School of Design and Art

Marston: Remembering Home Through Creative Practice

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Human Ethics The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number #HR149/2012

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Abstract

Identifying with the fields of memory and material culture studies, this research seeks to understand how a lost home can be remembered through creative practice, specifically plain sewing and printmaking. Marston Farm was my family home for fifty years, until the land was redistributed under the Zimbabwean Land Reform Programme in 2003, and my family subsequently migrated to Australia. Referencing scholars Alison Blunt and Gaston Bachelard and writers Rebecca Solnit and Doris Lessing, the project explores various meanings of home and place by situating my concerns in a larger theoretical and social context. In addition the creative project takes into consideration the implications of reflective nostalgia outlined by Svetlana Boym, testing how to reimagine home out-of-place.

Anthropologists Caitlin DeSilvey, Divya Tolia-Kelly and David Parkin have considered the significance of memory in material culture, and in this project these concerns are investigated in a contemporary art context. Drawing on James Barilla's notion of the 'return gesture', this research examines how to embody the memory of a place via creative practice. Encountered and embodied memory is evident in artworks that engage with material culture and creative processes, which have emerged from my memories of Marston, and Edward Casey's contention that habitual body memory aids orientation in place is explored via the use of plain sewing in my creative practice. Photographs form an important part of my enquiry as signifiers of place, time and visual mediators of distance; these findings are supported by the theories of Susan Sontag and Shelly Hornstein.

I suggest that by imbuing artworks with narratives of a remembered place via creative acts, there is the possibility of engendering a reimagining of place and memorial experience of a lost home; concepts relevant to those who face dislocation due to forced or voluntary migration from home. Through a personal project I seek to comprehend the broader implications of memory of home and place.

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Distance and Memory

On a warm morning in January 2001, we packed ourselves into the beige Toyota Cressida for the last time. It was the car my sister had learned to drive in, and had been my grandfather's 'good' car. I try to cling to the memory of the last drive past the old house, the crumbling promenade and down the avenue of trees that marked the entrance to Marston Farm. Even now, I struggle with the finality of that moment, the heaviness of our departure, and the terrible fact that I remember so little of it. I was fourteen years old and I was excited about another future, in another place. Fifteen years later and I am in that future, seeking a return home.

INTRODUCTION

BASIC PATTERN: Your Measurements, a Starting Point or Premise and Where It All Began.

In the opening pages of *A Book of Migrations*, Rebecca Solnit reflects on a conversation she had with a colleague in the Great Basin area of the United States about their interest in paradoxes and metaphors:

> Our metaphors and paradoxes seemed like ways of being in two places at once, and we had begun to suspect that the philosophical desire to reach some final destination is, finally, a humorless attempt to be in only one place, the unreachable vanishing point of literal truth itself. Arrival, like origin, is a mythical place (Solnit 2011, 3).

The idea that a metaphor facilitates a sense of being in two places resonates with my desire to reimagine a lost home via creative practice. The lost home in question is Marston Farm, our family home in Zimbabwe, which was redistributed in 2003 under government land reform policies. As Marston is now a lost and politically contentious home, I cannot physically return there and so metaphors, memories and stories are what I tell myself here, in another place, in order to re-experience that home now. If metaphors are an attempt to "be in only one place", that mythical place, in this project they do so by lingering between two places, two homes—a Perth home and a lost Zimbabwean home. The metaphors that will be presented as part of this research are evident in the layout of the chapters of the exegesis, which uses sewing methodologies as a framework, and in the discussion of artworks that seek to remember a lost home.

My family has an extensive, recent migratory history, which will be outlined in this exegesis with particular reference to my maternal grandmother, Catterina Rossetti, who has experienced multiple migrations during the course of her life. She struggled with isolation, language and cultural barriers when she migrated in the 1950s from Italy to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and later during a second migration to Australia. In addition, my grandmother is a trained dressmaker who has maintained her practice of plain sewing for over sixty-five years. Plain sewing refers to the skills and processes employed in the making of garments that excludes fancy work such as embroidery. In this context, plain sewing enabled my grandmother to realise original designs for clients in her community. In this research I consider how, as a creative and habitual practice, plain sewing can aid in the attainment of belonging, and be a means of physically and memorially re-experiencing home, even when a person has been displaced from that home. My grandmother's practice constitutes a deep part of the fabric of herself and it is integral to the sense of belonging she achieved first in Africa and later in Australia after our eviction from Marston.

As plain sewing figures so strongly in the narrative of Marston, as well as forming a key creative research methodology, the structure of the exegesis follows a garment making process. This introduction takes the form of the "Basic Pattern". In sewing, the basic pattern is derived from a person's exact measurements––waist, hips, shoulder, bust. It is the foundation upon which creativity builds. With an individual's form plotted and fixed, a dressmaker can fashion the design of the garment and the cut, and envisage the fall of the fabric. As a starting point, it is a means of orienting the dressmaker, enabling a consistent and sensitive approach to making the garment. It is fitting that we should start here, with the basic pattern, in order to situate the place from which this research emerges.

Marston Farm was a tract of agricultural land situated in the town of Bindura, approximately a one-hour drive northeast from the capital city of Harare, in the Mashonaland Central District of Zimbabwe. It is this place, this lost home, that my research is concerned with. My grandparents, Vincenzo and Catterina Rossetti, purchased Marston in 1957. The homestead comprised three houses and the shell of a fourth, the original farmhouse. My mother and her three siblings were raised there, and whilst she and her younger brother moved away, two siblings and their kin remained on the land with my grandparents until 2003. I made regular visits to Marston with my mother, father and sister, as our home in Harare was only a short hour-long drive away. Marston was very much a central point in our lives; a nexus that drew the extended family together during festive seasons, and served as a home during weekends and school holidays. This place, our family homeland, along with the majority of white-owned agricultural land, became a key political concern in Zimbabwe's recent history; but land ownership has long been central to questions of belonging, and contested political and social identity in this troubled region.

In 1889, under the direction of the British government, the British South African Company headed by Cecil Rhodes, became administrators of a landlocked region in southern Africa. Named for Rhodes, it became known at Southern Rhodesia (Zambia to the north was known as Northern Rhodesia). There followed a predictable extended period of exploitation by the colonisers, of both land and people—the two main tribes being Shona and Ndebele. Mineral and agricultural wealth was directed toward the Empire, and managed by the small percentage of white settlers (de Villiers 2003; Richardson 2004). With the exploitation of resources forming a context, land ownership became a central concern in the region, and in the history of the country there are three distinct periods of change that inform this research. Firstly the Lancaster House agreement 1980-1990; followed by a phase of post-colonial land reform 1990-2000; and finally the advent of land invasion and occupation (Fast Track Land Reform) 2000-present (de Villiers 2003, 22).

By the 1960s Prime Minister, Ian Smith, was under increasing pressure from the British government, who desired a shift to black majority rule in the region. Smith reacted by declaring a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), thus disconnecting from British political influence (de Villiers 2003, 30-31) and declaring an unrecognised state of Rhodesia. The period that followed saw Rhodesia ostracized and placed under political sanctions. Despite this, Rhodesia fared relatively well, as neighbouring South Africa and Mozambique maintained trade as usual (Richardson 2004). In reaction to the continued political dominance by whites, the incidence of guerilla warfare increased in rural towns from the 1960s-70s, this period was known as the Bush War (Richardson 2004). Unable to ignore the mounting unrest, Smith and the competing political factions—ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union) and ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union), led by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe—met with British officials to map out the future of the country, in what became known as the Lancaster House agreement, 1979. This meeting led to the independence constitution, and would set land reform policies for the next ten years (Richardson 2004; de Villiers 2003).

Given the overwhelming white ownership of important commercial farming operations, the British government sought to implement an assisted purchasing scheme for white-owned farms. Negotiations at Lancaster House lead to covenants that land would only be acquired on a "willing seller-willing buyer basis", and that financial compensation could be settled in a foreign currency of the seller's choosing. In addition, idle land could be procured for public purposes, but only at an agreed, full market price (de Villiers 2003, 7; Richardson 2004, 32). The Lancaster House agreement paradoxically offered a large measure of protection to the minority white farmers for the following decade. The protection was established in order to avoid destabilising food and economic production in the region, during the transition period to black majority rule. This compromise by the newly established administration, set an uneasy tone for the fledgling nation, where "[t]he new government was faced from the outset with the almost impossible task of striking a balance between the need for immediate and tangible land reform and maintenance of skills and investment to support economic growth" (de Villiers 2003, 9).

From a quantitative perspective the new government achieved a great deal in complying with the agreement, and resettling a large number of households onto re-purchased land. However, the social and political sentiment at the time meant that the Mugabe government felt under pressure to over commit and exaggerate the possibilities of land reform. This resulted in overambitious initial estimates of how many families could be resettled during the first ten years of the policy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they fell short of their initial targets, and in popular opinion, had failed to meaningfully transmute patterns of ownership established under colonialism (de Villiers 2003, 11). Consequently the tone was set for pending troubles, where land reform was firmly established as a key point of contention during subsequent political campaigns (Richardson 2004, 36; de Villiers 2003, 20; Worby 2001, 477). Despite some successes early on, the Lancaster House agreement can be perceived as ruling by remote (foreign) manipulation, and was never truly "owned" by the Mugabe government (de Villiers 2003, 23). As a result, impatience and social/political/ideological pressures prevailed in chaotic and destructive subsequent policies that have left a country severely compromised.

In the lead up to the expiration of the Lancaster House agreement on April 18 1990 (Richardson 2004, 37), Mugabe was able to make certain changes to land reform policies. The Land Acquisition Act of 1985 made it mandatory for commercial farmers, seeking to sell their land, to offer it to the government first. In addition under-utilised land came under the scrutiny of a newly established Derelict Lands Board, which could acquire land for government use, "these actions signaled [sic] an ominous shift in the abstract notion of property rights. Rather than being seen as inviolate, property rights now meant a little less, since the government could usurp land when need be" (Richardson 2004, 35). This is evidence of a shift in political and social conceptions of land reform, and served to complicate the relationship to land for farmers and farmworkers, as result of government actions.

After the Lancaster agreement expired in 1990, the second phase of post-colonial land reform ensued, where the government was free to follow its own strategy of more streamlined and radical reform (de Villiers 2003, 22; Richardson 2004, 36-37). However, over the ensuing decade many became disillusioned, and there was increasing anger toward a government, "which repaid its supporters and high-ranking politicians...with prime pieces of farming real estate taken from the commercial farmers" (Richardson 2004, 38). To add insult to injury, much of this newly acquired land was left idle, and regional workers were affected by severe job losses and uncertainty (Richardson 2004; de Villiers 2003; Magaramombe 2010) (see footnote 6, on displacement). Thus a motif of continued complexity concerning place and belonging becomes apparent across both class and race. Many facets of Zimbabwean society were affected by corruption and the mishandling of land reform, which was increasingly perceived as a political bargaining chip with which Mugabe manipulated his supporters (Worby 2001, 477).

Finally, the third phase of reform manifested in the Fast Track Land Reform Program[1], which is discussed in the following section, and is contextualised within my family's experience of dispossession. My family are white Zimbabweans, a notion that linguist Susan Fitzmaurice expands on in relation to a sense of belonging in Zimbabwe. Fitzmaurice notes that initially white individuals subscribed to the ideologies of Colonial Rhodesia with its systems of class and race, and later found affinity in post-independence Zimbabwe "when whites asserted their right to (historical and contemporary) possession of the land on the basis of their being as legitimately African as black Zimbabweans" (Fitzmaurice 2015, 328). Whilst this is a useful broad expression of white sentiment leading up to and during the time of the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme of the early 2000s, my family's circumstances were somewhat different.

My mother's and my own generation were born in Zimbabwe, but my father and grandparents were immigrants who arrived and bought into an established British colony with its attendant ideologies and infrastructures of home and belonging. While I feel that I belonged to Zimbabwe, my homeland, our recent migratory history serves to complicate the generalisation outlined by Fitzmaurice. My personal experience has been influenced by the migrations of my maternal grandparents (from Italy) and my father (from New Zealand), as well as my own later migration to Australia. In certain respects, I envy the absolute conviction of a generalised sense of belonging to place, and ultimate entitlement over purchased farming land in Zimbabwe that many white farmers felt and still feel. However, through this research I have begun to unravel the complexity and multiplicity of place, and concede the contested meanings of Marston Farm. I must make it clear that it is not my intention to express the views of all my family members, who have their own personal relationships to Marston, and equally complex understandings of our experience of eviction and dislocation via migration.

Fitzmaurice explains the legal case Mike Campbell brought before the courts in Zimbabwe. Campbell, a white farmer, pleaded a case for land ownership that is similar to my family's claim on Marston. He did not plunder the land, or inherit it from those who had in the early twentieth century (Fitzmaurice 2015, 348). He made a legitimate purchase under British rule in the 1970s, as my grandparents had done in the 1950s. Fitzmaurice elaborates:

> This task [of proving legitimacy to owning farm land] entailed removing themselves [white Zimbabweans] from the stigma of being the descendants of white settlers, and therefore unlawful occupiers of the land. It involves the rhetorical move of casting themselves as Zimbabweans who expressed their commitment to the new, non-racial state and their deference to the majority by purchasing land in a symbolic act of belonging. This kind of move is designed to silence the accusations firstly, that they came by their land by privilege (for instance, through inheritance) and secondly, that they have alternative loyalties, namely, to Britain (Fitzmaurice 2015, 348).

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[1] During this time of changing perceptions of land ownership and entitlement, certain terms rose to prominence. Terms that anthropologist Eric Worby recognises as morally loaded and deeply abiding in the region (Worby 2001, 492). Certain expressions can be readily understood in the context of challenges to unfavourable histories: "invasion" holds a double meaning, linked to the coloniser, but more recently established as a term to describe the government sanctioned invasion of white owned farms by War Veterans (from Zimbabwe's independence war) (Worby 2001, 476). "Settler" and "Resettling" hold a more complex meaning, with an embedded history in the region; a meaning that harks back to a white government's attempt to fix people into so called tribal lands; delineating and enforcing an often erroneous, rightful place of belonging for Indigenous Zimbabweans (Worby 2001, 492). Worby draws a link between the Independence government's handling of resettlement, and that of the previous colonial government, identifying the capacity of resettlement to dilute social agency. Where previously Indigenous Zimbabweans were forced onto designated tribal lands, now individuals find themselves placed under the "singular authority of the resettlement officer" (Worby 2001, 493).

