'¹⁷³ In the words of Lydia Wevers: 'dreams, love, babies, illness, death, animals - all these are unmodern'.¹⁷⁴

This 'relentless modernizing' in Australia produced the closed-records adoption system. Artificial feeding, while breaking the link between the single mother and her child, made it possible for other women to take over this role and as 'the

¹⁷¹ Howe and Swain op.cit. 37

¹⁷² Ibid

¹⁷³ Kiberd op.cit.295

¹⁷⁴ Lydia Wevers, 'Dreaming Modernity' paper presented at the ASAL conference in honour of Professor Elizabeth Webby, University of Sydney, 2 February 2007

demand for babies increased, the status of the single mother declined. No longer the 'poor, unfortunate', she came to be seen as 'unfit'.¹⁷⁵

Private adoption had come to Australia with white settlement but its association with baby farming and its lack of any basis in law had always made it a somewhat disreputable business... It is only after the Great War, with artificial feeding much more fully developed, that adoption came to be seen as a way of placing ex-nuptial children in childless homes.¹⁷⁶

In Australia, the intensity of taboos and stigmas that had developed in conjunction with this modernising drove women further into the nuclear family structure - two 'unconventional' familial structures thus become 'respectably' nuclear. Children were reconsigned to better help families fulfill the nuclear ideal which, in Australia, has also been an ideal of being racially white. Laws to stop the exploitation of 'illegitimate' children came to pass, 'and so the child became the *actual* property of the brand new nuclear family.'¹⁷⁷ This way of reading adoption as a product of capitalism and the rise of the nuclear family is, of course, a social and political way of reading and must always be qualified by the individual voices of the people involved in the adoption experience. As one submission to the New South Wales Law Reform Committee put it:

¹⁷⁵ Marshall and McDonald op.cit. 39

¹⁷⁶ Ibid 38

¹⁷⁷ Shawyer op.cit. 47

This whole adoption process has become two-sided, with the adoptive parents' feelings being made to seem inferior. So often after reading reports in the media, we have felt as though we are guilty of some dreadful crime, almost as though we had snatched these children from their mother's arms, when all we did was to open our hearts and homes within the law, to children who otherwise in those days, would be placed in institutions.¹⁷⁸

In actual fact, before the rise in adoption during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, adoptive parents had 'to be persuaded to accept ex-nuptial babies.'¹⁷⁹ Rather than point a finger at the members of the adoption triad adoption needs to be observed in its relation to the State. In 1962, David Cooper had insisted, in *The Death of the Family*, that the family was crucial to hegemony - whether capitalist or Stalinist - 'reinforcing the effective power of the ruling class in any exploitive society by providing a highly controllable paradigmatic form for every social institution'¹⁸⁰. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, in 1970, identified the family as 'a force frustrating revolutionary change'.¹⁸¹ 'These critiques of the mutual dependence of the family

¹⁷⁸ New South Wales Law Reform Committee *Report 69 Review of the Adoption Information Act 1990* 1992 162

¹⁷⁹ Howe and Swain *op.cit.* 39

¹⁸⁰ David Cooper *The Death of the Family*, Penguin Harmondsworth 1971 5-6

¹⁸¹ Kate Millett *Sexual Politics* Hart Davis London 1970 158

and the oppressive State have been sidelined since the 1980s, but it is time to revisit them'.¹⁸²

The effect of the removal of children is that the familial reproduction of culture, between parent and child is halted and, even if the separated child is reunited with kin later in its life, it has already orientated itself to the world without the natural continuum of the mother's physical and psychological body for all the years of absence, has already become someone else entirely, bonded to a different community. This dispersal of family and community by the state is a potent form of the social control. The real power of this method of reassigning children as a force of oppression is found in the susceptibility of the community to be educated into accepting it. It helped in the establishment of 'legitimate' culture and was packaged and presented as acceptable to community via, among others, the discourse of illegitimate birth. Philosopher Jenny Teichman argued in 1982 that what was needed to be investigated were not the causes of illegitimacy but 'the institutions that give rise to the legitimate/illegitimate distinction.'¹⁸³

Opposition to illegitimacy functions covertly as a support for its binary opposite - legitimacy. Martine Spensky's (1992) account of homes for unmarried mothers in 1950s England suggested that their adoption

¹⁸² Ferrier, Carole. 'So, What Is To Be Done About the Family?' 2006 http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-September-2006/ferrier.html#_edn4 footnote 2 Last viewed March 10 2007

programmes were designed to produce socially legitimate children, marriages and families. The legitimization project extends far beyond the individual family. What is legitimated by the concept of illegitimacy is western, white bourgeois culture itself.

Legitimacy nominally refers to being born out of wedlock.

However, legitimate births status can stand in for cultural legitimacy.¹⁸⁴

Because the concept of legitimacy is not a universal principle but a particular historical product of western intellectual culture it 'reinforced the nuclear family ideal but, just as significantly, it actively and energetically creates the various illegitimacy problems and thereby defined what constitutes a legitimate culture.'¹⁸⁵ In Australia, the construction of bodies as 'illegitimate problems' reinforced the nuclear family ideal but just a significantly, helped constitute a 'legitimate' national culture.

Secrecy provisions and the denial of human rights

The adopted body, originally configured as an object in need of rescue and compassion, rapidly changed to a construction manufactured by the political, economic and social pressures of the capitalist system and the nuclear family, expressed in the rapid rise in popularity of adoption and the corresponding

¹⁸³ Jenny Teichman *Illegitimacy. A Philosophical Examination* Basil Blackwell Oxford 1982 10

¹⁸⁴ Gail Reekie *Measuring Immorality; Social Inquiry and the Problem of Illegitimacy* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1998 181

secrecy provisions. The removal of adoptees' identities was much more directly the result of taboos and stigmas, class notions of respectability, feminine stereotypes and religious oppression, all conservatively defended in the myth of the clean slate of the infant, rather than of the compassionate desire to rescue unwanted children from dying from exposure, involved in the notorious 'baby-farms' or the barrack system's production of 'well-drilled' 'noiseless machines'¹⁸⁶.

The development of middle-class respectability, promoted to the public to a large extent by religious organisations, had an impact on the production of the closed records adoptee as women were forced to conceal the production of an illegitimate body. Notions of class respectability and feminine stereotypes were reinforced by women's disadvantageous political and economic status but also by women themselves in a female discourse that goes back to colonial Australia. In 1847, Caroline Chisolm gave her now famous advice to the British government regarding the establishment of a 'well-conducted community' and 'a good and great people' in the colonies.¹⁸⁷ The establishment of bourgeois society in Australia was connected with the desire to establish the 'feminine' stereotype for

¹⁸⁵ Ibid 183

¹⁸⁶ Michael.Horsburgh 'The Randwick Asylum: Organisational Resistance to Social Change' *Australian Social Work* Vol 30 no 1 March 1977 19

¹⁸⁷ Caroline Chisolm *Emigration and Transportation Relatively Considered* 1847 'For all the clergy you can despatch, all the schoolmasters you can appoint, all the churches you can build, and all the books you can export, will never do much good without what a gentleman in that Colony very appropriately called 'God's police' - wives and little children - good and virtuous women.'

women: 'The women [in the social elite] ... played an active role in maintaining class consciousness through their policing of gentility.'¹⁸⁸ The pressure, social and religious, on middle-class families desirous of asserting their moral superiority over the working classes to retain their class position, became so extreme that illegitimate children were adopted out even when financial resources to keep the child were available within the extended family.

Although Marshall and McDonald, in *The Many-Sided Triangle; Adoption in Australia* (2001), claim that 'studies examining the influence of social class on the decision to surrender the child are equivocal',¹⁸⁹ this is because of the lack of research on the relationship between adoption and class. Marshall and McDonald do concede that in assessment methods for adoptive parents there 'was inevitably a measure of subjectivity, and a decidedly middle-class bias'.¹⁹⁰ They provide a small insight into this relationship when they cite a 'social worker with many years experience at a major obstetric hospital, probably the greatest source of babies for adoption for over forty years in New South Wales, [who] observed the influence of social groupings on the decision the women made.'¹⁹¹ They suggest the kind of result studies of adoption and class might produce if they were ever carried out: 'The implication of this observation, if it has wider application, is that middle-class women were more likely to surrender their

¹⁸⁸ Summers op.cit. 53

¹⁸⁹ Marshall and McDonald op.cit. 48

¹⁹⁰ Ibid 7

babies. If so, it may be that the cost of preserving middle-class respectability was often high and its effects profound.’¹⁹² They conclude ‘a supportive family was an important factor in the decision to keep the child, a finding that should surprise no one’¹⁹³ and it was the middle-class families that largely ‘failed’ to support the mothers of illegitimate children.

In the 1960s the ‘enforcement of secrecy provisions was aimed at completely severing any connection [legal, physical, psychological and emotional] between the child and the natural family.’¹⁹⁴ The idea of a ‘clean break’ or a ‘fresh start’ was promoted as in everyone’s interests, including the infants, and the biological demands of the infant body simply could not compete with the socio-historical demands of the society that produced it. From the adoptees’ perspective, the ‘secrecy provisions’ may, at the simplest level, be a denial of their basic human right to know who they are and, as a legal and social development, this taking and hiding of identities was a social and legal development in the discourse of adoption that could not have been further away from that originary representation of the adopted body as a body ‘saved’ from neglect, abuse or death. This development in the production of the adopted body grew out of the confluence of many discourses and one area of research to pursue could be the direct relationship of World War II to the closed-records adoption system. This

¹⁹¹ Ibid 48

¹⁹² Ibid 48

¹⁹³ Ibid 48

system, however, can also be directly attributed to concerns over private property under the capitalist system and, more specifically, the inheritance rights of adoptees.

An apparent ambivalence about the effects of adoption was expressed in varying approaches to the questions of rights of inheritance¹⁹⁵ Gradually, secrecy was emerging as an issue, as the various states moved from preserving the rights of inheritance from the birth parent, and excluding automatic the adopted child from automatic inheritance from the adoptive parents, to reversing the situation entirely. This directly resulted in the production of the new adoptive situation being represented in the legal substitution of the birth certificate. There is, then, a direct line of cause and effect, as well as a pattern of imitation between states, discerned in the detailing of the inheritance rights of adoptees in legislation, muddied by their being 'swapped about', by defining the very nature of that swap as making the adopted body 'as if the same' as the biologically-grounded one.¹⁹⁶ The effects of this debate and the secrecy provisions it rapidly dictated in Australian law and society defined the very limits of my own subjectivity as a child brought up in the myth of sameness it cultivated.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid 37

¹⁹⁵ Ibid 31-2

¹⁹⁶ Ibid 29

The development of secrecy laws and provisions were a direct result of the swapping over of the illegitimate child's inheritance rights to another family, designed to transfer the cost of the illegitimate child out of the hands of the State. The stealing of identities and the cultivation of a myth of sameness were the by-products for the adoptee and for the denial of these children's basic human right to 'be themselves' it had to be justified to the adults concerned. The simple fact that it *was* a denial of the human rights of the child meant that it had to be virulently denied, and closed-record adoption became known as what was 'best for the child', when it was motivated, primarily, by what was best for the adults in the patriarchal society in which they lived. The stealing of anyone's identity can hardly be seen to be in their interest and the fact that it was so widely accepted across Australia, in law and society, is enough to make any adoptee feel paranoid. It is certainly a remarkable development from what was ostensibly the instituting of protection for unwanted children. This denial, which continues to operate powerfully in Australian society to this present day, dictates the continual denigration and trivialisation of the adoptee's experience, and ensured, in the past, a lack of support networks for the growing adoptee. Adoptees may well be the ones 'saved' from a fate worse than what they have been given, but the difficulties of their lifelong experience as adoptees remains underestimated in a society educated to think in a particular way.

The vetoed changeling body

The phenomenon of what I have termed the 'changeling' demographic, that group of adoptees adopted out during the peak of adoptions under the closed-records system, who have survived to experience the deconstruction of the secrecy provisions, is remarkable in the discourse of adoption in Australia. The 'ambivalence' of the property rights of the adoptee has probably had an effect on yet another legal imposition upon the adopted body in the establishment of the 'veto contact register.' In the late 1990s, the changes in secrecy provisions legally allowed the closed-record adoptee to pursue investigations into their true identities and many of the children brought up in the myth of sameness, became bodies who were, instead, searching for meaning in their difference. This reinstatement of the basic human right to know one's own identity has been qualified by the veto system as if the 'searching' adoptee threatens the earlier legal success of the removal and redefinition of their inheritance rights. An adoptee who claims their biological link with biological parents should entitle them to inherit from them, is merely asking to be treated like a normal, 'legitimate' citizen of Australia.

The consequence of this, however, is that the searching adopted body of the changeling is constructed as a financial threat by the biological parents, unattached emotionally and possibly vengeful, even greedy. After being absolved of all financial responsibility for their child, the 'contacting' adoptee threatens those who possibly benefited financially from the abandonment of

their children. Garry Leonard, in 'The Immaculate Deception; Adoption in Albee's Plays'¹⁹⁷ quotes Edward Albee:

'I'll do anything for money.' This is not the motto of an opportunist, or even the battle-cry of the amoral Edmund, but the detached voice of a commodity that cannot imagine doing anything except what it is paid to do. Albee's point is that the sense of the modern closed-record adoption system as a commercial transaction, at least on a broader social level, is not a fantasy.¹⁹⁸

The fear of biological relatives, either conscious or unconscious, that adoptees may re-enter their lives only to make a claim upon the material advantage, which may have been gained, was translated in legislation by the establishment of a 'veto' system. At the moment, in New South Wales, a fine of up to \$2750 or 12 months imprisonment or both can be applied to anyone breaking a contact veto.¹⁹⁹ There were 8,976 vetoes in place as at 30 June 2006, made up of 61% contact vetoes and 39% identifying information vetoes²⁰⁰ from all parties included in the adoption 'triad'. This searching, changeling adopted body, easily constructed as a greedy and vengeful body, is, however, first and foremost a

¹⁹⁷ Leonard op.cit.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid120

¹⁹⁹ www.commmunity.nsw.gov.au/adoption/birthparents_search.htm and click on the Contact Veto Register (fact sheet) in the related links. Last viewed 28 January 2007

human body, before it becomes illegitimate, illegal, adopted and, possibly, criminal. The adoptee has experienced the death of human empathy with its most immediate kin and the death of meaning in biological connection, and of love in kinship, and has been forced outside genetic kinship structures to find family. The searching adopted body searches for information about her or himself and this is primarily an emotional and psychological search for meaning, regardless of the transference and stealing of birthrights.

The permanent handicap of illegitimacy [was] primarily configured by the impossibility of inheriting land or wealth. Someone might choose to provide for the bastard, but the bastard had no legal right to demand anything more than the basics needed to survive.²⁰¹

The adopted body has a heightened sense of its relationship to the law and the state, has been produced through the rise of capitalism and the nuclear family out of the discourse of illegitimacy, the reconsignment of children, State controls over citizens, race and reproductive and infant-sustaining technologies and is constructed by adults concerned over private property and patriarchal inheritance laws. The adopted body is a commodified disabled body constructed by the conjunction of numerous discourses at the point of its infant body, and

²⁰⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2006. Adoptions Australia 2005–06. Child welfare series no. 39. Cat. no. CWS 27. Canberra: AIHW 29

²⁰¹ Leonard op.cit 112

imbued with the representations of the adults complicit in the adoption process, representations of which the adopted person may be entirely conscious but feel powerless to resist. In Australia, somewhere in this matrix of other people's representations is situated the human changeling 'I':

plainly set against the merely despairing articulation of the suffering self... [is the idea:] 'If the modern self is not well, the body of history will carry its illness.' That is, social disorder parallels (and in a sense is a causal factor) of the self's suffering. Put simply: the fault of our condition lies in the 'social disorder,' not the self...²⁰²

If the history of the adopted body is not so much a genetic history, nor that of the adoptive family, but is the history of a unique combination of discourses clashing at a moment in time to produce the body of the closed-record adoptee and the sub-category of the changeling adoptee then reading the adopted body as metaphor will have resonances that stretch far beyond the personal. 'The adoption trauma as such, tinges the lives of the adoptive triangle in the family as well as in the social macrocosm. Insights gained from the pathology surrounding

²⁰² Edward Engelberg *Elegiac Fictions: The Motif of the Unlived Life* Pennsylvania State University Press London 1989 258 His quotation is from David Michael Levin 'Psychopathology in the Epoch of Nihilism' in *Pathologies of the Modern Self: Postmodern Studies on Narcissism, Schizophrenia, and Depression* ed. David Michael Levin New York University Press New York and London 1987 21-83 24

adoption traumata open a perspective which goes beyond that of the clinic'.²⁰³ Given that the psychological condition of the adopted child has repercussions beyond the individual ego, psychoanalysis of the adopted condition may offer insights into the early development of identity, whether personal, social or national.

Actualising the adopted body as a literary tool

When the adopted body is used as a defining or interpretive linguistic tool, such as metaphor or for deconstructive readings, the characteristics of adoptee subjecthood, and the whole array of symptoms of 'adopteestentialism', will mark the selection and reading of texts in ways unique to adoptive experience. The 'intangible something'²⁰⁴ of the adopted body might be explained as that set of characteristics or concerns, sometimes referred to as the 'adopted child syndrome', that may be common to adoptees as a result of the common adoptive experience, so that certain characteristics or anxieties are 'heightened', doubled up, emphasized or repressed. Used as a metaphor, the adopted body can throw into relief certain features of another body that may not have been considered before, and probably not in relation to the other features in the group that consideration of the subject adoptee initiates, so that an adoptee reading of any text acts as a kind of blueprint or matrix placed over a body. Throwing a set of

²⁰³ Louis Feder, 'Adoption Trauma: Oedipus myth, clinical reality' *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 55 1974 491-3 491-2

hitherto seemingly unrelated characteristics into view in this way would be what I have termed an *ado/aptive reading of a text*.

As a linguistic tool, the adopted body is mimetic, a meta-body that can be used for reading itself as well as other bodies in a way unique to the adoptee experience. The history of silence and invisibility has made it difficult for adoptees to form communities and so, for the most part, adoptees have been isolated and fragmented in this aspect of their identity.²⁰⁵ Because of this, the versions of adoption the adopted child has read in literature may have been particularly important to them²⁰⁶ and in doing an *ado/aptive reading* of oneself the modern adopted body will be necessarily intertextual. Canonical writers such as Shakespeare, Bronte and Dickens and modern ones, such as Albee and Winterson, relate the fates of abandoned and 'bastard' children. Fairy-tale and myth form the earliest of archetypes that subject adoptees can read about themselves as adoptees: Rapunzal, stolen by a witch for stealing from her garden, Rumpelstiltskin trying to steal a firstborn son, and, from Biblical tales, Moses placed in the wicker basket on the river leading into Rome. However, of all these stories, it is, of course, the myth of Oedipus which is read most aptly onto the closed-record adoptee of the nuclear family under capitalism.

²⁰⁴ Nancy Newton Verrier *The Primal Wound; Understanding the Adopted Child* Gateway Press Inc Baltimore 1999 3

²⁰⁵ Marianne Novy, ed. 'Introduction' to *Imagining Adoption; Essays on Literature and Culture* University of Michigan Press U.S.A 2001 5

²⁰⁶ *Ibid* 5

The semiotic is the 'other' of language which is nonetheless intimately entwined with it. Because it stems from the pre-Oedipal phase, it is bound up with the child's contact with the mother's body, whereas the symbolic... is associated with the Law of the father. The semiotic is thus closely connected with femininity.²⁰⁷

Freud's development of the 'Oedipus complex', 'discovered' in 1897 and given a generalised theoretical form by 1923, is, as Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out, the 'nuclear complex'.²⁰⁸ 'Oedipus restrained is the figure of the daddy-mommy-me triangle, the familial constellation in person'²⁰⁹ The nuclear family forms the 'nuclear complex' by 'reproducing desire in this simple representation' so that the 'productive unconscious makes way for an unconscious that knows only how to express itself - express itself in myth, in tragedy, in dream.'²¹⁰ The adopted body is represented not once but twice in the Oedipus myth.

Chrysiippus is an illegitimate child who is kidnapped a by Oedipus' father Laius. As Laius is cursed because of his maltreatment of the bastard child, his own legitimate child inherits the bastard curse, and takes on the qualities of illegitimacy: he is left abandoned to die of exposure, is 'adopted' by strangers

²⁰⁷ Terry Eagleton *After Theory* Basic Books Perseus Books Group New York 2003 188

²⁰⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* transl. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane. Viking Press New York 1972 51

²⁰⁹ *Ibid* 51

²¹⁰ *Ibid* 54

and is labeled a 'bastard' by a drunkard at a party by being told he is not his father's son, who knows of his adoptive status something of which Oedipus has been kept ignorant. In this myth, the illegitimate child is the crime and the curse and the adopted child the curse and the punishment to Laius who dies at Oedipus' hand. In the same way that the role of the unwanted child is doubled as both the bastard and the adoptee in the Oedipus myth so the modern adopted child must negotiate the Oedipus complex in a state of heightened, or doubled anxiety. The ancient coding of taboo, admonitions and anxiety in the Oedipus myth are manifested in the adopted body which must negotiate the Oedipus complex under heightened and literal conditions, almost as if the myth were 'coming to life' under the conditions of capitalism and the pressures of forming the nuclear family.

The ubiquity of both myth and complex is associated with Freud's concept of 'family romance' (1909)... The mythical admonitions inherent in the Oedipus myth and reality-orientation are equally disobeyed, Jocasta and Laius pay no heed to the oracle and Westerners adhere insufficiently to an anticonceptive orientation... The common denominator between the Oedipus complex and the manifest aspects of the Oedipus myth may now

be traced back to the ambivalent preconceptive conflict... We see their symptomatic and circumstantial evidence in the child's character²¹¹

What is experienced before conscious perception in the subject may have repercussions in the development of its consciousness and the issues of the adult parties, although seemingly resolved on a legal and social level, may be internalized in the psychological body of the child.²¹²

Despite birth-control making 'its appearance in the eighteenth century just when the family had finished organizing itself around the child, and raised the wall of private life between the family and society',²¹³ the unwanted child continues to be produced, perhaps, as with Laui and Jocasta, from drunken moments. From this, the placing of the unwanted child in a new nuclear family Romance continues the Oedipal narrative, but rather than just being a parallel narrative, the adoptive child must also negotiate the Oedipal complex as a *hyper-real* text: negotiating the Oedipal complex is more of a threat, more of a concern, for the adopted child who 'lives out' its anxieties. In this respect, the restrained adopted child becomes an exaggerated version of the nuclear child who must negotiate the Oedipus complex, confined, like the nuclear child, to both desiring and being prohibited from desiring its nuclear companions, but under the unique

²¹¹ Feder op.cit. 491

²¹² Ibid

²¹³ Aries op.cit. 413

conditions of not actually being related to them in any genetic lines, and being placed at risk of incest with genetically related kin because of their anonymity. Like Oedipus, the closed-record adoptee grew up in the 'myth of sameness' and a denial of their difference. For Oedipus, even if he had known he was not the son of his parents, there was no community of adoptees to discuss things with, no one to help him understand his difference, just as in more modern times 'there were no manuals for the adopted like *How to Grow Up Adopted*.'²¹⁴

No relative had ever revealed the facts of adoption to me. I had been left to stew it alone... So, too, the critics of Sophocles insisted Oedipus must have known... But Sophocles had Oedipus cry out that he did not know... Perhaps Oedipus and I both knew through that middle knowledge one has when one knows and does not know at the same time.²¹⁵

Used as a literary tool, the adopted body mimetically reads the Oedipal myth upon their body, an ado/aptive reading revealing 'the manifest Oedipus myth is the case history of the adopted child',²¹⁶ as if the conditions under capitalism and within the nuclear family has brought the Oedipus myth to life in the production of the adopted body. The closed-record adoptee, restrained by enforced

²¹⁴ Lifton op.cit. 111

²¹⁵ Ibid 153

²¹⁶ Feder op.cit. 491

ignorance as to her or his true identities in order to fit the nuclear ideal, are Oedipus, *doubly restrained*, as if a figure in a straightjacket. An ado/aptive reading of the adopted body, then, reveals Chrysippus *and* Oedipus in the case history of the adopted child who must negotiate the Oedipus complex in an overly intensified manner in this new nuclear family romance. But Deleuze and Guattari remind us that

underneath Oedipus, through Oedipus, behind Oedipus... [are] desiring machines. At the beginning, psychoanalysts *could not be unaware* of the forcing employed to introduce Oedipus, to inject it into the unconscious. Then Oedipus fell back on and appropriated desiring-production as if all the productive forces emanated from Oedipus itself.²¹⁷

Like the nuclear family, the 'desiring machine' of the illegitimate, unwanted or abandoned child has been similarly 'simplified' into a neat formula that discourages self-reflection and investigation because of its complexity and paradox: 'Rule A: Don't. Rule A.1: Rule A does not exist. Rule A.2: Do not discuss the existence or non-existence of Rules A, A.1, or A.2'.²¹⁸ Within the kinship structures of Australian society it could be said of adopted bodies, as Deleuze and Guattari wrote of certain literary machines, that

we are struck by the facts that all the parts are produced as asymmetrical sections, paths that suddenly come to an end, hermetically sealed boxes, noncommunicating vessels, watertight compartments, in which there are gaps even between things that are contiguous, gaps that are affirmations, pieces of a puzzle belonging not to any one puzzle but to many, pieces assembled by forcing them into certain places where they may or may not belong, their unmatched edges violently bent out of shape, forcibly made to fit together, to interlock, with a number of pieces always left over. It is a schizoid work par excellence...²¹⁹

The adopted body is a 'schizoid work par excellence' and I offer it as an alternative model to Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic. In the process of the transformation of a life into story, we can witness the life writing process *in action* and observe how real-life bodies can suffer a sea-change, (into something rich and strange), by the power of story. Ado/aptive readings of the movement of people's lives into text are powerfully aware of that the very process, because the adopted body is conscious just how much of their real-life bodies are produced *from* story. What I am trying to explain is that an ado/aptive reading of text teases out the interstices between life and story, locates transformation in its many guises, and can locate concerns or anxieties in the Australian imaginary.

²¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari op.cit. 56

²¹⁸ Ronald D Laing *The Politics of the Family* Tavistock Publications London 1971 41

²¹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari op.cit. 43

Ado/aprive readings consider the 'other selves' within texts, because the ado/aprive body has *other names* for 'other' selves. The construction of the identity of a modern adopted body engenders a multiplicity of subjecthoods so that it is a real life, but imbued with silences and fictions, coupled with an imaginary life, the 'life unlived', that bears truths about the subject. The random 'what if' of the non-subject adoptee is made more of a concern, heightened as an concept, because it has its own name, the one printed on the original birth certificate. If there is a period of time between when the first birth certificate and the replacement birth certificate were issued, this other self may not even be imaginary but may actually have existed for a few weeks, to 'die' in society's imagination without being issued a death certificate. This has been the fate of still born babies in Australia for whom birth certificates were issued but for whom death certificates, traditionally, were not.

Let us for the sake of logic call this other named self an imaginary self which, despite being imaginary, has been given a *real name* by other people (usually their birthmother), albeit one that has been hidden from the subject. This twin non-existent self with a real name is also in itself a twin in the consciousness of the subject adoptee. The name on the original birth certificate is both the name of the imagined child if kept by her or his biological parents as well as the imagined aborted self, two distinct options that must have been, for the subject adoptee, on

the cards. Legal adoption, seen by some as the best alternative of the three possibilities, is, nevertheless, experienced by the newborn as rejection and abandonment, regardless of a waiting and loving adoptive family, because the infant cannot grasp its intellectual justifications.

The twin imaginary selves of the living adoptee, the kept child and the aborted child, represented by the birth name on the original birth certificate, are bodies embedded deep within the adoptees' subconscious, serving to remind it of its two 'near misses', and both are coupled with powerful connections to the idea of death. Although the subject adoptee lives on in the 'abandoned child' option, in its imagination *both* imaginary selves are killed off. The imagined possible *kept* child has been killed by the act of abandonment and the imagined other is the 'almost' possibility of its own non-existence. Both ideas, paradoxically, live on in the mind of the adoptee. This splitting off and twinning in the imagination of the subject adoptee is linked to death in a real sense, its multiplicity shadowed by the un-lived lives of the biological children the adoptive couple never had, or perhaps lost in death. These imaginary bodies are experienced by the subject adoptee, as the children whose rightful 'space' they have come to occupy, signified by the silences and sadnesses of the adoptive parents, and these absent bodies may also have had their own real names. These bodies exist as other imaginary selves in the mind of the subject adoptee who must move through the real world in the

spaces left by them, the 'empty lands / Through which the wide winds go, /
Where vast monasteries stand / Like garments around un-lived lives.'²²⁰

Even then I was stirring like a monster in my mother's womb. I was the
dark twin of that lost golden baby.²²¹

The adopted child is inserted into a position amongst real and imaginary subjects permeated by death – its present identity, its possible twin selves with their own real name, the other selves that should have been there instead. The adult adoptee is no longer any of these infant bodies, yet, is still an adoptee – meeting biological parents doesn't suddenly make one unadopted. To cast 'adopted' off the classification of my body I would have to seek a court order annulling the adoption. Would I then be someone who used to be a bastard, used to be an adoptee, but now am me?

Maurice Blanchot has found a way to pose the problem in the most rigorous of terms, at the level of the literary machine: how to produce, how to think about fragments whose sole relationship is sheer difference – fragments that are related to one another only in that each of them is different – without having recourse either to any sort of original totality

²²⁰ Rainer Maria Rilke *Das Stunden-Buch (Das Buch der Armut und Vom Tode)*

²²¹ Lifton op.cit 135

(not even one that has been lost), or to a subsequent totality that may not yet have come about?²²² It is only the category of multiplicity...²²³

The intellectual predicament of the subject adoptee is confusing in so many different ways, both externally and internally. Externally, confusion is established by a matrix of silence and disinformation, between fact and fiction, truth and lies, love and abandonment. Internally, a multiplicity of selves jostle for attention and threaten cohesion. This fundamental confusion in the development of the adoptees' subjecthood can cause serious mental conundrums, provoking seemingly irresolvable questions regarding personal identity. Closed records adoptees had to negotiate all this to establish a sense that they were a loved being, and not just a superfluous by-product of society.

Adoptees may turn their rage upon their adopted parents but, paradoxically, 'feel a tremendous dependency and need to connect to those same adoptive parents. This ambivalence is the source of great confusion and enigmatic behaviour.'²²⁴ Unconscious perception in the child appears as curiosity and is basically used in the search for narcissistic reassurance but with the adopted child, the portion of not being wanted is almost the whole, with the biologically grounded, it usually remains only a portion.

²²² Maurice Blanchot *L'entretien infini* Gallimard, Paris 1969 451-2

²²³ Deleuze and Guattari op.cit. 42-3

²²⁴ Verrier op.cit. 73

The subject adoptee lives a real life but is surrounded everywhere by imagination and death through which it must search for love. As its own narrative is revealed more and more to be a construct, the imagination and its world of the dead may appeal as the only land where Truth resides; many adoptees say that they 'tolerate death better than they tolerate separations.'²²⁵

Because the loss of a grandparent or a beloved pet can trigger memories of the first loss, children are often numbed by this and express very little, if any, affect. Their feelings go underground; they 'numb out'. This is often interpreted by the parents or others as the child's being callous or unfeeling, when he is actually warding off devastation.²²⁶

The adoptee appears to lack expression, to exhibit 'emotional detachment, indifference, complacency, and passivity ... almost as if he is in a trance.'²²⁷ This lack of expression and sympathy, especially in regards to death, can reinforce the perception of adoptees as 'unfeeling' but overwhelming emotions may meanwhile be functioning 'underneath Oedipus, through Oedipus, behind Oedipus'.²²⁸ With the visible material advantage, which was supposed to be

²²⁵ Ibid 48

²²⁶ Ibid 75

²²⁷ Ibid 72

²²⁸ Deleuze and Guattari op.cit. 56

guaranteed for the adoptee by the adoptive system, few people detect the desiring production:

Lack is a countereffect of desire; it is deposited, distributed, vacuolised within a real that is natural and social. Desire always remains in close touch with the conditions of objective existence; it embraces them and follows them, shifts when they shift, and does not outlive them. For that reason it so often becomes the desire to die.²²⁹

'Although tremendously painful, feelings can be tolerated. If a person becomes so inundated by the feelings that he is out of touch with the adult, intellectual side of himself, tragedy can happen.'²³⁰

To develop an intellectual life, the closed records adoptee, might not only be suited to the expression of themselves through *writing*, but may be a body expertly suited to *read*. From the moment it was born the closed records adopted body had to deal with and overcome a 'primary reading difficulty' due to the genetic unfamiliarity of the facial expressions and gestures of the adopting family. The adoptee must develop advanced reading skills to decipher their world and as 'hyper-readers' the adoptee learns a number of consequent skills. In constructing their identity the adoptee will come to understand, more than the

biologically grounded individual, that role models may be chosen rather than naturally designated.

Natural parents should bear in mind that the more supplementaries their children find, the better they will know that it takes all sorts to make a world. Also, that though there is always the risk of being corrupted by bad parents, the natural ones may be – probably ten percent of them actually are – the worst of the lot.²³¹

With this multiplication of role models comes the understanding that *anyone* can be an important role model, that they don't have to be genetically related but can be chosen at will, and that multiple 'families' can be constructed for themselves. They also come to understand that they are not fixed in any given place and, although the adopted body may suffer from being 'hyper-vigilant'²³², might benefit from being hyper-mobile: 'Our sense of not belonging has given us the freedom to move easily from one world to another, rather than being nailed down to a life without escape.'²³³

²²⁹ Ibid 27

²³⁰ Verrier op.cit. 46

²³¹ Stanley Weintraub ed. *Shaw: An Autobiography* 1856-98 Max Rheinhartd London 1969 52

²³² Verrier op.cit 59

²³³ Betty Jean Lifton *Lost and Found: The Adoption Experience* Harper and Row New York 1988 73

Is not the adoptee, then, in a sense 'freed up' from the tiresome weight of kinship influences? Is this not, then, a body expertly schooled in the nature of detachment - and might not the adopted body understand instinctively the goals of this literary ideal?

Rather than a gradual, well-timed developmental process, the child is forced by this wrenching experience of premature separation to be a separate being, to form a separate ego before he should have to do so. This phenomenon is often referred to 'premature ego development'.²³⁴

What are the repercussions of developing an ego prematurely? They are the nature of *détachement*'.

Professor Brian Cosgrove of the National University of Ireland asks 'is critical disinterestedness possible? Or, is it, for that matter, even desirable?'²³⁵ The word 'disinterestedness' famously occurs in Matthew Arnold's 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time':

How is criticism to show disinterestedness? And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called the

²³⁴ Verrier op.cit 31

²³⁵ Brian Cosgrove 'Critical Disinterestedness and Ideological Commitment: An Impasse?' eprints.nuim.ie/archive/00000334/01/cosgrove.pdf. Last viewed 3 March 2007 1

'practical view of things'; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches.²³⁶

'Disinterestedness' is, for Arnold, a crucial critical ideal but it is also a literary ideal post-modernism taught us to question. There is no Kantian 'view from nowhere', 'no conceptual space not already implicated in that which it seeks to contest'²³⁷ or evaluate and so the retort to Arnold must be that, even as he promotes this ideal, he is still acting at the behest of his own ideological agenda.²³⁸ In 2004, Oliver Sacks observed 'we deceive ourselves if we imagine that we can ever be passive, impartial observers. Every perception, every scene, is shaped by us, whether we intend it, know it, or not'.²³⁹ Cosgrove reminds us of the quiet revolution of quantum physics:

And of course it may still come as something of a shock to recall that even science, that discipline which above all others takes as its *raison d'être* a capacity for objective observation, found itself bedeviled, in the new physics of the early twentieth century, by an unavoidable and obtrusive input on the part of the observer.

²³⁶ Culler, A. Dwight ed. *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold* Houghton Mifflin Boston 1961 246

²³⁷ Patricia Waugh, ed. *Postmodernism: A Reader* Edward Arnold London 1992 5.

²³⁸ Cosgrove op.cit.

²³⁹ Oliver Sacks 'In the River of Consciousness' *The New York Review of Books* 15 January 2004 44.

It is clear, then, that it is rather more difficult for us to endorse the notion of disinterested objectivity than it was for Arnold. Yet rightly, and as a matter of pragmatic necessity, we continue to hope that some degree of objectively founded agreement is after all possible, both in our perception of 'reality' and in our (collective) responses to art-works (including literature). Severely hampered as we unavoidably are by a pervasive modern skepticism, we have to accept how difficult it is to arrive at a position of disinterestedness; yet, on the other hand, we do not entirely abandon all attempts to arrive at a consensus based on the available evidence. Disinterestedness, then, may remain as an impossible ideal to which, nonetheless, we may approximate.²⁴⁰

The adopted body, which is situated in a moment outside and against all other bodies, at the same time has the opposing ability to be a model citizen within the nuclear family, adopted, legitimate, entirely accepting of its fate. Schooled in *détachement*, the adopted body can be used as a literary tool to access that kind of ideal reading, raised above desire and loathing. Arthur Schopenhauer invoked the example of a tree as Idea: 'the perceived tree, as Collinson²⁴¹ puts it, "is plucked from the stream of the world's course", and becomes (in the words of

²⁴⁰ Cosgrove op.cit. 2. For a pragmatic view on the matter see James, William: *Pragmatism in Focus*, ed. Doris Olin Routledge London and New York 1992 109: 'The "absolutely " true meaning that no further experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge.'

Schopenhauer) “a representative of the whole, an equivalent of the many in space and time”. The individual tree is idealised as *the* Tree, or as essential “tree-ness”.²⁴²

It is, however, particularly in works of art that this possibility of contemplating the object-in-itself is offered... in the work of art - *but by design from the outset* - the inessential or contingent is eliminated, and the essential emphasized. Art, it might be suggested... strives to reveal, in Schopenhauer’s terms, the essential stripped of the inessential... in the formula found in Wordsworth’s *Tintern Abbey*, we see (or as skepticism here insists I should add, think we see) ‘into the life of things’.²⁴³

The adopted body is, quite literally, ‘plucked from the stream of the world’s course’ and becomes a manifestation of *détachement*’ and a spokesperson of the discourse of detachment. The adopted body is unwanted, is Oedipus and Chryssipus, is detached, and might be used as a tool, expertly honed in disinterestedness and detachment, to see into the life of things.

He was free, infinitely free, so free that he was no longer conscious of pressing on the ground. He was free of that weight of human

²⁴¹ Diane Collinson 'Aesthetic Experience' Hanfling, Oswald ed *Philosophical Aesthetics* Blackwell The Open University 1992 (repr 1997) 134.

²⁴² Cosgrove op.cit. 3

relationships which impedes movement, those tears, those farewells, those reproaches, those joys, all that a man caresses or tears every time he sketches out a gesture, those countless bonds which tie him to others and make him heavy.²⁴⁴

Not only is the adopted body useful as a literary tool for all these reasons, but the adopted body also reads texts as parody, as the absurd, because it is itself farcical and absurd, not of itself but a mere representation of a biologically grounded subject. This most becomes evident in formal rituals such as weddings, birthdays and funerals, which involve language that refer heavily to assumed biological connectedness.

