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Tracing In and Outside Newish Ethnographies

Abstract

Drawing a genealogical map of family history is a bit like 'joining the dots', a bit like tracing a shape that is already implied, or maybe filling out a story that is at first a faint but seemingly recognisable outline. Moving through the past of unknown family can mean using verifiable data such as archival documents and official records as markers and signposts, but also importantly, the imagination. As in any social research process, imagination mediates the connection between material and experiential realities, and in so doing constructs knowledge, histories, the past, the research and the researcher.

In searching for family, I am researching my own imagination as it traces and tries to understand other people's lives and actions. I have made artwork with the ephemera I have collected on the way, shaped and framed by the theory that informs my research practice. At first this creative approach was helpful because it was generative and problem posing and a concrete way of grappling with issues of representation. Now though, I have been unable, or unwilling, to conform to a singular or final distinction between art as social inquiry and social inquiry that is art. In this project, art making is research methodology and also research outcome whether written, sculpted, painted, sewn or compiled. Each medium is at once advantaging and problematic as a way toward understanding, and all are, depending on the way you look them, beautifully confusing.

Picturing research

Social research is a process of experiential learning. A way to learn about social phenomena, social theory and iteratively, research practice itself. How we understand the way we 'picture' our own experience as researchers and as ordinary historically situated human beings will affect the scripts we compile from our studies and the way they are, or aren't, acted out.

Social research, from whichever paradigm it emerges is a creative, living performance. The texts we deliver, whether allocated and memorised, rethought, rewritten, or improvised are merely fragments within scenes, within scenery, within landscapes. The way we frame our research actions and narratives can set the outlines of a unified and coherent picture, but only if we believe that tracing a single, final boundary is desirable or possible. Creative methodologies and new ethnographies are possibilities for social research that might approach the often elusive and complex layering of individual and collective experience and evoke action beyond the pegged out limits of institutional discussion. Espaliered to static framework though, creative methodologies might be pretty, but they will grow flat with the predetermined intention of how they should be viewed.

This paper is about unframing research methodology, as well the impossibility of doing so and what might be created from that tension. It is not a flowing narrative; it is a series of fragments that present their own edges: field notes and images, events replayed and renamed by hindsight, snippets of conscious analysis and temporally random events. It does not map out new territory with a defensible argument. Souvenirs of theoretical critique are not showcased as the accumulations and evidence of an expert traveller. Words and images here are not compiled to be unambiguous or to explain a rational conclusion. They are set down though as an invitation to a reader to feel rather than intellectualise, that is what I have to offer in a world where words, pictures and their configurations can bring as much despair as joy. This for me, is purposeful and considered political action, not gesture.

Field notes renamed: **Unframing research**

To whom it may concern,

RE: Constructing a theoretical framework in the beginning

It seems I am expected to choose a theoretical family. A beginning, a foundation like a DNA structure, but one I have to assemble myself. They say you can't always choose your family, but if you want to do social science research it seems you have to, theoretically.

Mats Alvesson (2002: 133) suggests that a researcher use theories "they grasp well and for which they feel an emotional preference". I have done this, but also, and I think as importantly, tried to use theories that I don't

understand fully (for example poststructuralism) because not knowing can stimulate movement, and theories that make me feel somewhat uncomfortable (like a lot of postcolonial theory does) in order to consistently trouble complacency and finality of meaning. Theory is wonderful sometimes. It heightens my senses and turns my view, sometimes just a sentence of it makes me want to cry or shout with rage. But I don't want to be captured by what could feel like the ropes of blood ties. Don't want to be captured by frames that I have to pick out from a maze that is all vanishing point and no horizon.