Agricultural land has long been a contentious issue in Zimbabwe and when the government held a constitutional referendum in 2000 seeking to expand state and presidential powers, some initiatives sought to make changes to land distribution. The proposals were overall defeated in the vote, but the lack of progress through government reform led disgruntled war veterans[2] and other black Zimbabweans to occupy some large commercial farms under government sanction. This system of occupation, called *jambanja*[3], became streamlined into what was termed the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (Fitzmaurice 2015, 345; Pilossof 2012, 54). A key intention of the program was to destabilise the large voting block of black farmworkers and their families by intimidation and violence (Pilossof 2012, 60).

These events heralded the beginning of the end for my family's tenure at Marston and problematised my grandmother's relationship to her home of more than fifty years. During the escalation of the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme, she was living alone in the main house as my grandfather had passed away in 1999. Fear and uncertainty infiltrated her dwelling as neighbouring farms were occupied. There was a sense of waiting for the inevitable, and questioning if we would be next.

The government first listed Marston Farm for acquisition in November 2001. My uncle, John Rossetti, the managing director of the farm, submitted an objection to the Ministry of Agriculture and Marston was delisted. But late in 2002, the land was split into five sections and allocated to settlers.[4] Initially only one settler occupied the land, and we were fortunate not to experience the violence meted out on other farms. Eventually the final section of the land that still belonged to my family was confiscated, and we were ordered off the land. John negotiated a deadline to remain on the farm until he had harvested the barley and pea seed crops. Due to rain there were delays in the harvest, and ultimately John and his wife, Lindsay, left Marston on 4 November, 2003, without having been allowed to complete the harvest. [5] The Rossettis were forced to leave the farming infrastructure and homestead to the occupying settlers.[6] Many of the African workforce and their families were also displaced after our eviction.[7]

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[2] The term 'war veterans' here refers to black Zimbabweans who fought for independence from Britain during the Liberation War of the 1970s.

[3] *Jambanja* is the term used to describe the initial period of occupation by war veterans (Pilossof 2012, 44).

[4] The term 'settlers' refers to black Zimbabweans given squatting rights on white-owned farms.

[5] These details of the final weeks at Marston are explained in a letter John Rossetti wrote to the Italian Ambassador in Harare, Zimbabwe, dated 17 February 2005.

[6] In the following excerpt, Pilossof demonstrates that the situation was similar for many white farmers during the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme:

At the beginning of 2003, 400 of the 600 farmers in the province [Manicaland] were operating on downsized or shared farms…these forms of 'co-existence' [with settlers] were severely biased against farmers, and were usually used by both sides for their own ends. For farmers, they offered a chance to buy time and organise their departure. For the occupiers, it was a chance to get a foot in the door, observe the farming process and acquire their share in the growing of a crop they would put little or no input into. Usually, farmers were evicted before or during the harvest, leaving the occupiers to reap the profits (Pilossof 2012, 57).

[7] The Fast-Track Land Reform Programme saw immense changes in land ownership and employment structures, and when farming land was seized and redistributed, many migrant African farm workers who were not native to Zimbabwe were displaced and deemed stateless after the government passed laws forbidding dual citizenship (Magaramombe 2010, 362-363; Ridderbos 2009, 73). Other workers left the farms for communal areas or to seek work in urban centres, and some were displaced *in situ*, choosing to remain in farm villages, but finding themselves in reduced circumstances with low wages offered by the new farmers and no additional securities such as education subsidies, healthcare and annual leave (Magaramombe 2010). For further scholarship on displacement *in situ* suffered by indigenous Zimbabweans in the context of North East Zimbabwe, see Godfrey Magaramombe (2010).

Distance and Memory

It is a hot day and we are seated within a quietly busy space. Work surfaces are covered in fabric, pins and haberdashery, and natural light streams in through the wrought iron window bars onto the cutting table. There is the pleasant, musty smell of cloth, machine oil and chalk, and the persistent tick of the iron's thermostat is like a metronome measuring time. This is a tranquil yet industrious place of work, of creativity, my grandmother's sewing room.

Recorded conversations between my grandmother and myself actually take place more than a decade after we left that room behind, in another country, Australia. But I imagine our conversation transpiring in her sewing room at Marston. This transference between different places and different times is fitting; resting agreeably within the breadth of migrant experience, it aids the expression of longing and memory of places no longer physically accessible, which we contemplate from distant, new homes.

> MM:
> Why did you marry Vincenzo?
>
> CR:
> Well, I liked him. And I would say it was quite [love at] first sight... But you know and it was also the adventure to come to Africa you see.
>
> MM:
> How did your family feel about it?
>
> CR:
> Oh they were worried...because I'm the only child you see.[8]

A chance meeting and the advent of love propelled my grandmother, a dressmaker, to Africa, and it is from the historical context of land reforms in Zimbabwe and the situated practice of plain sewing that this research stems. The exegesis is divided into four chapters, each framed as a key step in the dressmaking process, continuing with the metaphor of the basic pattern established earlier. The personal narrative of my family's experience of dwelling at Marston, and subsequent eviction and migration, is woven throughout the text, accompanied with relevant scholarly research and discussion of the contemporary art context. My studio investigations and creative outcomes will be discussed throughout the text.

Chapter one, "Cutting", considers the varied meanings of home and place in order to situate my concerns with a particular lost home in a broader theoretical context, with reference to theorists Gaston Bachelard, Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling. In addition, the personal environment of my family home is further established with reference to our displacement and migration, with the aim of expressing the drive behind my creative research. Multiplicity of place is a key concern examined in this chapter by acknowledging the varied and complex experiences of a place by different groups, as discussed by Ricardo Baldissone. The notion of the 'return gesture', which articulates the interest in remembering one home from the locale of another home, is considered with reference to scholar James Barilla. The creative writing of Rebecca Sonit and Doris Lessing on home, loss and memory will be examined along with the contemporary art practices of Rebecca Mayo and Nathan Beard.

Chapter two, "Passing the Mark", is framed by the transfer of guiding marks in dressmaking, and correspondingly reflects on nostalgia as experienced by exiles and immigrants. My understanding of nostalgia is informed by the writing of Svetlana Boym, who contends that reflective nostalgia embraces displacement and endeavours to reconcile the impossibility of return (Boym 1996, 512; 2007, 9). This concept underpins my creative practice as I attempt to reimagine a place from elsewhere, acknowledging the impossibility of a physical return to a lost home and perhaps enthralled by the imposed distance between my present and past homes. Photography,

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[8] Quote taken from an unpublished interview between Catterina Rossetti and myself, conducted on 28 December 2012.

introduced in chapter one, is discussed further with a focus on visually negotiating distance in my creative practice. Referencing phenomenologist Edward Casey, I expand on the significance of body memory within this research and consider the ways in which body memory enables orientation for individuals negotiating new contexts as a result of migration. The action of plain sewing as a habitual body memory is considered in relation to my grandmother's dressmaking practice and the incorporation of plain sewing in my creative research method. I will position plain sewing as a means of finding orientation in new contexts and facilitating the reimagining of a lost home.

Chapter three, "Piecing", reflects the compilation of garments via stitch, where the fabric pieces become comprehensible as a garment to be worn. This chapter considers in more detail the role of plain sewing in broader society and the role of craft methods within contemporary art practice, and provides a brief discussion on the feminist reappraisal of marginal craft practices. Plain sewing in the domestic sphere can be interpreted as both productive and potentially problematic. These concerns are elaborated on in relation to my family's personal experience, and through a consideration of the workspaces established at Marston and in Perth. I outline how creative practice methods might enable a reimagining and embodied remembering of home, with reference to the artworks of Do Ho Suh and Rachel Whiteread. The role of plain sewing in my own creative practice is examined as it relates to familial experiences of migration and belonging, and the memory of home.

Chapter four, "Fitting", embodies the penultimate phase of dressmaking, where the garment is fitted to the client and they physically experience the garment for the first time. Material culture is defined in this chapter in relation to the research at hand, and with particular reference to material artifacts and their ability to contain and transmit memory. In doing so, these artifacts can be considered as memory objects, a concept informed by the writing of Caitlin DeSilvey who notes that human engagement with objects can generate perceptible encounters with the past (DeSilvey 2004, 143-4). In addition, Nadia Seremetakis writes extensively on the subject of encountered memory and the relationship between objects and viewers. This conceptualisation of memory and material culture has underpinned my creative engagement with cloth and garments in the remembering and reimagining of home. This chapter also expands on the issue of displacement in a creative project that seeks to generate material objects about place from a position of being 'out-of-place', and tests whether embodied gestures and acts of repetitive crafting (Waters 2012) may imbue art objects with meaning. Further to these discussions of creative engagement with material culture, I expand on my conceptualisation of travelling cloth by considering the relationship cloth has to the body and global discourses of memory and place, and referencing such contemporary artists as Jane Whiteley, Kimsooja and Yinka Shonibare MBE.

The conclusion, "Finishing", considers the final engagement between garment and maker. It is the last, lingering moment before the garment is given over to the client to be worn and serves to summarise the key findings of the research project.

The artworks generated for this research project seek to reimagine and remember a lost home via creative practice. Taking into account the implications of nostalgia, they are a means of creatively negotiating distance and displacement through embodied actions that engage with the memory of place. The creative methods I employ test an artwork's capacity to receive and retain memory and narrative in the making process, particularly drawing on plain sewing, a practice significant to Marston. Through a personal project I aspire to examine the broader implications of memory about home and place.

CHAPTER ONE

CUTTING: Making Home in the Experience of (Dis)placement and Migration

"Arrival, like origin, is a mythical place." (Solnit 2011, 3)

Once a dressmaker has designed and drafted a pattern, it is laid upon the chosen fabric, which in most cases has been doubled. The pattern is placed according to the direction of the design motif on the fabric's surface, while also taking into account the direction of the weave. Following the straight grain is usually all that is required, yet at times it is necessary to lay sections of the pattern on the cross to allow for easier shaping or a full skirt. Once satisfied with the layout, the pattern pieces are pinned to the fabric and the cutting process begins¬—ensuring that a healthy seam allowance, usually 2–3 cm, is left around each pattern piece.

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This project expands on a particular place that I have direct experience of, yet I cannot negate the fact that I am remembering it from a great distance. The physical and temporal distance imposed by migration is a motivating factor behind this research project, and so the tractability of pattern pieces becomes a pertinent metaphor for the slippages and malleability inherent in memory and distance. The first chapter seeks to provide a foundational context of my family's link to Marston (home and place) and the experience of migration. In doing so, it refers to personal accounts of Marston throughout, with additional reference to relevant scholarship.

I invite you to consider the pattern pieces described above as fragments of a lost home, as individual facets yet to be fitted together as a whole narrative of remembering Marston. At this stage of the process, the pattern can be shuffled and reordered, placed and displaced. In their role as signifiers of Marston, the pattern pieces can be identified with the relevant theories and methodologies associated with my research. One of the pieces stands for the concept of 'home', and expresses the varied experience of home outlined by theorists Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, and writer Gaston Bachelard. Another piece denotes 'place' and considers how home and place are conjoined. A third pattern piece signifies the migration experience, and elaborates on the ways migrants go about home-making in new contexts, with reference to theorists Sallie Westwood and Annie Phizacklea. Having outlined some key elements in the garment pattern, the discussion returns to the context of my family's investment in, and displacement from, Marston, and draws on scholar Ricardo Baldissone's concept of the multiplicity of place. The additional pieces of the pattern outline my creative practice, contextualised with reference to the ways in which writers Doris Lessing and Rebecca Solnit, and contemporary artists Rebecca Mayo and Nathan Beard, explore place, home, memory and loss.

My interest in our family home can be understood in terms of the intensity of things learned and places experienced in childhood.[9] In *A Book of Migrations*, writer Rebecca Solnit remarks,

> It often seems to me that all one's creation is done in the first decade and a half, when an internal landscape comes into being with the force and activity of primordial volcanos and plate tectonics; the rest of one's time on earth is spent retracing, mapping, deciphering, excavating. Everything else one will see is seen in comparison with this formative landscape (Solnit 2011, 89-90).

This concept emerges during Solnit's travels through Ireland, when the scent and sight of freshly ground pepper at breakfast one day unexpectedly transports Solnit back to her childhood neighbourhood. The brief and intense memory of a past home lingered with her throughout the day, shaping her experience of that new place as she continued her journey along the Irish coastline on foot, moving through one landscape in the reverie of another. Childhood landscapes and home-scapes serve as points of departure and return, coalescing with the present experience of place. Solnit was moving through a new landscape but she paradoxically encountered her home.

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[9] See also Jerry M. Burger (2011).

Marston was a formative landscape for me, and our departure and enforced distance from that place has driven the desire to revisit this lost home through creative practice from the locale of a new home. Although it offers specific insight into the significance of a personal place, my creative research may also lead readers and viewers to consider their own formative landscapes and homes. This phenomenon is something that Gaston Bachelard remarks upon, understanding that when a writer or poet invites a reader to journey through their remembered home-space, inevitably the reader "leaves off reading and starts to think of some place in his [or her] own past" (Bachelard 1969, 14). He suggests that when we yield a personal narrative of home as creative practitioners (be it via writing, poetry, acting, music or fine arts) we enable a level of engagement with our audience, where the way to contemplating their own past homes may be revealed (Bachelard 1969, 14).[10] In the revelation of intimacies of a remembered, lost home, there is the opportunity for "extreme sensitivity" (Bachelard 1969, 71) and an elaborated affinity between artist and viewer, expanding the sense of place and awareness of what a home is for different people.

Geographers Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling reflect on the complexity of home, considering it to be "a *spatial imaginary:* a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places" (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 2; emphasis in original). As a "spatial imaginary", home can be perceived as malleable and able to transcend physical restrictions imposed by dislocation and distance in order to be reconstructed, remembered and reimagined elsewhere; a remembered home can influence the new home. If home "extend[s] across spaces and scales, and connect[s] places", there is the possibility that migrants carry with them the memory and experience of home into new contexts, and at least on an individual human scale, one place may connect with another. These connections may occur via the transfer of habitual practices that were carried out in the old home, and extends to the material culture that can be found in the new home, transported from one to another. Visual displays and physical actions exist in multiple homes across time and space.