²⁴³ Ibid 3

²⁴⁴ Antoine De Saint-Exupéry in Aries 411

CHAPTER 3

The Discourse of Detachment

I want to be named, looked in the eye, told 'Yes, you're part of our story' - not a shameful part, just a part.²⁴⁵

One thing that serves to unite people into an 'Australian' community, considering the diversity of the inherited and lived experiences of all Australians, is, paradoxically, an experience of 'separation', whether it be from individual experiences of separations or as part of an inherited system of repercussions from others' traumatic experiences. The experience of separation, of permanent, or semi-permanent, removal of a subject from something that has, up until this point, been an integral part of that subject's identity, results in a sense of 'loss' of self, or part of the self. This is necessarily accompanied by the subject having a sense of being a largely *changed* person, the experience of loss and detachment becoming a benchmark on either side of which the distinction between selves is more marked to the subject, and possibly to others. This 'discourse of detachment' evolved out of experiences of separation and loss, not only at the inception of Australian settlement but throughout its history, and came in a multitude of forms: loss of country, culture, language, land, property, or loved

ones, either by death or separation. Irregardless of the form of that experience, all Australians are the heirs of a society and culture saturated with 'separation' experiences. The discourse of detachment began with the arrival of all those detached from their homelands, 'overwhelmingly the individual, not the group',²⁴⁶ and the consequent displacement of the inhabitants already living in the country. This foundational act of arrival and displacement introduced a discourse of detachment into the embryonic formation of the modern Australian community that has been subsequently suppressed, but has continued to exert a symbolic pressure on the development of Australian society.

The closed-record adopted body as analogy.

Consideration of the adopted body as a literary tool draws attention to the analogy between the experience of the adopted child in its permanent separation from its mother's body at birth and subsequent placement in a new, completely alien, physical environment and accompanying family Romance, and the experience of an Australian society, itself fragmentally detached from all its histories, struggling to form a brand-new community of Australians in a situation both new and strange. The features of this analogy most immediately obvious to the adoptee are the associations of illegitimacy and even criminality. The adoptee has, historically, been associated with criminality as,

²⁴⁵ Ibid 170

Children who are not under the direct control of adults – orphans, foundlings, runaways, others who must make their own way in the adult world and whose parentage and background is lower-class or unknown – have frequently been the objects of speculation and suspicion; they have often been represented in myth, literature, and popular ideology as threatening members of the ‘dangerous classes.’ These myths and popular beliefs encode the anxieties of many and may also shape the expectations of the children themselves...

For centuries, significant distinctions among groups of institutionalised children – vagrants, delinquents, bastards, foundlings, orphans, half-orphans, and other poor children who were temporary residents – have been overlooked by the public [and] all these children might be stereotyped as bastards, troublemakers, or even congenitally corrupt young criminals.²⁴⁷

Verrier observes a ‘high incidence of sociological, academic, and psychological disturbance’ among the adoptee population; in overseas studies adoptees were shown to be greatly over-represented in psychotherapy.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Patrick O’Farrell *The Irish in Australia* New South Wales UP Kensington 1986 revised edn. 1993 26

²⁴⁷ Beverly Crockett ‘Outlaws, Outcasts and Orphans; The Historical Imagination and *Anne of Green Gables*’ *Imagining Adoption; Essays on Literature and Culture* ed. Marianne Novy University of Michigan Press Michigan 2001 58-9 See Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish* trans. Alan Sheridan 1997 reprint Vintage New York 1995 135-94; *Mental Illness and Psychology* trans. Alan Sheridan 1976 Reprint University of California Press Berkeley 1987 64-75

²⁴⁸ Nancy Newton Verrier *The Primal Wound; Understanding the Adopted Child* Gateway Press Inc Baltimore 1999 xv For instance, according to 1985 statistics used by Parenting Resources of Santa Ana,

About 156 000 convicts were transported to Australia between 1788 and 1868, with about 80 000 of those sent to New South Wales²⁴⁹ which has encoded Australian society with its own myths and popular beliefs. A nation keen to develop an unified Australian culture from a past so associated with criminality will go to great lengths to construct a legitimacy/illegitimacy discourse:

The concept of illegitimacy makes possible the definition, not just of legitimate parenthood and legitimate family structure, but of culture itself. Far from being a meaningless remnant from the dead past or the signifier of a marginal form of human reproduction, the notion of illegitimacy continues to be crucial to how modern western cultures define their own legitimacy.²⁵⁰

Like the identity of the adopted child, certain truths about Australia's origins are a threat to the social order and must be sealed away in records hidden deep in the Australian unconscious. Just as the adopted body was first declared 'illegitimate' and then 'legitimated' by adoption, the introduction of the discourse of the legitimacy/illegitimacy dichotomy into Australian society

California, 'although adoptees at that time comprised 2-3% of the population of this country, they represented 30-40% of the individuals found in residential treatment centres, juvenile halls, and special schools.'

²⁴⁹ State Records New South Wales (conversation with public access manager Christine Yeats).

represses the discourse of detachment and its memory of loss and veils the anxieties surrounding the association of origins with criminality. Figured in this way, if the Australian community is read as a closed-records adoptee, it was once a 'bastard nation'²⁵¹, 'physically and culturally detached from its region'²⁵², adopted by the United States of America; 'Australians are easily impressed by the power of the United States... We have adopted unthinkingly many of the values of its commercial, democratic society.'²⁵³ But in the wake of America's 'War on Terrorism' and the war on Iraq, more families are being systematically dismembered, more parents and children are being incarcerated, and more people are being subjected to human rights violations--in America's Foster Care, Adoption and Prison systems – than in any other nation since World War II.²⁵⁴

A more complex aspect of the analogy between Australia and the adopted body is signified linguistically in a juxtaposed 'naming'. In ancient legal terms the 'illegitimate' child was termed 'filius nullius', the 'child of no one'.

Before modern adoption, the baby was cared for in some way or another
(in Western culture it has always been illegal to murder an illegitimate

²⁵⁰ Gail Reekie *Measuring Immorality; Social Inquiry and the Problem of Illegitimacy* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1998 182

²⁵¹ I have borrowed the term from the activist adoptee rights organization. See <http://www.bastards.org>

²⁵² Bruce Grant *Fatal Attraction; Reflections on the Alliance with the United States* Black Inc. Melbourne 2004 86

²⁵³ *Ibid* 6

child), but it was also clearly demarcated as having no natural connection to the social order. In the Poor Law of 1576, for example, one encounters a characterisation of the bastard as 'an offence against God's lawe and man's lawe.' Here we see a moral requirement for the bastard to be stigmatised, but economics is an equally difficult issue: in the absence of a recognisable family connection, who is responsible for the child's welfare? Accordingly, the bastard was 'filius nullius,' or 'nobody's child,' effectively making him a ward of the state and, in 1576, a burden on local taxes. The local tax burden was sure to make the unwed mother the target of financially driven, as well as moral, disdain.²⁵⁵

Over two centuries later, the whole continent of Australia was similarly classified as 'terra nullius', the 'land of no one', and this has been a focus of much debate and analysis. Just as the category of 'filius nullius' had no biological basis for the bastard child, 'terra nullius' had no basis 'in ecological or cultural reality'.²⁵⁶ Both namings are fantasies that simply deny the way the world is.²⁵⁷ In this particular encoding it is the country itself, rather than the Australian community, which is figured as the bastard child. Extending this analogy, the original inhabitants of

²⁵⁴ Lori Carangelo *Chosen Children; Billion Dollar Babies in America's Foster Care, Adoption & Prison Systems* Access Press Palm Desert 2002 revised 2003 Electronic Edition <http://www.loricarangelo.com/> Last viewed 28 March 2007.

²⁵⁵ Garry Leonard 'The Immaculate Deception; Adoption in Albee's Plays' in *Imagining Adoption; Essays on Literature and Culture* ed. Marianne Novy University of Michigan Press Michigan 2001 112

²⁵⁶ Kay Torney Souter 'Babies in the Deathspace: Psychic Identity in Australian Fiction and Autobiography' *Southerly* Summer Vol 56 No 4 1996-97 20

the land become figured as 'abandoning', and like unwedded mothers 'pitiful or irredeemably wayward',²⁵⁸ they must quickly dissolve into anonymity as punishment for existing outside the legitimated culture and its laws. Under this mythology, the land, figured as an abandoned bastard child, demands a compassionate rescuing by the State and must be adopted under the closed-records adoption system, so assigning it 'legitimacy' but keeping the truth about its origins a secret.

Once we reproblematised it and view it in a broader historical context, we can see the history of adoption in general and of closed record adoption in particular as the latest attempt to resolve the essentially unresolvable fact of illegitimacy. The problem of the child born out of wedlock and thus 'illegitimate' is always a thorny one from the perspective of social institutions. Compassion dictates that all babies deserve care and protection, but these institutions also rely on notions of 'legitimacy' as that which underwrites their own authority to act. Illegitimate events cannot be simply declared legitimate without calling into question what determines the difference between the two, and this, in turn, brings into high profile the constructed nature of authority and even of the law itself. Not surprisingly, then, modern adoption is a court-ordered process that

²⁵⁷ Audrey Marshall and Margaret McDonald *The Many-Sided Triangle: Adoption in Australia* Melbourne University Press Melbourne 2001 4

²⁵⁸ K Inglis *Living Mistakes* George Allen and Unwin Sydney 1984 7

confers a degree of legitimacy on the conception, while keeping track, in sealed records, of the facts of the illegitimate birth.²⁵⁹

The institutions evolving in Australian society also relied on notions of 'legitimacy' as that which underwrote their authority to act. The declaring of illegitimate events to be legitimate, and vice versa, brings into high profile the constructed nature of authority and, as a consequence, the constructed nature of Australian law. The 'adoption' of land by the Australian community is, today, figured as a court-ordered process that confers a degree of legitimacy on the relationship between indigenous people and their land, but keeps track of, and contains, the 'illegitimacy' of land rights claims.²⁶⁰

One response to the emergence of native title as a persistent element in Australian legal landscapes, for example, has been an effort to discipline native title to conform with this imaginary - to establish a legal framework to contain it; to identify boundaries beyond which it cannot exist; to restrict its influence where it cannot be extinguished.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Leonard op.cit. 111-2

²⁶⁰ See Elizabeth A. Povinelli *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* Duke University Press Durham and London

²⁶¹ Richard Howitt 'Frontiers, Borders, Edges: liminal challenges to the hegemony of exclusion' *Australian Geographical Studies* vol 39 no 1 March 2001 Also at: <http://www.es.mq.edu.au/~rhowitt/BORDERS.htm>

The body of the Australian community is following the life path of the closed-record adoptee, its origins associated with criminality and illegality, not only in its official convict history but its criminally denied invasion of an occupied country. As a result Australia exhibits a hyper-concern with the legitimacy/illegitimacy dichotomy, projecting the illegitimate body onto a variety of bodies, such as ex-nuptial children, as well as the Australian landscape, to justify the reconsignment of land and bodies, and to define its own culture as legitimate.

Rather than serving to reinforce a social structure that is by nature legitimate, social condemnation of illegitimacy exposes a myriad of internal disturbances and quietly unresolved political tensions around race, class, gender, sexuality and colonialism.²⁶²

Australia posits as 'illegitimate' all kinds of bodies in its quest for delineating a legitimate culture. The fostering of fears, shames and taboos over illegitimate bodies justifies their secreting, their need to be hidden, but hidden legitimately. So asylum seekers are, today, declared illegitimate bodies to be hidden away in the middle of deserts and islands while their legitimation is considered. The acceptance of this practice in Australian history and culture has fed directly into the production of the closed-record adoptee: 'Since the eighteenth century, non-

indigenous Australia has readily tolerated the reconsignment of human beings of all ages precisely because it has metaphorised the land as empty'²⁶³, the country as parentless.

The life path of the closed-record adoptee can be read upon that of the 'bastard nation', accompanied by the same hopes that the hypothetical 'blank page' of the psyche of nobody's child, of the new community on nobody's land, will successfully graft into its new family Romance, grow into its lie, eventually standing as the legitimization of that lie, as a nation forgets.

The metaphor of the closed-record adoptee

For the closed-records adopted child a 'myth of sameness'²⁶⁴ encouraged a 'wishful thinking' that it could not distinguish between its mother's body and that of another woman, or if they did, would soon forget that difference.

Adoption, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, was viewed as 'the same' as having biological parents. The closed record system had good intentions, perhaps – the woman gets on with her life, the child's upbringing will not be interrupted, and so on – but it also served to inaugurate and protect the myth that once the baby was placed with a family, there was no difference

²⁶² Reekie op.cit. 182

²⁶³ Souter op.cit 20

²⁶⁴ Leonard 111

between this placement and a biological birth. Thus, this strategy for legitimizing the child, though it has obvious good intentions, is not without problems, for both the adoptive parent and the adopted child, who are both locked into a myth of sameness: for the adoptive parents, this is the child they were unable to conceive; for the child, these are the parents assigned to him or her after his first set abandoned him or her in some way.²⁶⁵

In Australia a 'myth of sameness' has also been promulgated in the officially sanctioned constructions of exclusivist Nationalist mythologies that emphasise continuity and unity between state and community, what has been termed a 'customary' relationship, 'based on those exclusive imaginaries which are structures around heritage in terms of kinship and genealogy, common descent and language'.²⁶⁶ This myth is based on a model of genealogy and kinship and involves a common language and a common culture.²⁶⁷ It represses the discourse of detachment and its association with illegitimacy because addressing it would

²⁶⁵ Ibid 111

²⁶⁶ Anna Yeatman *Postmodernist Revisionings of the Political* Routledge London 1994 Yeatman opposes this to the 'conventionalist' relationship which 'is based on acceptance of legal structures that allow different groups to operate together, and with commonly held values which guarantee equal access to resources by all groups, whether such resources are symbolic or other kinds of capital'. Sneja Gunew <http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/sgunew/FRAMARG/ONE.HTM> from *Framing Marginality; multicultural literary studies* Last viewed 13 March 2007

²⁶⁷ Gunew Ibid

risk the deconstruction of 'that spuriously unified national culture whose "unity" is based ... on the eradication of the very difference it supposedly avows.'²⁶⁸

As the myth of sameness functions in the Australian imaginary to repress the discourse of detachment so it also serves to disguise the 'primal wound' caused by the initial experiences of loss that gave birth to the discourse of detachment. Nancy Newton Verrier coined the term, 'primal wound,' arguing the adopted body is marked by separation trauma,²⁶⁹ causing a wound that remains as part of the adoptee's subjectivity, existing as unconscious memory traces, that may or may not have an effect on the adopted body's development of subjectivity.

bonding doesn't begin at birth, but is a continuum of physiological, psychological and spiritual events which begin in utero and continue throughout the postnatal bonding period. When this natural evolution is interrupted by the postnatal separation from the biological mother, the resultant experience of abandonment and loss is indelibly imprinted on the unconscious minds of these children, causing that which I call the 'primal wound'.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁹ Verrier, *op.cit.* 70

²⁷⁰ Ibid 1

Verrier posits the psychological reaction to having a 'primal wound' in the subjectivity of a body is the construction of a 'false self' to substitute for the effects of the loss of the originating conditions of identity and in reaction against threats of further losses and trauma.²⁷¹

Our current understanding of prenatal psychology has made many realize that the environment in utero is an important part of a baby's well-being. Yet, when it comes to adoption there 'seems to be a blackout in awareness. There seems to be a reluctance to recognise that at the moment of birth and the next few days, weeks, or months in the life of a child, when he is separated from his mother and handed over to strangers, he could be profoundly affected by this experience. What does it mean that we for so long have wanted to ignore this?²⁷²

The false self is the adoptees' method of adjusting to their environment in order to protect themselves from further abandonment or rejection²⁷³ and it is this 'false self' that the adopted body constructs that *protects*, but also *hides*, the primal wound.

²⁷¹ Ibid 35

²⁷² Ibid 13

²⁷³ Ibid 35

Perhaps the strength of this primal relationship has been underestimated because of the apparent adjustment many children make to the new environment. As adults we believe what we want to believe, and we want to believe that a child not causing any trouble is well-adjusted... Adjustment often means shutting down - creating a 'false self' ... With the compliant adoptee, the problem is what *isn't* happening, rather than what is.²⁷⁴

Jennifer Rutherford, in *The Gauche Intruder; Freud, Lacan and the White Australian Fantasy*,²⁷⁵ detects a similar condition in the Australian identity and delineates a 'false self' for the Australian nation which she terms the 'Great Australian Good' - the tendency to proffer a banner of 'caring' over the instigation of its opposite:

This identification with the power to do good underpins the numerous attempts at social engineering that have characterized Australia's shady history of black/white relations: relations that have deprived Aboriginal Australians, at every turn, of their good. The intent to do good is the alibi that is called upon whenever this history of deprivation momentarily registers in the national consciousness.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Ibid 33-34

²⁷⁵ Jennifer Rutherford *The Gauche Intruder; Freud, Lacan and the White Australian Fantasy* Melbourne University Press Melbourne 2000

In analysing Australian national fantasies Jennifer Rutherford claims 'we can see the way such fantasies disguise a lacuna, a trauma, that is foundational' in the Australian moral code at the heart of white Australian identity.²⁷⁷

Australia's foundational lacuna, the truth about its origins and hence its identity, is disguised by, and its foundational trauma repressed by, the fantasy represented by the naming of terra nullius and the exclusive nationalist mythologies that evolved from it. This parallels the experience of the closed-record adopted body, the lacuna in its identity is written on its original birth certificate, and its trauma of loss repressed by the myth of sameness. Like the bastard child, then, the body of the contemporary Australian community may be read as born illegitimate and associated with the criminal, not only in its official convict history but its criminally denied invasion of an occupied country. In turn, this community has figured the landscape of Australia as a bastard body, abandoned by its mother, and by doing so has defined, justified and legitimated its own culture, introducing discourses of legitimacy and illegitimacy to counter the discourse of detachment. The metaphor of the closed-record adopted body reveals an Australian community with a 'false self' that acts to hide the traumatic remembrances of separations and detachments at the heart of the Australian psyche. So an experience of 'adoption', although very different in each case and subculture, might be claimed to be common to all Australians.

²⁷⁶ Ibid 26-7

The experience of closed-record adoption creates a dysfunction of perception in the subject which hinders the accurate reading of people and contexts, and hinders the learning of skills with which to accurately read them. Not only is the adoptee deprived of that earliest of learning patterns - its own mother's face and body - having instead to struggle to read a face that is far more foreign to it - but the complex patterning of repressed separation trauma, instinctive emotion, the need to trust the words, and the myth of sameness serve to confuse the closed-records adoptee even further, after this initial reading difficulty. As a consequence the adoptees 'readings' of the people and the world around them may be scattered and difficult to organize, leaving them vulnerable in a world where so much depends on the accurate perception of the characters of others. In this way the loving protection of adopted people actually makes them more vulnerable and the new security of the adoptive home is read falsely by others to mean the security of the subject. In the same way the Australian community has been made vulnerable by its adoption experience.

The return of the repressed: the adopted body as neurotic symptom

Under conditions of repression, the repetition-compulsion establishes a fixation to the past, which alienates the neurotic from the present and

²⁷⁷ Ibid 53

commits him to the unconscious quest for the past in the future. Thus neurosis exhibits the quest for novelty, but underlying it, at the level of the instincts, is the compulsion to repeat.²⁷⁸

The closed-record adoptee becomes a changeling body when they discover or receive newly revealed truths about their identity and must rapidly integrate this information into their current identity. The changeling adoptee, with her search for her biological family, and perhaps the introduction and fostering of a relationship between biological and adoptive families, as well as her need to rapidly integrate newly-revealed hidden truths into an already developed identity, offers a redemptive metaphor for the future development of the Australian nation. A part of this process of integration is a 'looking back' in an attempt to understand the current self, to reassess one's personal history, 're-read' the past and identify how the stories and myths that they were given, and that they constructed about themselves, functioned to hinder positive life choices. A similar historical reassessment has been a work in progress by an Australian nation seeking to integrate revealed truths into its current identity in an attempt to understand how repressed discourses may have functioned to influence the development of its history. As a result, we have 'begun to perceive organised structures of forgetting in relation to the Aboriginal people, structures

²⁷⁸ Norman O. Brown *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* Wesleyan University Press Middletown Connecticut 1959 92

which the historians both helped to erect, and, many years later, to break down.'²⁷⁹

Michel de Certeau offers a psychoanalytic perspective on the engagement between historical and contemporary discourses,²⁸⁰ proposing that the present is haunted by the 'return of the repressed', an 'other' that has been eradicated in the process of writing, that comes back to disturb and unsettle the fixity of current meanings.²⁸¹ 'The dead haunt the living. The past: it "re-bites" [*il re-mord*] (it is a secret and repeated biting)'²⁸²:

History is 'cannibalistic,' and memory becomes the closed arena of conflict between two contradictory operations: forgetting, which is not something passive, a loss, but an action directed against the past; and the mnemonic trace, the return of what was forgotten, in other words, an action by a past that is now forced to disguise itself... It resurfaces, it troubles... it inscribes there the law of the other.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Paula Hamilton 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History' *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia* eds. Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton Oxford University Press Melbourne 1994 13

²⁸⁰ Michel de Certeau *Heterologies. Discourse on the Other* Manchester University Press Manchester 1986 Ch.1

²⁸¹ Reekie op.cit. 20

²⁸² Certeau op.cit. 3

²⁸³ Ibid 3-4

The repressed trauma of Australia's past has enacted a pressure on the symbolic and acted as an unconscious motivator in the development of Australian society by inscribing the law of the other and the construction of the 'un-Australian' projects an 'Other' in the attempt to make 'Australianness' an ideology. This is the nature of the discourse of detachment, which is a repressed discourse. This repression has re-entered the symbolic of Australian society, time and time again, in the legal process of removing babies from their mother's bodies in the name of the Great Australian Good, in the orders for the removal of Aboriginal children, in the closed-record adoption system and in the incarcerated children of asylum seekers held in detention centres. These seeming 'aberrations' of a compassionate society are in fact part of a broad systemised phenomenon of separations between parents and children, in the past rarely questioned as a system of 'doing good'. Child removals as a discourse of 'caring' became so entrenched in Australian history and culture that children were often relinquished by Australian mothers²⁸⁴ even with adequate family to care for the child and without the direct intervention of government.

This repression directly feeds into the discourse of detachment influencing public opinion and government policy, to this day. The extraordinary social and cultural anxiety over the mother/child bond can be seen in the public hysteria

²⁸⁴ An example of such 'coercion in caring' can be found in Penny Van Torn's 'Sky Gods and Stolen Children', presented at the University of Sydney in 2004, in which she examines Governor Macquarie's

over the trial of Lindy Chamberlain or the 'children overboard affair'. Hence this anxiety creates a vulnerability in Australian society which is ripe for political manipulation. A contemporary flashpoint for the return of the repressed can be read in the 'children overboard' affair which surfaced to affect national political decision-making, specifically, Australia's national line on border protections and the treatment of children and child-removals within detention centres. Just as the Howard government actively continued to separate families in detention centres, at the same time it cleverly played upon Australian anxieties surrounding the separation of the mother/child body to further its ability to do so. In the 'Tampa Crisis' over the arrival of asylum seekers in a sinking ship in Australian waters in 2001 the site of the mother/child refugee body became a space of national political manipulation.

The senate inquiry into a 'Certain Maritime Incident', otherwise known as the 'children overboard' inquiry, was concerned with the denial of access to land by the sinking ship in Australian waters, with asylum seekers on board. The Liberal/National Coalition Government, led by the Prime Minister John Howard, directed defence headquarters to put pressure on the navy to ensure that no one from SIEV 4 would 'ever' be allowed to land on Christmas Island. About six weeks later this same boat became the centre of the 'children overboard' affair when the asylum seekers were accused by the Howard

'Annual Feasts' conducted to persuade Aboriginal women to relinquish their children and which continued

government of throwing their children overboard when refused permission to land on Australian protected shores. This Tampa crisis launched the Howard government's dramatic policy change on border protection, winning it huge public support and helping the Coalition win the election in November 2001.²⁸⁵

On the other hand, this anxiety over the mother/child bond in the Australian community, so cleverly played upon for political ends, has been just as often suppressed by governments, as used by it. A report titled 'A Last Resort?'²⁸⁶ from the 'National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention', announced on 28 November 2001, was tabled in federal Parliament on 13 May 2004 and recounts some examples of enforced separations in Australian detention centres. There was, for instance, the Russian mother held in Villawood who was to be deported without her infant son, considered a legitimate citizen of Australia because his father was Australian. The nine-month-old boy was separated from his mother for five months, only seeing her for a few hours on three days a week. The mother reported the baby ceased to recognize her after many months except when she sang a particular song.²⁸⁷ In another instance, children of illegal immigrants were snatched from school without the presence of parents. No

till 1835

²⁸⁵ Marion Wilkinson and David Marr *Dark Victory* Allen & Unwin Crows Nest 2003

²⁸⁶ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/children_detention_report/report/

²⁸⁷ Cynthia Banham SMH October 2 2002

permission was given for the children to farewell the friends they had been to school with for up to seven years, before they were taken into detention.

These structures of forgetting, erected around the body of the asylum seeker as 'illegal' and Other, are so powerful that the failure of the Howard Government to act in regards to the saving of mothers and children on the SIEVX is as rapidly forgotten as the 'children overboard' affair was believed. On October 18, 2001, a small, unnamed 19.5 x 4 metre wooden fishing boat that would later be dubbed SIEVX (Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel X) departed Bandar Lampung, Indonesia en route to Christmas Island. On October 19 at 3pm the boat went down in international waters, inside the Australian aerial border protection surveillance zone. Approximately 146 children, 142 women and 65 men perished . Structures of racially based systems of 'forgettings' are still in place today as the rapid 'forgetting' of the 353 asylum seekers, largely from Iraq and Afghanistan, who drowned with the sinking of the SIEVX six years ago, can attest to. 146 of these were children, their lives and stories in the national consciousness sinking like the boat.²⁸⁸ The same Senate Select Committee that was enquiring into 'A Certain Maritime Incident' also considered the SIEVX and concluded that 'it [is] extraordinary that a major human disaster could occur in the vicinity of a theatre of intensive Australian operations and remain undetected until three days after

²⁸⁸ <http://sievx.com/> Last viewed March 23, 2007

the event, without any concern being raised within intelligence and decision making circles.'²⁸⁹

The return of the repressed occurred in the rapid construction, and wide-scale acceptance of, the closed-record adoption system in Australia. This, I argue, can be read as an hysterical response to, or a subconscious mimicry of, the unconscious and repressed knowledge of the enforced child removals in Australia that produced what is now known as the stolen generations. Large numbers of Aboriginal children were 'legally' separated from their families after 1910: 'the separation of families in a systematic policy of racial destruction did not end in some states until 1969.'²⁹⁰ 'One of the dominant motifs in the urban Aboriginal memory in particular has been the taking away of children by the State authorities'.²⁹¹ The flurry of white adoptions that occurred towards the end of this period may well be linked to the denial of these memories and experiences in the broader community and be an subconsciously motivated attempt to reassure their own community that removing babies from their mothers was an acceptable and humane practice.

²⁸⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SIEV-X> Last viewed March 23, 2007

²⁹⁰ Hamilton op.cit. 13

²⁹¹ Ibid op.cit. 13

Kay Torney Souter discusses these particular connections in her essay, 'Babies in the Deathspace: Psychic Identity in Australian Fiction and Autobiography'.²⁹² In it Souter outlines the negotiation of childhood and the construction of self in the space of genocide. She concentrates on aspects of twentieth-century Australia, claiming the crucial social-historical prototype for her thinking 'is the mass kidnapping of Aboriginal children, particularly mixed-race children, by various Australian governments during the last hundred years.'²⁹³

These stolen Aboriginal children are the most brutal and visible, but by no means the only, manifestation of a distinctively Australian wish to move children about. Not that the wish to do this is in any way peculiar to Australia, of course: it seems to be one of civilisation's discontents, and all cultures have their own stories to tell about it. Like all such stories, the Australian story is shaped by a specific history: I argue that the particular form of the Australian wish to move children around can be understood, at least in part, as a response to living in a world made available by recent and innumerable massacres. The mass kidnapping of Aboriginal children is the foundational enactment of child reconsignment in Australia, and I

²⁹² Souter op.cit.

²⁹³ Ibid 19 Souter notes: 'The history of this catastrophe is still being written: see, for example, Rosemary Van den Berg, *No Options, No Choice* (Broome 1994)'

argue that it colours the conduct and the perception of all other child
reconsignments.²⁹⁴

Souter's argument aligns with my own thesis that 'Australia' can be read in the metaphor of the closed-record adoptee by pointing out that the reconsignment of citizens of all kinds is based on the idea that the child/citizen's identity is for the state to create. This was precisely how Australia, itself, began:

Children are reconsigned – that is, moved from the family of origin to be raised by another family – for reasons which have to do with other people's desire to move a child out of one situation into another. The three main results of the wish to place or re-place a child - forcible government dictated removal of a child, voluntary (in some sense) adoption or foster placement, and reproductive technology involving some form of parental transfer of donor gametes - represent different, though overlapping, responses to the belief that the child's (and thus the citizen's) identity is for the state to create, with or without the co-operation of the biological parents. The development of Australia as a British settlement shows a particularly literal working through of this idea. The creation of European-settled Australia was based on the idea of the reconsignment of citizens: convicts, displaced persons, child migrants... preferable to the original

²⁹⁴ Ibid 19

inhabitants, who the government deemed so unsatisfactory as to not to exist at all as citizens.²⁹⁵

Souter posits that the stolen Aboriginal child is thus the prototype, not only of all reconsigned Australian children, but of the child-citizen in post-invasion Australia. In this world, children do not exist in their own right until granted some form of acknowledgement by the 'meta-parent', the state or, through it, the socially acknowledged guardian. The reconsigned, stolen or adopted body of the child, the central emblem of the discourse of detachment, becomes a motif for *all* Australian citizens.

This particular manifestation of repressed trauma as the 'wish to move children about' in Australia is, Souter suggests, a guilty response to living in a psychological 'Deathspace'²⁹⁶, a psychic 'post-massacre vacancy'.²⁹⁷ Moving Aboriginal children about is the foundational enactment of this wish:

Since the eighteenth century, non-indigenous Australia has readily tolerated the reconsignment of human beings of all ages precisely because it has metaphorised the land as empty, with what is ambiguously called a

²⁹⁵ Ibid 19-20 Souter notes: 'Indigenous Australians were first counted in the census and given the right to vote in 1966'

²⁹⁶ Souter borrows this term from Deborah Bird Rose's account of the massacres of recent history in *Hidden Histories: Black Stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations* Aboriginal Studies Press Canberra 1991

Dead Heart as its centre ... I believe that the image of the Dead Heart of Australia – with its implications of sterility and murder – should be understood as a guilty response to the experience of living on the site of innumerable massacres... Living in and profiting from a Deathspace creates enormous cultural anxiety. In particular, it shapes the way the state treats its citizens, and also, often, the way individuals who live in it think about themselves. One of the effects of the Deathspace must logically be a suspicion and intolerance of liveliness and generativity. In the cultural anxiety produced by genocide, mixed-race babies in particular are a sign of transgressive potential for love and adaptation between the races.²⁹⁸

Although these babies may also have been a product of rape and violence, rather than love, Souter makes a valid point and it aligns with my claim that the popularity and over-enthusiasm for adoption during its peak period in Australia signifies the return of the repressed as a ‘proven’ justification for the legitimacy of taking Aboriginal children into white families. Souter asks:

How can spontaneous living generativity, especially as embodied in the family, in the bodies of parents and babies, be tolerated in the space produced by the massacre?

²⁹⁷ Souter *ibid* 20-21

The answer is that it cannot. As in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, generational identity must be forcibly reconstructed in a Deathspace, in an effort to justify history. The physically and psychically bonded are separated in the interest of managing the new space, and the best 'parent' becomes the patriarchal state. In the Deathspace, children will be considered to belong with guardians who can teach them ... the relational skills of the institutionalized. Deathspace anxieties are relieved by the attempt to obliterate physical relatedness... In such circumstance, bodily links such as physical resemblance are intolerable reminders of the actualities of birth and death: the status of a differentiated individual in the massacre is intolerable. In the Deathspace, the concept of the child as citizen-commodity is more tolerable than the idea of the child as loved and lover.²⁹⁹

In the Deathspace, babies (and therefore their families) are not regarded as individuals with histories, futures, and social, psychic and biological realities. Souter concludes her paper by commenting on the writing of adoption narratives:

For a child to ask 'where do I come from' is to challenge the ideologies that make the strain of living on the site of massacres tolerable, because an

²⁹⁸ Ibid 20- 21

honest answer would insist on the realities of parental experience and thus the outrage of the child's loss.

Narratives of adoption and child-stealing in Australia are intelligible as rejections of a silence about the past which is imposed to make the present tolerable. Although it may seem safer to insist on the myth of no origins in the case of stolen children, via a sort of biological Terra Nullius that argues that the child was invented with her new birth certificate, children's origins have a way of revealing themselves. Suzanne Chick's flat collar-bones, [and] Robert Dessaix's gallic colouring ... insist on the reality of origins and thus of relatedness.³⁰⁰

The repression of the discourse of detachment is overlain with a construction of a world where adopted children are conceptualized as needing no link to their genealogical past. Memories are invented and planted by a state apparatus that has always wished to move children, and citizens, about. Souter reminds us that 'memories are not of the conscious, Cartesian mind alone: The landscape has "memories", bodies have memories, the unconscious has memories, and the denial of those memories is part of the pain of living in the Deathspace.'³⁰¹ She confirms that, in Australia today, there are stories that *need* to be told:

²⁹⁹ Ibid 21

³⁰⁰ Ibid 34

³⁰¹ Ibid 35

Aboriginal people are telling them, just as adoptees and 'child-migrants' are reconstructing their histories. Speaking about the child's history in the space of genocide challenges the Deathspace.³⁰²

Adoptee writers

Although Indigenous life-writing has successfully challenged Australia's traditional national identity, with works in the canon of Australian Literature such as Ruby Langford Ginibi's *Don't Take Your Love to Town*,³⁰³ Sally Morgan's *My Place*³⁰⁴ and Kim Scott's *Benang*,³⁰⁵ there are very few changeling narratives which reflect the fact that the deconstruction of the closed-record system, which continues to function on some levels³⁰⁶ (currently, only adopted persons over the age of 18 can obtain their original birth certificate),³⁰⁷ has allowed adoptees to undertake the 'writing cure' and speak about their experiences. The dearth of narratives from closed-record adoptees who died before the 1990 Act represents the silence of a demographic of adoptees who never told their stories because they didn't know them.

³⁰² Ibid 35

³⁰³ Ruby Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town* Penguin Ringwood Victoria 1988

³⁰⁴ Sally Morgan *My Place* Fremantle Arts Centre Press Fremantle W.A. 1987

³⁰⁵ Kim Scott *Benang*. Fremantle Arts Centre Press South Fremantle W.A 1999

³⁰⁶ See http://www.exiledmothers.com/open_adoption/index.html for some of the problems encountered with 'open' adoptions that are not really 'open' because of the lack of legal infrastructure to ensure and regulate contact

³⁰⁷ '2.6.2 Adopted persons' birth certificates' in *Review of the Adoption Act 2000* Report to Parliament October 2006 NSW Department of Community Services
<http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/adoption/adoption.htm> 10 Last viewed 15 March 2007

I would say that the writing cure can be, and perhaps ... must be, also a reading cure, and in a sense an interpersonal one, linking writer and reader via a creative work... That experience of meeting 'what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed' in literature may in one sense seem mundane, but in fact ... can perform the analytic function of opening our own mind to ourselves... I think it's in part the way that individuals 'rewrite' the texts they read, mobilizing the 'uncanny feeling of familiarity', that helps to dislodge constraint and move the reader towards greater insight and freedom.³⁰⁸

Since 1953, 150,000 Korean children have been adopted into fifteen main host countries in the West and constitute the largest international adoptee group worldwide. As a result an adopted Korean movement has existed on an international level since the 1990s and is today trying to formulate an identity and community of its own beyond Western adoption ideology and Korean nationalism.³⁰⁹ 'Adopted Koreans and the development of identity in the "third space"' by Tobias Hübinette, a PhD candidate in Korean Studies at the University of Stockholm, Sweden, outlines the history of international adoption from Korea and the emergence of an adopted Korean identity transcending 'race',

³⁰⁸ Kay Torney Souter, English, La Trobe University, Melbourne.
<http://www.psychoanalysis.asn.au/about/dialogue/472> Last viewed 12 March 2007

³⁰⁹ British Association of Adoption and Fostering *Adoption and Fostering* Vol 28 No1 Spring 2004 ii or
http://www.baaf.org.uk/res/pubs/aandf/abstracts/04_1.shtml#ii Last viewed 12 March 2007

citizenship, culture, religion and language in what he terms the 'third space'.³¹⁰

Outsiders Within, Writing on Transracial Adoption, (2006) is written by adoptees and addresses this boom in 'transracial adoption' and the media that reports it. As *Outsiders Within* reveals, while transracial adoption is a practice traditionally considered benevolent, it often exacts a heavy emotional, cultural, and even economic toll but through essays, fiction, poetry, and art, intercountry adoptees are exploring this intimate aspect of globalization.