"To be held captive by a picture or perspective is to be captivated such that one cannot re-orient one's reflection and, hence, one 'thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it'"

(Owen citing Wittgenstein 2002: 218)

Framing and displaying a piece of artwork has a major bearing on how it 'looks' and how it is perceived. There is something about a frame that speaks of ownership and value. It will impact on the relationship that the viewer has with the artwork; it will define, both physically and psychically the terms of engagement. Imagine the difference in experience between viewing a series of drawings framed and hung on a gallery wall to that which might be had if they were offered as an unsorted pile in a suitcase that could be rummaged through. I have tried to 'unframe' theory in this project rather than build it into a static foundation that will determine research shape. I have responded to theory by living it through rather than 'applying' it to action. I haven't tried to find explanations for the social phenomenon I have immersed myself in, or prove 'truths' – I have just tried to locate 'possibilities' for further consideration.

Fragile shapes of love and death



"Why does the recognition of people's worth, of their human and civil rights, always seem to be hanging on the more or less fragile branches of a family tree? Why must we be held by these limbs?"

(Povinelli 2002: 215).

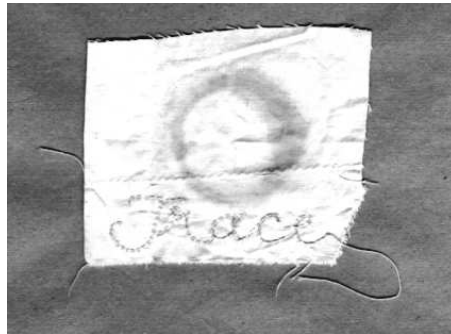
The first picture I have placed here is a photograph of my grandmother's biological father, taken in 1914 and given by him, I imagine, to her natural

mother when they were 'sweethearts'. In the corner is a faint, almost-not-there signature, 'Fred'. It's all the material evidence my grandmother had of him, because he went to the first world war, got mustard gassed and died as a returned and damaged serviceman before he had a chance to marry my great grandmother. Or so the story goes. I liked to take him out of the old cardboard school case and hold him next to my grandmother's face. She didn't care for him much, wasn't all that sad about not knowing him, because the man who eventually 'stood for' father was loved and 'real' and she didn't have time or respect for the authority of blood ties and legal documents to account for reality or love.

In the light, you can see a faint outline of the base of a teacup. I wonder if it was placed there on one of the days my grandmother and I sat together and talked about Fred as a story and tried to understand him and the world he lived in. The next picture is a story too. I painted it in 1994 after my grandmother died and it's about her life and is comprised of a collection of ephemera owned by or attributed to her, but arranged by me. I painted it as a reflective process and a way of pinning down the traces of my relationship with her, but also as a way to speak 'her side'.

The photograph and the painting are material items, able to be touched and in some way representing real lives, real people but they are not the truth. They are "things that construct correspondences between experience and materiality" (Fritzsche 2005: 15) and are mediated by memory, which is itself negotiated contingently. They both refer to historical and social contexts and conditions, the painting in an abstract and symbolic way, the photograph through more recognisable signage. They are connected. I have connected them by interpreting the circumstances of my grandmothers illegitimate birth as relative to the life she ended up living; to her politics, her economic circumstances, the relationships she did and didn't engage in and to a sense of social isolation that paralleled a deeper sense of belonging to families she constructed, or gathered to herself. I have imagined her 'becoming', and it's this liminal space, this threshold space where the social is imagined rather than known, that interests me. I have no desire to prove anything.

Tracing



“as we trace the contours of our inquiry, we often do so with ‘a hidden hand that shapes conscious thought’”

Lakoff on Johnson cited by Diamond & van Halen-Faber (2005: 84)

I have been doing art research, or better still, making art/research. I could name it arts-based research practice, or aesthetic inquiry; I could call it using creative methodologies or interdisciplinary something, but basically, its just doing art and social research at the same time. It's not as simple as it sounds though, happily, and the challenges and dilemmas and wafts of joy at sometimes locating what and how I imagine I 'know' is matched in intensity to discovering the value of 'not knowing'. This learning spills over the temporal boundaries of the small research project I am talking through here, for a Masters of Social Science subject requiring 'an integration of theory and practice'. It reaches back through individual memory and collective narratives of history for fragments to make art that connects ideation and materiality into questions of the present. Using autoethnography to travel through the cycles of action research, my participation is pictured as a focus of study as well as a research tool.