Social geographer Kathy Burrell notes that people often persist in believing that home is a sanctuary from external or unsavoury influences despite various feminist and social discourses to the contrary (Burrell 2014, 146). In addition, Doreen Massey refers to the porosity of place, understanding that the physical boundaries of a home cannot always withstand intrusions or change, be they sinister or otherwise (Massey 2005, 1995). To provide a more thorough account of the varied and complex understandings of home, I recognise that often the concept and experience of home cannot be separated from the context and place where it exists (Burrell 2014; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Blunt and Varley 2004). Home might entail both comfort and discomfort as a result of internal and external factors connected to place. An interview with Russian artist Ilya Kabakov illustrates this paradox well by demonstrating that even in highly regulated societies, such as that of the Soviet Union in the 1950s, *select* spaces of refuge were found within the home, where a certain freedom of opinion and expression could be exercised:

> And then there was "human" life that transpired in the kitchen, among one's close family and friends. In the 1950s, it was possible to talk among one's close friends in kitchens, by that time there was a guarantee that no one would run and tattle about what was discussed there. After the death of the Cannibal [Stalin] this dual life became firmly established, it was recognized by absolutely everyone, including the official organs of the secret police. There was a very strict distinction between public and domestic, kitchen life (Vidokle 2012, 3).

This chapter touches briefly on some of the circumstances and conceptions of home, and draws attention to the misconception that homes are always safe, private and homely, and acknowledges the fluidity and complexity of home. Although my experience of Marston was for the most part positive, there were political and social influences beyond my control, which led to eviction and displacement. The mitigating circumstances that impact my memory of home provide an impetus for the creative exploration of the memory of that place. Our eviction from Marston transpired despite my family's efforts at home-making and securing the home through physical and aesthetic actions, which will be explained in the following section.

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[10] Theorist Shelley Hornstein also considers how viewers might engage with representations and narratives of places when the depiction takes the form of postcards. She reflects on the subject of postcards as substitutes for the actual place, "transporting us to some other place we imagine which, in the end, is not the actual place, but rather, an imagined place, like the places we construct in our 'architecture of the heart', the place deep within our mind's eye" (Hornstein 2011, 72). Whether or not a viewer is familiar with the place signified in a postcard, they are prone to linking other, personal associations with visual representations of place. The perceptions of those who encounter visual representations of place will be discussed further in chapter two, while Caitlin DeSilvey's writing (DeSilvey 2004) on material culture and memory encounters will be discussed in chapter four.

Making a Migrant Home

At a moment when all the pieces of a metaphorical garment are laid out and yet to be fixed permanently into a form—and in order to give an account of my family's experience of multiple homes—I will discuss in more detail my grandparents who were, and are, creators. My grandmother Catterina (b.1926) is a dressmaker and my grandfather Vincenzo (1913-1999) was a blacksmith and farmer, who constructed our dwelling in Zimbabwe. He built the main house at Marston in the 1970s to improve on the original structure where my mother and her siblings were raised. Their creative engagement with Marston established an important foundation for understanding our attachment to the homestead itself. We lived and made things as a family within the walls my grandfather raised.

Along with the development and improvement of the farm by building the main house, my grandparents compounded their sense of belonging at Marston and in Zimbabwe. They incorporated design elements from their Italian heritage into the building, such as a garden enclosed by a stone wall complete with fountain, as well as ornate wrought iron detailing that was added to the building (blacksmithing was a skill my grandfather had learned in his hometown in Italy). Such visual and physical structures reiterated a sense of belonging and ownership that my grandparents sought to convey. Similar methods of place-making have been discussed by sociologist Tony Chapman in relation to home embellishment and establishing visual statements of dwelling and proprietorship, whereby reinforcements on doors signify protection, picket fences delineate private space and the placement of name plaques heralds a family's claim to a particular place (Chapman 1999, 135). My grandparents intended to dwell[11] permanently at Marston, and so they made visual and physical (built) statements to that effect.

Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling in *Home* present and discuss the multiple methods migrants employ to actively belong in their new country of residence. Of particular significance are house styles and the incorporation of material culture within the home as aids to a sense of belonging. Immigrants literally build memories and understandings of home into the new environment. For example, architectural styles, decorative features and material culture such as fabrics and imagery from the country of origin are incorporated into the house. This is not to say that aspects of the new place of residence are not accepted and celebrated by immigrant communities even as they incorporate or replicate house styles from their country of origin. The integration of design elements from my grandparent's Italian heritage into their Zimbabwean home is a form of "diasporic spatial aesthetic" that can be perceived as "a remembering which is active, not simply a nostalgia for the familiarity of home but an attempt to make a home in a new landscape" (Westwood and Phizacklea 2000, 63-64).

My grandparents settled into the landscape of Marston through their agricultural endeavours, and, in particular, building the new house with its incorporated imagery and material culture drawn from their Italian heritage. With windows that opened out to the land, the view mediated by my grandfather's wrought iron, they achieved an amalgamation of place and belonging—a means of making a home in Zimbabwe. My grandparent's creative engagement with place was a purposeful home-making and search for belonging where "[t]he new site of home becomes the site of historical identification, and the materials of the domestic sphere are the points of signification of the enfranchisement with landscapes of belonging, tradition and self-identity" (Tolia-Kelly 2004, 315). They were synthesising a relationship between two places during their first migratory experience, where making home elsewhere enabled a visual and physical dialogue between places, between Zimbabwe and Italy, in an active, emplaced process of home-making.

The lived experience at Marston was not without its problems. The very fact of our ownership and dwelling, like that of other white farmers, attracted the attention of the land reform movement that forfeited us our right to dwell there. The following section expands on the ways that intrusion and displacement have shifted my understanding of home; and how a Zimbabwean home connects with an Australian one.

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[11] My understanding of dwelling is informed by Martin Heidegger's philosophy on dwelling outlined in "Building Dwelling Thinking" (Heidegger 1971), and, as geographer Mitch Rose contends, in order to build, it is necessary first to dwell (Rose 2012, 758).

Displacement from Marston, and the Multiplicity of Place

During my family's long tenure at Marston, they witnessed two major upheavals in the political and social landscape of Zimbabwe. Firstly, the Liberation War that led to the birth of the Zimbabwean nation. Secondly, the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme discussed in the introduction to this exegesis. The Liberation War of the 1970s, along with a minor burglary at Marston in the 1980s, saw measures taken to fortify the homestead. Subsequently, incidents during the Land Reform Programme of the 1990s challenged these physical fortifications in ways we could not have foreseen.

Doris Lessing, in her autobiographical text *African Laughter*, describes a key defensive structure white farmers in Zimbabwe assembled in order to fortify their homes, explaining that "all the white farmhouses had, many still have, great security fences around them, because of the War.[12] I stopped the car outside a fence that reminded me of pictures of internment camps, a good twelve feet high, of close mesh. Inside two large Alsatians bounded and barked, their tails all welcome" (Lessing 1993, 34). The fencing in of farm homesteads became common practice during the Liberation War, with one company placing an advertisement in *The Farmer*, an agricultural magazine for the predominantly white commercial farming community, offering "'a FREE LDP PARABELLUM MACHINE PISTOL with every security fence'" (Pilossof 2012, 123; emphasis in original).

A tall security fence encircled Marston too, but after the burglary at the main house in the 1980s, my grandfather continued to invest his creative energy into the structure of the home by undertaking the immense task of fitting each window and entryway with wrought iron security bars of his own ornate design. This was a reaction to the violation of unsanctioned entry by strangers. Burrell notes that homeowners who endure security violations experience stresses that can compromise their relationship to their home and to their material possessions, compelling them to seek solutions to an unhomely experience, such as sending their treasured belongings into secure storage (Burrell 2014, 161). As sociologist Tony Chapman explains, a person's "absolute sense of familiarity with their home may actually conceal its fundamental importance to them: its value lies below the surface until, that is, its identity is spoiled" (Chapman 1999, 146). Spurned by the intrusion of the thieves, my grandfather invested further in his home not only in order to secure it (Chapman 1999, 142), but also to celebrate the structure through beautification. The very fabric of the house is testament to my family's creative practice and commitment to making a home.

Decades on from the burglary, the situation for white farmers in Zimbabwe began deteriorating. Government land reform policies[13] challenged white farmer's legal ownership of productive agricultural land, and as violence became increasingly common, the perceived need for protective elements such as boundary fences, security bars and weapons increased once again. Paradoxically the window bars at Marston, designed to protect the home, could not prevent the final message of our eventual eviction from being delivered verbally and in writing through the very bars themselves, as the extract below from an interview with my grandmother Catterina Rossetti illustrates:

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[12] The 'War' refers to the Zimbabwe Independence War, also known as the Liberation War, which took place from 1964–1979.

[13] For details on the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme, refer to p. 4 of the introduction. See also Susan Fitzmaurice (2015) and Rory Pilossof (2012).

MM:
What was it like at Marston as land reform policies meant it was likely you would have to leave...what was it like living on the farm?
CR:
I was afraid because I was there on my own. But John[14] was not too far. And it was when we going to be next? When we going to be next?Things like that. And then the next neighbour were taken. And then eventually they came to me
MM:
So they came to you directly?
CR:
Yes. On the window of my sewing room he came there a guy. He give me a note that say..."From the first of next month this, all this is going to be mine." [15]

The reality of my family's eviction from Marston reflects the complexity of home and place as it relates to different people and cultures. Without question, Marston was our home, and yet it lay on contested ground. I recognise the complexity of Zimbabwe's colonial history as part of the narrative of my family's experience of home, displacement and migration. My family arrived and made a life within an established British colony, purchasing Marston Farm legally under the government and regulations of the time. Decades after the election of Robert Mugabe's government, and after a steady decline in economic and social conditions, a campaign commenced to reclaim agricultural land from white farmers. The colonial history of Zimbabwe and subsequent independence from Britain determined our existence in, and later abrupt departure from, that place. My research exists in part as a direct result of these colonial consequences, however it ultimately rests within the realm of personal narrative and experience.

Scholar Riccardo Baldissone considers that a particular place can mean different things to different people, and a conflict of opinion between people about that place does not negate either party's beliefs or attachment to it (Baldissone 2015). Agricultural land in Zimbabwe is perceived as the right of indigenous Zimbabweans, especially considering the suspect manner in which land was claimed and distributed under colonial rule (Mlambo 2005, 2,4-5).[16] However, my family purchased Marston farm in the 1950s and made a home there, and so this piece of land can be perceived as our home too. It is a place that has travelled through many versions of itself.[17]

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[14] John Rossetti is the eldest son of Catterina and Vincenzo. He lived with his wife in one of the two additional houses on the homestead. By this time, Catterina's youngest daughter, along with her husband and son, had joined my family in Australia.

[15] Quote taken from an unpublished interview between Catterina Rossetti and myself, conducted on 28 December 2012.

[16] There are parallels between Zimbabwe and Australia as settler colonial states. Both have a history of colonisation that severely disadvantaged and undermined indigenous people. Centuries later and the concern of "settler guilt" has arisen, where "collective guilt about historical acts has become a constituent part of contemporary national identity" (Maddison 2012, 697). In the case of Australia, this has severely hindered attempts to undo the marginalisation of indigenous Australians.

[17] Some artists and writers engage with the multiplicity of place. For example, Alban Biaussat's 2005 photographic project, *The Green(er) Side of the Line*, seeks to emphasise the injustices and ill-thought solutions to problems arising from the multiplicity of place in Palestine and Israel. Melissa Gould's *Floor Plan*, 1991, uses light to delineate the long since absent footprint of a Berlin Synagogue. The work recognises the Holocaust, and highlights the intentions of one group of people to erase the presence of another in that place. Rebecca Solnit's 2010 book *Infinite City* brings together writers, artists and cartographers to collate multilayered, illustrated essays to tell the stories of one city, San Francisco, as experienced by many.

When considering the multiplicity of Marston, I am aware that I am only able to account for my personal experience of that place and to some extent, the experience of my family. My point of reference is physically distant from my current location and I cannot comment on the history of that site prior to colonial settlement of the area. I can only speculate on Marston's current state and the experience of those who now reside there, and I cannot deny that these speculations would be highly biased. My interest lies in a specific facet of the history of a place, and my research aims to give an account of Marston as I knew it, and know it still; but I acknowledge that it is another place now. Baldissone has noted the pitfalls of prioritising certain temporal and cultural experiences of a particular place over the experience of others in that same place where "the decision over the recovery and the restoration of architectural artifacts always imposes a particular temporalising perspective, which reorganises chronology according to privileged hypothetical times" (Baldissone 2015, 124). It is clear that there are implications, at times negative, for this type of prioritising. In addition, I am sensitive to Baldissone's explanation of the flawed Western ambition to preserve specific objects or places in perpetuity, where the multiplicity of objects or places is not accounted for (Baldissone 2015, 128). My aim is not to freeze Marston in time, presenting a stagnant reproduction of the information I have gleaned (Baldissone 2015, 129). Rather I seek to acknowledge my experience of the place, using creative practice to generate artwork that communicates my understanding of Marston, a place that is made up of its histories, not finite but infinite (Latour and Lowe 2011, 278; Massey 1995, 183 and 188).

Migration and the Gesture of Return

My recent family history is made up of various migrations. My father is a New Zealander with French and Irish ancestry. He immigrated to Zimbabwe where he met and married my mother, a first generation Zimbabwean with Italian immigrant parents. My sister and I are second generation Zimbabweans and we immigrated to Australia with many of my family members in the early 2000s. We hail from multiple cultures and parts of the world, and for this reason it is at times difficult to conceptually locate myself in the world. I am ambivalent about my formative years in Zimbabwe. On the one hand grateful for the unique and privileged experiences I had there, yet now I am increasingly aware of the disparities between privileged whites and the majority underclass of indigenous Zimbabweans. Nevertheless, when I survey my past, present, and varied experience of 'place', I am drawn by a strong connection to Marston. I am fond of my Australian home, and also my childhood city home in Harare. Yet there is something in the endurance of Marston in my mind and experiential memory. It is where my immediate family resided for more than 50 years, longer than any other claim to dwelling in our recent history. The timing of my research is important. I have spent exactly half of my life in each place, and soon Australia will come to outweigh my temporal experience of home and belonging in place.