Moving beyond the personal narrative, these transracially adopted writers from around the world tackle difficult questions about how to survive the racist and ethnocentric worlds they inhabit, what connects the countries relinquishing their children to the countries importing them, why poor families of color have their children removed rather than supported – about who, ultimately, they are. In their inquiry, they unseat conventional understandings of adoption politics, ultimately reframing the controversy as a debate that encompasses human rights, peace, and reproductive justice.³¹¹

In America and Europe inter-racial adoptee voices are forming communities together and being published, perhaps because of internationalism and

³¹⁰ Ibid

³¹¹ <http://www.southendpress.org/2005/items/87646> Last viewed 15 March 2007

difference has loomed large in their subjectivity in a way it never was allowed to for closed-record and changeling adoptees in Australia. A number of changeling memoirs published in Australia over the last few years such as *Searching for Charmian* (1994)³¹² by Suzanne Chick, *A Mother's Disgrace* (1994)³¹³ by Robert Dessaix, *The Truth About My Fathers* (2003)³¹⁴ by Gaby Naher and *The Magician's Son* (2005)³¹⁵ by Sandy McCutcheon, but the changeling body continues to be a quiet body, silenced because of ethical issues within families that evolved under the myth of sameness, secrecy provisions and taboos. In some ways McCutcheon, born in New Zealand, lived out the real-life consequence of protest: his behavioural problems bewildered him as much as they did his adoptive parents who denied to him that he was adopted at all. As a result he became estranged from, and disinherited by, both his adoptive parents.³¹⁶ His adopted sister, however, who participated in the maintaining of the 'invisibility' of her adoption, remained very much in the bosom of the adopting family.³¹⁷ Both Dessaix and Chick, on the other hand, were able to write their stories because one or a number of the adult parties to the adoption had already passed away or deteriorated in dementia. Even so, the extent to which they 'self-repress' their own voices to protect the elder parties is still evident to the reader of their

³¹² Suzanne Chick *Searching for Charmian* Picador Sydney 1995 First published by Pan Macmillan Sydney 1994

³¹³ Robert Dessaix *A Mother's Disgrace* Angus and Robertson Sydney 1994

³¹⁴ Gaby Naher *The Truth about my Fathers: a memoir* Random House Milsons Point 2003

³¹⁵ Sandy McCutcheon *The Magician's Son; a search for identity* Viking, Penguin Books, Melbourne 2005

³¹⁶ McCutcheon op.cit. 29

³¹⁷ Ibid 65

narratives. As his mother remembers the circumstances of his birth, Dessaix writes:

To this day, when she speaks of that time, she speaks of having done something immoral. To tell the absolute truth, I find this confusing and painful and wish she wouldn't say it. The first time she said it I could feel tears in the back of my throat.³¹⁸

Such comments reveal a lot to adoptees about the world of the families who gave them away, but the idea that they are *still* thought of as the product of immorality and not of love also goes to show how far these families place the world of their own parents and family above that of the adoptee who is a stranger to them. Rather than changing their opinions about anything or anyone in their family, the adoptee must remain constructed as the 'unwanted' even after reunion. When Dessaix's birth mother shows *her* mother the photo of him, Dessaix discovers:

One thing was made clear that morning: no word of my existence must be spoken to anyone - not to Yvonne's brothers or sisters or children or

³¹⁸ Dessaix op.cit. 10

anyone else. Mother was very firm about that. As I write the ban has still not been lifted...³¹⁹

When Dessaix attempts to resist the refusal of his own kin to allow him a voice, the conversation takes on the cyclical form of hysterical argument:

We've talked about the ban endlessly, Yvonne and I ... in the gardens, where we used to take our sandwiches on sunny days when I was in Sydney, on the telephone, in cafés, on railway stations - but we just go round in circles. I think Yvonne feels like she's in a game of tug-of-war between the generations. I want to be named, looked in the eye, told 'Yes, you're part of our story' - not a shameful part, just a part.³²⁰

In turn, Dessaix uses literature to provoke a deeper understanding of how this feels, quoting Gogol's comedy *The Government Inspector*:

'If I might humbly beg you, sir, when you get to St Petersburg, please say to all the different big-wigs there - you know, all the senators and admirals - say "You know, Prince, or Your Excellency, in such-and-such a town lives one Pyotr Ivanovich Bobchinsky." Just say that: "lives one Pyotr Ivanovich Bobchinsky" ... Please excuse me for bothering you with

³¹⁹ Ibid 170

my presence.' He's quickly shown out. I'm not too exercised over the recognition of senators, admirals and sovereigns, but I do understand Bobchinsky's ache to be seen to exist - not approved of, necessarily, or praised, or even loved, but seen to be there.³²¹

As Dessaix urges his mother to *speak* of him, it is her persistent silence of which he writes:

I ache for her to break through its seal. Your mother's wishes are not sacred, I say to her, her wishes are no more legitimate than yours or mine. Speak to your sons, speak to your sisters - I can speak to anyone about you, but you have to stay silent! She needn't ever know. But Yvonne says nothing. And the years go by... Mother must die first. What is that woman's power?³²²

What is even more interesting than the matriarchal line's insistence that the status quo be perpetuated is the language of morality that passes between the relinquishing mother and the adoptee:

³²⁰ Ibid 170

³²¹ Ibid 171

³²² Ibid 172-173

When Yvonne speaks of one or other of her relatives, a man I might think of as narrow-minded and hopelessly mired in oppressive moral codes, and describes him as 'highly moral', 'principled' and 'good', I'm at a loss as to what to say. Who am I to say anything? It's none of my business. We use words like 'moral', 'principled' and 'good' very differently, for legitimate, socially determined reasons... All the same, there have been occasions when I've found the family's 'goodness' an affront.³²³

Dessaix is confronting the Great Australian Good within interpersonal relationships with his own kin. It lives on within Dessaix's birth family, not protecting him, he who was the baby whose interests were to be placed *first*, but protecting the rest of the family from the crime which we now recognize may not so much be the crime of an illegitimate birth, but the shame of a family's abandonment.

To protect recognition of the crime of abandonment the changeling adoptee must remain contextualized as a mistake, the trauma of his or her closed-record adoptive experience, a great good. This sets up the dichotomy, a paradox, that the life-writing adopted body must integrate into her own identity and into her narrative: to *be* the mistake, admit it, live it, or to say, loudly and clearly: 'It is

³²³ Ibid 176

you, not *I*, who is, and always was, wrong to deny my existence just because of the mores of family and society. The denial, not my existence, is what is unethical. My abandonment, not my birth, is the immorality and in this sense the relinquishing family becomes figured not as a family that has 'made' a mistake by producing the child, but has become it. Those that erected and perpetuated the closed-record adoption system and its myth of sameness are all moral victims of the Great Australian Good. It remains to be seen if the life-writing adoptee can integrate this paradox enough, become detached enough from the ethical dilemma that continues to silence her and that is built into her very subjectivity. Dessaix makes an attempt to end his life by driving off the road into a tree and McCutcheon by sticking his head in an oven, but both survive to write a novel instead.

The discourse of detachment read on the body of Australian Literature

The suppressed discourse of detachment in the Australian experience pushes its way into our dreams and can be read as symptoms on the body of Australian Literature. Peter Pierce, in *The Country of Lost Children; An Australian Anxiety*,³²⁴ locates a particularly 'Australian anxiety' regarding children, from colonial times to the present'.³²⁵ He finds this anxiety written on the body of Australian Literature in 'the symbol of the separated, lost or abandoned child, the symbol of

³²⁴ Peter Pierce *The Country of Lost Children; An Australian Anxiety* Cambridge University Press Melbourne 1999

³²⁵ *Ibid* xiii

essential if never fully resolved anxieties within the white settler communities of this country'.³²⁶ Pierce has located the return of the repressed discourse of detachment, expressed symbolically in Australian Literature in the national iconography of the child separated from its mother by being lost in the bush.

Pierce finds this symbol in Australian Literature 'an arresting figure in the history and the folklore of colonial Australia',³²⁷ one that became 'a vital means for European Australians in the latter half of the nineteenth century to express and understand the insecurities of their position in a land that was new to many of them and strange to all':

Symbolically, the lost child represents the anxieties of European settlers because of the ties with home which they have cut in coming to Australia, whether or not they journeyed here by choice. The figure of the child stands in part for the apprehensions of adults about having sought to settle in a place where they might never be at peace... In the twentieth century the symbol also continued in imaginative writing. Children lost in places they might not belong focused anxieties not only over legitimacy of land tenure, but of European Australians' spiritual and psychological lodgment.³²⁸

³²⁶ Ibid xi

³²⁷ Ibid xi

³²⁸ Ibid xii

A more recent publication by Kim Torney, *Babes in the Bush; The Making of an Australian Image*,³²⁹ also explores the development of this image from the late 1850s. Although Torney argues that 'children became lost because they, and often their families, felt quite at home in the bush'³³⁰ she argues that, paradoxically, artistic and literary representations support Pierce's views that lost children were 'emblematic ... of an anxiety that Australia will never truly welcome European settlement'.³³¹

In colonial Australia the child lost in the bush was a symbol of an insecure position and functioned to unite people who would otherwise be isolated geographically, as well as by class and racial barriers:

This disparate gathering united in a common cause provided a living symbol of the values of mateship and bush community spirit, and the powerful unifying force of the search became even more apparent with a later report that 'Chinese also abandoned their usual employment, and for two days their camps were almost empty'.³³²

³²⁹ Kim Torney *Babes in the Bush; The Making of an Australian Image*, Curtin University Books Fremantle Arts Centre Press Perth 2005

³³⁰ Ibid 52

³³¹ Pierce op.cit. 6

³³² Torney op.cit. 112

Torney observes how real-life instances of children lost in the Australian bush, such as the Duff children, were used for the purposes of religious and moral instruction in schools, 'the concept of expiating guilt, of winning redemption through personal sacrifice and suffering'³³³ resonating with religious teachings. Pierce also notes that the symbol of the separated and lost child became, paradoxically, a symbol of unity within the community as people from all walks of life gathered together to search. 'Lost children united rural communities in this country in colonial times, as desperately their members sought to find the lost ones alive. Subsequently, they might have to unite in mourning.'³³⁴ Pierce observes that this provided opportunities for isolated people and groups to 'come together' because, when a child was 'taken' by this new hostile land, it functioned, ironically, to unify in search and/or mourning. Aboriginal people, from whom the land was taken, were often sent back into it as 'trackers'.

In roughly the second half of the last century, European children were often taken by the land. The lodgment of settlers in this country had always been fraught with natural perils. It was compromised as well by uncertainty about their moral right to be here... Often they [the children] were saved by Aboriginal men who had been dispossessed of that same

³³³ Pierce op.cit. 112

³³⁴ Ibid xiii

land. Here, potentially, was a most potent image of reconciliation between black and white Australians. All too soon it was forgotten.³³⁵

The main positive function of this representation of the separated child in Australian literature and art is, then, contradictorily that it seeks to unite those who otherwise would remain unconnected in an isolated and isolating geography.

In his study of the development of this symbol, Pierce locates a change in imaginative writing by the mid-1950s when 'new and sharper' versions of the old anxiety were being expressed in Australia with an 'essential unlikeness' to the lost child stories of the previous century. By the mid-1950s, when the closed-record adoption system was gathering momentum, the symbol of the lost child in literature changed so that, instead of the child wandering off and being lost in the bush, 'taken by the land', 'the agency of loss of children was now the human rather than the natural world. That is, it was purposeful, rather than accidental'.³³⁶ Like Kay Torney Souter, Pierce links the anxiety over lost children to the Stolen Generation. The 'bush' is replaced by the urban landscape, as family and society become the environment in which the child disappears:

³³⁵ Ibid xii - xiii

³³⁶ Ibid xiv

Once the land indifferently took lost Australian children of European origin, now Aboriginal children were systematically taken away from their land. If these bodies of suffering can be connected, then the process of reconciliation between European and Aboriginal Australians, which can be glimpsed at times in the colonial tales of lost children, might be advanced.³³⁷

The repressed discourse of detachment, erupting symbolically in the image of the separated child in Australian Literature, indicates one way this discourse has interacted with Australia's cultural expression. The writing of adoptees themselves also directly articulates aspects of the discourse of detachment. There are other ways, however, in which this discourse erupts into writing that are more subtle and are demonstrated through the process of *reading* rather than writing.

I have argued that the severance of children from their birth parents parallels Australia's colonial history and that the inability of Australians to confront and deal with this discourse reflects the nation's inability to confront its own past and its own identity productively. If changeling bodies read Australian texts as other detached bodies that may exhibit symptoms of an 'attachment disorder', then

³³⁷ Ibid xiv

new understandings gained from re-reading Australia's past might be integrated into the myths and beliefs that made up the false self of Australian society.

I wanted myth and reality to merge: to know who I came from, what blood was in my veins. I wanted to live consciously, to get rid of the confusion and chaos cluttering my mind. To be real.³³⁸

The changeling body writes against the fiction, the constructed fantasy of *filius nullius*, in an attempt to prove itself a real body with real origins, seeking truth. If Australian society follows the life-path of the changeling body it will finally face its repressed trauma, alleviate its anxiety and free itself of the compulsive neuroses surrounding the reassignment of children and the illegitimacy of its citizens. An ado/aptive reading of Australian texts contributes to the construction of a new integrated Australian identity free from detachment disorders, one which unites disparate and isolated bodies into community.

Although it can be argued that all post-colonial texts can be read ado/aptively as having suffered a process of ado/aption, Australian texts are particularly suited to such a reading because of Australia's historical, analogous and metaphorical links to the closed-records adopted body. Ado/aptive readings of Australian texts will interpret signs of *détachement* on the infant body of our national

literature: Patrick White's *Voss*³³⁹ gives an archetypal account of the process of being pulled into Australia's 'Dead Heart' - the centre of a land metaphorised as empty, its dead heart a kind of black hole with a powerful gravitational pull.³⁴⁰

In these representations, the Australian landscape is imaged as full of natural riches and resources waiting to be accessed by the conqueror, but also as violently emptied of life, with spaces into which people and whole cultures can disappear, which needs constant human replenishment.³⁴¹

The adopted body writes to stop itself from disappearing into the myths by which it was constructed. The adopted body reads to contribute to an Australian identity better integrated and 'truer', beyond the confines of its constructed false self. I am offering a new way of reading the post-colonial Australian text, via the psychoanalytic model of the adopted body, using the metaphor of the adopted body to read Australian Literature. Locating symptoms of attachment disorder in the detached body of Australian Literature may help to define the 'intangible something' that makes people 'Australian'. As Dessaix concludes of his own

³³⁸ Betty Jean Lifton *Twice Born; Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter* 1st pub. McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1975 Penguin Victoria 1977 94

³³⁹ Patrick White *Voss* Penguin Books Melbourne 1960 (first published by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957)

³⁴⁰ Souter op.cit. 20

³⁴¹ Ibid 20

journey as a changeling body: 'I told you: this is a tale without an ending. I have told you the truth. Now trust me.'³⁴²

³⁴² Dessaix op cit 195

CHAPTER 4

An Ado/aptive Reading of Peter Carey's

True History of the Kelly Gang (2000)

Sylvia Lawson once argued that the colonial must become nationalist to rise above the paradox of the colonial condition³⁴³ but if the colonialist crime was the violation of the traditional community, the nationalist crime has been the violation of the autonomy of the individual.³⁴⁴ In postcolonial societies nationalists may violate the rights of minority groupings, and also the customs and the familial structures of people, in their efforts to construct a unified concept of nation³⁴⁵ but by way of compensation, 'then learns how to mythologise the very values which it has helped to destroy.'³⁴⁶ Today, the story of Ned Kelly's heroic resistance to a perceived unjust law is generally identified as nationalist mythology in an appropriation of an original mythology, enacted as oppositional history. Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*³⁴⁷, published in 2002 and winner of the Booker Prize for that year, is the latest in the literary 'rememberings' of the Kelly story, and, in conjunction with Carey's other works,

³⁴³ David Carter 'From Australian Literature to Literature in Australia' paper presented at the ASAL conference in honour of Professor Elizabeth Webby, University of Sydney, February 2, 2007

³⁴⁴ Declan Kiberd *Inventing Ireland The Literature of the Modern Nation* Vintage London 1995 292

³⁴⁵ Ibid 294-5

³⁴⁶ Ibid 294-5

³⁴⁷ Peter Carey *True History of the Kelly Gang* University of Queensland Press St. Lucia 2000

has 'caught the dominant theoretical currents of the past thirty years.'³⁴⁸ Of Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* and Robert Drewe's *Our Sunshine*, Graham Huggan, in 'Cultural Memory in Postcolonial Fiction: The Uses and Abuses of Ned Kelly', writes:

This latest attempt to remember Kelly raises the usual questions, though, as to what continues to be forgotten. It seems fair to assume that for a growing number of Australians, the national narrative embodied in Kelly - and, through Kelly, enshrined in the Australian Legend - is embarrassingly exclusive, and that the history of Aboriginal genocide and dispossession - increasingly institutionalized in a number of official events, museum exhibits and state memorials - now constitutes the most significant form of memory work being undertaken in postcolonial Australia today. All the same, there are numerous signs that the folk memory associated with the Kelly gang has made a recent comeback. Why? One reason may lie in the current appeal of a variety of nation-based outlaw mythologies to a transnational memory industry.³⁴⁹

Huggan theorises that 'nostalgically rebellious figures such as Robin Hood, Jesse James and Kelly himself circulate as iconic representations of an oppositional

³⁴⁸ Elizabeth Webby 'The Carey stakes' *Australian Book Review* April 2006
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~abr/April06/Webby%20review.htm> Last viewed 29 March 30 2007

history that disguises other, probably more significant oppositional histories, ensuring that these latter remained ignored or inadequately understood'.³⁵⁰ Also, 'like other metaphorical narratives, the stories of these people endlessly express hidden structures deep in the collective psyche; ... such sagas are more evolutionary than cumulative, acquiring new meanings as they borrow from each other, migrate and reappear.³⁵¹ If Kelly has become part of the false self of the Great Australian Good, then an imaginative reassessment, via an ado/aptive reading of his latest manifestation in literature, might release some of the 'pressure of colonial history' and articulate some of the trauma of detachment stories.

The repressed discourse of detachment is a significant oppositional history disguised by a transnational memory industry that has cultivated a 'myth of sameness' in officially sanctioned constructions of exclusivist Nationalist mythologies that emphasise continuity and unity.³⁵² Huggan argues, however, that there is still a place for memory-work on such a central manifestation of Australian mythology as Ned Kelly: 'as the nation is forced to face the pressures brought upon it by its own colonial history, so the status of the national icon

³⁴⁹ Graham Huggan 'Cultural Memory in Postcolonial Fiction: The Uses and Abuses of Ned Kelly' in *Australian Literary Studies* Vol.20 No.3 2002 49-50

³⁵⁰ *Ibid* 49-50

³⁵¹ Jan Kociumbas "'Mary Ann", Joseph Fleming and "Gentleman Dick": Aboriginal-Convict Relationships in Colonial History' *Journal of Australian Colonial History* Vol. 3 No. 1 April 2001 34-5

³⁵² See Anna Yeatman *Postmodernist Revisionings of the Political* Routledge London 1994

must be imaginatively reassessed. Fiction plays a valuable role in such creative revisioning processes.’³⁵³

This ‘revisioning’ of Kelly began while he was still alive with the publication of at least four books of which he was the subject as well several pages at the opening of Marcus Clarke’s article ‘Bushranging in Australia’ published in *The Victorian Review*, January 1880 (he was hanged on 11 November that same year).³⁵⁴ Ned Kelly’s own words appeared in book form in the year 2000 with the publication of *The Jerilderie Letter*.³⁵⁵ In it Kelly’s real-life concern over the violation of the post-birth mother/infant body is readily apparent in his blustering and enraged phraseology:

the ungrateful articles convicted my mother and an infant my brother-in-law and another man who was innocent and still annoy my brothers and sisters and the ignorant unicorns even threaten to shoot myself But as soon as I am dead they will be heels up in the Muroo... It will pay Government to give those people who are suffering innocence, justice and liberty. If not I will be compelled to show some colonial stratagem which will open the eyes of not only the Victorian Police and inhabitants but also the whole British army and no doubt they will acknowledge their hound

³⁵³ Huggan op.cit. 153

³⁵⁴ Brian McDonald *Kellyana; A Bibliographical look at the Ned Kelly Legend; In conjunction with the Kelly Display held at the Justice and Police Museum*, Pamphlet, January 2002 3

were barking up the wrong stump. and that Fitzpatrick will be the cause of greater slaughter to the Union Jack than Saint Patrick was to the snakes and toads in Ireland. The Queen of England was as guilty... of what they were convicted for...³⁵⁶

The wording of Kelly's letter suggests the concept of a unified mother/infant body - in his text it is *both* the mother and the infant who are convicted, and they are mentioned again, with bitter sarcasm, later in the letter; 'the Police got great credit and praise in the papers for arresting the mother of twelve children one an infant on her breast' (36-7). This text, originally written by Kelly in 1879, expresses an early colonial anxiety in regards to the mother/infant body, and finishes with a demand for its financial nurturance:

I give fair warning to all those who has reason to fear me to sell out and give 10 pounds out of every hundred towards the widow and orphan fund and do not attempt to reside in Victoria, but as short a time as possible after reading this notice, neglect this and abide by the consequences, which shall be worse than all the rust in the wheat in Victoria or the durth of a dry season to the grasshoppers in New South Wales I do no wish to give the order full force without giving timely

³⁵⁵ Ned Kelly *The Jerilderee Letter* ed. Alex McDermott Text Publishing Melbourne 2001

³⁵⁶ *Ibid* 26-9

warning, but I am a widows son outlawed and my orders must be obeyed.³⁵⁷

Kelly's anxiety over the mother/infant body is taken up in the literary remembering of Kelly's life by Peter Carey in *True History of the Kelly Gang*. Written in the form of diaries kept by Kelly, the discourse of detachment exerts a pressure upon his narrative in the symbol of the post-birth mother/infant body, which is constructed as a body continually under threat of division by State authorities.

In his narrative, Kelly's earliest recollection is of his mother, Ellen Kelly, 'breaking eggs into a bowl and crying that Jimmy Quinn my 15 yr. old uncle were arrested by the traps... I were 3 yr. old' (5).³⁵⁸ introducing a symbol of birth and separation in Kelly's earliest memories. Later, after Kelly's three-year stint in prison, Ellen lets him know in no uncertain terms that his anxiety is justified:

You don't know nothing about my adjectival life she said you don't remember what its like to live here with the adjectival squatters impounding every adjectival chook and heifer they can snaffle and the traps always knocking on my door hoping to take away my children. (195)

³⁵⁷ Ibid 83

When Kelly articulates his fears, 'I feared my mother and her baby would be sent to prison' (198), he predicts what eventually happens when Redmond Barry sentences Ellen over an affray with Constable Fitzpatrick:

Redmond Barry put on his lambskin then sentenced our mother to 3 yr. for Aiding and Abetting the Attempted Murder of Constable Alexander Fitzpatrick he further ruled she could not keep her baby with her he were a cruel and heartless b-----d his time will come. (265)

This direct intrusion of Australian Law into the mother/infant body prompts the Kelly Gang's full-scale rebellion after they offer to surrender in exchange for the release of Ellen and the infant, but this is refused by Barry, who had previously sentence one of Kelly's uncles to death (262). Later, as outlaws on the run for murder, the Kelly Gang rob Euroa Bank while keeping a group of twelve men hostage. Kelly, outraged by an unjust Australian Law (it is generally accepted that Fitzgerald was an alcoholic who had lied about the Kelly family and Ellen was convicted on his testimony), figures these men as a jury: 'At Faithfull's Creek we was tried before a jury of our peers you would not know it from the papers' (338).

³⁵⁸ Carey op.cit. 5

The hut were quiet again but for the sound of the train passing in the night. I looked around at the men one by one I asked what they would have done if they was in our boots.

They give no answer though a softening in attitude was definite.

And what would you do about my mother I asked. She is imprisoned for Aiding and Abetting an Attempted Murder which were neither attempted nor murder in the 1st place.

Again no answer.

Her baby is taken from her I said and they did not answer.

And here is the thing about them men they was Australians they knew full well the terror of the unyielding law the historic memory of UNFAIRNESS were in their blood and a man might be a bank clerk or an overseer he might never have been lagged for nothing but still he knew in his heart what it were to be forced to wear the white hood in prison he knew what it were to be lashed for looking a warder in the eye and even a posh fellow like the Moth had breathed that air so the knowledge of unfairness were deep in his bone and marrow. In the hut at Faithfull's Creek I seen proof that if a man could tell his true history to Australians he might be believed it is the clearest sight I ever seen and soon Joe seen it too. (341-2)

Kelly's construction of 'Australia' refers to an unyielding Australian law against which he posits an alternative history, a construction of 'Australianness' formed, not by the authorities, but in the collective memory of individuals, felt in 'their blood, bone and marrow.' This 'historic memory of unfairness' refers to Irish and class oppression, sourced and exacerbated by the convict system. It recalls the trauma of colonial society, 'the terror of the unyielding law', a history that feeds into the repressed history of detachments.

As Kelly reads the primal wound within the body of community, he gains, with the quality of revelation, the 'clearest [in]sight', discovering a space in his writing where Australia's 'true history' might be told, a space made available in the knowledge that if the truth can just be spoken and *heard* it will be *believed*. This need to be believed is the quest for recognition by the oppressed, the giving of weight to a personal history that a mainstream denies. For Kelly, this 'ado/aptive' moment marks a turning point in his understanding of how to articulate himself. The rest of his narrative revolves around his attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, to be heard by speaking, writing and publishing his story, a 'true' story that resists the official recording of Australian history by the victors. Because of this revelation Kelly now believes: 'They will print my letter then you will see what happens the Australians will not tolerate a mother be gaoled for no offence' (352).

Kelly is optimistic, for what he construed as an Australian understanding was what he, himself, projected on a silent collective. To Kelly the reply of silence to his story is an acknowledgment by the Australians that his story is believed as true. But the fact that his questions are answered three times with silence recalls the biblical story of Peter's denial of Jesus. The men do cheer his speech at its end but their failure to reply might imply an underlying unwillingness to act. Kelly is yet to discover that it is one thing for the truth to be spoken and believed, but another for it to be acted upon, and the terror of the reprisal of an unyielding law silences the individual.

Having observed the State authority's continual interference in the lives of his fellow colonials within the Irish population, a persecuted minority subject to institutionalized racism in colonial history, it is its specific attacks on the mother/infant body that drives Kelly to seek a forum for his protest.

In the chill of the morning I fancied I could smell the rain and my mind went to Melbourne Gaol where the water must be thundering on the tin roof above my mother's cell. I had failed to protect her... (271)

Ellen also blames herself: 'I've been as big a fool as any mother could be' (261) but realizes, under Australian law, 'It's a cruel thing to have a baby in this

country' (319). When his own child has to be smuggled out of the country to save a mother/infant body Kelly writes:

the very light of my life were stolen away my baby vanished... On the same day come a tearful letter from Nott Street she was in torment not having heard from me she were sailing to San Francisco. To hell with all traps I hate them. Everything I had they took from me. (354)

The end result of Kelly's protest is, however, his death and the death of all in the Kelly gang, as well as the incarceration of many who knew them. This factually based symbol of the divided mother/infant body predetermines the disintegration of the Kelly community as Ned refuses to save himself by escaping interstate and thence to America, by vowing to free his mother first (351-2). The separation of the mother/infant body by the state authorities thus results in the disintegration of the Kelly community and can be read as a metaphor for the numerous examples of community destruction in Australian history instigated by the removal of children from their familial communities.

Another symbol of the post-birth mother/infant body is figured in Mary Hearn and infant and is set up in juxtaposition to the figure of Ellen, with Kelly even

mistaking one for the other when he secretly approaches the new hut he built for his mother, during his outlawry:

From the saucepan rose a cloud of dense yellow smoke though I were more concerned with that crow black hair that white skin and in my confusion imagined it were my mother unexpectedly made free. I felt a bolt of joy the weight of worry lifting off me.

Ma I shouted.

Jesus Christ moaned Dan please lets go.

But the woman heard my cry and to my shock it were Mary Hearn.

(295)

Like Ellen, Mary Hearn is harassed by the representatives of Australian Law and threatened with the removal of her children:

He blew out his match the dark air were acrid with sulphur. I don't hate you girlie but any Magistrate could look at this passbook and see you cannot support this child he is Endangered as we say in law.

He were threatening to have her baby removed into an orphanage she would kill him 1st.

Very well she said I'll think about your offer.

Yes he said coldly you can call at the Police Station before noon tomorrow.

The minute he departed she knew she must flee she picked up the cart and carried George to her room then she dressed him in singlets jackets shawls as many garments as she could fit one atop the other his arms and legs as stiff as broken limbs in plaster of Paris and he were crying very loud. (264)

To the threat of the dismemberment of the mother/infant body, Mary reacts as if the child's own small body is to be dismembered by overdressing his limbs so they are 'stiff as broken limbs in plaster', in a metaphor for the psychological dismemberment they would suffer in separation. Mary eventually is successful in fleeing to America, giving birth to her second child, Kelly's daughter, safely outside the reach of Australian Law.

This is Carey's most radical departure from the known facts surrounding Kelly's life and so the most radical departure from any pretext of *his* that he is writing a 'true history' of Kelly. A love interest for Ned Kelly in the form of Mary Hearn may at first simply seem like a Romantic device but this symbol of motherhood is interwoven throughout the narrative and is featured, like the symbol of Ellen, as an axis on which the whole of the narrative rests. Written on the run from the law, Kelly's diaries, which, along with several newspaper accounts and chapter

headings descriptive of the physicality of the material, make up the whole of the text, are addressed to his daughter by Mary Hearn. Hence this imaginary invention of Carey's becomes the whole 'reason d'etre' of the text.

The audience for Kelly's writing, then, is a fabricated Australian daughter who has been whisked away from an unjust Australian law enforcement system, to the safety of America. This daughter, who as the reader of Kelly's diaries is a construction of *us* as readers, is introduced in the novel's opening sentence:

I lost my own father at 12 yr. of age and know what it is to be raised on lies and silences my dear daughter you are presently too young to understand a word I write but this history is for you and will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false. (5)

Kelly claims that he has experienced loss and understands 'what it is to be raised on lies and silences'. Knowing that he might not survive his bid for freedom, he understands his own daughter might suffer the same loss as he has - the death of her father. The justification for his writing, then, is Kelly's desire to *change* this repetition of history so that, although his daughter will experience loss, she will not, like him, be 'raised on lies and silences', but know the truth of Australia's alternative history. Carey implies also that Australian readers, 'when old enough' might understand Australia's alternative history. But typical of Carey's

irony is the wording of Kelly's adamant insistence of truth, 'no single lie', which, although accompanied by an oath, upon a second reading might imply, that his history is full of *many* lies rather than none at all. When the reader considers, furthermore, that 'Lies and Silences' rather than his own father has raised Kelly, then Kelly might be constructed, in his consideration of history, as an unreliable witness. Of some of Carey's work, the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* comments that, 'founded on Mark Twain's famous statement that Australian history does not read like history but "like the most beautiful lies"',³⁵⁹ it is

self-consciously preoccupied with lying in its concern with the processes of writing, the inevitable element of fiction-making in every human attempt to tell the truth, and the power of fiction to transform and illuminate bald fact. Carey's interest in fictionality extends to history, which he sometimes presents in alternative 'fantastic' versions, implicitly suggesting the constructed quality of all 'objective' historical narrative and the partiality of all explanations of events.³⁶⁰

This drawing together of fatherhood, loss, lies, silence, history and truth in Kelly's opening sentence ironically predicates the development of a discourse of loss and detachment, truth and fiction, that appears more and more fantastical as

³⁵⁹ *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* 2nd edn. ed. William H. Wilde, Joy Hooton, Barry Andrews Oxford University Press Melbourne 1985 1994 151

³⁶⁰ *Ibid* 152

it proceeds, until it is revealed that not only is Kelly's intended audience a literary creation of Carey's, but his daughter may also have been imagined by Kelly himself:

I knew I would lose you if I stopped writing you would vanish and be swallowed by the maw. I see it now I were ½ mad but each day I wrote so you wd. read my words and I wrote to get you born. (367)

As Kelly writes this, his daughter is born in America: 'You was born. You was in a foreign land but safe at your mother's breast' (368).

Ned's entire 'true history' of himself and the Australian society and landscape through which he moves seems to be based, then, on a fanciful projection of wholeness and safety in the symbol of the intact mother/infant body outside of the reach of Australian law. In this fantastic projection, Kelly is envisioning the development of Australia's false self. The 'maw' into which Kelly's daughter, and we as readers, might vanish if Kelly stops writing his true history, is the history of lies. The reader is the daughter who will read and believe the truth but whose existence is almost written out of the narrative in the very process of Kelly writing her *in*.

Both images of mother and child, Ellen and babe and the pregnant Mary Hearn then, underpin the purpose of Kelly's writing – his many letters and histories within the text are written in an attempt to free his mother and reunite her with her child, and the whole diary that encompasses all of these histories is written for his daughter with Mary Hearn, who is born in San Francisco at the time of writing. Mary Hearn has two children, however, and it is in the depiction of her relationship with the firstborn, George, ironically the son of an American, that Carey suggests how this desired symbol of wholeness might be achieved *within* Australian national boundaries.

In another instance in the novel when Mary's child George is threatened with removal by the law, Carey juxtaposes the analogy of Christian fatalism in the image of Ellen and her martyred son, with the figure of Mary, who will eventually escape the clutches of Australian law, but first stands up to it. Mary's 'mother's curse' is a response that involves in the immediate sense neither defeat by, nor flight from, but resistance to, the law. If Australian Law acting in regard to the reconsignment of children is read as the patriarchal attempt to control women and reproduction, then the implantation of Mary as a symbol, someone who that not only escapes but deflects this flow of male desire, offers a genuinely revolutionary alternative to the projected history of Australia's false self. Unlike the colonials in the hut at Faithfull's Creek, Mary does not remain silent. When the representatives of Australian Law snatch her baby from her, she openly

curses them. In the presence of Ned's sister Kate, Inspector Smith takes Mary's infant:

Sir cried she the baby is falling. It were true the babe were slipping from the trap's grasp but fear can make a big man deaf and Inspector Brooke Smith were in Holy terror that I were hiding in the hut he thought his end were near.

Come out Kelly you'll be shooting children if you fire.

O give my baby back Mary cried she darted forward but were knocked away she had no more power than a plover squealing around a raided nest.

Go on cried Smith get out the brat is in my care. So saying he got a knee up under George's bottom a firmer grip around his chest.

Mary thought she were about to have her baby confiscated by the government. O do please return him to me Sir.

Brooke Smith swatted at your mother in reply it were to Kate he spoke. See all the men I have out there today? I will have as many more tomorrow and when I find your brothers I will blow them to pieces as small as the paper in our guns.

Sir I beg you he's just a baby I am taking care of him very nicely as you see. I'll show you my saving book if you would like.

Are you Kate Kelly?

Don't tell him nothing said Kate.

My name is Mary Hearn Sir I have broke no law and neither has my
on.

The name of Hearn meant nothing to the Inspector... (289)

Mary pleads for the return of her child claiming that both she and her son 'have broke no law'. But she has broken the tacit 'law of the father' as George is illegitimate and it is on moral grounds the police can justify themselves even if it is on financial grounds that they claim the child. The delineation of personal ethics and law are thrown into relief, with Christian moralities both called upon and subverted. Mary's biblical name 'meant nothing to the Inspector' and he is depicted in a state of 'Holy Terror'. At the earlier instance when Mary is threatened with child removal she reacts by praying fervently (264). Now the police, who are after Kelly, get much more than they bargained for in having to face a naked Mary in the fullness of her power as 'mother' (elsewhere she is also depicted as 'witch' (326) and 'madwoman' (327)). As the baby passes to the second officer, who throws him into the air a number of times, Mary openly curses the unborn children of the police officers and the organs of their creation:

O I curse your seed cried Mary.

Ward's grin failed him.

I curse your unborn children said Mary her blood were icy cold her eyes as black as coal. May your children come to the straw with feet like toads and eyes like snakes.

Silence!

You will be like a blackfellow with no home to turn to. Your wife will lie with soldiers. You will wander the road with sores and weeping warts.

Detective Ward were white and waxy as an altar candle.

Halt cried his partner or I'll fire.

Mary were just a girl of 17 normally v. meek & polite in manner her skin still unspoilt by the colonial sun but now her mouth were thin and straight.

Then may you get red and scaly skin upon your private parts.

I order you cried Superintendent Brooke Smith & discharged his pistol through the roof.

That were the moment George's eyes changed colour Kate will attest to that. One moment they was blue the next a yellow brown the colour of a ginger cat. In the heat of the furnace metals change their nature in olden days they could make gold from lead. Wait to see what more there is to hear my daughter for in the end we poor uneducated people will all be made noble in the fire. (290)

The representatives of Australian Law are making a direct attack on the sacrosanct bond between mother and infant, but Mary deflects the attacks of both men by speaking against them. To the cursing of Ward's future children his yell of 'silence!' renders only himself speechless and at the cursing of his 'private parts' Brooke Smith discharges his pistol harmlessly through the roof, his cry 'I order you' impotent. With her Irish curse (and its noticeably complex racial gesture towards the dispossession of Aboriginal people) Mary has knocked the aim of the arm of the law off its course, its discharge, both actual and verbal, is rendered harmless, and she later escapes with the post-birth mother/infant body intact. Mary curses the Father's law rather than accept it, in a way that Ellen never managed and so, as a consequence, she had to martyr her son.

In this novel, Australian law is exposed as the scaffolding of a national 'false self' with its 'untrue' history of egalitarianism. Mary's curse upon an Australian's most cherished representation of his masculinity, his phallus/gun by which he enforces his law over women and children, renders that law spent and powerless. By uttering her curse Mary actually transforms reality, her speech moving atoms, and the baby becomes changed in the process. Kelly compares the transformation of George's eyes, changing from blue to 'a yellow brown the colour of a ginger cat', to the 'lost art' of alchemy, referring to a symbol of lost power in the context of present oppression and powerlessness.

The illegitimate George thus represents the power of action and transformation regained: the poor and uneducated can be made noble, the bastard can be made legitimate, not through the declarations of constructed patriarchal and oppressive laws, but by the exertion of the natural power of the mother. Upon her utterance history changes and the repeating pattern handed down from father to son is interfered with, transformed, an hysterical, obsessional pattern finally arrested. There is, then, something changed in the nature of the discourse of detachments.

By juxtaposing the separated mother/infant body of Ellen Kelly, in agreement with the known facts of Australia's 'true history of unfairness', with the fabricated *unseparated* mother/infant body of Mary Hearn, Carey deliberately inserts a symbol of wholeness into the developing national memory of the Kelly story. *True History of the Kelly Gang* is, then, 'not just a *recovery* of memory mapped onto the wild colonial body, but an *implantation* of memories designed to bring a collective history of destruction to the fore.'³⁶¹ Carey's rewriting of the Kelly myth becomes an example of an enabling definition of cultural memory as a collective 'activity occurring in the present in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed even as it continues to shape the future'.³⁶² By implanting the symbol of wholeness of the mother/infant body into the

³⁶¹ Huggan op.cit. 148

developing national memory of the Kelly story, this symbol of the mother/infant body intact outside of Australian law, provides an alternative history, a narrative of escape, for an Australian psyche saturated with the motif of child removals.

The discourse of detachment erupts upon the surface of Kelly's narrative in other ways, not only in the symbol of the mother/infant body, but mapped onto the wild colonial body of Kelly himself. The opening sentence of Kelly's history immediately introduces the discourse of detachment into Kelly's psychological body, in his detachment from his father, which he links to his father's detachment from his *fatherland*:

Your grandfather were a quiet and secret man he had been ripped from his home in Tipperary and transported to the prisons of Van Diemen's Land I do not know what was done to him he never spoke of it. When they had finished with their tortures they set him free and he crossed the sea to the colony of Victoria. (5)

For Kelly, the discourse of detachment into which he has been born, becomes one that is not so much 'begun' in Australia but has been inherited, transported from the fatherland of Ireland. The trauma of detachments is also immediately

³⁶² Ibid 151 Huggan quotes Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer eds. *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, Hanover NJ University Press of New England Dartmouth College 1999, vii

introduced in the tortures his father suffered but of which he never speaks. When it is revealed later in the text that his father may have been transported rather than executed because he betrayed his Irish rebel compatriots, the discourse of detachment as a discourse attached to the colonial condition of Australia, appears to have, as its source, the colonial condition of Ireland, a 'return of the repressed' skipping whole continents.