The concept of *histories* as contested, partial and ambiguous narratives that loop over themselves to configure moving shapes is central to my research approach and can't be separated from the way I act within it or speak of it. The idea that events are recorded and remembered into histories constructed by ideologies (Tierney 2000: 544) obscures definitive beginnings and the logical progression of time. Tracing history in a Foucauldian sense is a genealogy that purposely fragments, prises apart continuities in order to disrupt rather than unify (Grenz 1996: 136). In working to build a tangible 'plastic' form, I am at the same time trying to find where it can be fractured.

Locating a beginning then as I tell you about it here is difficult, because doing so suggests an ordered single timeline or a list of priorities when in fact hindsight, review, revision and retelling are distinct but overlapping, sometimes competing ways of pinning down experience so it can be usefully shared. They are all at play when 'writing up' - reinventing, making the task another learning step into a new tangle to be picked through. It follows that if a

research process has been recursive and meandering, as mine has, then the account of it could also be, but there needs to be some kind of sequence made of it and a beginning decided on, even if there isn't a 'true' beginning. I'll start with what I wanted to know and double back over why and how I went about it, but these more formal reporting conventions will be intentionally overshadowed by reflection on the way that art and science has helped and confused me. *Helped me by confusing me*. I hope that throughout, or at least by the end, I'll be able to shape a response to maybe the most important research question, which is *so what?*

I wanted to understand what people might be looking for when they traced their family history. My curiosity about the life of my biological great grandfather opened a view into the popularity of genealogy as a 'hobby'. Looking at this prolific activity in the context of the often fraught and heated discussion about national identity and how it might relate to 'values' in Australia at the moment seemed to multiply the possible dimensions of meaning in family history research. I wondered how the everyday participation of "memory workers" (Lambert 2002: 3) interacted with formalised accounts of the past. I noticed that I felt a slight distaste for what seemed to me to be a burgeoning 'cottage industry' that had connotations of colonisation, albeit of the past and people who were dead. People who had outlived their "use value" and instead were just valued in the transaction of exchange (Bishop 2005: 992), as Marx might see it if he wasn't dead himself. I wondered if my own Anglo-Saxon heritage shaped this response, a sense of shame at the gloating accounts of squatters and gold diggers rampaging and dispossessing that are for the most part titled as an "objective record of achievement" (PM John Howard cited in Clendinnen 2006: 2).

Still, I was strangely entranced by the possibility of finding the "mute evidence" (Hodder 2000: 703) that might resemble the outline of gaps in my grandmother's story. On my way, firm whispers from post colonial theorists suggested I take note of other absences embedded in, and muted by, the power of evidence. Turning my gaze toward my own past is a way to resist pasting over historical stories with re-readings that pretend differences in memory, experience and meaning can be reconciled, redeemed, homogenised. A way to refuse the idea that sanctioned political histories written and learned through dominance can be rebalanced by an imperialist desire to understand that demands access to the 'others' "territory of experience and belief" (Jones & Jenkins 2004: 143). Not knowing is sometimes very important, noticing who benefits by it is more so.

Field notes renamed:
Unspeakable in emptied spaces

My friend took me to a presentation for Family History Week, hosted by a church group. There were a lot of people there. The main hall had been set up with tables where people displayed documents and artefacts grouped into countries. There was also a stall with computers and someone instructing on the use of the genealogical databases that the church managed and shared

beyond itself. Apart from a display of charts and documents from China, they were all from European countries.

There was an empty table with a sign above: 'Aboriginal'. Nobody was there. I thought maybe they were late setting up. I talked to a lot of people and asked if they were members of the church. Most weren't but everyone seemed to know each other quite well. There was a very warm, friendly atmosphere. After a while we all assembled for a talk given by a local family historian. She asked if there was anyone who hadn't yet started to trace their family history and I was the only one to put my hand up. She said that there was still time for me to leave so that I could avoid getting obsessed, impoverished and completely neglectful of my families needs. Everyone laughed. I thought it was pretty ironic too.