Beyond the desire to belong to a place, situating my creative practice in that place enables a critical analysis of migratory concerns, issues of displacement, and the aims of this research to examine creative practice and the memory of place. Scholar James Barilla explains that "to situate oneself is to go back in order to go forward, to lay the groundwork for rhetorical developments, which suggests that such a move has political ambitions that are not limited to nostalgia" (Barilla 2004, 8). The concept of identifying with, and being situated in, a place has proven vital to my grandmother's experience of migration and finding belonging in new contexts through creative practice, which will be further discussed in chapter two. In addition, it is important to situate my creative research within the memory of Marston, as recalled from another home in Australia. The place is paramount but the *distance* is the impetus. The lure of the unattainable is made all the more compelling because of the experience of displacement. There is a distance between my home in Perth and my home in Zimbabwe that begs to be navigated and engaged through creative practice. As I contemplate the mesh of possible belongings, and the multiplicity of place experienced by my family, I consider the importance Barilla attributes to the acknowledgment and identification of the place from which we speak as a "return gesture of sorts" (Barilla 2004, 8).

Barilla has also raised the question of physical return to place over metaphorical return (Barilla 2004, 8), prompting me to question why I do not simply physically revisit Marston. I considered this as a real possibility in the early stages of this research project. However, I acknowledge that even if it were safe and viable to return, the place would be very different from my memory of it. In relation to the home as a building, Peter King has stated that "[a dwelling] is a hard, unyielding object which can present us with an implacable physical presence that we cannot avoid. We know that the dwelling would exist without us... Its existence does not depend upon our appreciation of it... the dwelling would continue to function if others were using it" (King 2008, 46). The location of Marston is still the same, the physical address and even the houses (so Google Earth tells me). Yet the human topography of the place is utterly, irreversibly altered. What traces, beyond the physical buildings, remain of my grandparents' efforts, of their dwelling? And yet, this site of home may still retain its significance as a site of belonging and identification even if my family are no longer physically present there (Fog Olwig 1999, 73). The challenge evolved and reinforced the initial research question: In what ways can an artist evoke their lost home through embodied memory and creative practice? The return has to take place via creative practice.

As a means of commencing the gesture of return through creative practice, I have engaged, via printmaking processes, with family photographs[18] of Marston, the content of which defines the context of a 1950–70s Rhodesian[19] farming family *(Figure 1)*. They depict a selective and idealised view of place, outlining typical events and achievements as well as acts of dwelling, home-making and place-making of a particular family. Landmark moments such as the start of school term are represented by examples of school uniforms; the family car is documented, as well as pets and, naturally, the cultivated fields. The selective points of view were chosen by my family to depict their daily life and experience of Marston Farm. These were portrayals of commonplace events, examples of farming prowess and the prosperity of family life captured in photographs, perhaps to be sent back to Italy for the extended family to admire, and to maintain a record. They provide a context of colonial life for the migrant, with the white farmer overseeing his labourers, directing but also working alongside them. There is an African minder, a child herself, supervising the white infant. It is a selective collection of images and moments, with limited evidence of building tensions that led to the Liberation War.


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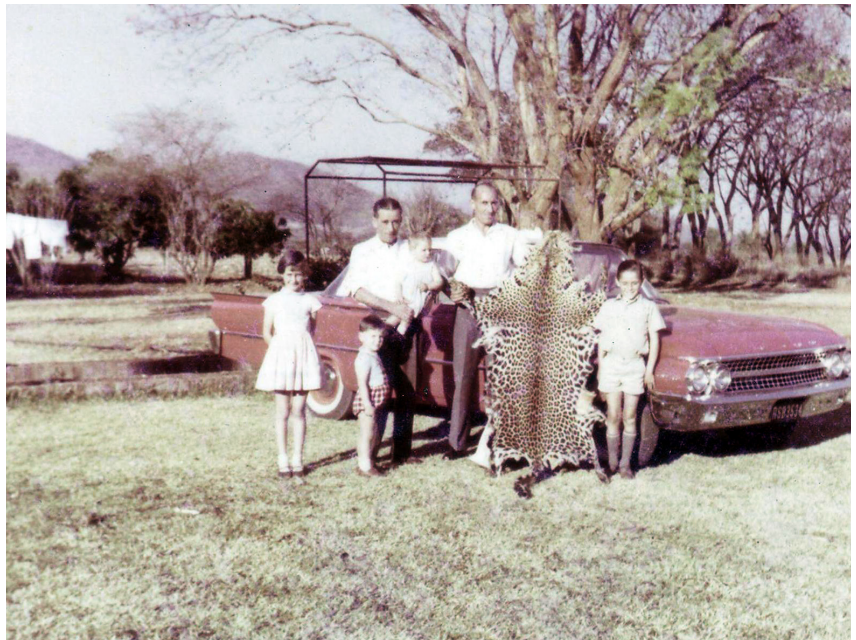
[18] A full account of the role of photography in my creative research will be considered in chapter two with reference to theorists Susan Sontag and Shelley Hornstein.

[19] Rhodesia was renamed Zimbabwe after attaining autonomy from Britain in 1979. The images discussed here predate Independence.

Figure 1. Selection of family photographs
taken at Marston Farm, c.1956-1969.

These photographs originated at Marston and underwent a migration of their own, dispersed along with various family members around the world, only later to be scanned into computers, stored on USB drives and in some cases, they have traversed the Indian Ocean to arrive at my home in Perth. Resuming the analogy of the cutting and piecing process of dressmaking, I selected a number of these photographs, digitally enlarged them and then screen-printed them as fragments, piecing them together to reconfigure the image, as seen in *Marston, memories from the faraway nearby* (2013) and *Candy* (2015) *(Figures 2 and 3)*. During this process of dislocating and returning, the journey continued as the photographs were enlarged, bitmapped, exposed, high-pressure hosed and flooded with ink, and finally reconfigured in a grid-of-nine. The fragments themselves were disrupted during the print process through deliberate forceful washing out of the stencil, which damages the image and allows 'hot spots' of colour to emerge in the final print. The four-colour printing process separates the image into a matrix of dots, each layer of colour (cyan, magenta, yellow and black) rebuilding the tonal variation and detail of the original photograph. The results are 'glitched' reconfigurations of the photographs.[20] The physical, process-based glitches were enacted as a means of making visible the slippages inherent in memory.

In order to travel to Perth, the photographs of Marston collected from family members have been saved as JPEG files, a digital format that allows for easy transmission and circulation as unnecessary digital information is discarded (Kane 2016, 140). It appears that they were always meant to deteriorate and transform through their migratory, and creative, processing. My cousin recounted a conversation she had with her mother as they prepared to depart Marston for the last time. Her mother wanted to take so many objects with her, fearful of leaving behind precious moments and memories in the form of clay artworks her daughters had made, ornaments and other material culture from home. My cousin pointed to a low coffee table in the lounge and said to her mother that whatever she could fit on the surface of the coffee table, she could carry with her into a future away from Marston. Imagine a diminutive domestic surface area delineating the memory of home and encompassing the experiences of a lifetime. It's clear that family albums were squeezed onto that surface area, and the images held within have continued to journey into digital and material realms in order to inform my creative research in acts of reimagining a lost home.

In the prints *Marston, memories from the faraway nearby* and *Candy*, there is evidence of the memories compressed into photographs of a particular time and place; scanned and saved to a USB destined for Australia; bitmapped, blasted and bled in the four-colour screen-printing process. The physical departures and arrivals of these prints speak to the inexactitudes of acts of remembering. As writer Rebecca Solnit observes, "Arrival, like origin, is a mythical place" (Solnit 2011, 3).

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[20] Closely linked to digital technologies, glitch art stems from a determination to draw attention to the "technical apparatus otherwise concealed from viewers" (Kane 2016, 129), and to reveal the materiality of digital mediums, the content of which elicits communication failure and obstruction. Examples of this can be seen in David Lynch's *Inland Empire* (2006), Thomas Ruff's *Nudes* and, recently, Australian photographer Mike Gray's exhibition *Corrupt* (2016), where personal confessions (that we never see the content of) are inserted into the image code, prompting unpredictable glitches in the final photographs.

In my practice, multiple processes have been applied in order to *physically* interfere with the image quality and content of the source photographs. They started as hardcopies, and then existed for some time as digital files, before undergoing a further transformative and deliberately 'glitched' process of screen-printing described above. Derived from scans of film photographs, they have travelled through a digital version of themselves. My practice does not interfere with the code that forms digital images in the way that glitch art traditionally does, although the images are separated into their tonal dot layers via a digital bitmapping process. Rather the glitches have been manifested through physical gestures in the forceful washing out of emulsion, and in the use of overly fluid ink in the printing process.

The prints were an attempt to reach back into place, to situate myself as artist researcher within a space-time that preceded my experience of that place; the photographs used here are from the 1950s–70s, while I was born in the 1980s. Doreen Massey frames the concept of space-time within political and community concerns, acknowledging that "the boundaries [of nation-states], and the naming of the space-time within them, are the reflections of power, and their existence has effects. Within them there is an active attempt to 'make places'" (Massey 1995, 189). Massey goes on to explain that the concept is not limited to governments and nation-states, but also applies to less formal, localised social endeavours to make place.

Although the photographs are selective in what they convey, I consider the prints derived from them as an avenue into place through practice; I cannot inhabit that space-time but through practice, hence the laborious[21] nature of their making. Having started my research with forms of printmaking, in the following chapters I expand on the creative practices significant to place and test how these other methodologies contribute to the aims of this creative project to remember a lost home. Prints that engage with photographs of place go some way to reimagining home, as evidenced in the discussion here. However, to achieve a more embodied and evocative experience of a remembered home, I look to habitual body memory and plain sewing, which will be discussed in chapter two.

Figure 2. Melanie McKee, *Marston, memories from the faraway nearby*, 2013, 84x60 cm, screen-print.

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[21] Labour, as it relates to the generation of artworks, will be discussed further in chapter four.

Figure 3. Melanie McKee, *Candy*, 2015, 84x60 cm, screen-print.

Creative Perceptions of Home, Displacement and Return

The remembering of home through creative practice is not without its complications. To return, physically or metaphorically, is not a simple act. In seeking an expanded perception of home and exile (self-imposed or otherwise), my creative research has been particularly influenced by writers like Doris Lessing and Rebecca Solnit. Doris Lessing experienced first-hand the effects of migration on one's sense of place. Her childhood was immersed in the final phase of the British Colonial era. Born in Persia (now Iran) in 1919, she relocated with her family in 1925 to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where they established a farm and struggled to make a living (Lessing 1995, 128-29). Lessing dwelt in places that have changed their names, and her writing draws extensively on her experiences in Africa as a child and young woman. She was exiled from Rhodesia as a result of her political activism and opinions that ran counter to the established government (Lessing 1993, 11-13).

In the following extract, Lessing reflects on the experience of exile, and her inability to reconcile dislocation from her homeland:

When I returned to the country where I had lived for twenty-five years, arriving as a child of five and leaving as a young woman of thirty, it was after an interval of over twenty-five years. This was because I was a Prohibited Immigrant. An unambiguous status, one would think: either a good citizen or a bad one, Prohibited or Unprohibited. But it was not so simple…the impossibility was a psychological fact, nothing to do with daylight realities. You cannot be forbidden the land you grew up in, so says the web of sensations, memories, experience, that binds you to that landscape (Lessing 1993, 11).

Individuals remember and have affinity with their homeland despite physical dislocation, and yet places change regardless, and are brought into focus when a return is made after a long absence. Lessing conceded the social and physical changes upon her return to Zimbabwe; thus suggesting that when exiles finally manage a physical homecoming, the home may have shifted, either physically or conceptually, or both. Initially things may appear to be the same as remembered, "then slowly it has to be seen that things are not the same, there are gaps and holes or a thinning of the substance, as if a light that suffused the loved street or valley has drained away" (Lessing 1993, 13).

Lessing's autobiographical writing resonates with understandings of the multiplicity of place, and accepts that geographical places are constantly transforming according to natural environmental processes or via the impact of social and political change. Perhaps it is not really possible to physically return to a particular place as it has literally (though maybe imperceptibly) moved on (Massey 2005, 137). Political borders may shift or entire countries may be born where old countries once existed, and for those whom the concept of home and place has shifted irrevocably, memory and the past become key players in a shifting and uncertain future (Jansen 1998).

Lessing's notion of 'myth country', introduced in a conversation with her estranged brother, corresponds to my memories of home:

> 'Did I tell you I went to the farm?'
>   This was rhetorical, for how could he have told me?
> As he mentioned the farm, a silent No gripped me. In 1956, I could have gone to see the farm, the place where our house had been on the hill, but I was driving the car and could not force myself to turn the wheel off the main road north, on to the track that leads to the farm. Every writer has a myth-country. This does not have to be childhood. I attributed the *ukase*, the silent No to a fear of tampering with my myth, the bush I was brought up in, the old house built of earth and grass, the lands around the hill, the animals, the birds. Myth does not mean something untrue, but a concentration of truth (Lessing 1993, 35).

Whilst the memory of a place can remain fixed as far as the nuances of memory allow, the actual place alters and is affected by time and our dislocation from that place. In my attempts to revisit a lost home via creative practice, the act of remembering place becomes open to and concedes the shifts in circumstance between what is remembered and what is. The artworks, shifting themselves in the process of making, become apertures into a place and time, a myth country, that has been synthesised by the acts of remembering and of making home.

In contrast to Lessing's ache for home, Solnit shuns any sentimental remembering of her childhood home where complex familial relationships marred her memory of that place (Solnit 2008, 79). She entered self-imposed exile at fourteen years of age, and it is through narrative and storytelling that Solnit finds a way through her memories of place and home, bringing her readers along for a solitary journey as they traverse her writing:

> Some years ago, I dreamed that my mother had fixed up the house, or had done so in dream terms, heavyhanded ones: the swimming pool was surrounded by broken glass, the bathroom had two sunken tubs shaped like coffins...I dreamed of my father every now and again too, and long after his death, not long after the hermit taught me to shoot, there was a period in which I told my father to stand back because I was armed. After this series of victories, he became harmless. Clearly, I was getting somewhere over the years. I took over the master bedroom and decided to move in. I drove the family out of my own room (Solnit 2008, 79).

The return to the house in Solnit's dreams and writing is metaphorical. Her understanding of home is cyclical and complex, where the house and the place or county it sat in are profoundly connected to one another. Many years later she began to reconcile and then leave (mentally and emotionally) the house behind, yet the *place* still beckoned:

> The house was a small place inside a larger one, or a small story inside a larger one; picture the stories nesting like Russian dolls, so that terrible things were happening in that house, but they were tied to the redemption happening on the larger scale of the county... I had left the house for good a quarter of a century before and just gotten out of it in my dreams over the past year, but the country was something I chose to return to again and again, and on this return I'd seen the nesting of those stories (Solnit 2008, 91-92).