Kelly loses his father twice; the first time, 'I lost my own father from a secret' (18), when he uncovers the hidden chest containing women's clothes and masks, the symbol of his father's trauma under colonialism, transvestism, violence and betrayal. The return of the repressed re-enters the Kelly history as Kelly unwittingly betrays his own father by stealing a calf for food for the Kelly family. His father takes the blame but never recovers from the incarceration:

You may think it strange that a man can survive transportation and the horrors of Van Diemen's Land and then be destroyed in a country lockup but we cannot credit the tortures our parents suffered in Van Diemen's Land - Port Macquarie - Toongabbie - Norfolk Island - Emu Plains. Avenel lockup were the final straw for your grandfather he did not speak more than a dozen words to me from that day until his death. (37)

Kelly's father was silent about his trauma but by symbolically unearthing it Kelly betrays his father and sends him to the grave, finally defeated by the return of the repressed:

And there we saw our poor da lying dead upon the kitchen table he were bulging with all the poisons of the Empire... (37)

The primal wound of colonialism can be read, not only upon the body of his father, but upon the psychological body of Kelly himself. An ado/aptive reading of Kelly's textual body maps an adopted body upon the wild colonial one. If hysterics deny the separation from the mother's body and the language that ensues from it and obsessionals magnify both and, terrified, attempt to master them,³⁶³ Kelly may well be displaying symptoms of having suffered separation trauma in the pre-Oedipal phase, leading to problems in negotiating the Oedipus complex. The adopted child may be a model for both (female) hysteric and (male) obsessional and in the symbolic may be 'more vulnerable..., more fragile when she [sic] suffers within it, more virulent when she protects herself from it.'³⁶⁴ Kelly repetitiously negotiates, and fails to negotiate, the Oedipus complex in his regressive drive to regain the attachment to his mother (hysteria), but, on the other hand, foregrounds his own repetitious inscription by multiplying his

³⁶³ Julia Kristeva 'Women's Time' transl. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake in *The Kristeva Reader* ed. Toril Moi Basil Blackwell London 1986 198

³⁶⁴ Ibid 204-5

'histories' within the narrative (obsession) as Kelly's conscious narrative constantly attempts to attack and control its own tendency towards illiteracy by writing.

all my childhood some man thought he could tell me stories about my ma.

(95)

The repetition in the text of the resistance against the resolution of the Oedipus complex, a resolution that should be achieved in the successful repression of incestuous desire for his mother, illustrates Kelly's anxiety surrounding his detachment from his mother's body. This desire exists in continual conflict with its flipside - the desire to reinforce and inscribe the self onto the symbolic. As this exaggerated separation anxiety dogs the ensuing narrative, Kelly's Oedipal phase is unsuccessfully negotiated again and again, in hysterical repetition. Kelly, like the adopted child, is the Oedipus myth manifest, succeeding in ousting the first rival for his mother's affections, his father, by being the cause of his imprisonment, and ultimately, his death.

The killing of the bull calf by Kelly to feed his starving family is a crime enacted in place of his father's failure to fulfill his role as provider, but reveals his latent aggression towards his father whom Kelly well knows 'would rather die than go to prison' (21). Kelly's reaction to his father's incarceration is confused: 'I were so

v. guilty I could never have admitted that life without my father had become in many ways more pleasant' (25). By age 11, while assisting his mother in childbirth, Kelly has already replaced his father in his imagination although the presence of the father immediately intrudes:

...I held our precious baby in my arms her eyes so clear and untroubled. She looked me frankly in the face and I loved her as if she were my very own... I were happy then.

Said she Go tell him now

I'll go later

Go now.

But I did not wish to leave... (28)

The failure of the hysterical body of Kelly to negotiate the Oedipus complex results in the 'murder' of his father: 'Father son of my heart are you dead from me are you dead from me my father? (36-7) At the point of his father's death Kelly supplants his father who becomes the 'son of my heart', justifying it neatly: 'So you can see I had become a very serious boy it were my job to replace the father as it were my fault we didn't have him any more.' (43)

Kelly's hysteria is enacted again and again throughout his narrative as other men constantly vie for the position of Ellen's lover, and Ned seeks to protect her. His

protection of his mother against Uncle James' seduction results in Uncle James' arson and death sentence (45-51). Kelly also refuses to name in his narrative the nature of Ellen's occupation as a prostitute: 'now she were far away from Fifteen Mile Creek and no longer could I guess her life. I were told she took laundry and perhaps she did but I am sure she only did what she must do' (51-2); 'I didn't understand how she could profit so well from laundry but knew better than to question her directly' (50).

By age 13 Kelly's repetitive anxiety over his mother's body becomes paranoid and he mistakes a suitor of his sister's for one of his mother's as Harry Power vies for Ellen with Bill Frost:

Alex Gunn were another suitor that were clear... (62)

Next day Alex Gunn departed and Harry Power returned it were like an adjectival railway station...

... Harry come back... stayed the night and left early.

By design or accident Alex Gunn returned almost immediately afterwards... (64)

Gunn slept on the table each time he rose I were awake and by his side I was an adjectival terrier. (65)

...even when my mother made a clear announcement I were too discombobulated to take it in. It were some moments before I understood my skinny sister was to marry Alex Gunn.

I had thought myself full growed but now I seen the truth it were a mighty shock I were trying so hard to be a man I had kept myself a child. Looking at my sister I saw how her cheeks glowed her bosoms pushed out against her blouse I blushed to think the things they would now be allowed to do together. (66)

The flip side of Kelly's paranoia and latent aggression manifests itself in his writing of his mother; he often relates her story as his own in her absence, as in her meetings with the rat charmer (189) and the Banshee. His depictions of his mother are highly romantic, describing her beauty and wild nature, 'My mother had such dark and lively eyes she were ever full of tricks but also laughter' (197). His failure at psychological separation from her is most evident in his writing of her at Annie Kelly's and Alex Gunn's wedding party. Kelly positions himself in the kitchen door just so it happens he can watch his mother dancing:

I were waiting at the kitchen doorway with nothing to do than wonder how long it would take to get the dinner served. From this doorway I also could observe my mother in her bright red dress with bustle she were dancing with a ferret faced fellow in a checked tweed coat I refer to that

ignoramus Bill Frost. My mother had just won the Ladies 1 Mile Handicap and were v. bright and happy until she spied me watching. Then she abandoned her Englishman and sought me out.

Come said she lifting the hem of her fancy dress and drawing me out through the steamy slippery kitchen into the hotel veggie garden where my Uncle Wild Pat the Dubliner were lying blotto under the tank stand. Not a glance did my mother give Wild Pat but escorted me down between the dunny and the compost heap and there she asked me bluntly how I liked her dancing partner.

I don't mind him.

Then it would be a favour if you quit glowering at him. You look ½ mad.

I cannot help my face. (69)

Kelly's narrative includes the erotic play on the word 'come' as Ellen is 'drawing' Kelly out through a 'steamy', 'slippery' kitchen, and ends up between twin symbols of expulsion - the dunny and the compost. This depiction of Kelly's separation anxiety becomes comical as his struggle to hold onto his position as head of the family is symbolically portrayed in a struggle over his dead father's chair; 'Bill Frost now were occupying not only my mother's bed but also my father's chair' (103): 'At night the man himself returned to find me sitting in da's

chair' (105); 'I discovered Bill Frost sitting in my chair... The moment he stood I sat down' (117).

Ned Kelly's guilt over the death of his father and his inability to detach from his mother is manipulated by Harry Power, to whom his mother had 'sold' Kelly's services. Power, who is in competition with Bill Frost, who had fathered a child with Ellen, convinces Kelly he must shoot Frost to fulfill the dictates of 'manhood'. In doing this, Power successfully usurps Kelly's dead father through a system of violence and lies, telling Kelly that his shot at Frost had been fatal and so he must hide out from the police - meanwhile Harry visits Ellen in Kelly's absence. The truth is hidden from Ned for a period -

but none of this ceaseless activity could still my mind I were v. guilty for having killed the father of my mother's child.

Yet the truth is neither a boy nor a horse and not even Harry Power can suppress it forever not with cunning or abuse not even with the great weight of his mighty arse. I got my 1st glimpse of the situation one morning... (138)

Kelly overthrows Harry Power in yet another Oedipal re-enactment, and his downfall is soon assured. Although Kelly writes: 'I aint a fizgig I said and I won't shop no one to you b----rs', he admits to giving the police 'certain information it

were nothing much' (158) and Harry is later caught and gaoled in line with the known facts of the Kelly history.

As for other women in Kelly's life, Kelly expresses his sexual naivety as he is unjustly sentenced to three years hard labour:

Instead they found me guilty of receiving a horse not yet legally stolen and for this I was given 3 yr. Hard Labour my last hope of youth was stripped away I had never yet kissed a girl but were old enough to be a married man. (186)

Kelly's incarceration is unwritten in his narrative, existing as an absence in the text that is 'cut out' of him (192), a silence that mimics his own father's suppression of the primal wound.

After his three years in gaol Kelly emerges with a beard to find his mother with child at 42 to George King: 'It disgusted me to see his age he were young enough to be myself' (193). Even his own brother teases him:

You know I aint got any girl Dan.

True said he your ma is your donah as everybody knows.

Shutup.

Hubba hubba Mamma is your girl.

The traps behind us were enjoying this conversation it would be spread round the township by the morning.

You got a grudge against George cause he married your girl (213).

In Kelly's later reverie over the love he has for his mother as he comforts her, again a man intrudes on the Kelly family Romance:

Shush Shush said I it were only as I held her that I knew how deep I loved her we was grown together like 2 branches of an old wisteria.

What can I do for you Ned?

George King stood at the corner of the hut with his carbine at the hip his finger on the trigger...

...now go on I can see your girlfriend's got your tea for you. (219-20).

His mother claims happiness but Kelly can do nothing to oust George King except to threaten him and his separation anxiety, no longer able to be acted upon, continues to be unconsciously expressed in his dreams: 'My father and mother now appeared to me every night in dreams my father's face lacerated with a 1,000 cuts I knew I done this' (198). Kelly tries to write the final farewell with his mother, a farewell he has already imagined in a repetition of separations:

Many is the time I have imagined those final moments in the gloomy hut Kate bawling on the bed my mother kissing us both on the cheek.

Go said she my soul's within you. (261-2)

Instead of relating the separation, Kelly's reverie is dominated by a reinforcing of his maternal attachment and his rushed writing, indicated by the lack of any punctuation, coupled with the latent aggression of the depiction of 'dingoes on a chained up bitch', signal his excessive anxiety toward the act of separation:

All my life I had stood by her when I were 10 I killed Murray's heifer so she would have meat when our poor da died I worked beside her I were the eldest son I left school at 12 yr. of age so she might farm I went with Harry Power that she might have gold when there were no food I laboured when there were no money I stole and when the worthless Frost & King closed round her like yellow dingoes on a chained up bitch I sought to protect her. (261)

The repetition in the text of the resistance against the resolution of the Oedipus complex, a resolution that should be achieved in the successful repression of incestuous desire, illustrates Kelly's anxiety surrounding his detachment from

his mother's body. This desire exists in continual conflict with its opposite drive - the desire to reinforce and inscribe the self onto symbolic. In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Kelly seeks to inscribe himself in a symbolic that devalues and disempowers him, renders him poor, uneducated, part of a discriminated minority, and criminal, rendering him, finally, 'illegitimate' and outside the social order. Like the adopted body he writes a 'false self', his own conception of the 'good Australian nation', which functions in a dichotomous relationship against the oppression of English law on Australian soil.

In an ado/aprive reading of Kelly's psychological body, signs of separation anxiety are located in Kelly's simultaneous drive toward hysteria and obsession. As if traumatized as a pre-gendered subject, Kelly is driven by an hysterical desire to regain his mother's body as well as obsessively attempting to master the separation, and the language that ensues from it. The symbol of the breaking of eggs in Kelly's earliest memory can be read as a representation of a separation of the pre-oedipal subject from the mother's body. The violent images of rain hissing as it hits the oven, of 'puddles the colour of mustard the rain like needles in my eyes' (6), is the anticipation by Kelly of his difficulty in entering a symbolic order which disempowers him, an adoption into an Australian society of subjugation, racism, poverty and violence. This is evident in this earliest of memories as Ellen attempts to take a cake to her brother in gaol:

We arrived at the Beveridge Police Camp drenched to the bone and doubtless stank of poverty a strong odour about us like wet dogs... I remember sitting with my chilblained hands wedged beneath the door I could feel the lovely warmth of the fire on my fingertips. Yet when we was finally permitted entry all my attention were taken... by a huge red-jowled creature the Englishman who sat behind the desk. I knew not his name only that he were the most powerful man I ever saw and he might destroy my mother if he so desired.

Approach says he as if he was an altar.

...I could smell his foreign spicy smell...

... He untied the muslin his fingernails so clean they looked like they was washed in lye and to this day I can see them livid instruments as they broke my mother's cake apart.

TIS NOT POVERTY I HATE THE MOST
NOR THE ETERNAL GROVELLING
BUT THE INSULTS WHICH GROW ON IT
WHICH NOT EVEN LEECHES CAN CURE (6)

Kelly's reproduction of an Irish poem sets himself up as a literary subject.

Succeeding this first recollection of a world of oppression is Kelly's second recollection which introduces what will become the focus of Kelly's obsession: to

tell his story via *writing*. This memory comes at the age of 9 when Kelly, in the absence of his father, is still very much ensconced in the pre-symbolic world of the feminine and in the hut in which they all loved: 'there was 6 children all sleeping between the maze of patchwork curtains Mother hung to make up for the lack of walls. It were like living in a cupboard full of dresses' (8).

If language intrudes to signify the entry of the subject into the symbolic, Sergeant O'Neil might be read as intruding into 'this shadowy world' (8) bearing, for Kelly, the means by which he might speak:

on the night in question he brung me a gift of a pencil. At school we used the slates but I never touched a pencil and was most excited to smell the sweet pine and graphite as the Sergeant sharpened his gift he were very fatherly towards me and set me at one end of the table with a sheet of paper. My sister Annie were one yr. older she got nothing from O'Neil but that's another story.

I set to work to cover my paper with the letters of the alphabet. My mother sat at the other end of the table with the Sgt and when he produced his silver flask I paid no more attention than I did to Annie & Jem & Maggie & Dan. After I made each letter as a capital I set to do the smaller ones such were my concentration that when my mother spoke her voice seemed very far away.

Get out of my house.

I looked up to discover Sergeant O'Neil with his hand to his cheek I suppose she must of slapped him for his countenance were turned v. red.

Get out my mother shrieked. (9)

Kelly's first possession of this instrument of a writing not easily erased on a slate is experienced as a sensuous weapon, a decoy, via which he is distracted from the attempted seduction of his mother by the Sergeant who 'sharpens his pencil' and acts 'very fatherly towards' Kelly.

This incident links, for Kelly, the first real threat of separation from his mother with the power of writing. It is Kelly's fascination with his own pencil, his desire to inscribe himself, that seduces him away from his mother, threatening him with separation via her seduction away from him. In this way Kelly's experience of inscription via the written word instigates his separation anxiety and sets up a dichotomy that permeates the narrative, this tension functioning as the agency of all Kelly's actions.

Having witnessed the seductive power of the written word, Kelly focuses on becoming ink monitor at his school, where his role would be as master of the implements of writing.

I cannot now remember why I desired such a prize only that I wanted it a great deal. When my time came at last I vowed to be the best monitor that were ever born. Each morning I were 1st to school lining up the chipped white china inkwells upon the tank stand then I washed and returned them to their hole in every desk.

Monday mornings I were permitted to also make the ink climbing up on Mr. Irving's chair and taking down the McCracken's powder from the upper shelf it had a very pungent smell like violets and gall. I measured 4 tblsp. With every pt, of tank water it were not a demanding task but required I get to school by 8 o'clock.

It were on account of this I saw Dick Shelton drowning. (29)

Seduction functions in the language of the text via the foregrounding of the olfactory sense, Kelly noting the 'pungent smell' of the ink powder as he before 'was most excited to smell the sweet pine and graphite' of the pencil.

As master of the implements of writing Kelly experiences his first, and possibly greatest, role as hero. He saves Dick Shelton from drowning and for the first time experiences luxury and adulation – hot bath water, laundered clothes and food: 'I had begun the day with bread and dripping now I was ordering lamb chops and bacon and kidney'. Mrs. Shelton 'said I were the best and bravest boy in the

whole world.' (31). Kelly's role as master of the implements of writing leads directly to his construction as hero.

At each significant point of contact with the written word, then, Kelly experiences it as pleasure. Later, when he receives his first copy of a book, *Lorna Doone*, and Joe Byrne reads it to him, Kelly, tired of the fame he earned from beating Wild Wright in a fight, romantically identifies with the protagonist. Kelly not only understands the power in the seduction of writing but discovers the process of reading as pleasure:

John Ridd lost his da at the exact same age I lost my own. He were a champion wrestler but tired of hearing about it often longing to be smaller. So even before I met with Lorna herself I liked this book as well as ice cream ipso facto it is proven that Joe Byrne that so called CRIMINAL were a better schoolmaster than Mr. Irving who taught me how to make the ink without the pleasure of its use.

In 2 blessed yr. of peace I read LORNA DOONE 3 times I also read some Bible and some poems of William Shakespeare. (208)

When Kelly's mother is finally gaoled Kelly's desire to inscribe himself in the symbolic becomes obsessional. The 10th bundle of his diaries is titled 'The history is commenced' (293) but this is a history commencing towards the end of Kelly's

narrative, suggesting it is here that he decides to take matters into his own hands, to become an agent in the creation of history.

The Victorian police was naturally v. free in offering blood money it were not only A. Sherritt we permitted to accept their bribes. We cd. Look down from the Warby Ranges and see the plumes of dust rising off the plains and know the police was actors in a drama writ by me. (348)

Kelly believes he is now creating reality, and it is at his point that he writes of his daughter, writes 'to get you born', inventing his future audience, his daughter as reader. With this construction of his reader, Kelly goes beyond the recording of his true history in diaries and starts to write letters. With the printing press now producing endless constructions of Kelly in the newspapers, the writer begins his quest for this new power of publication.

Mary Hearn asks Kelly to write his story down, promising a copy for Donald Cameron whom they had read of in the newspapers as suggesting to the Premier an inquiry into the Kelly outbreak. Kelly describes his first letter as a 'chaste dance': 'The 1st page were rapidly accomplished then the 2nd and 3rd' (300). But, when it is revealed Mary is pregnant with his child and the letter is for her, Kelly discovers a new occupation in the process: 'Thus was I drawn into this occupation as author for once the letter were completed I immediately

commenced a 2nd to Mr. Cameron' (302). After the revelation in the hut at Faithfull's Creek, when 'Joe seen it too', Joe Byrne composes another letter to Cameron but Kelly is soon disappointed: 'No word from Cameron MLA tho he must by now of read 2 letters a rough one from me & an educated one from Joe' (347). Kelly then discovers that although he has written, getting published is another matter entirely:

That Cameron has received your letter said she it is all reported as you'll see. But her manner were strained and once I opened up the papers I soon learned all the editors had been shown my letter by Cameron but NOT ONE WOULD PRINT MY ACTUAL WORDS instead they was like snotty narrow shouldered schoolteachers each one giving their opinion on my prose & character. Throwing their garbage to the ground I were v. angry to be called a 'CLEVER ILLITERATE PERSON' by that rag THE MELBOURNE ARGUS another paper said I were filled with MORBID VANITY this was a gross offence against justice the colony being ruled like Beechworth Gaol. I kicked the papers apart and would of ripped them with gunshot were it not for fear of revealing our location to the traps.

Mary took my hand and kissed it she held my face and stared deep into my eyes. Dear said she it don't matter no more.

She led her hands down onto her stomach. Said she Our baby will read your letter dear.

But I were in a rage she could not comfort me my words had been
stolen from my very throat. (350)

Kelly tries to persist in his belief that his 'Australians', projected by him on a
silent community of men at Faithfull's Creek, will publish him but Mary
contradicts him:

They will print my letter then you will see what happens the Australians
will not tolerate a mother be gaoled for no offence.

No one will ever print your letter she shouted

Then like I said I will print the adjectival thing myself. (352)

In Kelly's desperation to have his words printed he decides to take control of the
means of production: 'I'll stick up an adjectival printery I said I'll print the
adjectival thing myself' (351).

Mary flees and sends a telegram informing Kelly that she will wait five days for
him to join her and escape to America. This induces a letter writing frenzy in
Kelly who cannot abandon his mother in gaol. What was once pleasure for Kelly
is now a desperate labouring:

the very light of my life were stolen away my baby vanished but I remained at my station that is the agony of the Captain if rats is tearing at his guts still must he secure the freedom of his mother and all them men in gaol. I fought with everyone I were in torment from all sides...

The air in the North East were hot & still as a baker's oven the white ants flying around my beard crawling in my ears & up my nose I were the monitor once more making fresh ink from McCracken's powder nothing give me no relief but the ceaseless labour with my pen I wrote 30 pages to your mother. (353)

Kelly's hysteria and obsession have culminated in megalomania. As Kelly projects of himself as Captain, as hero, he writes yet another 58 pages in the same sitting:

I wrote another letter 58 pages long this one for the attention of the government if I was ignorant and unlettered as it claimed then so be it but I made known the earliest days of my life showing the history of the police and the mistreatment of my family. (353)

When Kelly's 30 pages to Mary are returned 'ADDRESSEE UNKNOWN' (353) Kelly believes his letter was tampered with by the Police, especially as it arrives at the same time as a tormented letter from Mary saying she has not heard from

him and is leaving for San Francisco. Every attempt by Kelly to write is thwarted, he straps the 58 pages to his body and robs the bank Jerilderie;

On the 7th of February 1879 the Kelly Gang rode to Jerilderie to renew our cash reserves from the coffers of the Bank of New South Wales. My 58 pages to the government was secured around my body by a sash so even if I were shot dead no one could be confused as to what my corpse would say if it could speak...

... My 58 pages was pinching and cutting me I could feel them words being tattooed onto my living skin. (353-4)

Kelly later mythologises himself as Cuchulainn,³⁶⁵ who was associated with a murderous and undefeatable frenzy which caused him to turn about in his skin, and here Kelly is a literal embodiment of Cuchulainn, turning about within his own text. Kelly writes his own body as text, his living skin becomes a self-generating mythology, and his desire to inscribe himself on the symbolic obsessional. In deciding to take control of the means of production, the printing press, Kelly dreams of reproducing his living skin, 500 times.

Now the bank were robbed but this were not the main purpose of my visit I come to Jerilderie determined to have 500 copies of my letter

printed this would be a great profit to Mr. Gill the editor of the
JERILDERIE GAZETTE.

Up to that day Gill's only importance were to make public the price
of cows in calf and so called GENERAL SERVANT I come to elevate him
to a higher calling. HE WOULD PRINT THE TRUTH THEN MY
MOTHER WOULD BE RELEASED FROM GAOL. As soon as Ellen Kelly
were reunited with her 9 mo. old babe I would be free to follow Mary
Hearn (358).

For Kelly, 'by far my most important business in Jerilderie were to seek out Mr
Gill' (358), but Gill, stumbling across Kelly, flees and they are forced to consider
printing Kelly's letter themselves. Joe brings Mr. Lyving, a bank teller, but he is
hopelessly slow at typesetting so Joe returns with Gill's wife who manages to
convince Kelly to hand over his precious papers to her:

If you give me the copy my husband will print it for you when he returns.

I don't have a copy it's the only one.

It is called the copy even if there are no others now give it to me
please... How many pages are there Mr. Kelly?

58...

³⁶⁵ See Henry Glassie's *The Penguin Book of Irish Folktales* Penguin London 1993

...she had to know how I wished the pamphlets stitched & bound all this I wrote on the receipt. She said she would require a 5 pound deposit so I give it to her and she wrote down that I had.

Now said she you must give me the copy.

I could not believe it said Joe Byrne the Captain gives her all his pages. It were bail up your money or your life so the old bitch robs Ned Kelly and he give her all his golden pages. (360-1)

The Gills hand the papers over to the Police and when Kelly find out he declares Gill a traitor to his profession as printer. Kelly, himself, becomes the 'terror of the government', brought to life by writing:

...he were a coward to his trade as printer he were honour bound from ancient time to let the truth be told but instead he give it to its enemy. He were stupid as the government itself if he thought I could be stopped so easy.

...he were no more than a child breaking a spider web and the same web will be spun again tomorrow I could not be silenced.

I imagined myself v. calm but Joe later told me the pupils of my eyes had turned an unholy red...

That night the Kelly Gang made camp by light of rain & lightning strikes and while the boys lay quiet as dogs wrapped up in their coats I sat with my backside in a puddle my oilskin above my candle & my paper.

I begun again they could not prevent it. I were the terror of the government being brung to life in the cauldron of the night. (363)

Kelly's 'Jerilderie Letter' did eventually make it into print but it is lost for the purposes of Kelly's narrative and this loss of his 'living skin' signals Kelly's psychological desintegration.

It is one thing to toil with your pen another thing entire to do it while you fight a war. In the Autumn of 1879 I tried to once more write the 58 sheets stolen from me by the Gills I tore up pages then begun again by flooded creek by light of moon and when I had made such a mess my brain were addled I returned to this splashed and speckled history you now hold in your hand.

I had boasted I were a spider they could not stop me spinning but that were in February and by the end of March I had to admit I could not repeat what I had previously done. My Jerilderie Letter were lost forever. (367)

This lost living work is spoken by Kelly in a grandiose speech, his obsession with his inscription metaphorised like stars across the night sky: 'The words must be said and say them I did beneath the dazzling Milky Way the skies spilled like broken crystal across the heavens' (370).

Kelly retreats to a shepherd's hut that has old newspapers plastered on the walls and sets about reading it from top to bottom. It is here, surrounded by the tantalising evidence of the power of the written word that he has not yet successfully harnessed in his attempt to free his mother, that Kelly gives birth to his final conception of himself as the 'Monitor'.

It were during them winter storms we begun studying the paper on the walls my LORNA DOONE was long ago ruined in the Murray so there were not a great deal else to read but the news of 18 yr. before. The previous incumbent must have been a Yankee every page he pasted were about the Civil War...

... I come across the badly damaged likeness of a ship called the *Virginia* the southerners had clad it all with iron there were another ship the *Monitor* its bridge were like a tower forged of steel ½ in. thick and ironclad monster with a pair of 11 in. guns like the nostrils on a face. O that a man might smith himself into a warship of that pattern he could sail it to the gates of Beechworth and Melbourne Gaols. Blast down the doors. Smash

the walls apart. No munition could injure him or tear his flesh he would be an engine like the Great Cuchulainn in his war chariot they say it bristled with points of iron and narrow blades with hooks & straps & loops & cords. (371-2)

The small ink monitor who first gained charge of pen and ink now creates himself as a monstrous ship of war, becoming the manifestation of that power he first tasted as hero in saving Dick Shelton, the very manifestation of the mythological Cuchulainn who, like Oedipus, was has been an adopted child. Like Cuchulainn, whom Kelly learnt of by the tales his mother told, Kelly had slaughtered a beast as a child. Cuchulainn took up arms when, at the age of seven it was prophesised that anyone who took arms that day would have everlasting fame, although his life would be short. Cuchulainn would also go into a frenzy in which he would turn about in his skin.³⁶⁶ Jan Kociumbas, in “‘MaryAnn’, Joseph Fleming and ‘Gentleman Dick’: Aboriginal-Convict Relationships in Colonial History’, reminds us that:

idealised outlaw narratives have a life of their own and as such, powerfully and necessarily determine human action. Yet, perhaps it is the other way round. It may be that it is identifiable human beings, especially the raconteurs, reporters and historians, who reinvent and perpetuate the

outlaw legend and consciously use it for their own ends. Bandits themselves may be complicit in this process. That is... perhaps these people understood their predicament in terms of this received bandit lore, the more so since it was traditionally associated with government protest against the loss of cherished rights to food-sources and communal land.³⁶⁷

Ned Kelly writes himself into mythological discourse and, clad in iron like the *Monitor* ship, believes he will defeat even death:

Shuttup I snapped at them I were the Captain and it were time to
cease this endless bicker. Removing a piece of paper from my britches I
lay it before Joe's poisoned eyes.

What is it he asked and turned it upside down.

It is the pattern for the ironclad man.

Who is he asks Joe. He is you said I he is a warrior he cannot die.

(373)

The metaphor is taken from writing and publication; by being the ink monitor and having access to and controlling the means of the production of writing, one can inscribe one's own true history, construct one's own identity through story and put it into circulation, to continue after the demise of the body, making the

³⁶⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuchulainn> Last viewed 30 March 2007

writer immortal: 'For his head I made a fort like the turret of the Monitor I made a thin crack so he might observe the destruction of his enemy no gun could hurt his tortured heart' (374).

The metaphor of the 'monitor', as both master of the implements of writing and as an iron-clad and invincible warrior, is a metaphor born of the disempowerment. The Irish-descended Kelly has inherited the loss of a mother-tongue thanks to the history of colonial oppression. Via writing and publishing, Kelly enters his body in the battle over history, the battlefield of language waged over differing versions of the 'truth'. As the Monitor, Kelly envisions himself at war against the British Empire that poisoned his father's body:

The British Empire has steam & factories & thousands come to toil each day carrying out its orders it cannot imagine what we colonials have in store... The 3 of us stood back in silent veneration as the Soldier of Future Time turned his back to walk with steady tread there were a slight squeak from the cockplate swinging from its wires did ever such machine of war tread upon the earth before? (374)

Without a printing press, Kelly organizes his supporters to write 60 copies of a threat to the public against helping the police, that they mail out:

³⁶⁷ Kociumbas op.cit. 35

I had wished only to be a citizen I had tried to speak but the mongrels stole my tongue when I asked for justice they give me none. In the autumn of 1880 I were forced to compose the following coffin letter 7 of us sat round a rough table we manufactured 60 copies... (375)

To Kelly, 'the bare branches of English trees made shadows thin as handwriting on the Commissioner's walls', and he feels entirely in control of reality, as if the world was his for writing:

The Commissioner thought he were the servant of Her Majesty the Queen but he were my puppet on a string he ordered the Special Train as I desired he summoned the black trackers and called for Hare & Nicolson who thought themselves famous as capturers of Harry Power they never imagined they would be captives in a drama devised by me. (382)

Before his final battle with the police, after the failed attempt to derail the train that carries them, Kelly's obsession and hysteria erupt in a dream about his mother. In this dream Kelly's own blood turns to ink, and he wears the sash that marked his first experience of being a monitor with heroism. The ironclad *Monitor* that shoots down the prison walls is Ned Kelly as writer, and the text he produces his ammunition. Writing has empowered him beyond the shame of

poverty, discrimination and injustice and enables him to liberate his mother; the sea, a vast symbol of the feminine and of the unconscious, washes all the world away in a subconscious vision of pre-Oedipality.

I see Mr. Irving finally made you the monitor she smiled. Looking down at myself I seen the ink on my hands & up my arms it were bleeding down my shirt and moleskins.

I spilled it I said tho I did not remember having done so I were surprised that I must be back at Avenel Common School. You put that sash on she said do you hear me. It were 7 ft. long & fringed with gold I had nothing to be ashamed of Mother and me walked side by side along the catwalk I looked down to the ground floor where there were much smoke and destruction many policemen was lying dead.

The front gate of Melbourne Gaol were shattered and in its opening were that ironclad Monitor its 11 in. gun pointing up the nave of the prison but the sea were lapping across my boots all Russell Street were washed away. (383)

As he writes, the magnification of Kelly's super-ego reaches its heights, and he recalls Napoleon like a dear friend: 'I now sit on the eve of battle... the table I write on is made from cedar it wd. suit Napoleon himself.' (393)

It is when Kelly is in this state of heightened anxiety that Thomas Curnow the schoolmaster intrudes to set in action Kelly's final downfall. He plays upon Kelly's insecurity regarding his education as Kelly scorns Curnow as a 'superior fellow' whom his mother had to beg for Kelly's education. When Curnow asks, 'Do you object to a man reading?' and he replies too defensively 'O I sometimes read a book myself', Kelly immediately reveals his own ignorance by asking whether the Shakespeare play Curnow held under his arm was 'any good'. This enables Curnow to laugh at him 'as if I wd. never know what of I spoke I were an oaf in muddy boots tracking across some oriental rug. O yes it is very good I cd. Of slapped him for his insolence' (384). This is the real final battle for Carey's Ned Kelly, not the physical body of the monitor shooting at police, nor the successful monitor of his dreams, but the psychological body of Kelly's text of himself in combat with a master of education:

...it were my inkwell that he lingered on the most.

I see I interrupt you at your labours.

...he were almost cross eyed with curiosity as if he seen a dog standing on his hind legs and talking.

Mr. Kelly you give an appearance of an author.

... Is it a history you write?

I said THE ARGUS called me a clever ignoramus I were sure a schoolteacher would hold the same opinion. (385)

At the climax of Kelly's imagined power he writes himself in the eyes of Curnow 'like a dog standing on his hind legs and talking'. Kelly's superego towers above the conflict at the centre of his identity and the cunning Curnow knows just how to play upon Kelly's vanity and his belief in 'truth' to get his hands on his manuscript. Curnow compares him to the author of *Lorna Doone*: 'it is no bad thing to be an ignoramus for if Mr. Blackmore is an ignoramus then you or I wd. wish to be one too' (385) and, in reply to Kelly's embarrassed comment that his history is 'too rough', Curnow says: 'It is history Mr Kelly it should always be a little rough that way we know it is the truth. He continued in this vein and finally I relented of a page.' (386) Curnow offers himself as editor:

It is most bracing and engaging given the smallest of improvements it could be made into something no Professor would ever think to criticize.
(386)

The final seduction of Kelly is carried out by a superior practitioner of the written word, who later becomes the self-appointed editor of Kelly's words, and in this way a representation of the author, Peter Carey. In a great carouse in Mrs. Jones' pub, beside the railway line at Glenrowan, awaiting the signal of the derailment of the Special Train carrying police, Curnow borrows the words of Shakespeare for the final denouement. Kelly is defeated by the performance and utterly

enthralled, reading himself in the words of the eponymous King Henry V before the Battle of Agincourt. In his flattery, Curnow is elevated to the status of priest of poetry, and gains possession of Kelly's words as well. Inspired, Kelly's own narrative soars up into a declaration of his gang's nobility, and the nobility of Australians:

I do not know where that deep voice came from for the teacher's normal manner were light as a reed bt. now he read to us his eyes afire his face that of a soldier by my side so did the priests rise up beside the common people in times of yore.

Those what listened sat on floor or table they wasn't well schooled it weren't their fault but many cd. not write their names. Their clothes was worn the smell of the pigpen & the cow yd. was both present but their eyes burn'd with the necessary fire.

Constable Bracken were scowling but amongst the other faces there were astonishment for even if the meaning were not clear they cd. See a man of learning might compare us to a King & when in the middle of the poem Dan & Joe come back in from the night then all eyes went reverently to those armour'd men. Them boys was noble of true Australian coin.

(389)

The metaphor of the 'Monitor' is one of control of language, of writing, and of history, a machine of war in the battle for symbolic inscription and the depiction of truth. Kelly's text ends with the text of Shakespeare and in writing this Kelly attempts to insert himself into the canon of writers. Kelly's last written words, 'no time', leave his history unfinished and open to endless reinterpretation. In handing Kelly the two pages from Shakespeare that he recited as 'A souvenir of battle', Curnow ironically souvenirs '500 adjectival pages' (386) of Kelly's voice, taking them away to be edited and circulated by him; 'Oh Tom, what have you done? / What I have done, he said, is become a hero.' (394)

Kelly's whole narrative is framed by a repetition of accounts of the final battle in which Kelly is captured. These two anonymous accounts are linked to each other as a frame for Kelly's narrative by the image of Kelly as the 'monitor' - fully equipped in his *Monitor* inspired armour for the final battle, vocally repeating his constructed identity: 'I am the b---y Monitor, my boys' (1 and 397). In a footnote, Carey draws attention back to the means of production, as the 'Siege of Glenrowan' is published the year after Thomas Curnow's death:

The author identified solely by the initials S.C.Printer: Thomas Warriner & Sons, Melbourne, 1955

The Monitor has taken on a life of its own in the form of a printer – forever multiplying Kelly’s inscription.

Huggan argues that novels such as Carey’s ‘confirm the value of sustained critical engagement with the Kelly legend’ and are examples of transformative cultural memory that ‘might prove as useful in addressing the collective needs of the present as it is in uncovering the combined injustices of the past.’³⁶⁸ An elaborate construction of a ‘false self’ on a national level, a system of ‘organised structures of forgetting’³⁶⁹ and remembering regarding the inception and development of modern Australian society, is perpetually disrupted by Kelly’s wild colonial body that bears the imprint of the primal wound:

That is the agony of the Great Transportation that our parents would rather forget what come before so we currency lads is left alone ignorant as tadpoles spawned in puddles on the moon. (317)

Ned Kelly's armour restricts vision. It is a metal armour of defensive Australian mythology that covers the absence of a head, beautifully captured as the eyes on landscape in Sidney Nolan's paintings of Kelly in armour, a protection for the

³⁶⁸ Huggan op.cit.153

imagined void of 'terra nullius', and a criminal mask for a real denied discourse of contemporary Australian history. It is a 'false self' of bravado, an outlaw's steel helmet that seeks to protect a head but, instead, inhibits its vision:

As the police climbed the fence between the hotel and the railway line,
three ironclad men awaited them in the dark of the veranda. The tallest of
them, Joe Byrne, raised his rifle.

This ----- armour. I cannot ----- sight my rifle.

Shut up, they'll hear you. (392)

It is this lack of (fore)sight, about which we are told we must shut up, that enables denied historical trauma to function in a negative fashion via the continuing discourse of child reassignments. The 'real' Ned Kelly shared the anxiety of the closed-record adoptee: a concern with voice:

Well, it is rather too late for me to speak now. I thought of speaking this morning and all day, but there was little use, and there is little use blaming anyone now. Nobody knew about my case except myself, and I

³⁶⁹ Paula Hamilton 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History' *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia* eds. Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton Oxford University Press

wish I had insisted on being allowed to examine the witnesses myself. If I had examined them I am confident I would have thrown a different light on the case. It is not that I fear death: I fear it as little as to drink a cup of tea. On the evidence that has been given, no juryman could have given any other verdict. That is my opinion. But, as I say, if I had examined the witnesses I would have shown matters in a different light, because no man understands the case as I do myself. I do not blame anybody – neither Mr. Bindon nor Mr. Gaunson; but Mr. Bindon knew nothing about my case. I lay blame on myself that I did not get up yesterday and examine the witnesses, but I thought if I did so it would look like bravado and flashness.

Ned Kelly *The Ovens and Murray Advertiser* Beechworth 2 November 1880³⁷⁰

Melbourne 1994 13

³⁷⁰ Reprint of leaflet obtained from Beechworth tourist centre.

CHAPTER 5

An Ado/aptive Reading of Janette Turner Hospital's

Due Preparations for the Plague (2003)

Somehow the fact that the mother is not phallic means that the mother as mother is lost forever, that the mother as womb, homeland, source and grounding for the subject is irretrievably past. The subject is hence in a foreign land, alienated.³⁷¹

The unique experience of the closed-record adoptee in the formation of subjectivity and identity dictates a unique constellation of primary concerns which, as I have read on the body of Carey's novel, centre around a contradictory flow of desires, the hysterical compulsion to both retain or regain an attachment with to the lost body of the mother and the pre-symbolic state, and an obsession with the need for inscription on a symbolic in which the subject has been born within a matrix of disempowerments. The adopted body, traumatized as a pre-gendered subject, is driven by an excessive desire to regain the mother's body as well as to obsessively master that separation and the language that ensues from it in a world in which its place is detached, questioned and tenuous to say the least.

³⁷¹ Jane Gallop *Reading Lacan* Ithaca Cornell University Press 1985 148

Ado/aprive readings of Australian Literature cannot fail to be alert to signs of conflict between the grief-driven drive towards an earlier form, the mythic stasis, a search for the utopian state of jouissance, and a resistance to negotiating the Oedipus complex, caused by the fear-driven magnification of the trauma of separation, and its accompanying compulsion toward inscription. An ado/aprive reading of the false self depicted in Australian texts, will detect the symptoms of separation anxiety and detachment erupting upon them, locate the lacuna at the heart of the Australian imaginary which exerts a pressure on the symbolic, and will name these motivations.