After the talk, supper was laid out. Soup and rolls. I saw an Aboriginal man near the table who I see around town a lot but who I haven't met. We smiled in unknowing recognition as people often do in smallish towns. I wanted to ask him about the empty table, but I was too shy and I thought it would be rude, so I still don't know how all that fitted in with the 'show'.

*I said to my friend, "This soup needs salt really badly".
"Hmm" she sniffed "Maybe they don't believe in salt".*

What I have come to believe is that my inability to ask questions is the data here, not the absence of an answer tailored to my understanding.

Rummaging through

I embarked on the task of finding information about 'Fred', and stitching it into the fragments already enshrined in and over the old cardboard school case that my mother has seconded in a bit of a power hungry way. Using an autobiographical method of inquiry was a pragmatic strategy to fulfil the assessment criteria of designing a project that didn't require active participants and a time consuming ethics approval but it also allowed me the opportunity for the pleasure I suspected could be had from 'remembering'. I stood back and watched this pleasure, amongst other responses, and tried to make sense of them.

So, I am doing research about doing research. I embraced this layering consciously because I also wanted to understand the action of mapping out a 'theoretical family' - the construction of relationships to bodies of disciplinary knowledge that guides the 'finding' and the analysis of what is found. It was important to me to undertake this critically, not technically. It seemed necessary then to track my subjective affiliations to both the research question and the theoretical frames and methodologies I was gravitating towards, which emerge from critical theory traditions as well as post-structural concerns that are often reputed to clash in social research literature and around the lunch table in the staff room. I consciously chose a question that

veered away from my every day work as an academic literacy teacher to make a space that I imagined would allow me a bit of room to experiment creatively. I wanted a reason to paint. I wanted to avoid having to justify art-making and personal reflection. I perceive these are endeavours looked down upon as self-indulgent and spurious by many social science scholars who occupy a height that allows downward looking to the student place I inhabit. From that place, my own reservations and suspicions about the 'worth' of studying 'self' as a way to understand and act upon the social as legitimate praxis could be laid out, rummaged through.

I wanted to do something that felt new, to side step rather than plod through just affirming what was easily affirmed and ticked off as 'correct procedure'.

It's not new that qualitative researchers are expected to account for their subjective presence in the making of their research stories, but how far they step forward as 'verifiable data' isn't agreed upon of course. How far you can push past conventions named 'rigour' before you find yourself in an altogether different place is shaky too, depending where you're starting from. When I decided on this project I was very aware, and I still am of the derision that autobiography and creative, evocative research text can engender. While I'm really bored with the argument about it, I have to say, I don't want to get in the middle of it either. I looked for 'new ethnographies' to defend myself with if I needed to.

**Field notes renamed:
Decorative edging**

I borrowed a book today that seemed to be endorsed by many authors of journal articles as foundational for an understanding of autoethnography and creative methodologies.

The first (editors) chapter really left me cold. The form of the writing, as performance dialogue, is not altogether new to me and I have enjoyed and appreciated quite a few written in this genre. My belief was not 'suspended' in this one though and as a reader I felt patronised as well as totally uninterested. This had nothing to do with the content/argument/message of the chapter, but merely the writing technique. I felt that the authors had forced their discussion into this form just because they wanted to, not because it made sense, or because they had particular talent at constructing a script in a way that made it workable. Also, I didn't want to know about their dogs, how much their décor was stereotypically 'professorial' or what they had bought from the supermarket for dinner. Kak.

All of a sudden I didn't agree with them that the walls between art and science should be pulled down. To me, this really deserved the self-indulgent pointy finger and a brickies labourer to make sure the wall stays up.

Seriously though, I'm starting to wonder about rampant dismantling of dualisms. Maybe they serve their purpose sometimes. Maybe its just a matter of seeing them for their worth and having the freedom to move in and out of

them. Being allowed to. Honouring their dialectic relationship but not trying to eradicate it.

Maybe push them together sometimes, like twin beds, but not lose sight of the edges for when you need them?