For Lessing the house at the farm was powerful and very much loved, her home on the top of the hill. However, Solnit's childhood house was a negative zone, and she considered her home to be the county in which the house was built. House and home, though often conflated, are not always the same thing, Blunt and Dowling contend this in their book *Home*, where they state that "home does not have to be attached to a house; imaginaries of home can be connected to numerous places at multiple geographic scales" (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 88).

This research seeks to provide a context for a return to home that can be linked to trauma or pleasure. There are no limits here, and both returns are valid. My memories of home are predominantly pleasurable, but the means of our dislocation from that place were menacing and complex. Without the dislocation, violent or otherwise, would I have been compelled to carry out this investigation? Perhaps Solnit's troublesome relationship to her home has inadvertently strengthened her relationship to the broader county area, to place (Solnit 2011, 89). It may be a means of justifying the harshness of her youth, by contextualising where some of the callousness originated as reactions to broader social and personal pressures experienced by her parents. Not a justification, but perhaps at least a reason why. There is indeed a 'reason why' for our eviction, and many would argue it was justified, though perhaps ill-executed. These less savoury aspects of my family's relationship to home and place perhaps strengthen a need for examining dislocation and the memory of home. This makes for a richer investigation, a punctum of sorts. Barilla has suggested that when trauma plays a role in departures and dislocations from place, the memory of that place can be experienced "without the gloss of nostalgia or fantasy" (Barilla 2004, 27). As a result of the experience of trauma, individuals often desire a return to the place of exile in the belief that this will heal a lingering wound (Barilla 2004, 27). I'm not certain that I have a wound to heal, though perhaps Solnit healed hers in revisiting the landscape of her home, but not the house itself. Solnit's return to place, along with the unfeasibility of my return to Marston, illuminates the possibility of metaphorical return as a means of occupying the distance between homes, via creative acts.
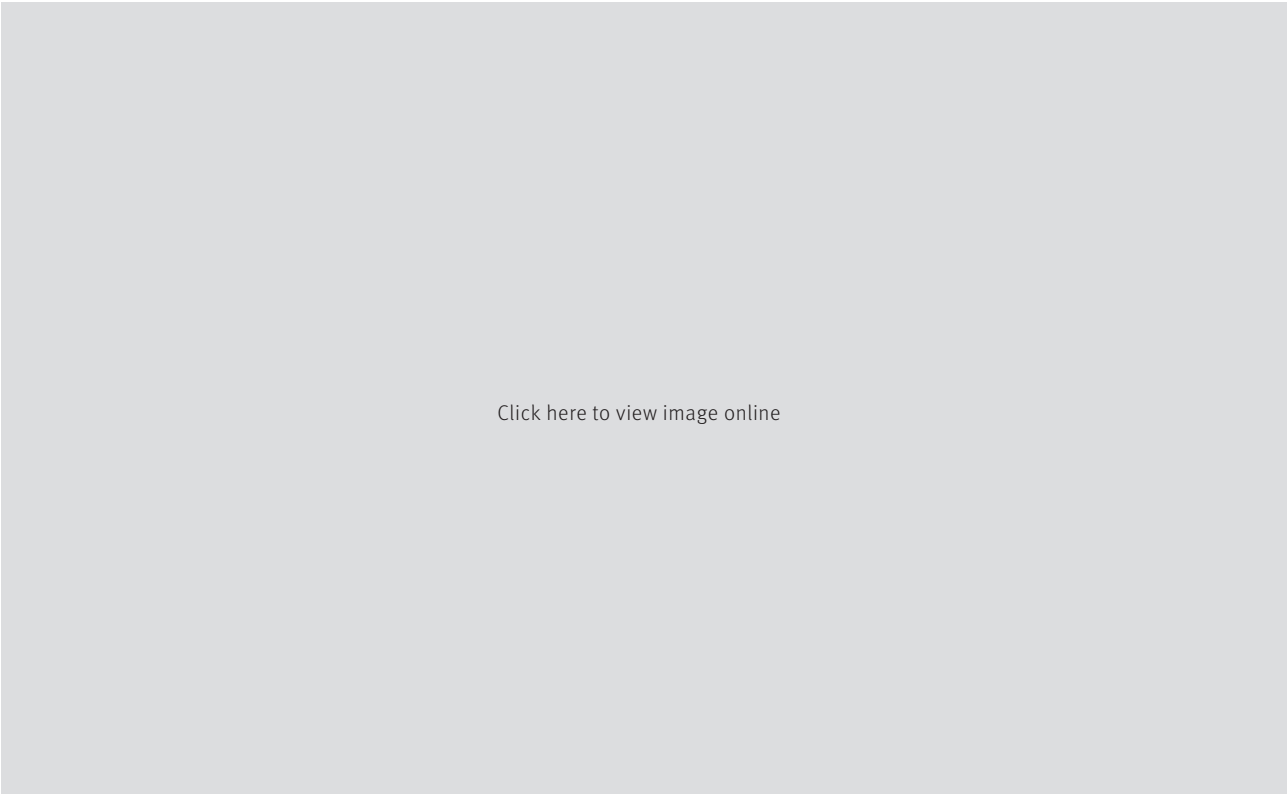
In an effort to visualise what this 'distance between' might look like, I was drawn to the work of Rebecca Mayo, an artist based in Melbourne, Australia. She has a particular interest in printmaking processes and has developed several bodies of work concerned with grief, loss, mourning, and her own family history. Mayo addresses both a physical and metaphorical return in the artwork *645 hands, 1350 fathoms* (2011) *(Figures 4 and 5)*, a series of cyanotype prints depicting the shifting waterscape above the site where the HMAS Sydney lies, the burial ground of her paternal grandfather. The artwork comprises 645 discrete prints, representing the exact number of individuals lost with the Sydney's sinking. When viewed en masse, assembled as a whole image on the wall of a gallery, the effect is immersive, arresting the viewer's eye with the liveliness of water captured still for a moment. Compiled into a physical stack of prints alongside a German to English dictionary[21], the work generates a different kind of gravity and presence as a structure to be circumnavigated.

The artwork entails a physical return inasmuch as Mayo travelled to the site and participated in a memorial alongside other family members of the deceased and then made a second return for a residency where the concept was further developed (Mayo 2015). Yet, ultimately, Mayo could not touch the wreck; her feet could not contact the ground where her grandfather rests. Shifting waves became a metaphor for that resting place, and a possible means of expressing the artist's recognition of this enforced distance; thereby offering an artwork that can connect an audience with an unfathomable place and a tragic historical event that has personal, national and international significance.

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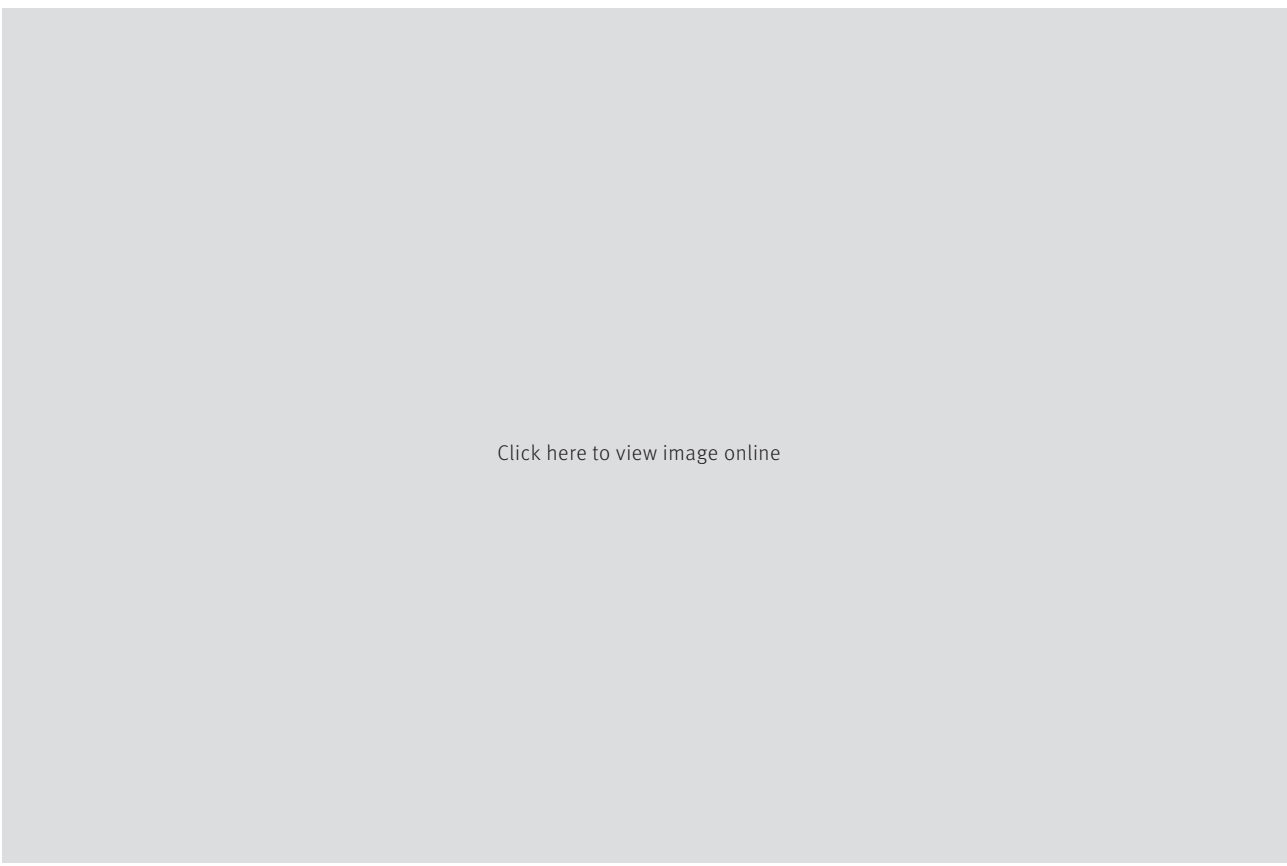
[21] Rebecca Mayo says of the inclusion of the book:

> The book on the table is a 1939 edition of Cassell's German-English English-German Dictionary. I bought it on e-bay earlier this year. It is the same, or as close as I could get, to the dictionary in which Detmers, Captain of the Kormoran recorded the battle when a POW in Victoria. He used a code that comprised of tiny lead pencil dots above letters, spelling out the sequence of events.

> Since November 19, 1941, the German story has largely been discredited or at least viewed with suspicion. That his dictionary, representing a conduit between German and English communication, became a [sic] important key in unlocking the final resting place of both HMAS Sydney II and HSK Kormoron is profoundly significant and, I would suggest, a metaphor for the shared resting place of all those who died in that battle (Mayo 2011).

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Figures 4 and 5. Rebecca Mayo, *645 hands, 1350 fathoms*, 26° 14' 37" S, 111° 13' 03" E, 2011, 645 parts, 12 x 16cm each, overall measurement: 180 x 690cm, cyanotype on bamboo paper, installation views.

Perth-based artist Nathan Beard's multidisciplinary practice is concerned with the 'in-between-ness' of his experience of multiculturalism and immigration in Australia. Engaging with his Thai heritage, Beard recently embarked on a mission to revisit (physically and allegorically) his mother's abandoned home in Thailand. The project evolved as his mother herself made a physical return to the place to farewell her dying brother. Beard took this as an opportunity to participate with the site alongside his mother as collaborator. The resultant work in *Obitus* (2013) *(Figures 6 and 7)* richly engages the history of an abandoned family home, its contents, and the broader community within which it is situated.

Whilst dealing with a cultural and familial history that is his own, Beard admits that he scarcely experienced the place physically, having previously only visited his mother's Thai province and home briefly when a young child, and observes that, "It was haunting to encounter a family history that I was essentially estranged from, and it provoked a desire to compile as much information about these artefacts as I could through my mother's perspective" (Ismailjee 2015). Through this collaborative process of creating *Obitus*, Beard became aware of his mother's creative engagement with her past home as she cooked Thai cuisine and developed Buddhist shrines in their house and backyard in Perth (Ismailjee 2015). Such efforts by migrants to involve traditional culinary and cultural practices, and material cultures within the migratory home, serve to illuminate the distance between distinct homes and the experience of place.

In contrast to my experience, Beard is able to physically revisit the place that is the subject of his art practice. Mayo is also able to get close to the site of the HMS Sydney, although unable to make contact with the vessel below. Although Marston will continue to be physically elusive, all three of these creative projects are concerned with a temporal distance. Each is revisiting a certain place and a certain time, using memory and the printed image as one of several vehicles of return.

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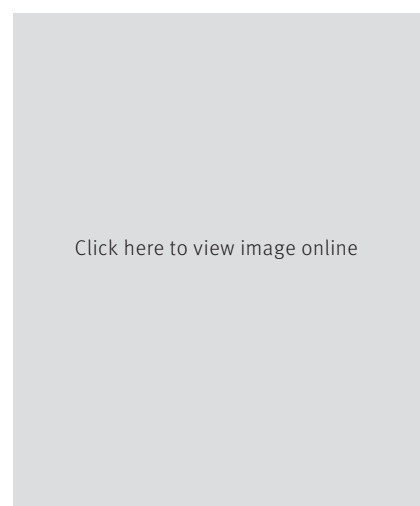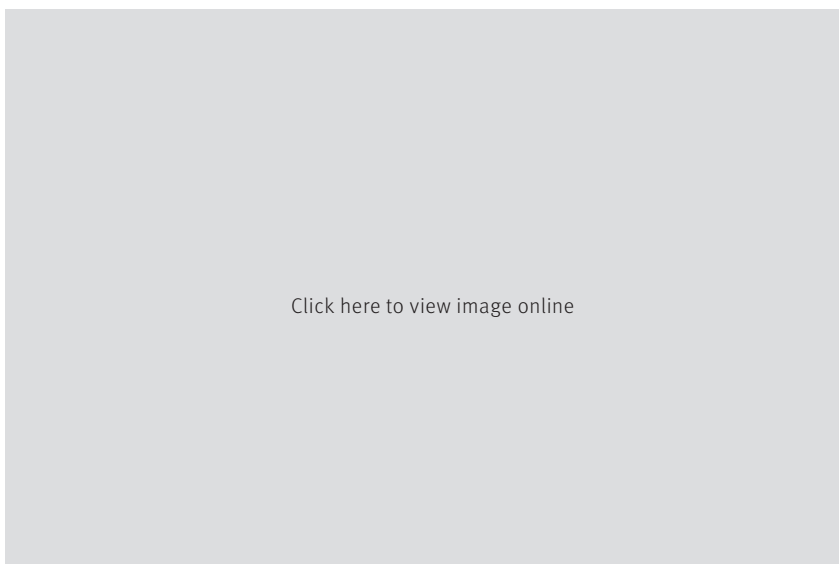
Figures 6 and 7. Nathan Beard, *Obitus*, 2013, dimensions variable, mixed media, installation views.