Janette Turner Hospital is another of Australia's most acclaimed writers. Her novel *Due Preparations for the Plague* (2003)³⁷² won three literary awards, the Queensland Premier's Literary Award for Best Fiction 2003, the *Age* Best Book for 2003 and The Davitt Award for Best Adult Novel 2004. Hospital has also won the Patrick White Award for her contributions to Australian Literature. At first glance Hospital's *Due Preparations for the Plague* seems to express American anxieties regarding acts of terrorism on American soil rather than directly addressing Australian anxieties and concerns. Yet, since it is text written by an Australian writer, an ado/aprive reading will reveal fresh constellation of symptoms on its textual body, that can be attributed to the expression of Australian preoccupations, offering insights into the Australian imaginary, the

psyche of the Australian community and its expression in national identity. Whether directly confronting Australia's own burgeoning national mythology or investigating contemporary fears of terrorist attacks in a new 'mother' country, expatriate Australian writers might offer a more analogously 'detached' expression of Australian concerns than writers continually immersed in Australian culture.

Like Kelly in Carey's portrait of him, Hospital's main protagonist is a writer who records his true history in a journal in the hope that he can communicate it to his offspring. Both attempt to write themselves, their own true histories, in resistance to, and in the hope of influence on, the world of events in which their voices are controlled or suppressed. For Kelly, his is a war of words with which he seeks to change the real world. Unlike Kelly, writing is, for Mather Hawthorne, simply a forum in which he can speak his truth in opposition to a world in which he actively participates in his own silencing by being complicit in the structures of the secret service. Both characters are constantly silenced by the 'authorities', if not simply by Providence, and in the end both are silenced by their murders. But Hawthorne's obsession with his own inscription differs from Kelly's as the post-colonial world differs from the colonial world. In colonial Australia, Kelly manages to publish and circulate some text by making handwritten copies and even accessing a printing press although he does not

³⁷² Janette Turner Hospital *Due Preparations for the Plague* Fourth Estate HarperCollins Sydney 2003

succeed in using it. By the time Hawthorne seeks to tell his true history the world has progressed to the point where the publication of Hawthorne's voice in his own lifetime is never a possibility. The post-colonial world in which Hawthorne moves as a 'false self' has progressed beyond the simple world of the oppressed into the world of the paranoid. An Australian son may no longer be driven by wanting everyone to hear his story but simply just someone. This is an obsession with inscription born, not of the silenced, but of the paranoid body which has been complicit in its silencing, an obsession born of paranoia.

Like Carey, Hospital has taken stock of a factually based sequence of events, terrorist incidents in 1976 and 1988 and, in 2001, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11, and fabricated a fictional narrative around real history. Unlike Carey's story, these events took place outside Australia's national boundaries and partly unfolded, not in a colonial history distant from the author's own lifetime, but in the process of the author's actual post-colonial writing. Hospital's novel is, therefore, less concerned with history and its struggle over truth than with the ethics of living in the here and now. Just as Carey title makes a direct link between discourses of truth and history, Hospital's makes a more subtle link between comparative histories, so that the contemporary concern of the Western World over terrorism is figured as an historic concern, reminding the reader that what is made out to be a spontaneous eruption of evil is something we have certainly had to deal with before.

Hospital's idea is that this experience of the unexpected terror is not new, not an inexplicable terror, but still one for which no preparation can really be made.

Hospital is in fact constructing a literary warning: to expect that full preparation can be made is, in a sense, a far greater danger as it mimics the fascist totalitarian mind. Hospital gently reminds us, by writing about individuals who are victims of terrorism, that one needs to accept on some level that terrorism is like the Black Plague of history - something for which you can never be fully prepared.

She quotes Daniel Defoe, 'preparations for the plague are preparations for death'.

It was Defoe, surrounded by the Plague, who asked this question in 1722, and it is repeated in the last line of the novel which precedes the then unwritten future of September 11: 'But this is a mystery, she thinks: how do we ready ourselves for what might happen tomorrow? What possible preparations can be made?'

(390). *Due Preparations for the Plague* is thus concerned with the depiction of 'the obsession, almost, with various people trying to make due preparations.'

Hospital offers her own judgement on 'what preparations are proper to be made for death?': 'to live well and decently and magnanimously now, while we've got life.'³⁷³

The action of *Due Preparations for the Plague*, as in Carey's novel, hinges on juxtaposed bodies, but these are not mother/infant bodies, but the detached bodies of children who have grown up without their mothers. The figure of the

³⁷³ Janette Turner Hospital, Interview by Eleanor Hall on The World Today, ABC local radio 21 May 2003

mother is absent in Hospital's text because the parents of the children have been murdered in a terrorist attack on a plane, from which the children had been released before it was destroyed. In the absence of this signification, a world of memory stands in for the absent mothers' bodies. The surviving children replace the loss of the mother's body with a world of memory, story and imagination, recreating the presence of, and connection with, the maternal:

She starts counting backwards from one hundred. She counts down through ritual layers, down through the Cenozoic and the Mesozoic and the Paleozoic and the Precambrian. Under the Precambrian is the time before the plane disappeared in a ball of fire, and there's a space there, a space that Samantha can think her way into if she counts backward far enough. In that space, everyone is still alive. She imagines it with chandeliers and a dance floor. Her mother is in a strapless dress of pale blue silk... (73)

Sam, Jacob and Cassie, three survivors of the hijacking that killed their parents, construct this world in their imaginations and locate a physical space to manifest it, an abandoned boathouse, which they ritually visit: 'Hunched into themselves in the loft, they can close their eyes and enter that state they call *Before*' (78). Here the survivors compare their memories of this maternal space: a form a collective

See also www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2003/s860328.htm last viewed 14 March 2005

memory which they share between them: 'Cassie has - when it is not completely fogged in - more memory of Before' (78). The physical representation of 'Before' in the boathouse is a womblike space, chosen because it is isolated, enclosed and near water. Associated with this regression to a fantasy of the mother/infant body is a sense of safety and forewarning: traumatised by the shock of terrorism for which they have discovered that no preparations can be made, the survivors fantasise regression as a space of escape: a place that provides forewarning of approaching danger and from which they 'could descend into the boat and glide away, soundlessly' (78). The boathouse is a place where the survivors enter a pre-symbolic world before language, where 'Sometimes they spend hours like this without speaking' (77), but this space beyond language also contains their trauma:

The blown-up plane, the horrible deaths - is beyond comprehension and beyond language, because of this, they do not feel any awkwardness in a prolonged silence. (83)

The survivors can be defined according to my definition of 'detached' bodies, as they are bodies that have suffered loss and are changed because of it. The moment of the hijacking and the loss of their parents has divided their subjectivities into a 'Before' and 'After' trauma. The world of 'Before', a world of memories, physically represented in the boatshed, contains an originating

identity. The world after is a paranoid, dangerous and chaotic one, in which the self is defined by trauma and survival, and the former identity is lost or unknown to the subject. The children of the deceased ritually construct their own identities through connections to a past in a hysterical failure to accept their sudden detachments.

Look at Samantha: here she is, the day the world changed, on the border between *Before* and *After*, in fading colour on Kodak paper. She is six years old. (67)

Juxtaposed with the hysterical detached body of Samantha is that of Lowell Hawthorne who, consistent with traditional psychoanalytic theory that the hysteric is traditionally female, and the obsessional male, denies the separation from the mother's body and the language that ensues from it, rather than repetitively regressing towards it. Lowell has learnt 'it is after a death, Lowell knows, that riddles and slow torments begin.' As a result, again and again, Lowell attempts to repress and erase memory, to forget, in order to come to terms with the unexpected and tragic death of his mother and, later, his father. As Sam hounds him with phone calls trying to find new information, 'Lowell erases her messages' (4), 'he will not listen', 'He never returns her calls', 'Lowell cuts off her call' (5); 'Sometimes Lowell pulls the jack from the wall'. 'Erase, erase. "She thinks your father knew about Flight 64." Erase. "Why are you so

afraid to speak to me?" Erase.' Lowell's erasure of Sam's words is his attempt to erase his own memory but he is ultimately unsuccessful: 'Lowell erases from the machine immediately and entirely, though less successfully, less entirely, from his memory and from his sleep' (5).

As with Kelly, erasure and forgetting, silence and lies, are the tools Lowell has inherited from his father. *Due Preparations for the Plague* opens in the static of Lowell's mind, which he seeks to control through the erasure and denial of memories. But as a result of his persistent repression, Lowell must continually deal with the unpredictable eruptions of the death drive. Up on the roof of his house, which he is repairing, Hawthorne becomes aware of a voice on the radio reciting a poem which plunges Lowell's mind back into his repressed memories and fears:

in spite of the fact that the reader has a mellow voice... what Lowell can hear is his own father in shadow duet, word for word... and then suddenly...*Forty thousand feet, he hears, severed fuselage... the fatal plunge...*

Shocked, he almost loses his balance on the ladder. *Death*, he hears, and it is plummeting at him, no question, *and final cure of all diseases*. The news commentator says these words. (Does he really say them? Is it possible?) (3)

Lowell almost falls from the roof of his house as he teeters above the eruption of his own repression, plunging into the memory of death that he has tried to expunge from his mind, which has combined with unconscious fears of his own mortality: 'Oblivion has taken to offering herself this way, quick and shameless. She tries it once or twice a week.' (3).

In the opening of the narrative, then, these issues of memory and erasure - remembering and forgetting - and the eruption of the death drive into language - are introduced through the character of Lowell. It is not only the unexpected and sudden deaths of the past that plague him but, as with Samantha, their proof that unexpected tragedy can strike at any place, at any time, and 'what possible preparations can be made?' except to prepare for death itself? It is Lowell's inability to deal with the death of his mother, and by implication his own mortality, that turns him into a living wreck, his anxiety communicated again and again to his children so that they become frightened of him, and his wife frustrated. His bumbling and traumatizing attempts to explain death to his children reveal his own inability to deal with it. Lowell's battle with the force of memory is a failing one, 'He is highly infectious with doom' (13). In his desperation to disarm and disempower his memories he only manages to imprint them upon his children like a curse, an inheritance he gained from his father:

“My father gave the impression,” Lowell says, “of a man soldered to doom... My father knew in his bones he was doomed,” Lowell explains. “He accepted it, he didn’t think he had any choice, but he took it like a man. He made a vow he’d give no sign... Of course, it cost him,” he says. (15)

Lowell understands that silence costs the subject, but because he has learnt this from his own father, associates it with masculinity and paternity. But his wife disagrees: ‘For years you’ve been like my third child. You wore me out. And now you’re Amy and Jason’s father’ (378). Finally, all this repression erupts in an out-of-body experience, triggered by a single word on his boarding pass, ‘terminal’, read while at an airport. A major panic attack ensues in which he entirely leaves his own body to return to find himself ‘sequestered in the middle nook of a bank of Bell telephones’ (14).

After the death of his father Mather Hawthorne, and his reception of his father’s inscriptions in writing and on videotape, Lowell changes tack and develops a compulsion to talk. Like Carey’s Kelly, Lowell has been brought up on the lies and silences inherited from his father, a matrix of secrets, evasions and an intuited discouragement of questioning that may be similar to that experienced by the closed-record adoptee:

Where are you going Daddy?

I can't tell you that, son...

When will you be back?

I can't tell you that, Lowell... No, no, you musn't say that I can't say.

What will I say?

You could tell them that your daddy's on a business trip to Hawaii.

You're going to Hawaii?

No...

I can tell them a lie?

Sometimes, when you have to look after a whole country, a lie is not really a lie. These are the necessary rituals of risk, Lowell. Do you understand?

If you say anything, you could put lives in danger.

It was a catechism that Lowell often rehearsed to himself. I must never say that I'm not allowed to say. (28)

An ado/aptive reading discovers the world of the closed-record adoptee in Lowell's world of 'necessary rituals of risk' where lies are acceptable and to speak is dangerous. This paranoid world is ruled over by the double bind expressed by R. D. Laing:

They are playing a game. They are playing at not playing a game. If I show them I see they are, I shall break the rules and they will punish me. I must play their game, of not seeing I see the game.³⁷⁴

The death of Lowell Hawthorne's father, Mather, in a car crash at the beginning of the novel, precipitates his panic attack in the airport, on his way to his father's funeral. This panic attack signifies the final eruption of Lowell's suppressed 'discourse of detachment', and he begins to experience the need to speak, to tell his story. At first he imagines and practices how it will sound to himself, then to various strangers, and, editing along the way, to a taxi driver, a waitress, and a barman. He has no need to listen to them but is instead driven by the birth of his own obsession to tell the story that he has for so long been trying to forget: 'Lowell can imagine himself repeating all this, casually, from time to time, and after several drinks, to strangers at parties and in bars.' (17)

In *Due Preparations for the Plague*, whether they be hysterical or obsessional bodies, the world of 'After' through which these bodies must move is a paranoid space, which they struggle to negotiate, and which threatens them with further trauma. People seem to be continually followed, filmed or photographed, 'How to live under and around surveillance is something they know about' (77) and some even disappear. Up to six survivors, one by one, die in mysterious

³⁷⁴ Ronald D Laing *The Politics of the Family* Tavistock Publications London 1971 41

circumstances. Paranoia marks the symbolic for the detached bodies of the survivors, and is the manifestation of their hysterical desire to regain the semiotic state. As an ado/aptive psychological system, the text of *Due Preparations for the Plague* constructs two worlds where 'paranoia decomposes just as hysteria condenses'.³⁷⁵ The paranoid world can be read as the displacement of the regressive urge toward the semiotic phase, experienced in the unified mother/infant body. In the absence of the mother/infant symbol in *Due Preparations for the Plague*, the fantasized reunion with the mother contrasts and constructs an opposing world of the symbolic, expressing an oppressive Law of the Father, and controlling the subject within it.

Like Carey's Kelly, Mather Hawthorne, who is later revealed to be a secret service agent, codename Salamander, thinks of Napoleon as he contemplates the war which he fights:

My thoughts dwell on death, he wrote in his diary when he was twelve years old - he was a desolate child in the Military Academy in Brienne - no doubt because I see no place for myself in this world.

And yet *there* was a man who dared his own fate and grabbed it by the lapels and stared it full in the face and defied it. (250)

³⁷⁵ Deleuze and Guattari *Anti-Oedipus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia* University of Minnesota Press 2003

He outlines the effect of the paranoid world to his psychiatrist, Dr. Reuben, ruminating on Napoleon:

...how did he try to keep an ignominious death at bay?

By recourse to the same old fool's gold we all so stupidly bank on. Foreknowledge. Spies. Informers. He had an intelligence system to die for, the most intricate ever evolved by a ruling clique...

And that's what undid Napoleon in the end: his own intelligence network and the distrust it bred.

Here's the conundrum: the better you train a secret agent, the less he will trust his peers; hence, as a logical consequence, the less able he is to work in tandem with anyone else, and the more likely he is – unintentionally – to sabotage the entire intricate project by the desperate need to know all.

And then there's this: knowing too much can get you killed. (251)

The intelligence service based on an attempt to manifest intuition, but by its very nature becomes a self-generating paranoid system, that inevitably backfires and kills the subject. Paranoia, brought on by the experience of powerlessness in the sudden and traumatic separation from the mother's body, engenders in the

infant a paranoid consciousness, in the very real experience of being commodified by society and detached from natural human systems of kinship. In this sense, adoption can be read as a form of terrorism - it may strike at any time, no preparations can be made, it might have happened to you! So, Hospital quotes Jean-Paul Kauffmann in *The Black Room of Longwood*, 'The captive devours himself trying to understand his abandonment.' (297) Hawthorne expresses the same sentiment:

You think I'm paranoid, of course, but then you have no idea, not the slightest idea, of how much Salamander knew about you before I called you, and if I were to tell you how much he knew, you would not sleep.
(250)

Salamander is later revealed to be Hawthorne's codename and he is, therefore, admitting how much he is complicit in the paranoid world surrounding him, that his enemies construct. Sirocco is the codename of one of the terrorists Hawthorne, as Salamander, is pursuing:

We will travel down through the circles of Sirocco's inferno as he choreographed them. Choreographed? Choreographed and recorded. That is the sort of sick thing Sirocco does. He is a gifted designer of the custom-made hell and he enjoys a visual record of his power. I do not

doubt that he watches and rewatches his own tape. He likes to imagine us watching. (273)

Like the world surrounding the closed-records adopted body, this paranoid system withholds information and creates secrets about real events:

...in the interests of national security – so I was told - the tapes were destroyed. Before I surrendered the originals, however, I made secret copies...

Consider that it is entirely possible that you too are being watched as you watch. (284)

This paranoid world of surveillance intensifies into a climax when Lowell and Samantha watch Hawthorne's 'Decameron Tapes' – Sirocco's film of the slow and macabre deaths of the ten remaining hostages, all in protective suits, in a bunker filled with Sarin gas. The poisoned bunker appears to be underground and to have seamless walls, its only point of contact with the outside world being the red light of a camera in the upper corner through which the captives are watched and the camera that films from behind a wall. As Sam and Lowell press the 'play' button, Hospital immediately draws the reader into this paranoid world, both as watcher and watched, and the metonymic world of surveillance is constructed around the reader:

The screen is shadowy. Some young director of *film noir*, it would seem, has dispensed with the notion of lighting. And the watcher is tricked into enclosed space and then trapped. In order to get out alive, the watcher must find the sealed opening in the wall.

You are the watcher.

You must navigate between dread shapes in the red-flushed dark. (Or you must turn on all the lights and smash the television set, and even so...) Even so, from high in the cube of your dream, where two walls and the ceiling meet, a red light watches...

The watcher performs as required.

You clutch at bedding, a handful of sheet in your fist. Vertigo strikes. Your breathing turns ragged. You sweat. You have the certainty that you are being watched. You are monitored not only by the all-seeing light - red devil's eye, or eye of God - that catalogues your every reaction from deep inside the television set; but you sense some further invisible and overarching presence that hovers and has you under surveillance...

Enough, you say. This - the waiting - is intolerable. Let the circus begin. (299-300)

When the people inside beat against the membrane that separates them from you, against the television screen, 'You can feel this. You can feel it in the thudding of your heart.' (299)

If the hysterical impulse is expressed in the absence of the mother/infant symbol as the dichotomous worlds of regression and paranoia, the opposing compulsion is the obsession with inscription on the paranoid symbolic. The compulsion to regain the semiotic space with the maternal body, to regress, or suppress and build an identity via memory erasure and retrieval exists with the dichotomous world of the paranoid symbolic but struggles in opposition to inscribe again and again the features and boundaries of identity onto a symbolic which has somehow deprived the self of a voice. Both these opposing drives function in the psychological body of Mather Hawthorne and his struggle over power; Hospital claims her novel is 'really about power, and the paranoia within power, that brings about its own eventual dissolution.'³⁷⁶

If the text of *Due Preparations for the Plague* hinges on the two axes of Samantha and Lowell it also offers, like Carey's novel, a central body who encompasses the dual drives of the detached body, hysterically circulating in a paranoid symbolic and obsessed with inscription. The psychological body of Mather Hawthorne involves the production of a false self, developed to protect the self and others

from further trauma. Like the adopted body, this false self, has its own name, 'Salamander'. This false self operates so successfully that it functions as a separate character, eventually conflicting with the will of Hawthorne, consuming him and making the death of both bodies inevitable. This understanding of the adoptee's binary conflict compels Hawthorne to inscribe himself secretly, tell something of his 'true history', by projecting his body as writing, and, in the postcolonial capitalist world, on video. In this way, like Kelly's, his inscription via the media, although it does not save him, survives his death to be eventually published and circulated as his own 'true history'.

Hawthorne posits himself, as distinct from and outside his work as the secret service agent, Salamander, as a 'true self'; someone who, like Kelly, has a privileged access to the truth of an alternative history to that promulgated in the real world. By revealing in his writing the secret identity of Salamander as his own 'false self', Hawthorne like Kelly 'defeats death' and defeats the world of surveillance that oppresses him and steals his voice.

The construction of Salamander begins with a single letter - S - which signifies Hawthorne's constructed false self, but also the dynamics of the false self as 'substructure, subterranean, subterfuge, split selves, Siamesed' (219). Like Kelly as Cuchulainn, Hawthorne is mythologizing himself:

³⁷⁶ Hospital on The World Today op.cit.

Salamander: a mythical creature having the power to endure fire without harm; an elemental being inhabiting flames in the theory of Paracelsus; any of numerous amphibians superficially resembling lizards but scaleless and covered with a soft moist skin and breathing by gills in the larval stage. (45)

Hawthorne refers to himself as Salamander as 'the other man', abnegating to him the real responsibility for his actions, blaming his false self for nudging events in dreadful directions. Hawthorne claims he operates from beneath Salamander's line of sight, reading Salamander's reports and notes, with the intention of sorting through them, editing them, rewriting, and writing his true self:

because someone has to do this. Someone has to set the record straight. Someone has to sort through the rubble of words and ideas, and I note, for example, that when Salamander writes 'ideas' in his reports, or rather in his handwritten notes for his reports, he writes "ids" for short, a plurality of ids, which is a singular idea when you think about it, and he uses the abbreviation "id" when he is indicating "idea" in the non-plural form, as a solitary fertilized seed. It bears looking into, this habit of his, this exhibitionism, this allusive shorthand that might mean *id*, ideogram, identity, identical, ideologue, or idiot. (219)

As the 'false self' Salamander appears to have a separate consciousness to Hawthorne, and even a self-conscious notion that he is but an 'idea', Hawthorne's false self encoded in Salamander's writing.

Hawthorne's plurality of identities becomes a mess of entanglements and yet, as it is for the closed-records adoptee, it is but a matter of language, not of separate physical bodies:

I want you stop this, Dr Reuben. I want you to stop words from doing this to me, iddying this way and that, uncontrollably. They are driving me mad. I want you to stop them.

I want you to stop Salamander from taking up more and more space while I am becoming – have you noticed? – smaller and smaller, like Alice in Wonderland with the shrinking potion. I want you stop me from disappearing. (219)

As Hawthorne and his small-man morality dwindle into nothingness within the id of Salamander and his role as protector of the world, his own identity is sacrificed, like the hostages are sacrificed, to what he believes is the 'greater good'. Again and again he becomes the victim of his own teachings:

You can be brought to acknowledge that multiple compromises – even shady ones, even ones that in ordinary circumstances you would find abhorrent – are the *sine qua non* of a nation's good. (233)

The false self of the Great Australian Good is expressed in the writings of Hospital, the identification with the power to do good here being the justification Hawthorne delivers. His identity is rapidly diminishing as more space is taken over by his construction of a false self, almost as if a process of adoption is occurring, his new adoptive parents, the Secret Service and its world of dangerous 'ideas'. Even Samantha, who really is an adopted body, reads Hawthorne/Salamander in this way, portraying the ethical and psychological dilemma of the 'disappearing' Hawthorne in her comic performance in a club, where her skit is a weapon aimed to provoke Salamander into revealing himself:

Did you hear the one about the guy in Intelligence who made his own lie and went to bed with it? Gave birth to an international incident but the CIA and the NSA pressured him to put it up for adoption. It grew up to be a full-sized war and then – because this is the way things go these days – it went looking for its birth father. There were blood tests, DNA, the whole works. Everything pointed to someone high up in Intelligence, who denied all on the grounds that he never fucked with the lie of the land.

(66)

In this telling Sam, Lowell, Jacob, and all the children rescued from the plane before the hijackers blew it up are contextualised as 'adopted' children, born of the lies invented by Salamander. It is in long and arduous search for the 'father' of the plot and the lies, Mather Hawthorne aka Salamander, via the world of *text*, that Sam uncovers the truth about herself. Samantha's own adoption is a subtext here, as much as the artificiality of Salamander, who is constructed just as much in the mind of Samantha, who is looking for him, as in Hawthorne's:

He has the eyes of a fly or a god. The things that he knows, weighty matters of life and death - not natural death, or swift death - orbit his consciousness, but he must not speak of them.

This is the way Samantha imagines him. She had constructed him, like a trick question, from undeleted half lines in documents. (45)

Hawthorne tries to resolve the ethical questions that traumatize his consciousness by apportioning blame to Salamander but claiming heroism for himself. At the time of the hijacking he had bargained with the terrorists and secured the release of the children from the plane, but had failed to secure the release of the adults. In this way, Hawthorne creates a generation, like closed-record adoptees, in the survivors, granting them lives to be lived but being unable to prevent the traumatizing of their bodies. These scarred children enter

Hawthorne's dreams and play on the remnants of his moral self. The mythical Salamander can withstand Sirocco's fire, but Hawthorne has been irreparably damaged by it:

My face and my entire body are as folded and pleated and convoluted as a roasted prune. Children point and stare and make forays into the blackened topography of my body. They climb my welts and slide down my scars. I recognise the children and this is what saddens me beyond what I am unable to endure, because I was the one who saved them.

These are the children I saved. (219-20)

Hawthorne wants desperately to expiate his guilt, remembering the children he saved, but avoiding the responsibility he had, as Salamander, in allowing them to be endangered in the first place. Salamander knew of the terrorist plot, it is revealed, but willingly exposed the people on the plane to it, so that the terrorist cells could be exposed, and eliminated for the greater good of the nation. This contradiction provokes Hawthorne's moral confusion ("Betrayed!" Sirocco seems genuinely amused. "That is wonderful. That you should speak of betrayal"). Hawthorne's ethical dilemma is represented in the two selves of Salamander, who makes decisions for the good of the country, and Hawthorne, who dreams about the children he saved and is represented by his fire-scarred body, the effect of the work of Sirocco. The phenomenon of terrorism has split his

subjectivity and made his body a fire-scarred wasteland, upon which the casualties of childhood trauma must live their lives. Hawthorne's dreams of his body as irreparably scarred by the fires of the double-crossing Sirocco, forming a topography, a country, upon which the rescued children play, a desolate playground that symbolises the psychological world the survivors must live in as casualties of trauma, and the physical world which still harbours those who want to silence the survivors.

"Everything's going to be all right, Agit." That was my promise to the little face that filled the screen of my monitor. The way I tell it, the way I feel it, the way the keeping of my promise feels true to me, is the moment when I set him (so to speak) on the escape slide, which is to say when one of Sirocco's thuggish crew gave him a push and he slid into Germany.

But he does not grow up into gratitude.

Would it have been better, back then, to let him stay with his mother on the plane? That is the question. Would it have been better to let him slip across that line that all must cross in the end? Would it have been better then, back then, instead of thirteen years later, the way it happened, had to happen, as required? This is a grave moral question. Such dreadful accidents are the things I have been called upon to arrange.

No more, I said.

I refuse. Arrangements for Agit Shankara will not be made.

But what difference does it make when there are always others who will handle these matters? (230)

It is revealed that Salamander has been murdering survivors of the hijacking whenever any of them get too close to the truth - that the secret service was complicit in the hijacking, that Salamander had helped set up and enact Operation Black Death, for the greater good of the nation, 'I believed I could lure all the members of an elite terrorist cell into one confined space and neutralize them' (282). The attempt to make due preparations, the attempt to predict the terrorists, tragically failed and the hostages were sacrificed. Hawthorne struggled to prevent the loss of lives that appeared inevitable as Sirocco double-crossed the agents and went ahead with the hijacking.

Operation Black Death was a politically necessary exercise that got out of hand. It was always a gamble, but an intelligent one, and a necessary one, and collateral damage is part of the game. Always. We know that.

Nevertheless.

The official line - Salamander's line - was this: events set in motion for the best of reasons must play themselves out. They must be allowed to take their course. If you intervene, if you try to throw a wrench in the wheels once the whole idea is in motion, well... To put it bluntly: if you get the children out, those children may grow up to destroy you.

That was the way Salamander thought.

But those children are *children*, I protested, and I gave instructions for which no clearance was received. (220)

This is the heart of the conflict between Hawthorne's true self and his false self, as he demands that his superiors negotiate with the hijackers and they tell him he is compromised by the fact he has loved ones on the plane. Nevertheless he proceeds and saves the children. The asserting of Hawthorne's personal moral body over the national moral body of Salamander marks the beginning of their conflict, which culminates, after years of struggle, with Hawthorne's refusal to assassinate another survivor who has found out too much. Hawthorne must now accept that this probably won't save Agit, and that he will be next. 'Once it was clear that sucking doubt was pulling me under, my own access to official Intelligence information was at first gradually, then rapidly, curtailed' (281). He is, it turns out, the very agent of his own demise, his words the very testimony that condemns him, as he has taught in his lectures to students in the service: 'This is not a field from which one can retire' (228); 'Retirement from this career is not an option' (228); 'The wages of sin in the Intelligence community are erasure' (228); 'Even your codename will be expunged.' (229)

Hawthorne understands that his assertion of his true moral self, a personal moral self, must necessarily entail his own death at the hands of the secret service and it

is in this conviction, as it was with Kelly, that he begins to write. For Hawthorne, his false self is like a second skin, just as Kelly's was his text:

I wear Salamander like a hair shirt. Like an iron lung. But now I want to plead these moments of escape when I defied him. I want to offer them to the children of Flight 64, I want to offer them to my second wife, and to our son L, and to my daughter F, to history, to whatever judges are waiting on the other side of the last abyss. But when I try to explain this to the children in the dream, my words fall from my mouth like hot tar. (221)

Hawthorne's anxiety over his inscription, his telling of his true story, begins in his dreams. Seeing Samantha, aged 6, at the opening of the chute, he sees her coat tearing and in his mind he pockets the fragment. But this image is soon followed by one of Sam as a vengeful angel, and Hawthorne cries into the past, into this vision, that it was he who saved them (230-1). This wish-fulfillment dream is born from the suppression of Hawthorne's voice and is the expression of his true history. His need to communicate to Samantha mirrors Kelly's need to communicate to his daughter - the idea that Sam might never know how he had saved her, unseen as he is behind his monitor and his secret identity, drives him into obsession, as he repetitively cries 'But no one hears' (231).

Through writing, however, Hawthorne's desperate need to justify himself to the survivors, to history, to express his truth, can be fulfilled, his explanation of his true identity and his moral worth articulated. And so it is in writing that Hawthorne pleads his case, again and again:

Against my terrible (though unintended) crimes, I post these small achievements: the children were released from the plane; I saved the life of my daughter, Françoise; through contacts with French Intelligence and the French police, I have made it impossible (or as close to impossible as such things can be) for Sirocco ever to reenter France.

The rest is silence. (282)

The rest is, in fact, not silence as Hawthorne articulates his own breakdown; 'Have you any conception, Dr. Reuben, of the physical pain of moral torment?' (266). Hawthorne writes metonymically of chemical 'nerve agents' but, as he is an agent himself, the pun indicates Hawthorne's psychological disintegration:

What nerve agents do, to put it succinctly, is sabotage the neurotransmitter system. The body's infrastructure is destroyed. All messages from brain to body are scrambled.

To put it even more bluntly: the functioning of your body is fucked up.

All codes become unreadable at this point, and meaning vaporises, and even the meaning of questions grows faint, like a radio signal at the edge of being lost, or like a battery emitting the weak sonic cries that foretell its extinction. (243)

Hawthorne tries to project his disintegration onto his false self: '*You are the one who's cracking up, Salamander. It will be you, and no one will weep for your going, least of all me*' (246) but he is, of course, himself, the victim of a 'nerve agent',

Salamander:

And so I too, Salamander – like Scipio – came by degrees to Carthage, burning... and to the knowledge of our own stockpiles of nerve agents where the codes became scrambled and all the meanings grew faint, you see, and things became more and more difficult to ...

And what are we ...?

And what is it that we defend at any cost...?

And which truths, exactly, do we hold to be ...?

And night after night from the middle of the furnace of Carthage and Flight 64, Scipio turns to me and he cries: O Salamander, how do we tell a glorious victory from horror?

And he weeps, Dr. Reuben. He weeps. (244)

Despite his repeated attempts to justify himself, to repress his own discourse of detachment, in his breakdown the truth is finally articulated - that Hawthorne and Salamander are one person, and thus his false self is not his worst self:

Are you taping me, Dr. Reuben? If you're taping me, I want to say this for the record: Sirocco is not the worst of it. The worst is *seeing* and not intervening to *stop*. The worst is that this happened under high-tech surveillance. The worst is those who watched and monitored and voted: *acceptable collateral damage*. (268)

The heart of Hawthorne's moral schism, his primal wound, the lacuna in the foundation of his identity is written, matter-of-factly, and passed onto his son in his journals, which he leaves in a locked box at an airport. This relates not so much to the sacrificing of the few for the many, but to the silencing of the few, the non-recognition of their sacrifice. As with adopted bodies, the lacuna is silence - the veiled wound driving the need to be heard:

It was the failure to save the passengers and the hostages that appalls. Their deaths were avoidable, though 'not without unacceptable risk to the national good.' (I quote those who decide our fates.) Even this I could

possibly accept: that in time of crisis, triage may be necessary. Some must perish for the greater good of all.

But if so, I pleaded, the many owe homage to the few. The record of their sacrifice should not be expunged. It is our side, our own side, which has obliterated the hostages more absolutely than Sirocco did. It is we who have denied them due rights and obsequies.

This is blasphemy, I argued. It is a moral stain on the national conscience.

I was sternly rebuked.

“Though collateral damage was regrettably high,” I was instructed, “Operation Black Death was a success...”

And so I came to Carthage and to Scipio. I began to ask the troubling question Scipio asked: *How can we tell triumph from horror?*

In my chosen career path, this line of questioning is fatal... (284)

Hospital's novel can, of course, be read as a critique of paranoid United States patriotism, to which Australia is even subject, but an ado/aptive reading of the character of Hawthorne reveals the universal drive of the adoptee toward articulation: if the isolation, confusion and trauma suffered by the body is a sacrifice for something, then at least let it be acknowledged and not suppressed in a myth of sameness, the name of the Great Australian Nation.

Hawthorne succeeds in inscribing himself by passing on a 'Journal of S: Encrypted', a 'Report Dossier: Classified' and six video boxes with a letter in the first and five tapes in the rest. There are also conversations with his doctor. Some of what he leaves behind is stolen but the remaining inscriptions are relayed safely by his son and Sam and eventually make their way into publication and dissemination via the French Press. The news of this conspiracy is, however, largely ignored and forgotten by the public, reflecting Kelly's similar difficulties in his attempts at circulation. In a sense, however, the true history of the hijacking and Hawthorne's original and true identity succeeds in being inscribed on the paranoid symbolic. He leaves his papers with his psychiatrist, whom he refers to as his 'midwife', in his function of delivering Hawthorne's body in writing, to his son.

I have only this one thing of value to leave behind – the truth.

All my planning, including my offering myself up to you as a patient, is geared toward this single end: the preservation of what I am leaving behind. (266)

Both the characters of Ned Kelly and Mather Hawthorne move in a paranoid world in which they are watched and pursued unto their deaths. Both characters become obsessed with the inscription of their true histories, with the idea of their imperfect moral bodies leaving something behind of worth - what they believe to

be a kind of pure concept of truth. Hawthorne, however, cannot let go of the process of inscription. Like Carey's Kelly, who also, in his obsession with the written word, sits atop the words of others, editing, adding and erasing, Hawthorne meticulously edits and constructs 'the truth' in the documents of others:

It contains the Last Words. From this tape I have excised the agonies that will not bear watching, I have cut and spliced, I have kept the Illuminations, I have inserted subtitles and I have memorialised the dead. I call it the Decameron tape, and it is my act of propitiation, my rite of mourning, my wailing wall, my monument to those who perished so terribly, my *Kyrie eleison*, my prayer.

It is also my indictment. (275)

Hawthorne justifies his editing, his plagiarism, as a work of art. He argues that, in editing the tapes, which record the death's of the hostages from sarin gas in an enclosed bunker, he is transforming the horror, redeeming it, and in doing so expressing the real truth of the hostages: which was not so much their horror as their hope:

Even out of atrocity, one is stirred to make art. *Especially* out of atrocity. One feels impelled to transform it. *They* felt so impelled. The Decameron tape is my own act of creative transformation and my act of atonement.

What I am preserving are stories fashioned in hell.

What we learn in time of pestilence, wrote Albert Camus, is that there are more things to admire in men than to despise. (285)

As Hawthorne's ego, like Carey's Kelly, developed into megalomania, the boundary he attempted to erect between his two identities as a solution to their existence, disintegrates. The 'independent', personal, human, words of Hawthorne to his psychiatrist, Dr. Reuben, contain a request for Dr. Reuben to make Samantha 'shut up'; a request which is confusing to say the least, at the reader cannot tell if it emanates from Salamander who wants her silenced, or from Hawthorne's desire to save her life. The inscription on the cover of his journals is from J.L.Borges' story *Borges and I*:

It's to the other man, to Borges, that things happen... I live, I let myself live, so that Borges can weave his tales and poems, and those tales and poems are my justification ... Little by little, I have been surrendering everything to him, even though I have evidence of his stubborn habit of falsification and exaggeration ... Which of us is writing this page I don't know. (217)

Like Kelly, drawing on the discourses of Irish resistance and Celtic warrior mythology, Hawthorne suggests an image of his text as skin. And just as Kelly as writer inserts himself within a Shakespearian discourse, Hawthorne mimics both Jonathan Swift and Borges:

Today I saw a man flayed, you might say. You would not believe how it altered his appearance for the worse... he was no longer among the living and he had no skin... He withdrew, even, from inside the shell of himself; from me, that is to say, and I from him. We strove to keep our thoughts separate and private. I see him now, beside me, not looking at me: Salamander, encased in ice.

Which of us is writing this confession, I do not know. (274)

Even in death Hawthorne cannot project the idea of himself as someone singular although, at last, both his selves seem to agree:

This is what Salamander and I would like our tombstone to say, Dr.

Reuben:

In extremity, we yet achieved two good things: we saved the children; and we saved the tapes. (258)

In his struggle for inscription, Kelly situates himself in a literary tradition throughout Carey's novel, and Hawthorne does the same, trying to give validity to his words, his truth, by circumscribing himself, as Kelly does, with Shakespeare:

I am in blood stepped in so far, and Macbeth too started out with ordinary clean ambition and extraordinary zeal and simply got out of his depth, because one does not notice it happening, that is the trouble, until the day one takes a step too far and suddenly one is sloshing through blood and there is blood on one's hand and blood on the ceiling and blood on the walls and blood in one's breath and in one's thinking and one recognises Operation Macbeth, or Operation Blood, and yes, yes, I am stepped in so far, that, should I wade no more, Returning were as tedious as go o'er. (230-1)

Carey's Kelly is defeated by the power of Shakespeare's words, manipulated by Curnow so that Kelly reads himself as King Henry V. So Hawthorne reads himself in Macbeth, but also in Bushy, a minor character in *Richard II*, whom Hawthorne has played while at Yale:

I would feel unaccountably maudlin, tears would well up in my eyes (the New Haven reviewer mentioned this favourably), because there was something in Bushy that cleaved stubbornly to the old order – the oath of

loyalty, the idea of an anointed king, fealty to Richard – when he could easily have jumped ship and sailed smoothly into *Henry IV, Part I*, but he would not do it, he could not, he was a true believer, and more welcome was the stroke of death... (249)

Salamander also cites Dante (273) and quotes great works of poetry (3) and literature: 'I would rather be a serf in the house of some landless man... than king of all these dead men... Bear, O my heart; thou hast borne a yet harder thing'; 'And so I came to Carthage and to Scipio. I began to ask the troubling question Scipio asked: *How can we tell triumph from horror?*' (284). Hawthorne teaches his students:

Are you surprised that I expect you to know Boccaccio and Camus in this class? That I expect you to familiarise yourselves with their work? That I expect you to *memorise* them? Let me tell you something: in the course of this career, you will remember many things you wish you could forget. You will find immeasurable comfort in reciting the words of other men in the effort to crowd unwanted words offstage. (265)

The obsession with inscription, as for Carey's Kelly, pushes Hawthorne into the realm of the megalomaniac, as his sense of power fractures to the extent that it was exaggerated. Like Kelly operating as a law unto himself, believing 'the police

was actors in a drama writ by me' (348), so Hawthorne pulls the strings behind the scenes of international intrigue. In this representation, Hospital depicts the moral worlds, not only of terrorists, but of the people behind the world of surveillance.