I think I might be an art snob.

Complicit misfitting

I read many research accounts and explanatory texts that used alternative methodologies and writing conventions and responded variously with what I later realised was mostly aesthetic judgement or taste, not so much an evaluation of the trustworthiness of the content. Could this be the same type of judgement used by expert assessors who sometimes inform me that my writing is not a disciplinary 'fit' with the rigours of social science (even though it makes a good story)? Should I believe them that there is no chance to negotiate a different way and that I shouldn't dare try? Am I complicit in fixing boundaries in the very act of attempting to subvert them? I'd say so.

I've sometimes wondered, well, what's so new about new ethnographies? Artists have been interpreting, representing and shaping their social worlds for a long time now using a range of rules media and methods and then arguing about them afterwards, much like social scientists do it seems to me. It seems that arguing in the confines of received debates can take up a lot of time, especially when you are required to argue the reasons for not doing it.

Field notes renamed:

Belonging and proving it

I notice that like expert scholars, expert family historians are very insistent on referencing sources correctly, but they don't use the word 'referencing', they say 'recording'. Another authenticity map either way, fair enough. One of the volunteers at the historical society library explained to me that sometimes, someone will contact you believing they may be a distant cousin or some such. "But often, when you check their sources" she explained, "you have to say, No I'm sorry, you are just not in my family"

Talking proper

The formalised rules of social science research and art-making section off categories to enclose those who use them and therefore those who disregard them, or can't find their way in. Just like individuals who are compiling family histories. They might seem to be gathering together their ancestors into coherent groups and stories, but they are also by definition involved in an exclusionist practice by the very rules that define categories and the membership of them. The defining lines of governance curve and dance the words that name filial agreements and mark off the agreeers from the contesters. Eric Mykhalovskiy (1996: 133) explains the consequences of believing absolutely in scholarly rules and how "the production of proper

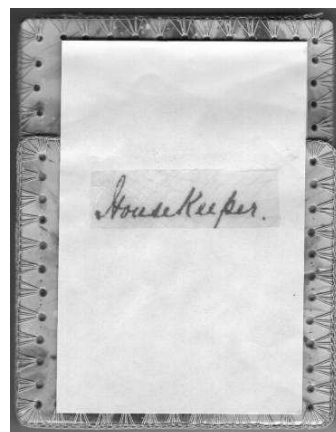
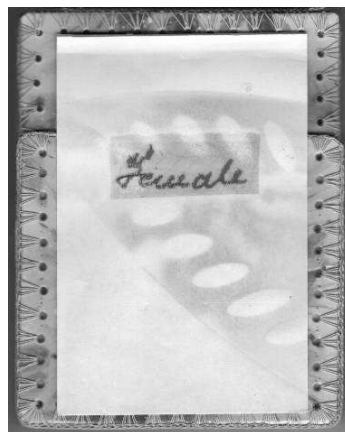
academic subjectivities comes at a personal cost of self-regulation, guilt, pain, the denial of pleasure and the silencing of voice". So can internalising the rules of family. And art.

That's not the only function of rules and their maps though, to oppress and dominate, and they can be useful if you know why you're using them and how they affect your actions. The problem is when they are accepted as natural, immutable. Rules at once unify and fragment. Words and thought. Words and speech. Words and pictures.

Field notes renamed:

Stitching around gaps, unpicking the word difference

I found Nan's mother Vera (who was in fact her aunt) in the electoral roll for 1913, the year before she was married. Amongst the staccato of home duties home duties tapping out the occupations of women voters, hers read 'forewoman'. I felt satisfaction and pride I have to say. She was a successful provider I had been told, and while I don't think either she or my grandmother used the word, a feminist. I had decided. I knew she had been a dressmaker, I owned remnants of fabric that I had claimed as my inheritance long after she had discarded them. Fished them out of my grandmothers few possessions like treasure. I wondered where she may have worked then, where she was 'in charge' and how I could find out.