CHAPTER TWO

PASSING THE MARK: Nostalgia, Body Memory and Orientation

"Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship." (Boym 2007, 7)

Having secured the paper pattern pieces to the desired fabric and subsequently cut them out, the dressmaker carries out the important task of tracing the pattern pieces before removing them from the fabric. This is done initially with chalk, then with needle and thread in a loose, looping stitch. The doubled fabric pieces can then be pulled gently apart; the thread becomes visible between the pieces and can be carefully cut, leaving a remnant of tiny threads on both pieces of fabric. This technique allows for the transfer of the pattern markings to the second, non-chalked piece of fabric. Passing the mark in this fashion allows the dressmaker to find their way by conveying reference points, delineating the pattern, and leaving a trace.

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When considering this research within the metaphor of dressmaking, the act of passing the mark is a fitting analogy for the role that memory plays in bringing a past home into a new context. Traces of the memories of Marston have provided a pattern for generating artworks that engage with place. Having marked the fabric in the loose, looping stitch, on pulling the pieces gently apart, a tension in the thread that holds the pieces together is momentarily revealed. It is in this gesture, and resultant tension, that a metaphorical association with nostalgia is established. Nostalgia is a key aspect of my creative research, and will be explored with reference to the work of theorists Svetlana Boym and Joëlle Bahloul. In addition, the artwork of several contemporary artists who engage with nostalgia in their creative practice will be discussed.

Resuming the contextualisation of photography within this project, I will reflect on the writing of Susan Sontag concerning photographs as keepsakes and repositories for memory and meaning. In addition, Shelly Hornstein's discussion of photographs as monuments to the past will be discussed. Photographs have been a useful resource as original visual references to Marston, yet at the same time I have had to negotiate the inherent nostalgia evident in the images I have inherited. Furthermore, photography has been incorporated into my creative method as a means of investigating my current dwelling place, visually negotiating distance and dislocation via art practice. The interplay between pre-existing photographs of a lost home, and recently produced images of my new home, will be examined in relation to my creative practice.

To continue the metaphor of dressmaking, the embodied, gestural repetitions of marking, stitching, and the untethering of pattern pieces via the act of cutting connecting threads, enables the foundational elements of the garment to become mobile. In this chapter I will explain how it is possible to understand the role of memory in achieving orientation via habitual, embodied actions when an individual becomes mobile during the process of migration. This notion will be expanded in relation to theorists Edward Casey's and David Seamon's views on ways of remembering. It is at this stage of the dressmaking process that disparate pattern pieces can be moved and placed (located) according to their marks (traces), forming a more complete narrative of home.

Remembering and the Motif of Nostalgia

Svetlana Boym (1959–2015) was born in Russia and immigrated to the United States, where she had a long tenure as the Curt Hugo Reisinger Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Comparative Literature at Harvard University. With a direct experience, and deep understanding, of the nuances and lure of displacement as a result of migration and (voluntary) exile, Boym's research demonstrates a profound interest in how exilic expressions of nostalgia are manifested by writers and artists. Her work has provided a useful definition of the different iterations of nostalgia where the prevailing restorative nostalgia situates the remembered home on a pedestal of sorts, raising it to the status of a utopia; it is a reconstructive form of nostalgia. Whilst ironic or reflective, nostalgia "accepts (if it does not enjoy) the paradoxes of exile and displacement" (Boym 1996, 512) facilitating a relationship to one's past home without limiting the ability to find belonging in the new home.

Elaborating on restorative nostalgia, Boym notes that it "stresses *nostos* (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home" (Boym 2007, 13). This conception of nostalgia can be linked to national ideologies, and has been used by political and commercial enterprises to establish consumable identities (Boym 2001, 49-50; Kannike 2013, 153). This is particularly evident in efforts to maintain or establish influence during times of major social or political upheaval, for example, nationalist propaganda of Eastern Europe post World War Two (Kunakhovich 2016, 477). In other contexts, restorative nostalgia has been employed in order to establish international perceptions of new nations. For example, the modern State of Israel, in the early years of its founding, selectively broadcast aspects of historical significance in the form of postcards of the Holy Land (Hornstein 2011, 72), thus shaping how foreigners view that place. Regardless of the context, restorative nostalgia draws on an idealised past in order to influence a contemporary, fixed perception of place.

As an uncut thread, metaphorically speaking, nostalgia can be understood as regressive, as preventing change or evolution of an individual or society. Yet when this thread is cut, and the metaphorical pieces of fabric become mobile, it is the remaining traces that enable a generous, reflective experience of the memory of home that can be transported elsewhere. Boym determines that "[r] eflective nostalgia thrives on *algia* (the longing itself) and delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately" (Boym 2007, 13).[23] Reflective nostalgia acknowledges and endeavours to reconcile the impossibility of a physical homecoming (Boym 2007, 9; Bahloul 1996, 132-133). It recognises that circumstances, people and places have changed (either drastically or subtly); and it is perhaps a more sensitive—and indeed sensible—approach to remembering and longing for a lost home. Although all my efforts are concerned with a particular lost home, I have experienced a sense of ambivalence toward this place. While driven by the memory of place I have no desire to physically return, except via the modalities of creative practice. The understanding and acknowledgement of the impossibility of physical return has enabled me to position my creative practice within the concept of reflective nostalgia.

Regardless of whether it is categorised as restorative or reflective, nostalgia has also been more generally linked to enabling the preservation of identity and offering continuity when circumstances change drastically, for instance as a result of migration. It has thus been posited as a useful and important mechanism of self-reflection and survival—on both an individual and social scale (Wilson 2015, 481).

Boym contends that the majority of people can identify with nostalgia, especially as it relates to childhood or the longing for a different time (Boym 2007, 8). Therefore, the presence of a familiar nostalgic sentiment within an artwork has the potential to make it compelling to a broader audience. By engaging with place via reflective nostalgia, I am open to the possible connections individuals may trace within a common visual language of nostalgic memories. As a recognisable motif, nostalgia's ability to engender affinity with an audience links to the discussion in chapter one on Bachelard's belief that intimacy between creative practitioners and their audience may be achieved in the portrayal of a remembered home.

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov are Soviet-born artists, who work collaboratively. Voluntary exiles from Russia, they are creatively enthralled by the utopic dreams of Soviet-era Russia, and their interdisciplinary approach examines the notion of return, along with idealised visions and experiences of home, place and a socialist past. Although I only know the work in reproduction, the Kabakovs' 2013 installation piece *The Happiest Man (Figures 8 and 9)* is emblematic in its aspirations to celebrate nostalgia and utopia, while simultaneously demonstrating that utopia always fails (Ambika P3 2013). The visual language is that of restorative nostalgia (Boym 2001, 49-50; 2007), but the outcomes probe the success of such celebrations of an idealised past. The installation takes the form of a mid-century cinema theatre, complete with red velvet curtains at the entrance and rows of red velvet seats arranged in front of a large cinema screen playing a compilation of Soviet-era propaganda films. Also within the darkened space is a room belonging to

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[23] For further scholarship on the concept of nostalgia, see Janelle Lynn Wilson (2015).

the happiest man—a domestic installation, exact in every detail, from which the happiest man may observe the cinematic delights in perpetuity. The Kabakovs deliberately seek to attain utopia through art, where the viewer is held in the loop of the filmic narrative, either observing from a seat in the cinema or within the private quarters of the happiest man. The euphoria is pervaded by an awareness of the improbability of it all; one cannot stay in the theatre for all time. The audience is jolted into contemplating something familiar, yet alien—another space-time—which altogether provides an experience of an idealised home that can also be understood as inauthentic and full of pretense.

In this artwork the Kabakovs have comprehended and exploited the utopic references of cinema in the context of both Hollywood and the Soviet Union. They acknowledge that while Hollywood incorporates subtle hints within films to identify the impossibility of utopia (Fossati and Trovalusci n.d), in contrast, Soviet films of the early twentieth century abandon themselves to the ideal of utopia and convey that conviction to the audience—at least for a while until the spell is broken upon leaving the cinema. Whilst my own approach does not pursue an immersive cinematic experience, it does seek to engage with the perception of nostalgia as a component of art practice, probing its (im)possibility and futility—and perhaps lamenting, a little, its failure to be authentic.

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Figures 8 and 9. Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, *The Happiest Man,* 2013, installation views.

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Steve McQueen's *Ashes (Figures 10 and 11)*, a video artwork that formed part of the 2015 Venice Biennale, contrasts national nostalgias with those of a more personal nature. The footage oscillates between a windswept youth, named Ashes, balancing on the nose of an orange boat, the sea stretching forth to the horizon; and workmen methodically constructing a concrete grave above a burial mound. The sound of the wind and sea is constant, broken alternately by the scrape and industry of the workers, then by the recorded audio of those who knew Ashes, and who had witnessed his murder. The work interplays between footage McQueen shot of the "beautiful" male youth in Grenada in 2002, and the building of his "proper" grave in 2014 (La Biennale di Venezia Channel 2015). McQueen commissioned the grave after discovering that Ashes had been murdered and buried in a pauper's grave only months after their meeting and filming (La Biennale di Venezia Channel 2015). The artwork is a culmination of multiple returns spanning twelve years, a desire to discover what had happened to the boy and a wish to articulate the pitiful disparity between the capable, lively youth and the "ultimate void" of death (La Biennale di Venezia Channel 2015) so heavily evoked in the concrete form of the grave.

As I watched the footage of Ashes, I became aware of a sense of nostalgia in McQueen's remembering of this lost boy—a longing for the possibilities that had once stretched before Ashes, like that never-ending ocean horizon. Likewise, the construction of the grave could be perceived as a nostalgic gesture, as are the multiple returns McQueen undertook in order to uncover and resolve Ashes' story and burial. The commissioning and construction of the tomb is as significant to the artwork as the serendipitous, spontaneous footage of Ashes.

Anthropologist Daniel Miller has commented on the nature of Caribbean graves that take the form of houses as enacting a final return to home (Miller 2010, 107). While ethnographer Heather Horst, in her research on Jamaican burials, likens this process of building a grave (home) as literally building a legacy in death for 'somebody', "[b]uilding up a tomb is then akin to building up a person, granting them status in the scheme of the family and wider…society. A person who possesses a house—even if it is a door-less and window-less tomb—is 'a *smadi*'" (Horst 2004, 20). While the footage of Ashes is a form of longing and a nostalgic visual memory, the building of the grave is where the work of reflective nostalgia becomes evident.

The building and embellishment of tombs in the Caribbean is a family and community affair, with the community invited to participate in the process. The style of the graves evolves and continues to be perpetuated by descendants as new graves are added to the site (Horst 2004, 20). Yet, Ashes was not affiliated with any church, and it appears his family could not afford the construction of a tomb (there are no details of his family's situation available) and so it is McQueen who commissioned the grave, thus enabling Ashes to be interred and attain 'presence' in death. The proper grave reconciled the memory and story for McQueen and perhaps for Ashes too.

Joëlle Bahloul is an anthropologist who conducted research on her own family's experience of migration and the living memory of a past family home. Through the research she noted the importance of the built structure of the house, even if a physical return by those remembering it is never realised, or indeed never desired. Dar-Rafayil was the communal Jewish-Muslim house that Bahloul's immediate and extended Jewish family inhabited from 1937–1962 in Setif, Algeria. The narrative spoken by her family wove in and around the form of the house. In tales of remembering, a tangible memory-scape is constructed, both for those who experienced the house, and those who are learning about it through conversations in new, displaced contexts. For Bahloul, this remembered house forms a locus for dispersed generations of her family where "frequent migrations are grounded in the stability of the house. Migrations and peregrinations are transfigured by the predominance of the spatial dimension of narrative development" (Bahloul 1996, 128). Never to be revisited physically by the numerous expatriate family members and their progeny, the house nonetheless remains tangible, its form evident in the verbal navigations of past anecdotes and personal histories of place.[24] A sensibility and awareness of a place that physically remains remote becomes apparent in verbal narratives and other creative approaches such as art and writing; thus providing access for those who have no direct experience or memory of the site. Bahloul's family narrative of place indicates a reflective approach to nostalgia, and acceptance of dislocation; it is a celebration of the place and the personal relationships that defined her family's existence in Setif.

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[24] Divya Tolia-Kelly's writing on re-memory, as experienced by the South Asian population of Britain, provides an expanded understanding of how individuals in diaspora remember a home they will never revisit. While Bahloul's emphasis is on the navigation of the remembered structure of the home, Tolia-Kelly considers the material culture, sounds and scents found within new dwelling places that enable a more complex memory of a past home. Rather than individual recollections, re-memory encompasses physical and phenomenological souvenirs collected during the migratory process; these might be objects, sights, sounds and stories (Tolia-Kelly 2004).

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Figures 10 and 11. Steve McQueen,
Ashes, 2014, video stills.

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Figure 12. Melanie McKee, *Marston, homestead with sun ripened paw paws*, 2015, 38x28 cm, screen-print.

Figure 13. Melanie McKee, *Marston, homestead with avocados*, 2015, 38x28 cm, screen-print.

In addition to oral histories of home, photographs have proven to be a mediator between places and memory, transporting the viewer between the place they inhabit in the present and the place remembered or reimagined based on the image (Hornstein 2011, 112). In chapter one I initiated a discussion concerning the photographs of my family's time at Marston, spanning the 1950s–90s. They are typical snapshots of family life, but now they appear reminiscent of a bygone era, and they fall into the realm of nostalgia casting a haze of sentiment over place.