Just as Carey's Kelly saw himself as King of the oppressed, of the Australians, Hawthorne believes himself to be a saviour of humanity, doing the hard yards of generating global stability. He teaches his thinking to his students in the secret service, telling them to 'think like a terrorist':

What, in essence, am I training you for? What is our mission? Our mission is the vigilante observation of, and the *channeling* of, the madness of true believers, and we do this in the interests of global stability for the greater good of all. (226)

Hawthorne goes further than asking his students to think like terrorists - he posits them as 'detached and blameless as gods':

We are chess players who move living pieces on the checkerboard of the world. We are as detached and blameless as gods, but like all creators, we must acknowledge an occupational hazard. Our creatures fascinate us:

both those we turn into monsters and those who elude us; especially those who elude us. We become obsessed. We run the risk of envying their lives.

In our profession (*making the world safe for stability*, as we like to say; and sometimes, relishing our own esoteric wit, *making the world safe for moral systems*) it is a given that chaos is all; that order is not only arbitrary but evanescent, and that it is the task of a small strong circle of like-minded people to establish and guard it. Exactly which system of order we sustain – morally and politically speaking – is immaterial. We support the system most likely to stay in place. (227-8)

That Hawthorne is not, however, a god is soon apparent as Sirocco has doubled crossed him, revealing Hawthorne is involved in a game of power, more than the work of a benevolent omniscient:

“Our agreement was to *channel* the obsession of the true believers, to reveal to you the names, the faces, the modus operandi of what you call a terrorist cell. How you catch them is strictly your affair...

I’ve even written your speech for you, Salamander. *These barbaric acts will not go unpunished...!*”

Sirocco laughs and pours himself more wine. “You can’t ride a whirlwind,” he says. “It’s not so easy. You can’t order it to stop just like that.” He snaps his fingers. “No more than I can. I use the energy of the

zealots, but I don't control them. I can't. They are the jokers in the pack.
You understand?" (254)

It takes the entire narrative of *Due Preparations for the Plague* for Samantha to finally come to a sense of the kind of world in which she lives person, the kind of person that Hawthorne/Salamander is, and to understand herself. At the start of the novel, Samantha is depicted as having strong sense of 'difference': and she asks herself 'how could she even begin to translate her life, her inner life, so that it would be intelligible to her peers?' (46)

On other days, in her classes at Georgetown University, she looks around the seminar table at fellow students and thinks: We live on different planets.

She is nineteen years old, majoring in American history and government, but how could she even begin to translate her life, her inner life, so that it would be intelligible to her peers?...

She thinks of it this way: that we are composed of a frail string of learned sequences (we recognise our own face in the mirror, we know our own name...), and these pieces which make up the puzzle of the self are held together by the glue of memory. Certain solvents can dissolve this glue: a stroke, catastrophic events. Then we are forced to become

scavengers of our own past, searching, finding, relearning, reassembling the self.

Samantha tracks different threads of light, painstakingly, one by one, and she follows their beams into the haze. Here and there, little by little, events can be catalogued and flagged, and eventually she hopes she will be able to recalculate the unknown quantities of herself... (46-7)

Sam constructs herself as an assemblage of stories with holes, that she can't finish, their connecting tissue a confusion of fact and fantasy. She remembers the past in print, with whole areas of text blacked out, and this is how she reads herself. Her compulsion is to fill in the holes, finish the stories, discover the bits of herself that have been elided by other people. Sam is a troubled and dysfunctional child until she discovers and gives in to an obsession as an outlet for the overwhelming force of her desire to know herself.

She became obsessed with the politics of hijacked planes and with the capacity of press and public for quick forgetting, and with the quiet erasure of events from government records. (61)

She tries to construct herself by constructing memories via questions, photographs and research, going so far as to pursuing it as a career, basing her thesis on American history. Samantha thinks of herself as text, constructs others

as text, reads texts, writes texts and even anticipates, a burgeoning genre of texts: 'survival lit'. She tells Jacob that she is "'doing it for the historical record, for the future, for her thesis'". She observes "'There's a special section in bookstores now: survival lit. Articles all over the place... risk addiction's part of the syndrome. There's statistical evidence, conferences, papers, proceedings'". (69)

Sam is unaware she could also be writing in another new genre of specialist literature: 'adoption literature' and most certainly is now a recent fictionalised character within that genre.

Just as Samantha constructs her adopted body as text, so she read others: 'Sometimes people Samantha is talking to thin out into block capitals and blacked-out spaces before her eyes.' (53)

She cannot finish any of her stories, they are full of holes. As for the connecting tissue: she cannot tell if she remembers the thing itself, or the newsreel clips, or the events as she has pored over them in previously classified documents, obtained through much diligence and cunning on her part. A lot of the past comes back to her as print, with lines and half lines and whole paragraphs blocked out.

*Approximate time frame known XXXXXXXXXXXXX anticipated strike
at major airport... Salamander in charge of operations XXXXX
XXXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXX XXX XXXX*

That is where she met Salamander. In a document. It was a case of
obsession at first sight. (51-2)

Sam tries to construct herself by delineating the identities of others, of
Salamander as Other:

She posits him because her own existence requires it. Her own existence?
From day to day, it feels to her an uncertain thing, without stable
landmarks or fixed signs...

Here and there, little by little, events can be catalogued and flagged, and
eventually she hopes she will be able to recalculate the unknown
quantities of herself and of Salamander who made and unmade her. She
constructs him from the traces he leaves in other lives. She puts him
together like a jigsaw puzzle in order to explain what happened in
September 1987 and how it happened and why.

She is mapping her way out of fog. (47)

Sam feels that Salamander 'made and unmade' her but it is her construction of him that helps her construct herself. Eventually her obsession will lead to the construction of both identities: Salamander as Mather Hawthorne, Lowell's secret agent father, and herself as an adopted person, the daughter of Lou whom she had believed was her aunt.

Samantha's difference sets her apart from the other survivors of the tragedy. These survivors desperately try to forget by repressing their memories, to the point of inducing psychiatric illness, as with Cassie (78), and addiction, as with Jacob, who uses heroin when the medication for his migraine proves itself ineffectual. Rather than hoping to forget the trauma she suffered, Samantha is in fact driven by its binary opposite - a need to remember. This is because Samantha is being driven by her unconscious status as an adoptee. Her compulsion to search and to retrieve information about an incident others are trying to forget is an expression of her repression of a discourse of detachment - the knowledge of her adoption at birth is kept from her, but she remains motivated by the primal wound she suffered, in which she lost her mother six years before she believes she lost her. Her birthmother, who returns to Sam in the form of her Aunt Lou, displays an anxious resentment at Sam's different approach:

She seems distressed. She seems angry. She moves away from Sam as though Sam might be infectious. "I would have thought," Lou says in a

restrained voice, “that contact ... that it would exacerbate ...” She hugs the album to her chest. “I read somewhere,” she says reproachfully, “that survivors of the Titanic avoided each other. Reporters tried to arrange reunions, but survivors resisted. I found that easy to understand.”

It is easy to understand, Samantha thinks. (54)

Sam understands this approach and, like the adoptee not informed of her adoption, is puzzled by her own opposing impulses, ‘does not really understand why she is so furiously angry at her aunt and the awkwardness of being in the wrong makes her angrier’ (62).

Babies already ‘know’ about adoption. It happened to them. By keeping that knowledge unconscious, their parents deprive them of a context in which to place the feelings caused by their preconscious experience of that loss. They often feel abnormal, sick, or crazy for having those feelings and puzzled by their own behaviour.³⁷⁷

The dilemma of the ignorant adoptee is their inability to understand one’s own reactions to things, and, in the absence of any explanation, the apportioning of self-blame. But Samantha is searching for the truth, and is the heroine of the novel, the only person in both Carey’s and Hospital’s novel who seeks the truth

from the very opening of the narrative, rather than being driven to record her own. Samantha, unaware of her adoption, is driven by the unconscious knowledge that there is something she is not being told, and this really is a drive for the truth.

“It’s just that there are some things I don’t know,” Samantha pleads, “and they drive me...” *You have to be extremely careful*, Jacob warns, *about what you reveal*. “The gaps keep me awake sometimes,” she says. “That’s all. Well, they keep me awake a lot, actually. I hoped you might fill in some blanks.” (54)

Deprived of the knowledge of who she really is, Sam is unable to naturally develop her sense of self, for how can she achieve an inner self-knowledge in the absence of the knowledge of her true position in the symbolic, or with a perception of that position that does not correspond to that of those closest to you? As some of the other survivors follow a path of erasure and forgetting, or healing through writing, she stands out as the one ‘dangerously’ obsessed by the need to uncover the past, motivated, as she is throughout the narrative, by the compounding unconscious desire to know who she is in the present. Her hidden adoption is the unseen motivator and Sam becomes ‘the one who will not let sleeping dogs lie’ (4). The revelation of her adoption at birth by her Aunt Rosalie

³⁷⁷ Verrier op cit 12

Raleigh nee Hamilton is not revealed to Samantha, nor the reader, until the last pages of the novel. This revelation provokes an entire re-reading of the narrative as a search for a pre-traumatised identity, not only one existing before the hijacking, but before her adoption. Her behaviour can then be read as the hysterical attempt to cling to the maternal semiotic space from which she was untimely ripped, twinned with an obsessive attempt to write herself on the symbolic.

When Samantha is introduced to the narrative through a message left on Lowell's answering machine her plea is that of the adopted child and her twinned false self: "'There are too many unanswered questions'" (4):

"we have information, but we *need* information, we need it desperately," the voice of Samantha cajoles, "so I'm begging you - " Sometimes she cannot speak for sobbing. (5)

'What can be worse than not knowing?' (5) she asks. Samantha's sobbing does not necessarily correspond to a need to explain past events, an explanation that will not change those events or bring her parents back, it is, rather, the eruption of her primal pain induced by the disruption of her infant bonding:

adoption, whether legal or illegal, is a dysfunction of kinship ... the adoptee perceives many people in his world as strangers ... the adoptee's specific loss of the most elementary biological kinship, in the process known as adoption, may cause "paleo-psychological regression" experienced as uncontrollable rage from deep within his/her own ancient history.³⁷⁸

Samantha's drive for information in a world that attempts to control and suppress information is metaphorised in an image of delicate efficiency:

She is already in a state of febrile and heightened alert. She hears the under- and overtones when people talk. She imagines an aura of electromagnetic feelers extending invisibly from her skin and waving about her like angel hair, like the sustenance system of certain sea creatures on tropical reefs: as water rakes through their unseen silken mesh traps, all that is needed stays. Information is falling toward her. It adheres. (82)

Samantha's hyper-vigilance is a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder but it is also a signpost written on the psychopathology of the adopted child. Her drive for information is also metaphorised in an image of awesome accumulation:

³⁷⁸ Dr. Patrick J. Callahan <http://www.amfor.net/acs/>

An avalanche starts with a pebble. Samantha thinks of the random searchlight of Cassie's lucidity as setting scree tumbling, loose drifts of it that pull scattered data along in their train. They gather density and speed. Clusters of detail roll over each other and cling. They generate force and the force intensifies. Disparate pieces of information cohere, connections pick up momentum, new facts are exposed. Samantha has a premonition that critical mass has been reached, that the accumulation of data has hooked up isolated circuits, that currents are fizzing around the elaborate latticework and traplines of her research, sparks jumping gaps, missing information being sucked into the black hole of her intense need to know. (82)

Sam struggles with the construction of identities of all those around her – from those who had been close to her, like her baby brother, 'I can't put my baby brother's face back together' (53); 'he doesn't have a face' (54), to the distant and shadowy identities of Salamander and Sirocco, the seeming agents of her state of dislocation. But her compulsion to construct the identities of others is an expression of her need to reconstruct her own. In Sam's world, other people become mere 'pieces' in her construction of herself, something she must achieve to a satisfactory extent before she can develop real relationships with people. Her adolescence is littered with rebellions and anti-social behaviour against those who cared for her. Again and again, however, she finds her attempts thwarted as

the bits of the mosaic that have her in them, the little girl in the blue jacket, continue to elude her:

when she and Jacob find someone, when they track down some new link, they treat the pieces like chips from a precious mosaic – from Byzantium say, or Pompeii or Ravenna – from some lost world, fabulous and perhaps impossible to reconstruct. Samantha searches for fragments of cobalt, hunting for the child in the forget-me-not outfit, but the blue notes always disappear...

Hysteria, being a language of the body, writes itself on her body, as Sam, in recalling the events of the hijacking with Lou, relives the physical sensations. Sam feels heat, fever, asks anxiously for something cold, some ice tea, and proceeds to fan herself with one of her Aunt's magazines, finding the paper damp. She requests air-conditioning and her Aunt is startled – *'In October?'* (51). Of course when Lou lowers the thermostat Sam starts to shiver.

'Can you turn it up again?' she asks. She can hear a baby crying fretfully.

'Doesn't that get on your nerves?' she asks. 'Is it from next door?'

'I can't hear anything,' Lou says.

'It sounds like Matthew.' On the plane, her baby brother's crying went on and on and on... 'He had a heat rash,' Samantha says. 'He'd drunk all his formula and they wouldn't give us any--'

'Don't,' her aunt says. 'Samantha, please don't.'

Don't worry, there's a blind curve just ahead, Samantha could have told her. (51)

The blind curve is the trajectory that began for Sam at her birth and serves to place her in danger. The experience of closed-record adoption results in a dysfunction of perception in the subject so that she is prevented from accurately reading, and learning how to accurately read, the people and environment around her. When Lou mentions that Rosalie got married quicker than intended, Sam reads this as a malicious quip at her rather than a reference to own Lou's own pregnancy and loss (59). The complex patterning of emotion and language serves to confuse and distress the adoptee as real emotions stimulated by real events interact with those stimulated by unconscious experience; the reading of bodies, others as well as their own, sometimes contradicting the asserted or believed truth. As a consequence, the adoptee's reading of the people around her is forever muddled, leaving her vulnerable in a world where so much depends on the accurate perception of the characters of others. In this way, the loving protection of adopted people actually makes them vulnerable and the new security of the adoptive home is falsely read to mean the security of the subject.

Sam is in real danger because of the obsessiveness of her search. Like the 'acting out' adoptee, Samantha heedlessly places herself in danger, in the stalking of Lowell at the beginning of the novel, in her provocative comic skit in the public eye at Chien Bleu, where she offers herself as a bait or lure in the hope Salamander will identify himself. Her fellow survivor, Jacob, warns her: 'You're sailing way too close to the wind, Sam. It's stupid and it's dangerous.' (69)

In her attempts to reconstruct the moments before the hijacking, Sam is trying to pinpoint her elusive moment of loss, to find a meaning in loss, but this loss eludes her because she had already suffered at her birth. The inability to pinpoint her loss drives her into hysteria, so that she repetitively questions, searches, harasses. Her memory and the stories of her past become confused: 'Sometimes she can remember. It all depends on which way she tells the story to herself' (49), so she grills her aunt Lou for clues, trying to gather as many different angles on this single point of memory as possible. Her Aunt Lou had watched the events unfold on a television far away, and hearing her story provides 'the different angle of vision that excites and disturbs Samantha. If she could see the little girl in the blue coat in someone else's frame, if she could study her, would the puzzle solve itself? "Tell me about watching us on TV"' (49). Instinctively Sam understands that Lou has the information she requires: that the point of loss which she thinks is the moment on the plane, is a re-enactment of her earlier loss

of her mother's body before the mirror stage and the substitution of a false identity.

As for all closed-records adoptees, the real world is not an imagined paranoid space but actual paranoid space, as even those closest to Sam participate in the deceit. In the paranoid world of the adoptee the decision that it is better for Sam not to know is made for her.

'Let it go, Sam,' Lou says. 'Let them be. Let them rest in peace.'

'I can't' Samantha says. (62)

As Lou actively discourages Samantha's search, the lacuna of Sam's true identity is delineated and proscribed, over again and again, in a matrix of subtle evasions and lies, throughout the conversation between mother and daughter. (58-60) Lou tries to discourage Sam away from her search, recommending that she let it go. Their conversation keeps circling, like that of Dessaix's with his birth mother Yvonne, circling around this lacuna. The pathology of post-traumatic stress disorder means that Sam will keep revisiting her trauma in the present and this will only be relieved by the eruption of her repression:

'I have to relive it all the time,' Samantha says, defensive.

'I know that, Sam. Whereas I try not to. I try to stay back here in the photo album, before it happened... Two different ways of coping, that's all.'

'You have more before than I have,' Sam accuses...

'Nothing we will do will change the past, will it?'

'I would just like to have a past...'

'I'm sorry, Sam, I don't know what more I can tell you. I can't do it. I can't give you what you want.'

'Won't, you mean.' (56)

Samantha is, of course, right but does not yet know she is talking about Lou's knowledge of her adoption, not the tragedy of the hijacking. In withholding secrets out of a desire to protect, Lou only prolongs Samantha's torment. But Lou appears to believe there is a right time for revelation, and it will only arrive when Sam is ready to receive it. This arrogant view serves only to reinforce the paranoid world for the subject.

The conflict between a subject's instinct and the paranoid world that denies it is a conflict that could drive a subject into paranoid psychosis without the assistance, the affirmation, of another subject. But no matter how paranoid the adoptee's symbolic is, it can never be total, and the symbolic will continue to be read at the insistence of instinct, for those signs that provide validity to the adoptee's instinctive truth. A point of resistance within Samantha's psyche, some existence

of self-awareness deep within her unconscious, continues to alert Sam's consciousness to the fact that all is not as she is being informed, that there is something vital hidden from her. The paranoid adoptee reads the symbolic for signs that might indicate the truth, what she is not being told. As Sam views a photograph of her immediate family taken just before the doomed plane leaves, she immediately notices something she does not understand.

'Why is my father watching you like that?'

'I had the camera,' her Aunt says.

'Why is my mother watching my father like that?...'

'Your mother never liked traveling much,' her aunt says.

The urbanity of Lou's lies contrast with the complexity of the truth – Sam's father watches Lou in that way because he is the father of Sam, who is really the daughter of Lou. In a drunken moment, Lou had slept with her sister's fiancée and become pregnant, so that a secret adoption by Sam's real Aunt and her father takes place after they bring forward the wedding. Lou is farewelling her own child, Lou's sister watches her husband for signs of further traitorous desires. If Rosalie is still unaware that her husband is the actual biological father of Sam, then this look might even indicate the moment when she realizes this. Sam reads Lou's lies in the banality of her answers and in her rage must flee from

her presence to a room full of further banal objects, to try out the sounds of these stories she is being told:

Samantha jumps up and walks out to Lou's kitchen and looks in her fridge and rummages there as though a different possible past is hidden somewhere behind the milk carton. Her head is deep inside the white-enameled cold. 'If she hadn't begged them to come to Paris, we would never have been on that flight,' Samantha says in a low voice to the back wall of the refrigerator, trying out the words. They bounce back from a tub of butter. She shuts the fridge door. She goes back into the living room and picks up the photo album and puts it down and goes out to the kitchen again. She goes to the sink. She turns on the cold tap, then the hot. She lets both of them run full blast. She watches her life running down the drain. (62-3)

In Lou's elaborate participation in Sam's deception, a participation driven by the shame in which her family holds her for her sexual crime, Lou manages to express to Sam her real pain at the loss of her daughter, claiming she terminated a pregnancy, without revealing the truth of the adoption. Lou communicates through her emotions the pain whose origins she will not specify.

Sam's experience of terrorism has led her on a journey in which she finds herself and the revelation of her adoption comes almost as an anti-climax, her sense of self already delineated in the struggles of her search. She has come to understand the likes of Mather Hawthorne and the world in which she lives as a world where people 'can be brought to acknowledge that multiple compromises – even shady ones, even ones that in ordinary circumstances you would find abhorrent – are the *sine qua non* of a nation's good' (233). Samantha now asks Lou directly, "'Tell me quick'" (386). The recalcitrant Lou finds it difficult to finally reveal the nature of her own wound and defers it, leaving instead a gap, a lacuna to imply that which she cannot admit: her abandonment of her daughter to adoption:

'So somewhere in the world I've got a cousin,' she says, awed by the thought. She thinks about it. 'We must have been born about the same time, because I've calculated that I was conceived –'

'About the same time, yes. The difference was, Rosalie could keep you, and I couldn't keep mine...'

'But you can find her, Lou. You can find your baby again. People do it all the time.'

'Yes,' Lou says. "Well, I did, in fact. But I don't want to intrude on her life. I'm waiting for her to want to find me.'

'Oh, she will, she will,' Sam says. 'And she'll be so lucky, Lou, to have you as a –'

And then it arrives, the heavy thing Sam has been afraid to know, though she seems – quite suddenly – to have known it all her life. It rises in her head like a plane turning into a sun. There is a crashing noise in her ear.

'Lou, are you..? Am I..?' (388)

When Lou admits that Sam's father is still her father, 'Knowledge rains down on her like a building collapsing. She cannot support the weight. Don't tell me anything more, she begs mutely' (389) but later,

She can feel a wave rising up within her, not happiness, she could not say that, but something rich and mellow that she could call a state of being at peace. (390)

Sitting in the graveyard, Sam comes to understand that 'The dead are always with us; they are close; but we must cling to the living':

But this is the mystery, she thinks: how do we ready ourselves for what may happen tomorrow?

What possible preparations can be made? (390)

The real ending of the story is, of course, the imminent attack on the Twin Towers that only the omniscient reader knows is on its way:

Manhattan feels dangerous.

Blink, and paradise can flip you into hell, she knows this can happen any second, she knows this could happen when the traffic lights change...

...The city unfurls southward down Broadway like a carpet, but flipflipflip. At any moment the carpet could be yanked from beneath her, the road could subside, the whole of lower Manhattan could drop into a sinkhole, the tall canyons of real estate could roar into flames. (381)

CHAPTER 6

An Ado/aptive Reading of Luke Davies'

Candy (1997)

To state most simply what we learn in times of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise'.³⁷⁹

Ado/aptive readings may be particularly suited to the analysis of 'drug fiction' because this is a genre that foregrounds the subject's struggle with the self within the context of addiction. Hence in drug fiction the 'voice' of the addiction is often distinct from the 'true self' of the character, setting up a dichotomy between the false self of addiction and the 'free' self. Depending on the novel, these are represented in various stages of agreement and/or struggle with each other. The contemporary manifestation of this genre has a variety of tropes and codes, similar to 'hard-boiled' fiction, which rose from the pulps to prominence during the 1930s and 1940s, reflecting the pressures of the Depression and World War II and 'offering a code for dealing with physical and economic conflict.'³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ Camus *The Plague* final page

³⁸⁰ William Marling *Hard-Boiled Fiction* Case Western Reserve University. Updated 2 August 2001. <http://www.cwru.edu/artsci/engl/marling/hardboiled/XXXXXX.html> Last viewed March 26, 2007

The 'code' of hard-boiled fiction constructed villainy distinctly, with a protagonist who could be considered a bad or shady character, an outlaw, criminal or even murderer, but still one whom readers are encouraged to know and even to initially empathise or sympathise with. Insofar as a criminal protagonist approached the status of 'hero' his behaviour was often justified as a product of hard times, the result of being born in a ghetto, homeless during the Depression, or scarred by one of the World Wars. This made him, and they were most often men, society's victim, someone occupying the same social margin inhabited by the private eye, who often pursued him. In this way the hard-boiled crime novel villainised the restrictive legal and social structures of modern capitalism, with the police, legal or investigative structures represented by an individual or group who were often brutal or unfair. It is 'not accurate to call these antagonists the "villains," although they are not entirely benevolent, for they ultimately bring the protagonist to justice.'³⁸¹ This genre of the 'hard-boiled' novel, related to detective and crime fiction, began to develop as the American author, Raymond Chandler, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, sought to make it not only a vehicle of social comment but of autobiographical reflection. Some hard-boiled fiction began to shed its toughness and some of its other codes. As the genre progressed into the 1960s and 70s, its formal possibilities were seen to

³⁸¹ Ibid

be exhausted seeing 'the genre into impossibility, moving into fictions of self-deception and self expenditure.'³⁸²

The genre of 'drug-fiction' as we know it today, one related to crime fiction, detective fiction and the hard-boiled novel, emerged in America in the 1960s and 1970s with the Beat Generation as writers such as Hunter S Thompson and Jack Kerouac focused their art specifically on drug experiences, uncovering or creating a new niche market. The fragmentation of mass media markets, begun by cable television in the 1980s, may reflect the fragmentation of this genre into further 'niche' markets, which are almost impossible to classify in relation to what kind of drugs the novels focus on, for example, 'junkie fiction' is largely about heroin, 'chemical' fiction includes ecstasy and psychedelics and 'slacker fiction' predominately features bong-smoking. In the United Kingdom, drug-related fiction peaked in popularity in the 1990s with the work of Irvine Welsh ('harpooning his quill through the counter cultural bowels of street life, the lower class rungs and finally into the abdomen of drug chutzpah itself')³⁸³ and his debut novel *Trainspotting*.

In Australia, drug fiction has also been popular in recent times, expressing a modern city/urban experience with which a young audience might have been

³⁸² Eric Mottram, 'Ross Macdonald and the Past of a Formula,' *Art in Crime Writing: Essays on Detective Fiction* ed. Bernard Benstock St. Martin's New York 1983 98

³⁸³ <http://www.thei.aust.com/books97/btlrvwelsh.html> Last viewed 26 March 2007

familiar. Andrew McGahan's first novel, *Praise* (1992), placed in the sub-genre of 'slacker fiction', won the Vogel prize, the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book in the Pacific Region and was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award, the Adelaide Festival Awards for Literature and the Canada-Australia Literary Award. McGahan's novel was described as

an utterly frank and darkly humorous novel about being young in the Australia of the 1990s. A time when the dole was easier to get than a job, when heroin was better known than ecstasy, and when ambition was the dirtiest of words.³⁸⁴

In 1994 John Birmingham published his first novel, *He Died With a Felafel in his Hand*, which also became a best-seller, and the popularity of both these novels, along with Davies' *Candy*,³⁸⁵ have seen them transformed into successful Australian films.

Traces of the codes of hard-boiled fiction are often used ironically in drug fiction since the villain, as protagonist and narrator, again usually male, differs from the hard-boiled protagonist in that he appears to have chosen his own 'victimhood', rather than having had it thrust upon him. Yet depictions of the society the drug-addicted characters circulate in retain a similar paranoid sense of a heartless and

immoral capitalist system. So there are times when the reader's sympathy may be rallied because of failures of this outside world to provide advice, love, support and nourishment to the characters, but such sympathetic readings are generally rejected by the text.

An ado/aptive reading of Luke Davies' *Candy* (1997) is demanded by its representation of the divided self, foregrounded by the retrospective narrator, as he depicts his formerly addicted self. Written in the present tense, from the point of view of the seriously addicted body, the narrative is, nonetheless, a projection from the narrator after rehabilitation, evident in the frequent slippery authorial interjections. An an ado/aptive reading detects subtle linguistic signs of this influence of the 'future' body upon the 'false self's first person narrative, until it comes to achieve dominance over it. As such, an ado/aptive reading of *Candy*, examines the struggle of these two selves, while searching for indicators of the 'primal wound' that the construction of the false self within the text has been designed to repress.

As with Hospital's Hawthorne, and the naming of an adopted child, the narrator's false self, the compulsion of his addiction, functions as a semi-autonomous character with its own name. 'Heroin' is constantly referred to through the narration as much as the narrator himself is never named. This

³⁸⁴ Book blurb at http://www.jointheunderground.com.au/other_books.html Last viewed 30 March 2007

addicted body is introduced at the very outset of the novel very much as the 'dominant' self and, although the narrator and his addiction are a single co-dependent body who tells the story, the true self is so 'dominated' that the reader is forced to participate in the character's struggle to inscribe his true self in the narrative, by struggling to read. This struggle to read the narrator's 'true self' in the text of the addicted body is demanded in the opening sentence of the novel, where the reader is made immediately aware that the narrator is in the throes of addiction and is, therefore, not to be trusted.

Everything's fucking beautiful! I'm so in love! I've just met Candy, it's been a month or two. We're discovering each other's bodies. Candy's just discovered smack and I've just discovered she's got a bit of money. Keen as all fuck to get dirty. (3)³⁸⁶

This textual onslaught, frequently relieved but never entirely banished for the duration of the novel, provokes the reading of an alternative narrative, constructed by the reader, in opposition to that which is being narrated. Much more so than when reading Carey's *Kelly* or Hospital's Lowell Hawthorne, both 'raised' on the lies and silences of their fathers, the reader must embark on a dichotomous reading in which the foregrounded narrative truth demands to be read as lies. More than with Carey's *Kelly* or Hospital's Hawthorne, and more

³⁸⁵ Luke Davies *Candy* Allen and Unwin Crows Nest 1997

than with any other genre, it is known to the reader of drug fiction that the narrator should not be trusted, that he will probably be a liar, schooled in a morality that will allow him to breach socially accepted mores to get a 'fix'. The first chapter of *Candy*, which the narrator titles 'An Example of a Good Time' relates an overdose by Candy but can also be read as a narrative of near-manslaughter. Thus, an alternative narrative becomes the preferred reading strategy of a reader who must negotiate a rather abhorrent protagonist, if the reader is to continue reading at all. An inducement to do this may well be the technique of suspense as the mutual impulse, in text and reader, is to wonder about the outcomes of what will soon come to be a life and death struggle between psychological bodies.

The construction of this dichotomous narrative, then, sustains the reader in her struggle to read, demanding sympathy from a reader who becomes constructed as a hoping subject, searching for signs of redemption in the narrative. The narrator only allows the smallest of glimpses into how he came to be in such an demoralised state, recollecting his life veering in a dangerous direction in the naivety of his youth:

I was young and full of beans. I was eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old,
and selling lots of hash and heads.

³⁸⁶ Ibid

The money began to roll in. The amounts I was dealing got bigger and bigger. I was like a small business, expanding from the ground up. The kind of thing the government would have been proud of. It was a vibrant, golden time. There wasn't a single sign on the horizon of imminent downturn. (73)

The narration begins, however, with the addiction of the narrator well advanced and the reader must embark on a harrowing hermeneutics of suspicion, searching for trust in the narrator, the voice uncompromised by addiction, the rehabilitated body retrospectively composing the tale. This struggle of the reader is, however, alleviated by the delivery of the pseudo-pleasure of drug-taking narratives. The attraction for the reader of drug fiction may be the same as that of hard-boiled fiction: a literary participation in the romance of rebellion but with the satisfaction, in the end, in the final operation of justice and thematic closure.³⁸⁷ This 'romance of rebellion' which, in the context of drug-fiction has been termed a 'drug aesthetic',³⁸⁸ may be the text's ability to imaginatively simulate the effects of drugs upon a subject's imagination, but without the accompanying physical risk of addiction. Although the reading of *Candy* is constructed as a 'struggle to read', like the experience of addiction the accompanying 'thrill', associated with emotional reactions of shock, abhorrence, pathos and redemption, make the reading of drug-literature a dubiously

pleasurable experience. The nature of its content induces a rapid read that simulates the addict's heady ride down into decadence, but within the safety of textual boundaries.

That roar of the blood vessels began, that luxurious and over-the-top pounding of the heart that I hadn't felt in a couple of years. My head was going boom, boom, boom. This was buffaloes and death compared to snorting's aggravating fleas. A god-damn stampede, an intra-body, extra-body, out-of body experience.

'Fffffffhew!'

I blew the smoke out and sat stock still, staring at a spot on the table, hoping my head wouldn't explode. About thirty seconds later I felt I could begin to talk. 'Jesus,' was what I said. Strange the expressions we use. (80)

On the other hand, those writing and reading drug fiction need to be aware of the space of the imaginative text as a forum in which writer and reader interact because there is a risk, especially with a novel like *Candy* where the description of 'shooting up' and of the precise chemical processes involved in the manufacturing of heroin are minutely detailed, that the interaction with drug texts might incite drug-use, with the writing or reading of *Candy* leading to

³⁸⁷ Marling op.cit

detrimentally compulsive activity. Brian Musgrove, in 'Dealing with the Demon: Drugs, history and society', notes:

The aesthetic pull of drug writing has induced real life experiment. The dramatic mescaline visions recorded in Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*, for example, seduced Timothy Leary away from mainstream psychology and into his notorious role as LSD guru.³⁸⁹

Musgrove charts a 'discernible and acknowledged pattern of cultural influence' in the two-century history of modern drug literature from its beginnings in the 1790s, delineating a pattern of drug use and drug writing:

Thomas De Quincey's landmark *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) was translated into French by the dandy-poet Alfred de Musset and quickly adopted as an article of faith by Parisian bohemians. As a result, Théophile Gautier founded the drug taking Hashish Club in the city's notorious Hôtel Pimodan; and a regular, Charles Baudelaire, proceeded to write his own magnum opus on the subject, *Les paradis artificiels* (1860), guided by De Quincey's delinquencies.

³⁸⁸ Ibid

³⁸⁹ Ibid

De Quincey's spirit also pervaded the 19th-century American scene: William Blair's 'An Opium Eater in America' (1842) and Fitz Hugh Ludlow's sensational *The Hasheesh Eater* (1857); disembarking in Melbourne in 1863, Marcus Clarke's first material acquisition was De Quincey's multi-volume works. Clarke's metropolitan journalism and his peculiar essay on 'Cannabis Indica' (1868) were products of this purchase. William Burroughs confided that as a youth he wanted to be a writer because writers 'lounged around Singapore and Rangoon smoking opium', snorted high-quality 'cocaine in Mayfair' and relaxed 'in the native quarter of Tangier smoking hashish' (Bokris 1997, p. xvii). In homage to Burroughs, singer Marianne Faithfull disclosed that her near-disastrous affair with heroin had literary origins: reading '*The Naked Lunch* for the first time' she had an epiphanous 'blinding flash. It became as clear as day to me what I must do. I would become a junkie' (Faithfull & Day 1994, 147).³⁹⁰

From this pattern of influence Musgrove concludes that understanding 'drugs' cannot be reduced or left to clinical or legal debate: 'The concept 'drugs' has an important aesthetic dimension, and this dimension has concrete social functions. As an historical appreciation of drug literature demonstrates, the aesthetic can

³⁹⁰ Brian Musgrove 'Dealing with the demon: Drugs, history and society' University of Southern Queensland <http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2006/04/musgrove.html> Last viewed March 26, 2007

direct life choices, and spawn subcultures and provide a rationale or value system for their codes and practices.’³⁹¹

Like the production of the closed-records adopted body, the modern body of the ‘addict’ was produced out of the massive social changes of the industrial revolution, the modern concept of ‘drugs’ emerging with the rise of European Romanticisms in the late eighteenth century, ‘and the proto-psychology found in the works of Rousseau, Goethe and Coleridge’:³⁹²

With the industrial revolution, technological advance, and mass production, came new markets for commodities. Because of rapid scientific innovation, new drugs were developed ... and they became some of the most lucrative products on the mass market.

Drugs also became a popular palliative for industrial society’s pressures... The shock wave of industrial revolution in late 18th century Britain stressed and fractured traditional community ties. It transplanted displaced populations into the mushrooming mill towns, and its factory system required new forms of routine and regulation – modern habits like shift work and clocking on and off, day in day out, which were unknown in traditional pastoral communities...

Review of Marcus Boon *The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs* Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2002,

³⁹¹ Ibid

Under the new industrial system, life was understood as an endlessly-repeated series of habitual actions, and this view of human behaviour is the same as the view of 'addiction' that developed in the 19th century. Like the factory worker, the addict was a creature of habit, who seemed compelled to repeat the same action over and over, every day. Industrial society operated with the same 'modern' logic as an addiction. Thus, it was thus no accident of language that in the 19th century repeated drug use came to be known as 'habituation' and the drug user was labelled an 'habitué'.³⁹³

Drug-related fiction bears this mark of 'habituation' in the language of the text, a tendency toward repetition that may risk its classification as a 'boring' read by a literary perspective. *Candy* does, however, offer intellectual challenges of a different kind if addiction is read as a psychological internalization of the master/slave relationship. If the addicted body is read as a *self-imposed* scaffolding of struggle within the self, the addicted self can be read as 'foregrounding' the duality of self, privileging the structure of struggle, that is already part of the natural psychological experience of the existential subject.

The nature of addiction works to disassemble the subject by offering immediate rewards in the quest for peace and happiness, while insidiously deconstructing

³⁹² Ibid

the ability to achieve this same goal. As the more positive feeling a drug delivers is replaced by the abhorrence of its absence, the exponential experience of desire/abhorrence evolves as a relationship of master and slave within the psychological and/or physical body of the subject. If this relationship is not rigidly monitored and controlled, it will intensify, and the likelihood is that eventually it will become untenable. The end result of creation of the addicted state, then, produces the necessity of a third experience to overthrow the master/slave relationship, via the death of the body or the triumph of the will.

By heightening internal struggle, then, addiction has the possible converse effect of increasing the necessity for peace and stability and, as a consequence, stimulates the subject's deepest desire for internal revolution. So the addicted body may live within a rollicking precarious balance but the action of entropy is likely to eventually succeed, due to the subject not being in a state of freedom to control and implement the necessary countervailing actions, foregoing the cataclysm until it is unavoidable. At this point the body either capitulates to death, suffers a coup d'état by the replacement of one addiction for another, or undergoes revolution, transcending and destroying the addictive relationship itself. To become an addicted body, then, is also to first invite, and later, perhaps, to force, the eventuality of transcendence.

³⁹³ Ibid

Stories of drug addiction are, then, survival tales, despite the controversy of them being self-imposed, so they have similar tropes to that of the survival narrative, as the individual becomes demoralized by the compromises needed to survive, and either succumbs to, or overcomes, his or her addiction. While the tale of a subject thrown into jeopardy by events out of his or her control may incite a lot more pathos, sympathy and identification in the reader, yet the story of addiction may also bear enough of these fundamental hallmarks of the survival story to engender readerly interest. If the reader understands the drug narrative as a survival story it can be fascinating to explore just when and why one's own sympathies are aroused or attacked within the text. After all, when we read an author, we are entering into a space with the hope that we will be successfully drawn into sympathetic understanding.

Even so, the reader's will to sympathise is consistently attacked throughout *Candy*. At times it might only be with the anticipation of redemption that a reading can be sustained and, in a first-person narrative such as *Candy*, redemption is a somewhat fore-gone conclusion if the narrator is going to be alive to tell his tale. During the most repellant sections of the text, an unpleasant journey of survival housed in a dark and seedy tale, it is the likelihood of a win over intensely adverse circumstances, that keeps the reader's interest. The protagonists of drug-related fiction more often than not emerge from this self-induced 'survival narrative' stronger and wiser than their pre-addicted selves,

having endured experiences a less adventurous and resilient person might have succumbed to. There is some satisfaction, perhaps, within the rehabilitated body, and within the reader, that an understanding of the power of the individual will has been gained in the writing and reading of drug fiction, that otherwise may never have been discovered, in a modern world that controls, discourages and even represses the expression of personal power.