I used a notebook I had found at a garage sale to make something out of this 'forewoman' word. It's handmade, from the 1950s or thereabouts Mum explained, its cover cardboard panels pasted with floral paper and stitched together through holes punched along the edges. "We made them in home economics" she told me. I made transfers from the different words designated to women that appeared in the various certificates I had collected and I ironed them alternately onto the pages. When I ironed them the paper burnt and I liked the visible ghost shape of the labour.

I thought about sewing to 'draw' the words. I realised though, that I have forgotten the embroidery stitches I learnt at school. I got a book about 'women's crafts' off the shelf; I've had it for years. I've never read the text though, only looked at the pictures and now I go back to it for instruction. When I look at the title, I see it as if for the first time – "The Gentle Arts: 200 Years of Australian Women's Domestic and Decorative Arts". I notice the absence of all the years not mentioned. I look through the pictures of quilts that I used to find comforting; the idea of women communing and making do with the scraps left to them.

I remember a quilt we had when we were little, I'm not sure how we came by it because it wasn't the kind of domestic item we would usually have, too fancy. It was one of those intricate 'wedding patterns' and I know somehow that it was made in the deep south of the USA. Eventually it fell to pieces like everything else and got chucked in the rag bag.

Years later, on one of those antique shows, Mum and I saw one similar being appraised for thousands and thousands of dollars. We just looked at each other and exchanged one of those shrugs where the corners of your mouth point down to meet your shoulders, and then we looked away.

I'm wondering now, who sewed the Klu Klux Klan's uniforms?

In all areas of my life, at home, school, art college, social science lecture theatre or the dinner table, I have listened when the contribution of women to art and 'history' is mentioned as absent from the records. What else is missing? My mind's eye turns to my great grandmother, to her peers. What places did they occupy on the continuum of colonial endeavour, resilience, mateship, violence and mayhem that blossomed as Federation - 'birth of a nation' - when they were on the threshold of their prime? Were they gentle?

I make another artwork to account for the ambiguities of women's subordination. It could be a celebration or an accusation, depending on the way you look at it.

I sew the words and I remember - I hate sewing.



Imagining sight or vision?

I've been reading about the subtle, confusing and complex distinctions that can be made between imagination, the imaginary, creativity (for example Law 2004 & Carter 2000) and their relationships with the material within the particularities of theoried definition. Carter, surveying the historical 'notion' of imagination in the context of art making found common elements emerged from wide ranging scholarly discourses. The (albeit simplified) work of imagination was often described as beginning with "Some 'thing' that was foundational" which was moved through an active course of transformation variously described as 'blending', 'dividing', 'converging' 'enlarging' and 'extenuating' toward a new 'thing' – a "unified image or work of art" (2000: 48 - 49). I think the action of inductive qualitative research could also be named this way. If these sketches were merged to configure new, creative methodologies for social research, what would the rules look like? In this recipe, is the 'foundational thing' always the traditional, scientific rule of reason? If so, what would that mean for the possibilities for 'research art', 'art research'? How might it be critical – in the sense that the eye was able to understand itself, its conventions, and therefore transgress its own imagined view?

Can social research change, create anything critically new, if it insists on sameness that just looks different, artfully?

Sometimes I think that there's a pervasive belief, in many fields, disciplines, practices and 'families' that if a person can use their imagination, or if they are blessed with an active and fertile one, then what will be produced from it will be 'creative' and therefore of some distinct value. Original. Artistic. I'm not so much interested in this. In fact I think it's dangerous to reify creativity and imagination as rare or desirable qualities in the production of anything,

particularly knowledge. In this world there have been many intricate and complex systems of torture and misery devised creatively and imaginatively.

What I'm interested in is to investigate the construction of imagination itself, it's past. In thinking this through, I realise that I'm actually reifying imagination anyway, making it into a 'thing' in trying to locate it as a situated process. I'm picturing it as having some kind of shape, looking at it as a type of vessel, its contours determining its function and usefulness, its limits and constraints. That contradiction is okay though. I can work with that, because the 'presence of an edge indicates that what is in view is to be looked at by a different set of rules' (Carter & Geczy 2006: 152) and it isn't the positive shape that I am trying to see, or the way the object defines *where it is not*. Negative space always has an edge, which can't be pinned down finally if the positive is shifted. Positive and negative spaces that mark out difference interchange places and positions when they are moved, re-read. I'm looking in this movement to where they meet, where the edges whisper 'rules'. What I *am* looking for is the rules of my embodied eye, the contingencies of my vision.