It is this nostalgic quality in particular that has made these photographs problematic to incorporate within my creative practice, as I negotiate the pitfalls of restorative nostalgia that freezes a moment in time, presenting an unrealistically fixed view of a contested place. However, the printmaking process itself is able to subvert the threat of restorative nostalgia evident in the photographs. This has enabled a successful integration of the source imagery. Here I refer to *Marston, memories from the faraway nearby* and *Candy* discussed in chapter one, where the process of separating the image into dots of cyan, magenta, yellow and black has physically (and as a result, visually) impacted the source image. The process has caused disruptions that speak to the physical displacement experienced by the maker and the subjects of the photograph. At other times, I have sought to replicate the image by the same four-colour separation process. In these instances, I have observed the clumsy framing of photographs in the hands of amateur photographers, where horizons tip drunkenly, or obscure points of view are negotiated, which I have reproduced in *Marston, homestead with sun ripened paw paws* (2015) and *Marston, homestead with avocados* (2015) *(Figures 12 and 13)*. Rather than seeking a streamlined visual return to place, the awkwardness of these points of view (initially unintentional) has been intentionally replicated in a conscious effort to undermine restorative nostalgia.

Daniel Miller commented that when one is faced with a vast array of family photographs, time itself is inhibited (Miller 2008, 110), where individuals may be photographed as children right through to adulthood, spanning a lifetime and recording seminal moments and life stages. The images I have in my possession for me to view in 2016 depict my mother and her siblings at various stages of their lives, and my grandfather is present in the form of a photograph, although he passed away 17 years ago.[25] A person may appear in multiple photographs amongst the collection bridging their entire life, united *in one place*. Similarly, a place can be depicted in photographs spanning decades, where time and place are condensed and Marston becomes manifest on my desktop computer in Perth, WA. As a result, Perth becomes activated as place from which to recall a lost and distant home.

Shelley Hornstein also considers how photographs facilitate our experience and knowledge of places where, "[i]mages plot our performative visual understanding of the world and, by process of that imagined and real peregrination, create a frame of a manageable quantity of cultural images in a curatorial exhibition of the imagination" (Hornstein 2011, 112). Photographs in a collection can act as an archive of memory. The photographs and artworks in this research project have come to re-place Marston into a present, experiential context of Perth, rendering the need for a physical return redundant. Geoffrey Batchen's question, "Has photography quietly replaced your memories with its own?" (Batchen 2004, 15) offers a worrying caveat to the act of re-placing Marston. Spending time lingering and working with photographs within my creative practice, I am acutely aware that they are becoming the visual mediators of a lost home. A photograph's finitude, its selective captured moment omits the breath before, and the action in the second after; a photograph cannot hope to offer a full account of the experience of a place. Photography allows for seeing out of context, and excludes our other senses (Sontag 1977, 93), thus limiting our comprehension and experience of the subject photographed. The more I linger with the family photographs, the more I reconstruct my memories around the information presented to me there, in that limited slice of time and place. For me it is important to synthesise photographs within an expanded creative methodology in order to amplify their possibilities and thwart their efforts at replacing my memory of home, and instead enable them to re-place Marston here in Perth in an act of reimagination.

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[25] Here I consider the aura that a photograph of a loved one may emanate by delivering a sensibility of the presence of one who is no longer physically present. Walter Benjamin, in his essay, *A Short History of Photography* (Benjamin 1979, 248), claims that although early photography maintained aura, despite the reproductive act of making an image, this was lost with the development of better techniques that ensured higher quality, sharper images. In her doctoral research, Australian artist Clare Humphries seeks to subvert Benjamin's thinking concerning the aura and reproduction, further elaborated in his seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". Humphries asserts that the aura may in fact be recovered and evoked via the very act of printmaking and reproduction that Benjamin claims thins the auratic experience of an artwork (Humphries 2014, 67-103).

By bridging a temporal and physical gap, photographs, when incorporated into artworks, can facilitate the reimagining of place. This becomes evident in pieces such as *Plication 1* (2016) *(Figures 14 and 15)* where photographs of both my Perth home and Marston begin to merge, stammering and faltering in an effort to reconcile. The act of reimagining takes the form of digital processing and manual, plain sewing techniques. The photographs of Marston and Perth in *Plication 1* are digitised, and deliberately sliced and shuffled in a process of reordering and realigning visuals of both places into one picture plane. Printed onto a fabric support, the pleating process has been applied in an effort to physically restore the image, attempting a reconstitution. But fabric is malleable and can be drawn back on itself, revealing one home in the wake of another in an ever-shifting temporal memory-scape.

Figure 14. Melanie McKee, *Plication 1*, 2016, 28x131 cm, solvent transfer on cotton lawn, cotton thread.

Discussing the ability of photographs to transcend time and space, Susan Sontag states:

> A photograph is both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence. Like a wood fire in a room, photographs—especially those of people, of distant landscapes and faraway cities, of the vanished past—are incitements to reverie. The sense of the unattainable that can be evoked by photographs feeds directly into the erotic feelings of those for whom desirability is enhanced by distance. The lover's photograph hidden in a married woman's wallet, the poster photograph of a rock star tacked up over an adolescent's bed, the campaign-button image of a politician's face pinned on a voter's coat, the snapshots of a cabdriver's children clipped to the visor—all such talismanic uses of photographs express a feeling both sentimental and implicitly magical: they are attempts to contact or lay claim to another reality (Sontag 1977, 16).

The above quote serves to emphasise the presence of nostalgic longing in instances of absence and in representations of distant subjects in a photograph.[26] At times, when nostalgic images have been incorporated into my artworks, I have enacted the "incitement to reverie" via the application of gestures in the form of stitch to reveal a physical contemplation of a similar activity that occurred in a past home, as in the textile artwork *Man's shirtfront, at the dam* (2014) *(Figure 16)*. Nostalgia is one reason for preserving the images so significant to the memory of place or a particular person; it becomes a material and visual link to the physically and temporally unattainable. With this in mind I have photographed the interiors of my grandmother's and my own home here in Perth *(Figure 17)*. My camera's attention shifts from quiet, contemplative spaces on the ceiling and floors, to the lived-in clutter of tables and bench-top surfaces. These are our new dwelling places, and they are primarily the spaces from which we contemplate our past home in Zimbabwe. They are also creatively activated places, where plain sewing and printmaking occur. If photographs are a "pseudo-presence and a token of absence", then the photographs of Perth interiors where making takes place can act as portals to Marston, the original place of making and the memory-scape of this project. By taking into account the present places of contemplation of a past home, it is my aim to generate a reflective experience of nostalgia in the reimagining and reimaging of Marston via creative practice. Photographs of Marston serve to bring the place into my current context of Perth; the family is present in the photographs, yet we are absent from 'there' now. Marston is another reality, another space-time (Massey 1995, 188). The photographs certainly inhabit this other space-time, and by incorporating these images into a creative practice, the physical distance may be closed perhaps for a moment.

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[26] For further scholarship on nostalgia and photography, see Svetlana Boym (2007, 7)

Figure 15. Melanie McKee, *Plication 1*, 2016 (detail).

Figure 16. Melanie McKee, *Man's shirtfront, at the dam*, 2014, 32x77cm each, mixed media on calico.

Figure 17. Melanie McKee, studio research photographs of Perth spaces.

Sontag's words from the extract above resonate in a more sombre creative endeavour instigated by Sarajevo-born photographer Ziyah Gafić. His project *Quest for identity* (2013) *(Figures 18–21)* takes the form of a published book and online database documenting thousands of personal objects recovered from bodies buried in mass graves in Bosnia. The photographs are designed to correspond with the existing physical archive of objects and human remains that are referenced in trials for crimes of war, and also as a means for seeking the identity of their deceased owners (Gafić 2016). He rightly perceives these objects as relatable; many people have owned, worn or referenced similar items, such as wristwatches, a pair of well-worn spectacles and dog-eared family photographs. His interest is in generating a sense of empathy with those who have experienced atrocities of war, either directly or indirectly (Eng 2014). In the same way as Sontag perceived photographs as representative of both a "pseudo-presence and a token of absence", Gafić's documented objects enable the viewer to "lay claim to another reality", profoundly incomprehensible as it may be, through empathy. Though less emotive, the passenger in Sontag's taxi will in the same way feel empathy with the driver's reverie upon seeing the photograph of his or her children strapped to the visor. Photographs of relatable objects and subjects evoke understanding and responsiveness between individuals.

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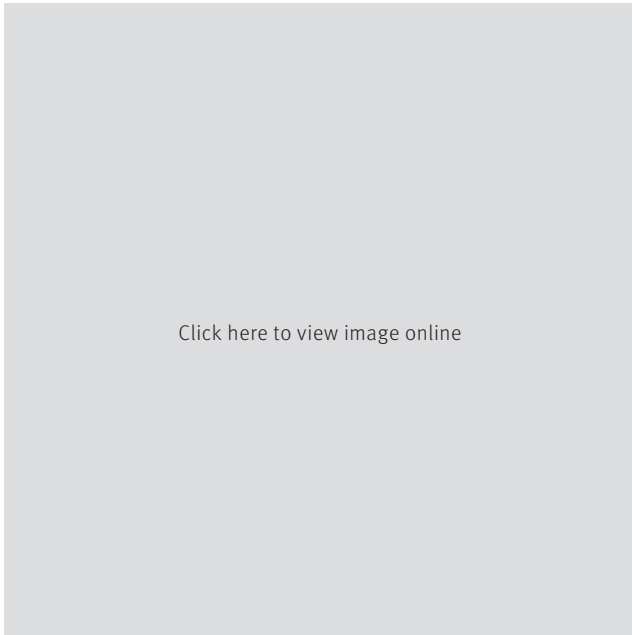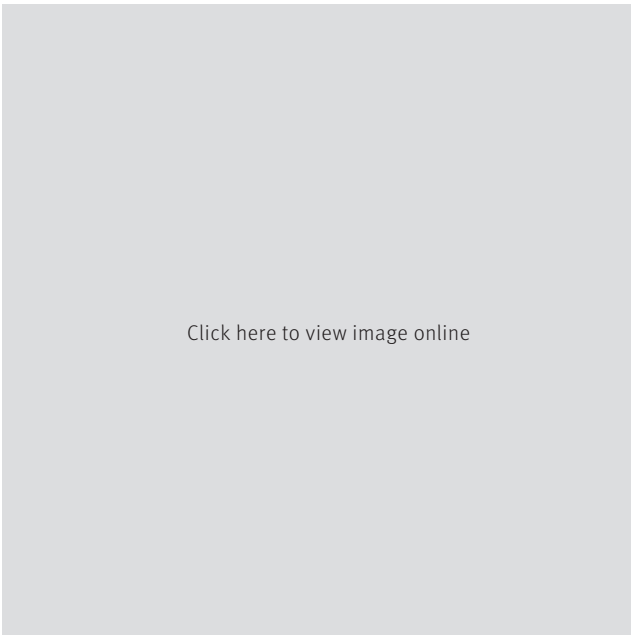
Figure 18 and 19. Ziyah Gafić, photographs from the series *Quest for identity*, 2013.

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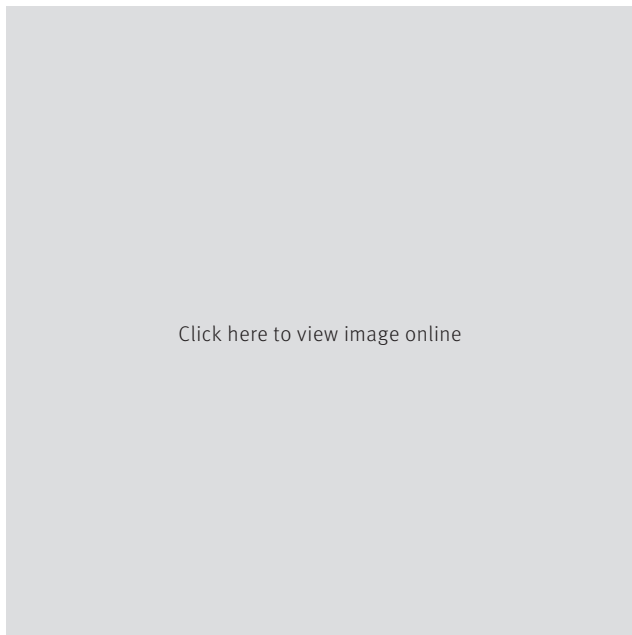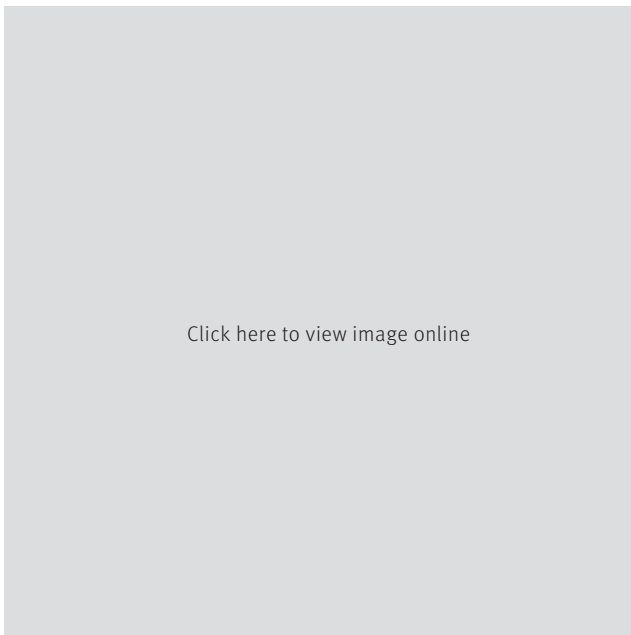
Figure 20 and 21. Ziyah Gafić, photographs from the series *Quest for identity*, 2013.

Figure 22. Melanie McKee, E*ntredeux
(between the two) I II and III*, 2014, 76x56
cm, screen-print and charcoal.

My artworks *Entredeux (between the two) I, II and III* (2014) *(Figure 22)* combine charcoal drawings of the main house at Marston with screen-prints of trees photographed in my local neighbourhood in Perth. Some of the trees and shrubs are indigenous to Australia, while other species arrived from overseas and were also present in the landscape at Marston. That these works seek to convey the futility of restorative nostalgia became evident to me as I began erasing the charcoal layer to reveal the house emerging from behind my 'local trees'; this process is like drawing in reverse. I had few reference photographs of the house and was working primarily from memory. After one particular drawing was completed, my grandmother pointed out that the staircase was incorrectly positioned. This oversight underscored the inexactitude of memory and the futility of seeking to precisely recreate this lost home. The slippages of memory apparent in the making of these artworks serve to demonstrate my experience of the temporal and physical dislocation from place. The possibility of reimagining home opened up a reflective nostalgic approach, where erasing the home makes it visible.