The dichotomous relationship of struggle between selves within *Candy* also challenges the reader's prejudices that may revolve around the dichotomous constructions of addicts as former innocents, who have stumbled into bad living due to the complex pressures and coercions of family and/or society, or as individuals who have the privilege of free-will but, somehow, are, faulty in character or intelligence. That the nature of drug addiction itself serves to incite faults of character and intelligence in the subject serves to encourage the latter misinterpretation, which overlooks the complexity of a subject's entrapment by its false self. Whichever view the reader tends towards she must admit that, in the reading of drug-fiction, she becomes complicit in a rebellion through self-indulgence, if she feels any sympathy for the characters, a pre-requisite if the novel is going to retain its reader. The possibility of the inducement of this 'guilty pleasure' in the reader, despite the abhorrence, physical and moral, she might also feel, may have the -real physical effect of prompting laughter, if it does not prompt the reader to stop reading entirely.

Laughter is ... a vital component of creative literature as the first symptom of a *crisis* in signification, of the rupture of the orderly structures and stable identities prescribed by the Symbolic. To substantiate this point, Kristeva cites Charles Baudelaire, who views laughter as belonging to the kind of artistic experience that conveys 'the power of being oneself and someone else at one and the same time' (Kristeva 1984: 223).³⁹⁴

This understanding of laughing implies a self both 'inside' and 'outside' of a context. Thus the relationship of laughter to distress or trauma can be seen as a way distressed or traumatised body can disrupt the distressing and traumatising memory/context and, if only for a moment, but also perhaps as indicative of a possible future, be free from it. The life writing of trauma and survival narratives may shock, but drug-fiction, especially, tends toward the writing of the ironic, the pathetic and the ridiculous, perhaps as a gesture toward admission that the predicament of the characters is largely self-imposed.

In contemporary writing, humour is used to organise texts in ways that allow the expression of contradictory impulses, frequently exploiting literary devices to stress the paradoxical nature of reality, the gap between the ideal and the actual. Humour alerts the reader to absurdity, allowing controversial subject matter to

be integrated, so that what might otherwise appear threatening, unpleasant, or illogical might be understood and contrasting and contradictory feelings and attitudes, paradoxes in thinking, be expressed. Davies gives his narrator a variety of the stereotypical hallmarks of the junkie character and uses them to make him, when he is not simply being outrageously shocking and/or repellant, bumbling, dumb and, at times, very, very silly. Colin, after helping Candy out with money a few times, becomes disillusioned with her and begins to refuse to help. The narrator relates Candy's final attempt at manipulation:

The final thing you do in the face of adamant refusals is get nasty...

The last thing I remember her saying was, 'Listen, we'll come around and pick up your washing machine.'

But Colin drew the line. Colin had more dignity than that.

About household appliances at least. (72)

This stereotypical depiction of the thieving junkie who would rob his own grandmother is extended again and again, in the construction of a protagonist who persistently repels the reader. The author inserts chapters of 'light relief' between the depictions of ugliness and tragedy, containing the shocking and harrowing details of the life of the junkie in a framework of farce. The junkie stereotype loses some of its feared and repulsive qualities to become an object of

³⁹⁴ Dani Cavallaro *French Feminist Theory; An Introduction* Continuum London New York 2003 84

ridicule, being both laughed at, as well as the laughing subject. Waiting in line at the GPO, the narrator's intellect is unfortunately clouded by his having taking a number of Rohypnols and he comes up with the idea of grabbing a big wad of cash that one of the tellers is counting behind the counter:

I lunged.

By the time I realised how hard it was to move fast, my momentum was carrying me forward and it was too late to stop. I grabbed for the money with both hands.

My fingers clamped on my side of the wad. And hers clamped on her side. What the fuck was she doing? This was not in the script.

She was so strong. I watched in disbelief as our hands did a tug of war. She pulled in her direction and I pulled in my direction and our arms rose in the air as we fought over the money.

At the instant she screamed I gave a final almighty tug. But as I pulled hard up and away from her, my fingers squeezed down on the top and the bottom note. The rest of the money exploded in a fountain of colour all over me. This was the moment where, had I been able to take stock, I would have realised that normal speed does not occur on Rohypnol...

... in an instant, every concerned citizen in the place joined the show. Citizen's arrest. Citizen's Twister. I was hit from all angles.

I was held tight in arm-locks and leg-locks and neck-locks. My limbs twisted in every direction. At one point I was horizontal to the floor but no part of me was actually touching it. (159)

The ironic style of *Candy* includes numerous instances of its cruder relative, sarcasm. Of his brother Lex, the narrator comments: 'I'm sure he must have picked up the vibe when we walked in. The anticipation. You don't go to the movies, six days off the gear for God's sake, and come home abuzz with excitement about the late news' (40). The snail-paced mental processes of the narrator and his constant recourse to sarcasm construct him as a stereotypical 'dope', but the frequent use of a sardonic self-mockery remind us that this is a 'remembered' tale, recalled by an older and wiser narrator with the privilege of retrospect, helping to maintain the interest of the reader. This sense of authorial detachment hints at a true self that a reader might look for, so that the reading and writing of drug-fiction may also work as a space in which writers and readers, in varying stages of drug experimentation, might communicate and elaborate their own true histories and work through the psychological processes of rehabilitation.

Projecting himself back into the body of the addict he once was, the narrator has little mercy for his earlier self, confessing to stupidity and self-deception on a regular basis, in an acquired self-critical voice of experience, that is forced to be

grossly funny by the shock of the trauma it relates. For whatever reason, the first-person narrator and Candy have made themselves rather useless, and at times a threat to others, but more than anything, they have made the illogical choice of becoming their own worst enemies. Accepting the characters in this way, the reader may be prompted to question the nature of a society that induces such self-destructive behaviour which, in a sympathetic reading, is sometimes interpreted as an attack on the symbolic via a paranoid attack on the self. In such a sympathetic reading, the main characters may be seen to have 'opted out' of the maintenance of a pathologically immoral society and perhaps simply been naïve about the danger of becoming part of that immoral element. In such a reading, society has failed certain subjects at the expense of others, and produced the addict.

Most drug-related fiction, however, deliberately works against such sympathetic readings and 'responsibly' re-emphasises drug-taking as a personal decision. The subject becomes an addict, it seems, almost as a life-style choice, as a rejection of what is commonly represented as 'normal', symbolised in the mediocre. The director of *Trainspotting*, Danny Boyle, claims his film attempts to be 'non-judgemental' about drug users:

It's about how people live their lives and how people interact. To see it as just a kind of reaction to social oppression, to social circumstances, is to

rip some of the soil out of it and to make the characters into victims - I don't think they really are. I think that they're people whose ideals and ambitions perhaps outstrip what society has to offer them, but I think they've got great strength in spite of that.³⁹⁵

Such an analysis might do little to incite sympathy in those who see themselves as victim of an addict's condition. The idea that addicts just 'are' rings false when the existential angst of the body under western capitalism can so easily be read as the motive for rebellion and protest. The protagonist of *Trainspotting*, after committing his final dirty deed, concludes:

So why did I do it? I could offer a million answers, all false. The truth is that I'm a bad person, but that's going to change. This is the last of this sort of thing. I'm cleaning up and moving on, going straight and choosing life. I'm looking forward to it already. I'm going to be just like you: the job, the family, the fucking big television, the washing machine, the car, the compact disc and electrical tin opener, good health, low cholesterol, dental insurance, mortgage, starter home, leisurewear, luggage, three piece suite, DIY, game shows, junk food, children, walks in the park, nine-to-five, good as gold, washing the car, choice of sweaters, family Christmas,

³⁹⁵ <http://www.thei.aust.com/isite/cellspotting2.html> Last viewed 26 March 2007

indexed pension, tax exemption, clearing the gutters, getting by, looking ahead, the day you die ...³⁹⁶

In such passages as these it is easy to see, no matter how much of what it relates is the misguided or self-defeating, that drug fiction is the fiction of rebellion in a modern world that many subjects experience as vastly illogical and immoral. Achieving rehabilitation is then a process by which a subject might re-enter society but with new strength and new skills to cope with it.

The concept of 'rehabilitation' implies a restoring of a former more beneficial state for the body, a win, in the internal struggle, by the pre-addicted body over the addicted body. The resultant rehabilitated body is, like the 'before' and 'after' of the trauma victim, a new body that incorporates, and must integrate, both past selves - pre-traumatised and traumatised. In Davies' *Candy*, the rehabilitated body of the narrator successfully incorporates his memories of his pre-addicted body, his addicted body, and the revolutionary body as the body of the writer. Although Carey's Kelly, Hospital's Hawthorne and Davies's narrator all achieve inscription as writers, only Davies' narrator manages to actually survive his struggle within the symbolic. In this way he may be read as the most redemptive of the three characters, successfully using the inscription of his true self in the form of a novel, as a way to save himself. If Kelly and Hawthorn are eventually

³⁹⁶ Irvine Welsh *Trainspotting* London: Vintage 1999 back cover Ibid

martyrs to their noblest conceptions of 'truth', they are just as much narcissistic in their obsession with the inscription of their own selves. Davies' narrator then appears as an enabling example of cultural memory, the remembering of the modern tale of drug addiction, as a tale of survival within a devastating symbolic.

Unlike Kelly and Hawthorne, who persistently refer to themselves in the process of writing, the narrator of *Candy* never foregrounds his writing experience or his body as writer. As with Kelly, who apparently composes his journals on the run as an outlaw, it is implied by the first person narration that the narrator as addict is telling the story but, unlike Kelly, this narrator never once mentions getting a pen and writing about his day at the day's end. This lack of self-referentiality might indicate a lack of self-reflection in the narrator but it also manages to give the realistic impression of the narrator not really existing very solidly in the world or the text during his submission to addiction. The three 'Candys', the narrator's wife, the colloquial term for heroin, and the novel itself, function to delineate the boundaries of a character who is remarkably boundary-less and lost in his own sense of self. The narrator exists almost as an absence amongst the deferring bodies of 'Candy', as if he cannot see himself anywhere except in relation to them. These other bodies are written as so entwined with his own that the true self of the narrator is forced to struggle in the hope that the tenuous subject of his insecure self, might form a voice.

It is the slippery authorial interjections, indicating a retrospective understanding of events, that remind us the tale that seems to be spoken from an addict's point of view is actually a projection of addiction by a rehabilitated narrator. This encourages and supports the reading of a 'true self' in the narration, signposted throughout the text until they eventually dominate, charting the transformation of an enslaved body into a liberatory work of fiction, the addicted body into the body of a writer. The text goes full-circle as the narrator 'kicks the habit' in a rehabilitation centre, toward the end of the novel, and the reader is left to contemplate that it must be sometime after this point that he sits down to write his story. This corresponds with public information that Davies began writing *Candy* five years after he beat his own heroin addiction. In this way the author, Luke Davies, recovers his former body of addiction, by writing the addicted body, the creation of this autobiographical fiction building on his success at rehabilitation, transforming his addicted body into an inscribed novel, written, published, sold and made into a film.

An ad/o/aptive reading of Luke Davies' *Candy*, privileges a false self in the form of addiction, a self with whom the narrator must struggle and overcome, if he is to inscribe his truth on the symbolic. The double-edged sword of addiction, the contradiction and self-deception at the heart of addiction, is immediately signified in the internal contradiction of the opening title, 'Example of good

Times: Candy's First Overdose'. This kind of dramatic paradox is a blue-print of the mind of the narrator, a repetitive and sometimes laughable pattern of faulty logic that litters the text, in which the struggle between selves is played out.

Candy is the sum of the struggle between the voice of addiction, who appears to be telling the tale, and the subterranean voice of the unconscious, a discourse of detachment, that struggles to push up into the addict's consciousness, and which will eventually articulate his own primal wound.

The addicted body is marked by contradictions, self-deceptions, dissembling, cruelty, a self-deprecating humour and a fondness for platitudes. Candy's eyes are 'a kind of mist you fall into' and meeting her 'was meant to happen'. But as if the elation of the opening paragraphs sounds false even to his own ears, with their identification of his new girlfriend, love, heroin and the money to obtain it as all 'good things', the narrator justifies his relationship with Candy through the banal statement that 'partnership is a good thing and helps focus your energies' (3) Banalities like this litter the dialogue of the characters in *Candy* and clichés and maxims are frequently used to disguise the not so hidden agenda of the narrator who probably simply couldn't be bothered constructing something more interesting. The narrator uses these commonalities as a linguistic scaffold to hold up what is an obvious illogicality: that injecting heroin is nothing particularly unusual and that everyone would be doing it if they knew how good it was. The words used by the characters are just as trite, superficial and sparse:

when Candy snorts heroin the first time she merely says 'woah' and when the narrator first administers it to Candy intravenously he says only 'there'. It is as if the two characters, in giving themselves over to self-indulgence, no longer have a need for language. Comically, a whole group of junkies yell out repetitively as if to thinking of a variety of expletives is too taxing: 'You fucking cunts! You fucking cunts! Don't youse ever come back here again, you cunts!' (15). The loss of language under the spell of sensory experience represents the antithesis to poetry, but it is poetry that is eventually expressed in the final deconstruction of the false self by the narrator, playing a simple game of Frisbee:

I follow long, luxurious arcs through the cool of the evening and Ken does the same and we pass our time this way, experiencing moments of convergence. I reach up and pull the Frisbee down from the sky. My spine tingles, I gasp with joy. The emotion of awakenng - is there a name for it? - floods my body.

We're like some elastic machine, running all over the park, tuned, tight, uniquely monocellular, locked into trajectories, aware of every angle. It becomes apparent that throwing a Frisbee is the most spiritual, the most poetic of sports.

(284)

If the reader does not resist the urge to giggle a little, then it becomes apparent how humour has worked in the text to guide the reader through the harrowing

details to this redemptive moment experienced by the narrator as poetic, and even spiritual, inspiration, yet retaining a tongue firmly in cheek.

Up until the assertion of the true self of the narrator, brought about by his 'remembering' in the space of the text the scene of his primal wound, the addicted narrator everywhere mistakenly identifies what he perceives as 'good' things, poetry, beauty and even love, with the effects of heroin upon his body and mind. He claims to be carried away by Candy, by the poetry of her, her beauty and her youth, but appears to be simply reliving his earlier experience of 'falling into addiction':

She's just finding out what I found out a few years back, that thing that heroin does to you the first few times. She is over the moon. She's in the Miranda zone-O wonder! O brave new world! Things are good beyond belief. I envy her that innocence. (4)

Like Carey's Kelly and Hospital's Hawthorne, the narrator draws on Shakespeare in his journey toward becoming a writer, trying to signal his unconscious desire to be inserted in the conversation of literature. But it is this very Shakespearian innocence the narrator sees in Candy that the use and abuse of heroin will destroy and the narrator's implicit culpability in Candy's fate is blatantly evident:

Nowadays, when it really works – which is beginning to be not always – what I get from hammer is a kind of deep comfort. An absence... What Candy's getting is the angelic buoyancy... Good luck to her; it won't last long. (4)

The narrator confirms all the reader's suspicions that he is a dissembler and cannot be trusted. After writing 'Candy's just discovered smack' it is soon revealed that it was he who introduced the drug to her. A portrait of his dissembling moral code emerges as he verbally discourages her from injecting, telling her to snort it if she wants to try it, but proceeds to inject in front of her. This seduction of Candy into addiction is masked by the narrator's falsely protective moral stance, while in fact he leads her precisely where he wants her to go. The narrator only 'falls in love' with Candy when she starts taking the drug too: 'the falling in love part began to happen a few days later. Because she came along for the ride. Because she was so willing' (4). Candy is psychologically 'hooked' before her body develops the dependency and she soon asks the narrator if she can try the drug 'his way': 'At that moment my heart moves and I feel so in love that I want to cry... I can feel the deep tugging of a kindred spirit, a twin... I say, sure' (5). The tugging of the narrator's 'twin' spirit is not his love for Candy but the false self of his addiction. The narrator's 'love' for Candy the

woman, and his addiction to heroin, are so confused throughout the narrative that when he eventually gives up one, he soon finds himself giving up the other.

The absence of pain the narrator experiences in his alternate reality is necessarily accompanied by a dissolving of value-judgement systems, having an impact on a whole range of personal and moral codes. The false self consistently deconstructs the hierarchies of its own value-system and this is manifested in a declining morality. Candy's unimaginative expletives from the depths of her euphoria; "'Fuck O God' Candy says 'Fuck fuck fuck'" (6), merge the sacred and the profane. Throughout the novel, wherever there is heroin, ideas of ugliness and beauty, the repulsive and the attractive, the sacred and the profane, right and wrong and good and evil, begin to equate with each other as if they were not opposites but just as easily read as one and the same thing. Even love, which the narrator constantly attempts to foreground in his relationship with Candy, does not bear up within this dissolving of value-judgements: 'I'm so in love!' ... 'It's weird how you can be going along, and all you're thinking about is heroin, and then you meet someone, and other thoughts get in there... Falling in love is kind of exciting' (3). The narrator's modest definition of love as a bunch of 'other thoughts' mirrors his inability to tell the difference between the experience of the poetry of gravity and the experience of vomiting - all is equally beautiful:

It's a beautiful afternoon in Leichhardt and I want Candy to experience more of it, not just the heavenly weight that descends on vertical bodies, not just the exquisite crush of inertia. She vomits a couple of times and I wipe her face with a towel and then she wants to close her eyes and nod off but I say, come on, let's go for a walk.

First I have another blast and get pretty ripped myself. The phone rings and it's Micky Fleck wanting a hundred and I tell him to wait along the bottom of Norton Street, at the Memorial Park. (7)

The relative vision of the world under the influence of heroin is equated with the beauty of poetry as Candy trails her hand in a council fountain:

She's staring mesmerised at the water. I know what it is: she's intrigued by the way her wrist breaks up the scallops of silver light that bob on the surface. It's summer, in a world that is shining and good. (7)

The narrator thinks he is recognising beauty, writing about poetry and witnessing the goodness of the world but his use of 'a world' instead of 'the world' is the subtlest of indications that the retrospective narrator has an understanding that other worlds exist, that 'worlds' may be something of a matter of individual perception. What the narrator is really recognising, is not

beauty, poetry and goodness but the consistent influence of heroin upon his perception of all things.

She's sitting naked in a puddle of water on the concrete floor, which I know now would feel cold and delicious in the state she's in, coming out of such deep bliss. A cluster of bubbles from the bubble bath hangs on her collarbone like a bunch of tiny white grapes. That was fucking beautiful, she laughs. Let's have some more! Like I said, I'm *so* in love. I've got a real good feeling about this thing. A good feeling in my bones. (11)

There are many subtle linguistic indicators that signify the presence of the retrospective narrator; the reflexive fragment of: 'This is the way I'm thinking, when I think about it' is used, rather than 'I thought'. Such interjections signal the alternative narrative of the true self of the narrator, a self which, it is soon apparent, is unutterably and oppressively sad.

My day in the light, the day is darkening. I'm hurling all the little joys against the greater sadness. The sadness is a giant weight. It presses down. Its meaning: 'What's the point?' The little joys are pebbles. The pebbles are getting smaller and smaller and the weight of sadness is growing, the sadness is gaining density and mass, until in the end I'm throwing handfuls of dust at matter so thick there's no space between

the molecules. Nowhere anywhere for anything to move. The years roll on. (12)

Just as the first part of the prologue is framed by references to love and beauty, so this second part is framed by the horrifying repetition of the addict:

Through the slits that are my eyes, I stare at my shoes, at the grey swirls of the concrete floor, at the bright orange lid of my syringe. And I realise – it's a kind of horror – that this is my life. / And I can't stop. I just can't stop. I can't stop any more. (16)

This hysterical fragment linguistically reflects the repetition, the 'habituation', of addiction, but these brief moments of eruption of the discourse of detachment are quickly suppressed by the addict's compulsions, so that when he considers acting on this knowledge, he ponders 'I'm sure it is possible, but no leap of the imagination can make it seem like it's possible.' (12) The opposition in this sentence is between what the narrator 'knows' and what he can 'imagine'; what he 'knows' is the discourse of his detachment, but what he 'imagines' is his false self, persistently failing him. This reveals the structure of his struggle between his understanding of the truth of the situation but his inability to imagine his way out of it. This is a conversation between bodies, the retrospective narrator and the addicted subject, revealed in a single sentence. They represent two

incompatible belief systems, the paradox within, so much so that the reader must wonder how such a body can be one and the same. Yet Davies constructs a bridge between them, the body as text, as the linguistic representation of the addict's movement from one body to the other, so that all bodies are inscribed within the single cohesive imaginative space of the text.

This process of transformation is read in the narrative of the true self that the reader is forced to construct, which is signposted throughout the text until it eventually becomes the rehabilitated body of the narrator who is detectable in the dominant discourse. In the first chapter of Part 1, the 'signs' on the body of the text are openly acknowledged by the addict as signs in his life:

I owed him money because my habit was really starting to get out of control. I'd noticed people like Micky Fleck and some other friends were calling me less often; maybe I wasn't so reliable anymore.

The signs to stop were there. (20)

But the voice of the retrospective narrator also speaks directly to the reader, and is a voice easier to like than the addict's. He uses the analogy of driving to incorporate his experience and a self-deprecating sarcasm to distance himself from it:

It's like there's a mystical connection between heroin and bad luck, with some kind of built-in momentum factor. It's like you're cruising along in a beautiful car on a pleasant country road with the breeze in your hair and the smell of eucalypts all around you. The horizon is always up there ahead, unfolding towards you, and at first you don't notice the gradual descent, or the way the atmosphere thickens. Bit by bit the gradients get steeper, and before you realise you have no brakes, you're going pretty fucking fast.

So what did we do, once the descent began? We learned how to drive well, under hazardous conditions. We had each other to egg each other on. There was neither room nor need for passengers. Maybe also we were thinking that one day our car would sprout wings and fly. I saw that happen in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. It's good to live in hope. (19)

This is a narrator that, as readers, we may be more comfortable sympathizing with. Later in the novel the narrator confirms his being duped in regards to the power of this momentum: 'I sincerely believed that this terrible momentum was a thing I could impose my will on, something that could be slowed down' (121) but the 'car' finally comes to rest only after decade of struggle.

It would be almost a decade before the car finally came down to a silent stop on an empty stretch of road a long way down from where we'd

started. Almost a decade before we'd hear the clicking of metal under the bonnet and the buzzing of cicadas in the trees all around us. (20)

Although the narrator obviously survives to tell his tale, nothing is yet known of Candy's future, and part of the persistence of the reader will be the genuine desire to find out what happens to her character, even if the teller of the tale makes himself odious. In this way, despite all the evidence provided by the misogynist narration, Davies constructs Candy as the real concern of his tale.³⁹⁷

The detached head in Patrick White's *Voss* has been read as a symbol of detachment that marks the Australian experience. The 'detachable head' in *Candy* can also be read as a metaphor, the detachable head of the junky's syringe providing a comic trope for Davies to represent the unpredictability, but perhaps also the detachment, of the world of the narrator, who believes himself in control in a world of delusion. In the men's toilets at the Cockatoo Club on William Street in Sydney, the narrator informs his reader that he is unfamiliar with 'fits' with detachable heads as he draws water into the barrel of the syringe to clean it. He forcefully pushes the plunger back into the barrel to expel the water:

The pressure was too great. The needle, like the pod of Saturn Five, came off from the main body at supersonic speed. By the time I heard the

pffft! of its flight through the cubicle, it had sailed through the security bars, straight out the window and on into the night. (38)

Davies continues his indirect satirisation of the junky, as the narrator pursues the runaway needle, calculating its trajectory into to a large pile of rubbish in the back lane of the club. He treads gingerly into it, using the edge of the mini-skip for balance:

Everything was spongy under my feet. Suddenly my right leg disappeared beneath me. I fell knee-deep into rotten tomatoes. A wet squelch filled my jeans. I heard the scurrying of panicked rats. (38)

The darkly comic scenario is extended when two police officers turn the corner into the laneway and the narrator remembers he has heroin in his pocket:

I did the fast-casual walk. I didn't look back but I didn't hear their footsteps pick up. I rounded the corner and ran the half block back to the Cockatoo Club. A kind of high-speed limp, a *whoomp-slurp, whoomp-slurp* sound. (39)

³⁹⁷ Sydney Morning Herald Weekend Edition June 17-18, 2006 NEWS 'A Story of Survival: Meet the Real Candy' 7

Candy also does not escape the satirisation of the retrospective narration, being always depicted as beautiful, but also the stereotype of 'the blonde bimbo', in the taxi on the way home musing 'Maybe it was meant to happen' (39). Later, his suspicious brother Lex asks the narrator where the bad smell was coming from:

I told him I trod in a puddle and it must have had something awful in it. He told me it hasn't rained for three weeks. I told him it was a puddle next to a construction site. (40)

The trope of the detachable head is used in another far more macabre instance that is also related as an extended comic scenario and used as a comic trope, this 'detachable head' provides a dark but comic relief. In the body of the addict, the psychological 'head' might well be something 'unpredictable', something 'laughable' but eventually, if addiction is overcome, something that might be 'detachable'.

Why does it seem so absurd to explain all this now? From there it was just a hop, skip and a jump... It didn't seem dangerous at first. Once or twice a week, how could you go wrong?

Suddenly it was two months later.

One day we woke up and realised we'd just been using for nine days straight.... We were pinned from dawn till dusk. On the tenth morning we had no money. The churning was back in our lives, in our stomachs. (45)

The narrator discovers in the writing of his body that his perspective has changed, that what once didn't seem dangerous to him, now appears to him to be absurd. Indeed, in this satire he asks the reader to help him re-cast his experiences as an addict as 'absurd', and certainly the repetition of the addicts' illogicality is just that. Humour compensates for the many instances the reader is exposed to the narrator's more repellent wishes:

It was bright and sunny. There were people everywhere. I hated them all, since it was so hard to hate myself or my own life. I wished I could stop time and take the money from their wallets. (47)

These repellent desires lead the two main characters to pawn their wedding ring and a silver necklace Candy's grandmother left her: 'something she said she'd never sell.' (46). Candy's own physical body becomes part of this general progression towards the 'devaluing' of all things and the moment she offers the necklace up for exchange, she simultaneously enters into the endless exchange of prostitution, the pawnbroker as her first 'client.' The implication that Candy and the narrator have crossed the threshold of what had previously been an

unspoken moral code is clearly admitted by the narrator who concentrates on 'not thinking' while Candy is inside the pawnbroker's shop. Although he rationalizes his actions as he always does: 'We needed the money, I told myself. It was a sensible world of supply and demand' (447) he also recognises that Candy has travelled 'a new kind of fear, through a dark tunnel into new territory'. Like the adopted body, Candy has become a kind of commodity, her body 'detached' from the world of love and emotion, 'we'd done that mental somersault where we reasoned that it was all for money and therefore didn't affect our love.' (53)

The narrator relates sex in explicit and detached detail in the same way he has related the concoction, and the administering, of heroin. The reader is never spared as he describes it in graphic detail, so that the reader is led on a pornographic journey, in the same way she has been led through the intravenous injection of drugs. But there is, again, a detectable and distanced narrator, who expresses his own detachment from the events, so that the coupling, or the tripling and quadroupling in this case, becomes a highly mechanized act, 'like the docking of the satellites'. The narrator still objectifies Candy, as he does throughout the narration despite his constant protestations of love, to combat his own horribly exposed sense that in his addiction he is something less than a man. The narrator's insecurity about his masculinity becomes the expression of his participation in Candy's prostitution. This very intimate experience between

bodies is immediately juxtaposed by their immediate retreat into individual expressions of selfishness, as none of them want to share their heroin with each other, increasing the absurdity of the subjects who so easily share their physical bodies. This mechanized construction of sensual bliss ends with a similarly grotesque parody of domestic bliss:

We all got completely wasted. For many hours we couldn't even open our eyes to watch TV. We just dribbled a lot and mumbled shit that nobody understood. We burnt holes in the sofa and on the carpet when our cigarettes, lit but unsmoked, suspended in our hands, smouldered down to long cylinders of ash as we drooped towards slack-jawed unconsciousness. It was the best kind of domestic bliss, the absolute absence of discomfort. (65)

Musgrove argues that, today, there is 'a compelling case that "legitimate" overground economies and drug undergrounds share an identical inner logic':

As the literary 'master addict' Burroughs wrote (1972/1959, pp. 8-9), heroin or 'junk' is retailed according to 'basic principles of monopoly capitalism and junk 'is the mold of monopoly and possession'; it is 'the

ultimate merchandise. No sales talk necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy'.³⁹⁸

Musgrove quotes Karl Marx's theory of commodity fetishism:

the idea that 'humble objects' circulating in a consumer economy acquired an aura, an almost 'metaphysical' quality, and to possess or consume them was the ultimate fulfilment of human desire. Consequently, modern commodity capitalism had an aesthetic dimension: like the mystique of drugs, the aura of the commodity provoked conspicuous consumption.³⁹⁹

Musgrove's argument is interesting but finally unsatisfactory when he asks 'in an age when people are consumers first, and citizens second, how is the consuming habit of the addict different from that of the compulsive shopper?'⁴⁰⁰ This is an interesting comparison with certain similarities, but the difference is also obvious. The dispensing with hierarchical models of value-judgement, and the deconstruction of moral codes, within the writing and reading of drug fiction, induces the reader to reassert her own, and this lends drug-fiction a didactic function.

³⁹⁸ Musgrove op.cit.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid

Drug fiction constructs macabre and comic scenes that involve drug paraphernalia; another common trope used to represent the extent of depravity the addict might sink to, is the figure of the 'dead baby'. The baby who dies within the narrative of drug fiction represents the ultimate negativity of the addict's world but also often signals a turn in the narrative through which the text finally rejects the world it has created, in a corrective defiance of the sense of glamour its depictions of euphoria have lent it. The baby is produced, in drug fiction, as an external representation of the birth of change and its sacrifice is the catalyst for the redemptive narrative to finally set in. Like the reading of the adopted child as commodity, the baby in drug fiction is produced as a function to alter the course of the narrative, in a society that places the individual as consumer first, citizen second and as person third, rather than being the biological offspring of an act of love: 'Somehow at some point we thought that a baby would change things. It gave us something to aim for' (122). Like the reading of the adopted child as commodity, the symbol of the baby has a reduced meaning as a 'wanted' infant; 'This is the baby we wanted, we said. This is the baby that will change our lives. So now we have a reason to stop using' (122). Like the adopted child as commodity, the baby is constructed as symbol of wantedness even as its wantedness is thrown into question. In *Candy*, the baby, like the narrator, does not warrant a name but is, instead, for the protagonists, 'the ideal opportunity for both of us to grab hold of the change of direction that we figured would set us on the course of our future' (122).

In the anti-worlds of drug fiction, it is not the baby, but the dead baby, that changes things: 'For a moment it felt like we weren't really junkies, but two people who loved each other, in the middle of pain and loss, in the real world' (123). It is the grief, not the child itself, that turns the action, and so the 'lost' infant, like those lost children in colonial fiction, serves to paradoxically unite others in grief. The living baby, product of an amoral and selfish logic, can only remain a symbol of the nihilism of a text that can never develop because it is stuck in a hysterical logic, incapable of imaginative escape. Only the loss of this symbol will bring the addicts to self-realization. The death of a most potent symbol of hope alerts the addicted body to the extent to which it has developed a master/slave dichotomy, and propels the true self upwards and outwards. In a single moment, while standing in the hospital, the narrator 'remembers' his most tragic separation from his own mother, and his primal wound finally surfaces into a narrative that has hitherto rarely deviated beyond its hysterical present. When he was sixteen years the narrator's mother was involved in a car crash and an unthinking nurse, ushers him into the hospital room:

I walk into the room full of machinery but I can't find my mother. There's an ugly lady with a purple head but I can't see my mother anywhere. For a moment I think this must be the wrong room. The lady with the swollen head - it's big as a watermelon - is hooked up to all sorts of tubes and

screens. Then she smiles weakly and raises her hand. I move towards her and say, 'Mum,' but my legs buckle under me. I know I am fainting and can't stop it. I taste vomit and hospital disinfectant at the back of my nose, and then I black out... The next time I see her, two hours later, she is dead. (125)

This hideous recollection is the primal wound, surfacing in memory, that the narrator has suppressed in his guilt over his inability to farewell his own mother because of her hideous physical state. His discourse of addiction is revealed as the suppression of the birth of a discourse of traumatic detachment. The space of the hospital is the place in which the protagonist simultaneously loses his child, remembers his mother and has his own primal memory of traumatic loss extracted, as if he, himself, were undergoing a life-saving surgical procedure. When the narrator writes of the guilt induced by his heroin indulgence, it is of his own mother he is really writing: 'I knew the guilt would be the kind of guilt that would bury itself for years' (125). The location of the narrator's primal wound within the boundaries of the text marks the surfacing of the discourse of detachment and from this point, a new voice fully enters the text, a second *italicized* body:

Sleep. The place where a deeper unease can penetrate through sick bone and aching muscle, an unease so fine and lightweight it can settle even on the atoms of

oxygen in your lungs, coat them with a dread silt, weigh them down, so you puff restlessly all night and whimper into the dawn.

When I'm drifting into sleep, sometimes I jolt half-awake for a moment, and I realise I feel scared. Then I think about the sickness enveloping our lives.

What's outside the mist? (133)

The new narrative issues from a deeper place, connected to the state of sleeping, but we immediately read, with some relief, that it is in the state near sleep, where the conscious and unconscious selves mix in a world of dreams, that the narrator seems to be 'more awake':

I will stop using drugs. I will re-enter the world: free at last to choose from all its parts. Not just forced to choose only one of them.

Forced to choose. Hmmm. Near sleep the mind throws words around.

Compulsion. Independence. All that shit.

Then in the morning I wake up there is nothing but fear... (133)

The text rambles into a blur of distressing images as his unconscious works overtime to assemble the damage of the day and redeliver it to the suffering mind of the addict in his trap:

Maybe only in dreams is there hope that the seepage of unease can harden into a message we might take note of.

But drugs wipe out your dreams, so what you retrieve from down there is rare.

Biblical fragments seep into the random jumble of images and words dislocate from the entrapping faulty logic of the ego and, like free radicals, act to disturb the disfunctional order. The subconscious realm is thrown into relief with the superficial drone of the addicted narrator, not only by its italicization but by the entrance of a kind of poetry.

In the end, life can be seen to be inconsequential, in the way that nothing matters on some vast evolutionary scale. But everything matters, and we know that most when life seems most horrific, when at each instant of time, all the space around us is everything there is.

Suppose this, Candy. Suppose all time was not the way it is with us. Suppose its mellifluous curves and parabolas, its contractions and contortions, the furious or sedate blood of its pulse, were of a different mathematics altogether. Or say the eye that views could view with the remoteness and the slowness of rocks growing, continents being born, galaxies rollercoasting through the universe. Imagine if we could stand above the flow of time and look down on it

just as we stood on Mount Dandenong and looked down on the dots of traffic ten miles away and below.

But there is a blackness all around. We can't imagine anything. We can't suppose. We are trapped inside the thickest of boundaries. (152)

The narrator is struggling, finally, to imagine his way out of his predicament and it is in this realm of the imagination that he articulates a discourse of detachment:

I am so far removed, from everything, that I can't even cry. There's a chasm between me, where I am, and the world I am in. The world I move my feet through. The atmosphere I breathe is like golden syrup, twenty-seven atmospheres thick. (219)

These realisations and admissions are provoked by the qualities of his dreams, which erupt in hysteria, tears, fights and horror. The true self of the non-addict struggles to articulate himself in the symbol language of dreams where he becomes an island out of the addict's reach. Finally working together in the realms of the imagination, the addict tries to read the symbolic language of himself, and understand the nature of his addiction. The island is an alternative world, a world of escape, but one which he is only struggling to reach: like the narrative drone of the text, constantly justifying but never going anywhere new,

the subject of the dream forever circulates, the narrator reading its hysteria in his own language: *'it is not the dream that is circular but the telling of it'* (135).

In or near overdose you drift in a profound stasis broken up only by the endless falling of snowflakes. But in dreams, things happen. This is so unsettling. Things. Events. They just happen, you don't control them.

When I wake, the whole of Melbourne is smothered in fog. I look out the window and can't even see the buildings across the street. But as the morning warms and the fog burns away, what was important during the night gradually leaves me. Soon I'm just me, a guy who needs a hundred dollars. (135)

It is in his dreams that the narrator is taught by his true self how to imagine himself elsewhere: *'for every hundred units of time, it takes up ninety-nine. But every now and then, even during bad times, I get a glimpse of a state where the mind is free to roam through spaces greater than what the body knows'* (220).

Change comes quicker to Candy after the trauma of losing her baby as the inner logic of her own addiction soon breaks down into madness:

Something was beginning to give for Candy. A seismograph in Sydney feels the distant rumbling of a profound rupture in the earth's crust a thousand kilometres away, beneath the ocean floor. In the same way,

through all the distance laid down by heroin, I was registering a flutter of discontent. God only knows what that flutter was inside Candy. A deafening upheaval I suppose. I was sure I loved her but it seemed no matter how hard I tried, smack came first. (141)

Candy's flutter of discontent, of course, is the beginnings of her mental breakdown (141), brought about under the influence of methadone:

'Listen to me!'

She stamped her foot. I looked away from the TV and our eyes met.

She was crying.

'Don't you see what this is doing to me?'

...

'Our life is more than bad. It's utterly fucked. And you are evil.'

They seemed such heavy words in the cold stark warehouse.

'O yeah, right, I'm evil. Now I think you've gone too far, Candy.

Goebbels was evil. Adolf fucking Hitler was evil. Put things in perspective, eh?'

'Do you know what I do all day and night to earn the money that we put up our arms?'

I closed my eyes. It was like the question that dare not speak its name. (141)

When they move to the country and go on a methadone programme 'things fell apart fast' (239) and Candy's breakdown occurs in nine weeks. 'Candy just got speedier and speedier as the methadone went down... Candy was getting a little bit hyper, a little bit aggro...I could hear the clockwork whirring out of control, a massive background noise' (240). When Candy tells the narrator on the phone that 'everything is fine, everything is turning blue', this becomes the linguistic representation of her madness, which is multiplied in a barrage of incomprehensible language, scrawled all over the walls of their home.

In the final week... she'd written strange poems, meticulously lettered with nail polish, all over the walls and doors. They said things like, 'Mother of the blueness. Angel of the storm. Remember me in my opaqueness. Of the flooding. Hit me up. Dear mother says you were born in Vietnam. Whistle down the wind (Alan Bates). You said you would look after me. Fly away sun.

I found some old tins of paint, all different colours, in the shed, and tried to paint over the poems. I didn't prepare the surfaces or use an undercoat. My heart wasn't in it. The inside of the house looked like a strange patchwork, and as the paint began to dry the faint outlines of the poems reappeared, like the return of ghosts. (276)

The narrator becomes aware of Candy's psychological state as psychosis: 'I was delving into the darker unease of... how a mind could overload and suddenly change into something unfamiliar and unknowable. Of how something felt deeply, however misguided, could disappear forever. This must be a kind of death' (261).