These questions move towards provisional answers as I think through how to make them, physically with my hands. To merely 'express myself' with well composed images unified by paint will not do. I have been fragmenting and reassembling my personal, social and academic history and I need the artwork to push this action further rather than capture it. The tryst between art and social research needs to be named somehow even if by a picture, and *felt*. It has to be accounted for, but it may be that words aren't enough.

Field notes renamed:

Creative ethics, ethics of creativity

I've been thinking about Laurel Richardson's single mother, 'Louisa May' (1997). I wonder what happened to her? I wonder if she knows she is the distant ancestor of a famous poem? Did her part-ownership of her voice pay off for her?

I haven't been able to find a text book account of the ethics of autoethnography as research method, an instruction list to follow. I don't need one though to conclude that there is nothing unobtrusive about hiding behind yourself. It gets boring too, the limits of the full ownership your own skin.

Possibility not probability

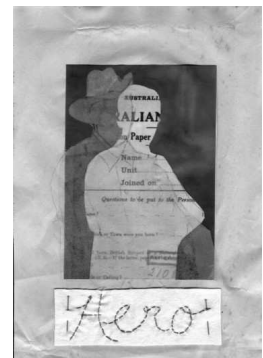
When I look back at what I have already made, I realise that the threads I have been unpicking, knotting, snipping, tying, have held together names. This is the passageway I have been pacing between art and science. Connecting, retreating. Ghost names of the past, names of theories and their champions and detractors, names for titles, explanations, spaces and worlds. Names for history stories and their relics. In the end, I don't shy away from the importance that words have for social science or for art, instead I have figured out a way to use them. Making art work with the words as 'found objects' and reshaping them by displacement from their contexts is a way of re-naming and re-imagining the possibilities of 'families', of self, art, research and history. It's all been done before, it only 'newish', but it makes sense to me for the time.

I am going to rename 'Imagination', 'Possibility'. I have a feeling that when people look for their family history, or theoretical families that they might join, they are always looking for 'possibility' in both past and present, and what they find will always be shaped by both. I'm looking for possibility in the empty spaces of the genealogists map, the ones between the sharp official lines that mark out sanctioned unions and their produce. Maybe they could be openings where there is a possibility to remember and talk through love, sadness, cruelty, fellowship, or loss or joy. Maybe instead of being empty, something could be made within it, now. That's the so *what*.

Research notes renamed:

The subtle relationships of inconclusion

I found a man who I think is Fred. I ordered his birth and death certificates hoping there might be information there that could connect him to my grandmother. Finding that he had died by hanging himself from a tree in the bush at Kurnell in 1925 affected me physically and emotionally in a powerful but quiet way. Kurnell is the place of the 'first contact'. So strange, only days before, I had walked through a beautiful installation outside the Museum of Sydney that had entranced and haunted me. The artists had imagined a memory of the Eora people watching the arrival of the strangers from the edge of the trees on their peninsula (Laurence & Foley 1995), the place where Frederick John Strong makes his last contact with life amongst and by those trees.





I have packed the odds and ends of this research art into a suitcase. It is a brown plastic Globite that speaks of my childhood, not my Grandmothers or Fred's. I have pieced together memories shaped by social theory as a way of "re-learning about the present and its possibilities" (Jones & Jenkins 2004: 145). The pictures and objects I have made are not framed or ordered into any particular sequence. The last item I include is a linen placemat with the words "Please Touch" painted with coffee, an invitation to participate in social research that opens its in-conclusions outward, that uses critical creativity to enact "unique visceral experiences" (Slattery 2003: 192) that might generate thought, feeling and change rather than prescribe it.

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