Unlike Candy, who moves from addiction to psychosis, the narrator moves, finally, into the body of writer. In the telling of his tale he discovers something that he terms a 'soul' located somewhere deep within his damaged body:

Veins are a kind of map, and maps are the best way to chart the way things change. What I'm really charting here is a kind of decay. The vein situation is no great exception. There really did come a point when we knew that our bodies were not in good order. That much was clear. As for our souls, well, we couldn't see the forest for the trees. (207)

For the retrospective and rehabilitated narrator, the map of his addicted body's veins charted decay and obscured his soul. The birth of a spiritual consciousness arrives as the banality of the addict's language finally dissolves into a poetry, meditating upon his body and its relationship with the spiritual:

I think in the end, with all those holes, you kind of do something. It's like you have a container to hold your soul, and you turn it into a colander. So much of you leaks out, until there's barely anything left. And you just keep lowering your standards, to deal with the barely anything.

You just leak away. And if you're lucky, then one night in the silence, in the deep heart of the dark, you'll hear the distant trickling of the blood in your veins. A weary world of rivers, hauling their pain through the dark heat. The heart like a tom-tom, beating the message that time is running out. You'll lie there strangely alert. You'll actually feel the inside of your body, which is your soul, or where your soul is, and a great sadness will engulf you. And from the sadness an itch might begin, the itch of desire for change. (207)

The birth of a concept of spirituality also signifies his birth as a writer. To enter this new space the narrator must test his memory: 'Memory is a fucker, the way it blurs things. The thing is, I can write about events. All that heroin, it was all events. When the events slowed down and emotional stuff began, well, I don't know that I know how to write about that' (255).

The 'emotional stuff' for the narrator begins in his visit to a site he is told is traditionally held sacred and it induces in him a physical reaction, emphasized

by the 'potent heads' of marijuana he has been using to keep his heroin addiction at bay:

I felt like an intruder, and rightly so. I had no connection to anything, least of all the earth. Only the cushioning effect of these monstrously potent heads prevented me from falling to the ground and weeping – for everything that flooded out of me as the methadone faded; for my absence from myself for so many years; for Candy, whose fragility was now exposed by the absence of drugs; for the terrible tragedy I sensed I was about to enter. (265)

The force of the narrator's entire emotional repression threatens to throw him to ground and weep, but is deferred and enters the text, finally, after he has seen Candy, a mere shadow of her former self, in the psychiatric hospital. From out of the confines of the addict's repressing discourse emerge the first real signification by the narrator that he has changed: 'two strangled sobs emerged, unexpectedly, from deep in my throat. I lowered my head and splayed my hands over my eyes' (273).

The 'quantum leap' from junkie to writer is made by the narrator in increments that are signposted in the text and Candy's madness teaches the narrator that language can create a subject's reality. Candy, in the initial stage of her

breakdown, had repeated to him a strange incoherent phrase that had filled him with dread; 'Everything's fine. Everything's turning blue here' (260):

Candy was the coolest junkie I'd ever known and the person I'd loved most in my life. I wasn't prepared for what was happening. It seemed a quantum leap from *everything's turning blue* to this. And yet everything around me, in this mental hospital, was undeniably real. (272)

The narrator mentions his own fate as a mere aside after the tale of Candy: 'And so at last it was *my* turn for hospital, the thing I'd been putting off for so long. One day I just walked to a detox, somewhere along Moore Park Road, and pressed the buzzer' (279). After a successful rehabilitation Candy and the narrator meet up for one last goodbye:

But that was it for Candy and me... - and so she disappears from this story, or the story disappears. I heard she'd travelled a bit, was doing OK. For a couple of years I heard lots of things, some good, some bad. And then after a while I heard nothing. (280)

As all the different Candys exit the tale the narrator as writer, and writing as breath, finally emerge in the space created. The art of Davies' drug fiction

becomes the third principle which, mediating between the material and sacred worlds, offered that new thing, 'a secular definition of transcendence.'⁴⁰¹

When I was using it was like, tomorrow everything will be all right, so today doesn't matter so much. I thought if I could hold my breath for long enough then finally tomorrow, full of light and pollen, would arrive.

And here it is. I can start breathing again. (296)

⁴⁰¹ Rushdie *Imaginary Homelands: essays and criticism 1981-1991* Granta in association with Penguin London 1992 420

CONCLUSION

Changeling Literature in Australia

Using the metaphor of the adopted body to read Australia and Australian culture I have shown how, as a metaphor and a product, it is specifically relational to the Australian condition, both a prototype and a meta-body, of the post-modern Australian writer citizen. The paradox at the very heart of the adopted body's subjectivity, marked as the primal wound repressed in its developing sense of self, replicates and interiorises the splitting of bodies that initiated its condition, which in turn is a direct product of the schism between biological parents. Read upon the body of the Australian community, its separation from its multifarious cultural and contextual 'parents', gives birth to the 'false self' to veil the discourse of detachments. Suppressed within Australian history, this discourse involves the metonymical replication of itself in a repetitive return of the repressed, the proliferation of the separation of the mother/infant body throughout Australian history to the present day. The repressed primal wound of the Australian community directly produced the paradox of the closed-record adoptee, interiorizing its wound in the heart of the adoptee's subjectivity.

As a meta-body the closed-record adopted body is Oedipus, doubly restrained, in the modern nuclear family and this intensifying of the Oedipal condition

fractures the Oedipal coding, even as the adoptee must negotiate them under exaggerated conditions, introducing Chrysippus, the bastard child, into its re-telling. The original maltreatment of the bastard produces the curse of Oedipus, the mythical prototype of the closed-records adoptee: the maltreatment of 'illegitimate' children by society renders Oedipus, a legitimate child of a nuclear family, suddenly illegitimate, adopted and, later, criminal.

The adopted child in the nuclear family cannot be simply reduced to the Oedipal codes and the neurotic territorialities of the Oedipus Complex and is born as the very embodiment of Deleuze and Guattari's desiring machine, escaping the psychoanalytic codes as lines of escape leading elsewhere. What is experienced before conscious perception in the subject may have repercussions in the development of its consciousness and the issues of the adult parties, although seemingly resolved on a legal and social level, may be internalized in the psychological body of the child - Oedipus manifest. The line of escape is the infant subject adoptee as the modern manifestation of the ancient myth - an exaggeration, an amplification, an elaboration, an *adaptation/adaption*, of the experience of the modern child-citizen in the Oedipal context as if the conditions under capitalism and within the nuclear family has brought the Oedipus myth to life, and then shattered it, in the production of the closed-records adopted body.

Breaking apart psychoanalytic discourse, the adopted body provides a new psychoanalytic model, internalizing the schizophrenic condition in the heart of the subject, and, with its unique relationship to the loss of the maternal within the semiotic space and to the resultant acquirement of language, will utter an new kind of ad/operative discourse. My life-writing can be read, then, as an example of a prototypical language emanating from the unconscious of the Australian writer, detached from her or his mother at birth and placed in a brand-new, and utterly unfamiliar, Family Romance, the Australian Continent.

The adopted body is a 'schizoid work par excellence' and I offer it as a more coherent alternative model to Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic. In the process of the transformation of life into story, we can read life writing *in action*, and witness the foregrounded narrative of transformation by the power of story. Ado/aptive readings of the movement of people's lives into text, Ned Kelly, Samantha Raleigh/Hamilton and Candy, are powerfully aware of that very process, because the adopted body is so conscious just how much of their own selves are produced from and as story.

The artist is one who proceeds not from feeling to form but from form to thought and passion, for 'the mere form suggests what is to fill it and make it intellectually and emotionally complete.'⁴⁰²

What I am trying to explain is that ado/aprive readings foreground transformation, the movement of things between elements, teasing out the interstices between life and story, reading and provoking transformation in its many guises within an Australian imaginary:

the shape taken by an experimental narrative may hint at the solution to the seemingly insoluble contradictions of a civil society, teaching it how to combine the benefits of modernity with the warmth of community. An art which deliberately opposes its own age is reflected in a notion of genius as never like the country's idea of itself: but from the contest with current codes a symbolic projection of the future community emerges. Kenneth Burke's model of language as symbolic action is helpful here, since 'it begins by generating and producing its own context in the same moment of emergence in which it steps back from it, taking its measure with a view towards its own project of transformation',⁴⁰³ an instance of art

⁴⁰² Oscar Wilde *The Artist as Critic* ed. R Ellmann London 1970 398

⁴⁰³ Jameson, Fred *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* London 1981 81

reminding us of the very contradiction of which it is itself the resolution.⁴⁰⁴

Australian Literature

Remarkably another kind of body in Australian society experienced a rapid birth, 'peak' and fall simultaneously with that of the legislated adopted body when, 'during a period of cultural nationalism and disciplinary specialisation', Australian Literary Studies was formed.⁴⁰⁵ 'It began, let us say very roughly, in the 1950s; the peak of its influence was probably in the mid to late 1970s; and we can sense its end, or at least its transformation into new forms, during the years between the Bicentenary in 1988 and the end of the twentieth century.'⁴⁰⁶

In 'Australian Literary Studies and Post-Colonialism', Robert Dixon claims that Australian literary scholars remain deeply attached to representations of Australia as a nation apart⁴⁰⁷ and quotes Gillian Whitlock: 'We are ... the most well-travelled and internationally well-connected generation of Australian literary scholars. And yet we continue to teach and write in institutional and discursive frameworks which favour the conception of national cultures.'⁴⁰⁸ This

⁴⁰⁴ Kiberd op cit 302

⁴⁰⁵ Robert Dixon 'Australian Literary Studies and Post-Colonialism' in *AUMLA Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association* University of Queensland No.100 November 1003 108-121 108

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid 108

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid 108

⁴⁰⁸ Gillian Whitlock 'Australian Literature: Points for Departure' *Australian Literary Studies* 19.2 October 1999 154

may well be articulating a very contemporary concern that Australian writers are exhibiting 'the psychological version, within the individual, of that rather revivalist form of nationalism which is self-conscious but not self-aware.'⁴⁰⁹

Knowledge of the self rather than mere ego would be the personal version of liberation, and even as nationalism is a phase which a community must pass through *en route* to liberation, so the ego is an essential precondition for the revelation of self. If whole peoples can mistake nationalism for liberation, so there are egos which demand to be identified totally with the self... Equally, there are others which identify solely with the shadow side, persistently asserting their unworthiness. Integration can finally be achieved only by those who admit both positive and negative sides as authentic elements.⁴¹⁰

Following Dixon's advice to 're-discover the way our national literature was always connected to the world' and to 'place Australian Literature back into International contexts'⁴¹¹ I am inspired by the 'ancient Gaelic notion that only in literature can the consciousness of a people be glimpsed.'⁴¹² I would like to draw

⁴⁰⁹ The Jungian methodology has been most lucidly explained by Helen M. Luke *Parabola: The Magazine of Myth and Tradition* Vol XI No 2 Summer 1986 56-63 (Kiberd 185 footnote 53)

⁴¹⁰ Kiberd op cit 185

⁴¹¹ Robert Dixon 'Australian Literature; International Contexts' paper presented at the ASAL conference in honour of Professor Elizabeth Webby, University of Sydney, February 2, 2007

⁴¹² Kiberd op cit 328

a concluding analogy for the future of an Australian Literature by considering the Irish as 'the first modern people to decolonise in the twentieth century.'⁴¹³

Despite this, a recent study of theory and practice in postcolonial literature, *The Empire Writes Back*, passes over the Irish case very swiftly, perhaps because the authors find these white Europeans too strange an instance to justify their sustained attention.... All cases are complex, but it is precisely the 'mixed' nature of the experience of the Irish people, as both exponents and victims of English imperialism, which makes them so representative of the underlying process.⁴¹⁴

Like the Australian condition, the history of the colonial Irish condition is marked by an understanding of loss. In 1966, the Irish writer, Thomas Kinsella, wrote about Irish Literature:

In all of this I recognise a great inheritance and, simultaneously, a great loss. The inheritance is certainly mine, but only at two enormous removes - across a century's silence and through an exchange of worlds. The greatness of the loss is measured not only by the substance of Irish literature itself, but also by the intensity with which we know it was shared; it has an air of continuity and shared history which is precisely

⁴¹³ Ibid 5

what is missing from Irish literature, in English or Irish, in the nineteenth century and today. I recognise that I stand on one side of a great rift, and can feel the discontinuity in myself. It is a matter of people and places as well as writing – of coming from a broken and uprooted family, of being drawn to those who share my origins and finding that we cannot share our lives.⁴¹⁵

It is as if, somehow, this is the experience of being Australian but multiplied a thousand fold, as each individual experiences the loss of literatures, written and oral, with which they were once familiar.

In Australia, as in Ireland, some of the people who had lost their own pasts, similarly tried to dispossess others and, as with the Irish, perhaps an understanding of this ‘underlying process’ can help to produce something akin to the generativity of the Irish Renaissance. After centuries of enforced provincialism following the collapse of the Gaelic order in 1601, ‘it was the grand destiny of Yeats’ generation to make Ireland once again interesting to the Irish... No generation before or since lived with such conscious national intensity or left such an inspiring (and, in some way, intimidating) legacy.’⁴¹⁶ Declan Kiberd notes, in *Inventing Ireland; The Literature of the Modern Nation*;

⁴¹⁴ Ibid 4-5

⁴¹⁵ Thomas Kinsella, *The Irish Writer*, MLA New York 1966, 58-59

⁴¹⁶ Kiberd op cit 3

The Irish Renaissance produced certain masterpieces that do float free of their enabling conditions to make their home in the world. Ireland, precisely because its writers have been fiercely loyal to their own localities, has produced a large number of these masterpieces, and in an extraordinarily concentrated phase of expression.⁴¹⁷

Applying this 'fierce loyalty' to our own localities, Australian writers might well go a step beyond, articulating the wealth of inheritances, carried across continent and across country. And it is expatriate writers, like Carey and Hospital, who have reputations overseas 'where they are often read very differently to the way they are read here',⁴¹⁸ that carry with them, and continue to construct, ideas - and an 'idea' - of Australia.

The question which faced the decolonising world, the question to which it might become the answer, was: how to build a future on the past without returning to it?

'The past is the only certifiable future we have', says Fuentes: 'The past is the the only proof that the future did, in effect, once exist.' Hence his motto: *remember the future, imagine the past*.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ Ibid 4

⁴¹⁸ Dixon 'Australian Literature; International Contexts' op.cit.

⁴¹⁹ Carlos Fuentes 'Remember the Future, *Salmagundi*, Fall 1985/Winter 1986, No. 68-9, 338

Imagine is the operative word for the liberationist.⁴²⁰

In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, as an apprentice to the bushranger Harry Power, Ned Kelly is fetched by a boy named Shan, a 'wispy sort of boy' who 'wore short pants his legs no thicker than the handle of a hoe'. 'His naked feet was a good 10 in. long' and 'he had a worn out little face his blue eyes were very faded the kind you see in the children of old fathers.' (121) Kelly questions Shan but is 'offered a brown envelope held out with fingers which was long and slender as little sticks', instead of words and, although he seems to be well understood by horses, 'was v. queer he did not often speak' (122). Upon entering the scene of Shan's Family Romance, Kelly cannot help but observe Shan's unusual behaviour within its context:

the boy started jumping chair to chair around the dining table it were a very queer game and I could see his mother were frightened of him she would not stop it. Often he touched the ceiling with his strange thin fingers although later I thought I must of imagined this for the ceilings were 13 ft. high. (123)

When Kelly asks Shan's sister 'how old her brother were she said he weren't her brother...' (123).

⁴²⁰ Kiberd op cit 292

In Irish mythology, a changeling is a fairy child swapped at birth with the human child who is 'stolen' and spirited away to the land of the 'Little People'. The changeling child is the substitute child for the family who has so sadly lost their own infant child. In Kelly's tale, Shan is a colonial precursor of the Australian adoptee and he inspires the telling of a changeling tale:

Harry said there were a couple near Tipperary that had a child which were taken in the night. The so called CHILD left in its place were very strange with a wasted appearance in its eyes you could see that it were very old indeed. The parents was afraid of it and would not argue with it and it could break a plate or climb around the thatching without them daring to contradict it. Harry hadn't seen this substitute child himself but his mother knew him she said the boy had the ability to be in many different places in the one time. He liked to sew and while this were a strange occupation for a boy no one would make jokes at his expense. The wonder of his village he were often about in the woods or nearby towns then inside his cottage sometimes at the same minute he were also in the fields. At the cottage he sat by the fire working on a patchwork cloak it were quite outstanding and no one could explain where he got such colours from. There were a red in particular which were like the red

you find in a stained glass window and there was no red about his mother's garments in the whole house not the smallest skerrick.

People come paying their respects to the parents but they really come to see the cloak to watch the boy's fingers as he sewed no one never seen the like of it before. The fingers was so very long and nimble they were like the fingers of a monkey bending as he sewed as if there was no bones at all but as for the design itself people complained it were almost impossible to get a good look at what the boy were up to.

Time passed his brothers and his sisters growing older with children of their own but the boy didn't age a day although some thought his eyes grew paler no one could imagine how a simple cloak could occupy him for such a length of time.

Then one day the mother goes to the priest saying that the boy had a question that wanted answering and would the Holy Father call on them at such and such a time. The priest come to the house where he found the boy were waiting by the fireplace and the boy straight away asks his question which were as follows.

Would he go to heaven yes or no.

The priest looked at the boy at his strange washed out eyes his long thin fingers and he did not wish to offend him nor did he wish to lie.

At last he spoke he said I can promise you that if you have a drop of Adam's blood in your veins you have as good a chance as I.

And if not says the boy.

Then said the priest you will not go to heaven.

And with that the creature let out an awful kind of shriek he dropped his patchwork on the floor and run away. He were never seen again but his parents kept the needlework for many years after. It were a picture of the Holy Mother and her Babe and everyone who seen it reported it were very fine.

It were now almost dark I asked Harry did he ever see this needlework he said his mother had been shown it on the eve of the very day she were transported. I asked him did he believe in the fairy stories and his answer were he had heard so many from his mother he concluded their only purpose were to frighten the young people to keep the boys away from the girls but now his mind were changed. He thought there might be something to them after all.

In this tale the Priest, a representative of divine law, declares that if this child is not of Adam's blood then he will not have a place in divine society. Reading this supernatural tale as metaphor in the real world, Adam's blood can be read as Adam's law, and a child of Adam's law must be a product of holy matrimony. When the citizen child finally understands that it is somehow outside of divine

society – the legitimate family, law, or nation - it shrieks and disappears, back out of existence, back to fairyland. In Australia, this ‘fairyland’ will be produced in the imagination of the new ‘illegitimates’ - the illegal people confined in a space bounded by razor wire and electric fences. In Australia, the reality of our ‘fairyland’ to which ‘illegal’ people must disappear is a land of segregation, incarceration, isolation. In colonial times it was the reserves and mission stations.

The fact is, from the moment that we are placed in the framework of Oedipus – from the moment that we are measured in terms of Oedipus – the cards are stacked against us, and the only real relationship, that of production, has been done away with. The great discovery of psychoanalysis was that of the production of desire, of the productions of the unconscious. But once Oedipus entered the picture, this discovery was soon buried beneath a new brand of idealism: a classical theatre was substituted for the unconscious as a factory; representation was substituted for the units of production of the unconscious; and an unconscious that was capable of nothing but expressing itself – in myth, tragedy, dreams – was substituted for the productive unconscious.⁴²¹

Following the Irish example, we can, after loss, reactivate our unconscious so it is not just expressing itself but is entirely *productive*. Australian Literature can

create a magical representation, a patchwork quilt of unearthly colour depicting a whole and undivided body, the embroidery of the loss and unattainable desires of its illegitimate body. If it is new forms and experimental narratives that are required, it is in the symbol of the changeling adoptee, that a revolutionary or transformative image of Australian Literature may be observed. For Australian writers:

The news is not all bad: it is arguable that these individuals had precocious capacities released by the difficulties of their infancy and childhood.⁴²²

While disconnection creates 'instability by disconnecting people from past traditions...it also liberates people by making the past less determinate of experiences in the present' and can 'create conditions of possibility.'⁴²³ Where a generation had previously looked to the father to determine its values, a younger generation may have to discover that each must seek them for him- or herself.⁴²⁴

The adopted child, and the post-colonial child, learns better than anyone, the necessity of inventing parents:

⁴²¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus: capitalism and Schizophrenia* transl. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane New York Viking Press 1972 24

⁴²² Kay Torney Souter 'Babies in the Deathspace: Psychic Identity in Australian Fiction and Autobiography' *Southerly* Summer Vol 56 No 4 1996-97 33

⁴²³ Paula Hamilton 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History' in *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia* ed.'s Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton Oxford University Press Melbourne 1994 27

⁴²⁴ Franz Fanon *A Dying Colonialism* tr. Haakon Chevalier Harmondsworth 1970 82

All children in colonies, writes Salman Rushdie in *Midnight's Children*, possess this power to reinvent their parents and to multiply their fathers as the need arises. Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of Rushdie's novel, has 'the gift of inventing new parents for myself whenever necessary':⁴²⁵ since he was born at the founding moment of the new state, this is appropriate, because India too is trying to father itself. A land which was an imperialist fiction attempts to constitute itself an irrefutable fact, with 'a new myth to celebrate, because a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom... catapulting us into a country which would never exist, except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will' ...⁴²⁶

...This repudiation of the biological parent in a colonial situation takes on a revolutionary character, since it involves not just a rejection of authority but of all official versions of the past: and it proclaims a determination to reinvent not only the self but the very conditions which help to shape it.⁴²⁷

The adopted body of the adopted child, the Australian nation, the Australian text, must continue to be read for what it is beneath its construction of a 'false self' because what it produces culturally, what it writes on the symbolic, creates

⁴²⁵ Salman Rushdie *Midnight's Children* London 1981 108

⁴²⁶ Ibid 111

⁴²⁷ Kiberd op cit 385

that symbolic, and creates itself. The unconscious of Australian society produces the past, present and the future of Australian society. *Knowing* the self, becoming aware of our unconscious fears, anxieties and motivations, allows us some agency in the control of what will be produced as, what will *become*, the future Australian community, to hopefully prevent some of the worst excesses undertaken in the name of the 'good' of the Australian nation. Kiberd writes: 'The moment of liberation is thus achieved when the return to the source is also an opening onto a mysterious future':

this instinct for what is near and yet hidden is in reality a return to the sources of our power, and therefore a claim made upon the future.

Thought seems more true, emotion more deep, spoken by someone who touches my pride, who seems to claim me of his kindred, who seems to make me a part of some national mythology.⁴²⁸

This may explain one of the paradoxes of post-colonial culture: that it can seem, at one and the same time, extremely old and extremely young, of ancient lineage and in a sense yet unborn.⁴²⁹

In searching for this third term both Hospital and Dessaix provide us with an interesting literary interpretation of a system of binaries 'which would ultimately

be transcended by a third term, the unnameable “thought” which combines both reality and justice.”⁴³⁰ Above and beyond the expressions of the paradoxes of the changeling adoptee, both Dessaix and Hospital write directly about something else entirely.

Something the life-path of the changeling subject could not predict was the flourishing of strange incidences of coincidence and synchronicity within reunion narratives. Verrier, in her extensive work as adoption counselor, ‘cannot help’ ending *The Primal Wound* by relating some of these unusual reunion stories. Dessaix’s *A Mother’s Disgrace* ends with some rather mystical ruminations:

Forgetting freedom for a moment, even a fashionable notion of a self as a unique point at which various discourses intersect (discourses about family, God, class, intelligence, taste, sexuality - they’re almost infinite) doesn’t seem adequate to describe what I now see. What I now see is something much more old-fashioned, much closer to common wisdom: looking for the first time across the dining-room table at my grandmother, soft-skinned and haughty... the way my mother mixed

⁴²⁸ W B Yeats *Explorations* New York 1962 345

⁴²⁹ Kiberd op cit 291

⁴³⁰ Ibid 317

diplomacy with self-assertion... sitting looking at all this I had to think of blood.⁴³¹

It is this lesson that the changeling learns when meeting her or his biological kin for the first time:

What I want to say is bound up with coincidence... This narrative is littered with coincidences, for that matter, as characters in my tale brush past each other unaware that from the point of view of a storyteller yet to emerge narrative lines are mysteriously knotting, branching and forming patterns...

But (and this is the really awkward part) some coincidences have appeared not to be random. Or to have, like wave particles, a patterned randomness. To believe them simply random would, ironically, be to strain credulity. What, then, are they?⁴³²

Tristan, the character who most embodies this optimistic reading of the world, and resistance to the fatalistic world of the intelligence agents and the terrorists, is the one most in tune with the 'discourse of connections' which surrounds him. 'Two images unexpectedly coalesce in his mind and match exactly, and light comes off them' as he suddenly remembers seeing Lou at the airport and another

⁴³¹ Dessaix op cit 186

bizarre meeting years back when two women he knew intimately were living in the same building (117). Tristan asks himself '*Did that mean anything?*' (117) as the working of memory and the very event of such coincidences inspire a search for meaning. This redeems his character and sets him apart from the psychological world of the agents and terrorists, and perhaps is the condition which allows him to feel and embody most of what is love in the novel. Some such coincidences in *Due Preparations for the Plague* are deliberately choreographed, like Tristan and Genie and others being on the same flight. Some occur as an indirect result of the conspiracy of surveillance and the paranoid world the agents and terrorists create, like the convergence in the Place des Vosges, but others seem completely random like the fact that the busker plays 'Caravan'.

In this one moment many subjects and movements converge across both space and time. Tristan, detained at the airport before the fateful flight, recalls three recent incidences in which he thought he saw an old amour of his, Genie, whom he hasn't seen for years.

His third sighting has been less than – what? – three hours ago (if he were to measure time in the normal dimension): he saw her crossing the Place des Vosges pulling behind her a small carry-on suitcase with wheels. In the stone arcade on the southern side, near the Victor Hugo museum, she

⁴³² Ibid 186

stopped to listen to a black musician playing jazz. A small crowd had gathered. Tristan watched from behind a stone pillar. The man was playing Duke Ellington's 'Caravan' on tenor sax. Tristan found this coincidence so extraordinary - his first gift to her had been a Duke Ellington cassette, her first to him had been Thelonious Monk, and 'Caravan' had been on both tapes - that the music seemed to him proof positive his grasp on reality had slipped. (103-4)

The very event of such coincidences again demands Tristan's existential or metaphysical search for meaning:

'There must be an explanation,' he says, pondering the triple apparition of Génie. Perhaps, given the oddities of time and space, given surreal linkages that have been scientifically vouched for, perhaps molecules of past events continue to coalesce around their original points of occurrence, although in some other dimension. He believes a trick of the light or the memory can reassemble them. (103)

In the space of the bunker, one of the other hostages, Homer Longchamp, reveals he also was present at that same moment.

It would seem that the tangent must be significant, and the meaning tantalizes but eludes me because what hovers as of equal significance is another random moment from the day of the flight, a street musician I heard in the Place des Vosges. I had my ticket and my fake passport, I was filling in time before the two o'clock Roissybus from Place de l'Opera, and I heard the unmistakable sounds of New Orleans jazz. Someone was playing Duke Ellington's 'Caravan' on tenor sax, and I can't begin to explain to you the effect, the excitement, the extraordinary coincidence. The night before I'd left New York to fly here, to the Sorbonne, I mean, I'd gone to a concert of a new young trumpeter from my home town: Wynton Marsalis. He played 'Caravan' - well, every jazz musician who's ever lived has played 'Caravan' - but this bracketing of my flights with the song filled me with an intense and obscure excitement. I had an inner conviction, entirely irrational, that something profound would come of this.' (340)

It is Homer Longchamp who takes up this demand for meaning in the world of connections around him, and suddenly realises, for Tristan and Genie, a line of escape leading elsewhere:

'I have "Caravan" running through my head, and I am also noticing that though my eyes are stinging and my vision is blurred, and my lungs feel

as though they are stuffed with wet towels, the gasses are clearly dispersing because here I am still talking and you two have just come to the same conclusion and it is time to find the way out.' (340)

Or is the implied survival of the last hostages just an editing ploy in Mather Hawthorne's attempt to make Art from suffering? The victory or defeat of the world of connections over or by the world of detachments is left ambiguous, and in the absence of any clear victory, only the power of the imagination and art, in redeeming humanity and resisting the inevitable victory of death, is asserted. Art comes, says Kiberd, not in that moment between a second and third phase, when the realist approaches the magical, but in that moment when the dreamer, installed in the third phase, reaches back to the cast-off reality.⁴³³

although it was quite understandable that people, in their anxiety to modernize, should dream of creating themselves *ex nihilo*, free of degrading past links, this must not be, cannot be, absolute. The task is, rather, to show the interdependence of past and future in attempting to restore history's openness.⁴³⁴

In the world of surveillance, the bunker filling with Sarin gas, Hospital offers lines of escape leading elsewhere in the figures of Tristan and Genie, whose

names refer to mythology and story, to the power of the imagination, in writing and in fiction. These characters alone conquer the power of the observer, not being defeated by the malevolent eye of Sirocco, but liberated by the eye of the benevolent viewer – Lowell and Samantha and, ultimately, the ideal reader, yourself. As they confront their own deaths the remaining hostages, from within their gas suits, begin to talk, one by one they die in a room that appears to have no openings and nothing in it except the camera of Sirocco's, and now Lowell and Samantha's, surveillance. But in the telling of their tales something is discovered amongst them:

'Forget conspiracy,' Homer says. 'There is something awesome about the patterns of chance, something mysterious, and we need that mystery.

Especially now.'

'At least it makes our deaths interesting' Tristan says. 'Stupid and horrible, but interesting...'

And then – click... a switch is thrown, or so it seems...

'There's air,' Homer says. 'A small current...'

'I think we're not going to die...' (343)

Tristan and Genevieve, the last two hostages alive in the bunker, provide a line of escape leading elsewhere, out of the paranoid world of the text. Here the

⁴³³ Kiberd op cit 302

borders within the text between the watchers and the watched, as well as the border between reader and the text, seem to completely dissolve as Tristan and Genie seem to hear the urges of those watching, the words Hospital puts into the mouths of her readers, from the distance of a world that appears closed and past, toward hope and survival. Their awe at the working of coincidences that cannot be explained away by any conspiracy kick starts them into a system of hope, a different desire altogether. Genie and Tristan's survival is left unverified and is perhaps just a product of Hawthorne's editing, but 'real' or not, at the end of the Decameron Tapes, text, film and reality merge in an opening of escape as Sam and Lowell watch the final scene in the bunker and Hospital places words and silences in the reader's head. As Lowell and Sam watch the Decameron tapes they, and the reader, think:

(Stay awake, you want to shout at them. Fight!)

(You want to scabble from the outside of the nightmare with bare hands, because they are moving like sleep-swimmers now, drifting deep underwater. Tristan turns to Genie and kisses her in slow motion, mouth against mouth, and you are floating with them through green fluid space. You see starfish, seaweed streamers, antlers of coral.)

'Un grand sommeil noir.' Tristan murmurs, 'tombe sur ma vie...'

⁴³⁴ Ibid 292

(You hear the words like wavelets against your gills, but you thrash against that long dark sleep, you will not let it close over their lives or yours, you refuse to let them sink gracefully, you stir up the waters, you make Leviathan rise from his dark cave...)

'Did you hear that?' Tristan asks.

'What?'

'I don't know. I thought I heard something.'

'Can't hear anything,' Genevieve mumbles, her voice slurred.

'Something shifted. There are people out there. The crack's getting bigger.'

'Tris...?'

STATIC> SEA OF WHITE NOISE> VISUAL BLIZZARD.

The screen goes dark.(353)

The voice that intrudes upon their dying world could be the thoughts of Samantha and Lowell but, as the words of the narrator, are just as much the thoughts of the reader. Whoever this voice belongs to, the voice of the author herself intrudes upon the world in the film, and perhaps into the past present of

time within the bunker, and changes it - a crack appears and gets bigger, their escape is left as an open possibility.

Ironically, and most bizarrely of all, as Hospital writes her novel, the terrorists who executed the September Eleven terrorist attacks were readying for their strike upon Manhattan's twin towers. Hospital feels in some sense she may have tuned into the current feeling in America and its fears of imminent terrorist attack before September Eleven. Its occurrence made her change the time in which her novel is set, and to modify her terrorist scenes, because of her experience of hearing the numerous mobile phone calls, carrying messages more of love than fear in ways that were more calm than panicking, from some of the passengers on the doomed flights.

You sort of think, gosh, have I nudged something into being, you know, by thinking it up and the explanation that I can live with is that as a writer you're doing research on a subject, you intuit possible directions, and you correctly intuit them, so that in a sense you are prophetic about them.⁴³⁵

This assertion of the power of the imagination is the real preparation for death that Janette Turner Hospital is indicating in her novel, the only way to defeat death. It turns out that the real torment of life is our own imagined guilt, the

real defense against death the power of story-telling, of re-telling, of bonding via communication, language and writing. Whether we live in peace or torment may be as much a matter of the mind as of empirical factors. Mather Hawthorne may communicate something of his deeper self, may have achieved some measure of self-knowledge from out of his fractured self and doomed moral universe, when he writes about his experience of the power of imagination.

Do you think it was the plague - the plague itself - that Boccaccio, Defoe, and Camus all sought, with such frantic scribbling, to keep at bay?...

No...

What is the brief agony of the body that comes with its own anaesthetic of shock? It is nothing. Believe me, Boccaccio, Defoe, and Camus were haunted by their own nightmares, by their own betrayals, and by their dead. Like the Ancient Mariner, they were condemned to tell the stories of those who haunted them as an act of propitiation, to keep their Furies at bay.

The dead never stop telling us stories.

Those whom we have betrayed, no matter how pure our intent, how scrupulous our reasons, they tell their tales to us night after night, which is why some of you will lose all capacity to sleep. (265)

⁴³⁵ The World Today 12.10pm ABC local radio Wed May 21 2003 Eleanor Hall reporter

It is indeed the demons of the past that torment the dying – Sirocco himself has lost all power to the people in the bunker who now confront their lives entirely, and the fears that damaged their lives, for the first time, in confronting their own deaths. Salamander has some understanding of the power of the world through which desires appear, the world of imagination, and in his lectures refers to poets as powerful and imagination as a weapon:

Those with vivid imaginations are at greatest and most immediate risk. Conversely, with proper training, this same proclivity of the imagination to conjure up airy nothings can be the most potent indicator of those who will survive. (260)

In his survival instructions he gives many examples of mind over matter – people surviving solitary confinement for years, Christ walking on water, Boccaccio writing the *Decameran* in the midst of the plague (263), and instructs his pupils in the use of the imagination in the art of defense:

When *in extremis*, close eyes, open mind, step out into the uncharted abysses of your own memory and imagination, open parachute, create a

floating world, explore its tunnels and byways, stay there until All Clear signal sounds. (262)

Then write it down.

Adoptees, schooled in detachment, have a unique vision from within their own 'third space' and are forced to confront, to ask and act to discover: 'In just how many ways are we connected to the people that came before us?'⁴³⁶ In what better space can this be explored than in a nation's literature using the metaphor of the adopted body? The adoptee who has discovered her biological parents, and, within her life narrative, constructed an extended family of biological and adoptive relatives, is a restored body and a restored body 'becomes an image of the recovered community, since the protection of a body from outside contact has often been the mark of a repressive society.'⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ Verrier op cit 222

⁴³⁷ Kiberd op cit 355

... most adoptees lead fictitious lives in which real names and places are
changed.

Betty Jean Lifton, PhD, *Twice Born; Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter*.

Catholic Adoption Agency (N.S.W.)

A Special Work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society

Phone: 550 0911

Lewisham Complex
West Street, Lewisham
(P.O. Box 5, Petersham 2049)

4th September, 1990

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

NAME: CATHERINE MARGARET DUNNE.

PLACE OF BIRTH: ST MARGARET'S HOSPITAL, DARLINGHURST.

DATE OF BIRTH: 2nd JANUARY, 1990

WEIGHT & LENGTH: 3657gms (8lbs 10oz) - 56cms HEAD CIRCUMFERENCE: 33cms

BABY'S MOTHER: ANN AGE: 20 (born 1951) NATIONALITY: AUSTRALIAN
(English - Irish - German descent)

Appearance: She is 5'2" or 5'3" tall; but it was noted she "gives the impression of being taller". She is described as slim about 7½ stone, with long straight black hair, brown eyes and olive skin. She is also described as attractive "with Madonna looks", and glasses. Her mother is 5'6" tall, medium build, with similar colouring, but hazel eyes. Her father is 6'1" tall, a big man, fifteen stone, with blond hair, blue eyes and fair skin. Anne has three siblings; a sister, aged eighteen, 5'2" or 5'3" tall, with fair hair and blue eyes like her father; a sister, aged sixteen, 5'6" tall, and "big boned", with dark colouring like her own and a brother, aged fourteen, 5'9" tall, and still growing, also fair and blue eyed.

Significant Medical History: Healthy apart from glandular fever some months before the pregnancy. She is myopic (short sighted) and wears glasses. She has dermatitis on the hands and feet. Her mother is forty-five, her father forty-nine, and he has diverticulitis and a hiatus hernia.

Both maternal grandparents were deceased in their fifties, the grandmother from heart disease. The paternal grandmother was alive in her seventies, the paternal grandfather died of pneumonia, aged thirty-six.

No other medical details are recorded.

Hobbies & Interests: Music and reading.

Background: Ann was a second year University student, studying business, computers and statistics as part of a Science Degree. She had also done casual work as a shop assistant. Her father was a qualified spray painter educated to Intermediate level, her mother was a clerk in the Public Service, educated to Leaving Certificate level.

.... / 2

Ann was the eldest of four children - her sister was doing the Higher School Certificate, and the youngest boy was in Second Form. Ann was described as very intelligent, poised, sensitive, quietly spoken and attractive. She felt adoption was best for the baby and was managing with support from the baby's father and both of their families.

She was very controlled emotionally, not talking much about her feelings or her relationship with her family. She had "obviously formed a very strong attachment" to the baby's father.

Ann named her baby Marianne.

BABY'S FATHER: SERGE AGE: 22 (born 1949) NATIONALITY: EGYPTIAN
(German - English - French and
Greek grandparents)

Appearance: He was described as 6'1" tall, of medium build, with fair hair, brown eyes and olive skin. He had a long face and a long nose.

There is no description of his parents.

Significant Medical History: No known illnesses. His parents were both in their late forties and seemed healthy. His grandparents were all deceased in their seventies with nothing recorded but "old age".

Hobbies & Interests: Music, doing things with his hand e.g. carpentry, mechanical constructions.

Background: Serge was an only child, his parents came to Australia when he was five years old and were Naturalised. His parents had a good education overseas and his father was an Accountant (formerly a "cotton classer" in Egypt) and his mother had a clerical position.

Serge was in Fourth Year of his Medical studies at University, doing a Bachelor of Science as part of his course. He had worked at various part time (holiday) jobs while studying. He was described as ~~shy~~, hard to get to know well, introverted but outgoing with his friends, responsible, very sensitive and stubborn. He had a good sense of humour and social poise. He enjoyed a good relationship with his family who mixed with both European and Australian friends.

GENERAL:

Serge and Ann had known each other for about six years but had only been "dating" for a short time. It was not economically possible for them to settle down and they saw adoption as "best for the child". Serge stood by until the baby was born but it was expected the relationship would then cease.

The baby was born by normal delivery after a fourteen-hour labour. The baby was normal apart from a right clicky hip which was of no significance. Ann named her baby Marianne and signed the papers consenting to adoption on the 10th January, 1972, at St Anthony's where the baby was being cared for.

The baby went to adopting parents on the 20th January, 1972.

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