The trees themselves are evidence of my experience of multiple places as a result of migration; some were present at Marston whilst others were only made familiar to me upon migration. Photography has played an important role in *Entredeux* as a means of contemplating and documenting in 'dislocation' via the *collecting* of imagery. After photographing my neighbourhood trees, the background and contextual details were digitally erased, and the tree isolated and dislocated from its Perth situation and reinserted, via four-colour screen-printing, into an imaginary, charcoal plane from which the Marston house emerges. Reflecting upon the trees became an exercise in pondering a past place whilst being 'here', present in a different place. As with the prints discussed in chapter one, the screen-printing process was deliberately glitched. The interference in the technique and transmission of colour highlights the disruption between places and times that dislocation has entailed. The house and the trees don't quite settle into the image plane. Reflective nostalgia is evident, where the creative process deliberately thwarts efforts at restoring the image of home, and seeks to reimagine it instead.

Similarly, the artwork *Now and then or Salvage to salvage* (2015) *(Figures 23 and 24)* engages with place in a reflective and destabilising manner, using a combination of pigment transfer process and stitching to depict images of Marston Farm. The fabric base is sheer and floats in front of the surface of the wall, its weightlessness proffers the potential for warping and disruption of the visual/remembered information provided in the print. The stitched house is an attempt to reconstruct the old house at Marston and yet it fails to do so adequately. The fluid nature of the gauzy fabric, the pinching of the fabric where the hand-stitched tension has been too high, and the resultant warping of straight lines compromises the precision of the home's depiction. The entire work is subject to movement, and is the opposite of a solid, brick and mortar monument to home (Hornstein 2011, 74). The artwork is a representation of architecture, of a real place, that threatens to deconstruct or abstract itself at any moment depending on the physical angle of viewer and movement in the atmosphere around it.

Figure 23. Melanie McKee, *Now and then or Salvage to salvage*, 2015, solvent transfer on polyester, cotton thread.

Figure 24. Melanie McKee, *Now and then or Salvage to salvage*, 2015 (detail).

Your Body Remembers

"As we are among and amidst things in the world, so we are enclosed by the places we inhabit and remember." (Casey 2000, 259)

Having passed the mark, and followed the traces of nostalgia, interest turns to the migrant body and the way in which it, too, remembers. It is an entity that has physically travelled, been dislocated, and is a carrier of the self. My migrant body has experienced Marston Farm, but now remembers that place from a new, displaced situation. Body memory, according to phenomenologist Edward Casey, encompasses memories held within the body itself (Casey 2000, 147). This type of memory has also been referred to as body-ballet or time-space routines (Seamon 1979, 56), but for consistency I will use Casey's term, body memory. Of particular interest to my creative research is the notion of habitual body memory, which refers to memories that become subconscious or 'second nature', for instance, driving a car, domestic routines, or sewing (Seamon 1979, 56; Casey 2000, 148).

Considered in this way, habitual body memory could be perceived as rather mundane, as the enactment of banal, daily activities. However, it is these very consistent and ingrained qualities of body memory that enable individuals to function and adapt within their daily lives; having a store of habits perfected, one can attain the mental and bodily capacity to adapt to a new situation or problem as it arises. In addition, body memory's foundational qualities could contribute to enabling individuals to gain orientation when they find themselves in an unfamiliar environment:

> Getting oriented is to learn precisely which routes are possible, and eventually which are most desirable, by setting up habitual patterns of bodily movement. These patterns familiarize us with the circumambient world by indicating ways we can move through it in a regular and reliable manner (Casey 2000, 151-2).

David Seamon has also considered the orienting role of body memories in the making of a new home, where a sense of rootedness develops over time as habits form within the new space that eventually "becomes a field of prereflective action grounded in the body" (Seamon 1979, 80). The ability to intuitively anticipate the actions necessary to function seamlessly within a home environment provides surety and comfort *in place*, and achieves a sense of rootedness. The establishment of body memories provides a bedrock from which personal and social relationships, centred around particular activities in a particular home, can evolve.

In the previous chapter, I discussed Barilla's notion of the 'return gesture' and the importance of identifying the place from which we speak (Barilla 2004, 8). With this in mind I consider the significance of body memory as a means of establishing a deep familiarity with a specific place in the first instance. My grandmother's relationship to place, along with my own, has deeply informed this research and I have considered the role of habitual body memories in establishing her sense of belonging at Marston Farm as an Italian immigrant. Certainly the broad gamut of habitual body memories was useful to my grandmother, with daily routines grounding her sense of emplacement at Marston—from regular morning walks on the lands, to the brewing of the daily espresso. But one habitual practice, more than any other, stands out. Dressmaking was a skill my grandmother learned as a youth in Italy, and it is a practice she has maintained through multiple migrations from Italy to Zimbabwe to Australia. When discussing the practical aspects of dressmaking, I will use the term 'plain sewing'.

Plain sewing, as a habitual body memory, oriented my grandmother and provided her with a practice that was both productive and comforting in its familiarity. Importantly, it connected her to the broader community through dressmaking. Naturally there were creative challenges to be overcome when working with individual designs and clients. However, it is the foundational, habitual body memory associated with stitching, pinning, cutting and handling fabric that enabled my grandmother to establish a sense of belonging in new contexts. And to my mind, the practice and the place where it was enacted become inextricable. Habitual memories enable the development of belonging in a new place and, in return, the place compounds a sense of stability and "rootedness" (Seamon 1979, 79) or orientation, of being in place in order to make a home and, in this case, in order to make garments too. Plain sewing aided emplacement and a sense of belonging and orientation.

In addition, plain sewing has been a means of physically and memorially engaging with a lost place from a displaced locus. The qualities of habitual body memory within plain sewing have been passed to me from my grandmother. I have applied this practice to generate memory objects[27] related to Marston. The artworks are the end result of an important physical and memorial process, a form of remembering a lost home.

In the early stages of this research my grandmother instructed me in how to make garments, usually these consisted of simple patterns for dresses and blouses. However, the construction of a lined winter jacket as a project was particularly intensive and complex. I documented my grandmother handling the garment in its formative stages as she taught me the methodology *(Figure 25)*. English is her second language, and although she speaks it proficiently it is often easier to demonstrate a particular action, rather than describe it for me to emulate. This process of learning and making had a rhythmic quality, where my grandmother would demonstrate and I would act on her instructions, before returning the garment for the next demonstration. Passed to and fro, the garment evolved into something identifiable. A finished garment is certainly satisfying and desirable, but I am equally interested in the pattern pieces, the traces of tacking, mark making and stitches, the layering of fabrics, linings and interfacings. These facets of the plain sewing method compose a visual abstraction of the entity before it becomes a wholly recognisable garment.

Figure 25. Melanie McKee, documentation photographs of my grandmother demonstrating plain sewing techniques in the construction of the winter jacket, 2013.

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[27] The concept of memory objects will be expanded on in chapter three, with reference to the research of Caitlin DeSilvey and Nadia Seremetakis.

Figure 26. Melanie McKee, *An Interior Memory-scape*, 2016, dimensions variable, solvent transfer on calico, cotton thread.

Figure 27. Melanie McKee, *An Interior Memory-scape*, 2016 (detail).

The textile piece *An Interior Memory-scape* (2016) *(Figures 26 and 27)* is a culmination of plain sewing and printmaking processes, where fragments of the garment have been infused with an image from Marston via a solvent transfer print technique. The fragments have been hand-stitched to form a whole garment with the image (pattern) that would usually form the 'right' side of the fabric, paradoxically forming the 'wrong' side, and comprising the interior of the garment. By following the traces of the marking process in order to piece the garment, the original photograph has been reconstituted, and yet remains imperfect, with evidence of misalignment where faces disappear into seams and limbs reappear, doubled on the coattail or inside the sleeves. It is in the misalignment that the fragmentary origin of the garment is perceived, providing a synthesis of place (Marston) and practice (plain sewing) that was carried out there.

Habitual plain stitching binds *An Interior Memory-scape* together. The regularity of habitual memory performed in continuous stitching serves to reflect Casey's supposition that "habitual body memories constitute an "effective-history" within my lived body and are as integral to it as its tissues and organs. Indeed, it is only through habitual memories that my body can have any history internal to itself" (Casey 2000, 151). By enacting a habitual body memory in a new context, I seek to provide a tangible link via my body's internal history to that original, lost place. The stitching process is internally inscribed and emanates from Marston. Now complete, this plain sewn and printed garment can be worn on my body, hugging a memory-scape close.

Plain sewing has proved to have longevity for the women in my family, adapted within the home-space across vast distances and in diverse circumstances. Sewing alongside my grandmother through various projects has strengthened my physical connection with the memory of Marston. As a habitual body memory, sewing is a means of actively remembering a place through its very process and through the resultant garments and artworks. These understandings have led me to adopt plain sewing as a key creative method at the core of this research. It provides a means of entering the memory of Marston, facilitating continuity and communion with that place.

CHAPTER THREE

PIECING: Plain Sewing in Contemporary Art and Home

"[Clothes] are embedded with the memories of a life once lived or with the stories of the migrant limbs once housed within their folds." (Jefferies 2007, 285)

Turning the fabric to the wrong side,[28] and using the marking threads as a guide, the dressmaker begins the process of piecing the garment together. The marking threads of the front bodice correspond to those of the back bodice, the yoke marks correspond to the neckline, the armholes to the sleeves, shoulder-front to shoulder-back and so forth. By carefully aligning the marks, pinning then tacking the seams together, the garment begins to take form; by the hand of the dressmaker it becomes an object. It is also at this stage that a layperson can envisage the final product; they can begin to identify the shape, form and purpose of the garment—the garment becomes knowable.

The process of piecing a garment is deeply satisfying: carefully aligning marks, using both sight and touch to ease the fabric pieces into place, before pinning and drawing the needle and thread through the layered material. Having tacked the pattern pieces together, the garment is turned to the 'right' side, revealing its form for the first time. The previous chapter introduced plain sewing as a form of habitual body memory, and here I expand on the significance of the practice now that, metaphorically, the shape of the garment has become visible. In this chapter a broad context of the historical and social implications of craft traditions such as dressmaking is outlined with reference to feminist artists' reappraisal of marginal craft practices. Once a context has been established, the conversation will turn to a discussion of sewing in the home and how it may relate to the migrant experience and to the specific experience of my family at Marston. This analysis will make reference to the lived spaces in the homestead and here in Perth. Plain sewing will be considered in relation to my creative practice, specifically the way in which the practice has acted as a vehicle for locating and negotiating displacement.

Plain Sewing and Crafting Contemporary Art

In order to acknowledge and situate my own research and creative practice, it is necessary to outline the broader context of sewing as an industry and creative methodology. There is a great deal of scholarship on mass manufactured and mass consumed clothing (O'Connor 2005, 42; Palmer 1999, 207; Zakreski 2006). Historically, in the West, attention has been paid to the more sinister aspects of the garment industry, such as the abuse of seamstresses during the industrialisation of England and the plight of exploited migrant workers of both genders in European and American fashion centres during the twentieth century (Zakreski 2006; Harris 2005).[29] Despite these negative aspects of the industry, it nonetheless remains evident that sewing also provided opportunity for entrepreneurial individuals (Green 1997). Sewing is an easily transferrable industry, which does not require expensive outlays to establish a business. On one hand the ability to take work home to the domestic sewing machine meant the worker was easily exploited in terms of underpaid or unpaid overtime. However, it also provided flexibility for women workers, giving them the right to work *and* remain within the domestic sphere (Green 1997, 154). In view of these circumstances, many dressmakers work successfully either from a domestic or commercial premises, either employed or self-employed, and enjoy the protection of a regular and loyal client base (Tulloch 1999; Palmer 1999). The arrival in the nineteenth century of the home sewing machine drew domestic power relations into question, with the economic role of women beginning to challenge that of the male breadwinner (Fernandez 1999, 60). The ability to repair or to make clothing within the home, both for household consumption or monetary profit, enabled women to contribute to the home economy and strengthened their position in the domestic sphere.

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[28] The 'wrong side' refers to the back of the fabric, which is intended to be on the inside of the garment.

[29] For a comprehensive analysis of the plight of the Victorian seamstress, and the social and literary commentary of the time, see Patricia Zakreski (2006).

There is a problematic history of human rights and labour abuses accompanying the sewing industry (Zakreski 2006; Green 1997), and its deep-seated association with *female* labour situates sewing as a marginalised practice (Buckley 1999). As a result it is unsurprising that much feminist discourse centres on sewing as an occupation (Buckley 1999, 58). Feminist writers such as bell hooks, Rozsika Parker and Doreen Massey are interested in navigating and speaking from the margins in order to voice feminist concerns and issues affecting other relegated identities (Buckley 1999, 56; hooks 1991; Massey 1994; Parker 1984). In addition, artists such as Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, Ghada Amer, Kiki Smith and Janine Antoni have been noted for employing craft activities, such as sewing, weaving and embroidery, which have been framed as socially marginal, in order to create discourse on social, political and identity issues (Sanders 2005; Schapiro 1987; Guralnik 2010).

While an in-depth discussion on the role of feminist writing stemming from craft practices is beyond the scope of this research, elements of patriarchy, the potential complexities of the domestic sphere and 'women and work'[30] are evident in the narratives of the place from which this research emerges. My family's tenure at Marston spanned five decades, and my grandmother's creative work at home, as well as the eventual establishment of a productive sewing room in the homestead, ran concurrently with significant international feminist developments in the art world. In the 1970s Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro made art through craft methodologies that challenged perceptions of the status quo and high versus low art. In doing so they exploited the socially marginal and claimed the personal as political (Sanders 2005, 94). There is evidence of this in the 1971 collaborative installation *Womanhouse (Figure 28)*, a three-month creative residency in an abandoned house in Hollywood. Schapiro and Chicago were teachers who directed and participated in the project with their female students from CalArts. Reflecting on the experience, Schapiro recalls the unease felt at the time,

> How would they [male colleagues] take to my 'Dollhouse', which I made in collaboration with Sherry Brody... After all, I was the eldest on the project and had a creditable career in the New York art world. I had exhibited my mural- sized, abstract illusionistic, hard-edge paintings...for years. Why would I make a dollhouse? Such a trivialized image, such a slap in the face of high art (Schapiro 1987, 28).
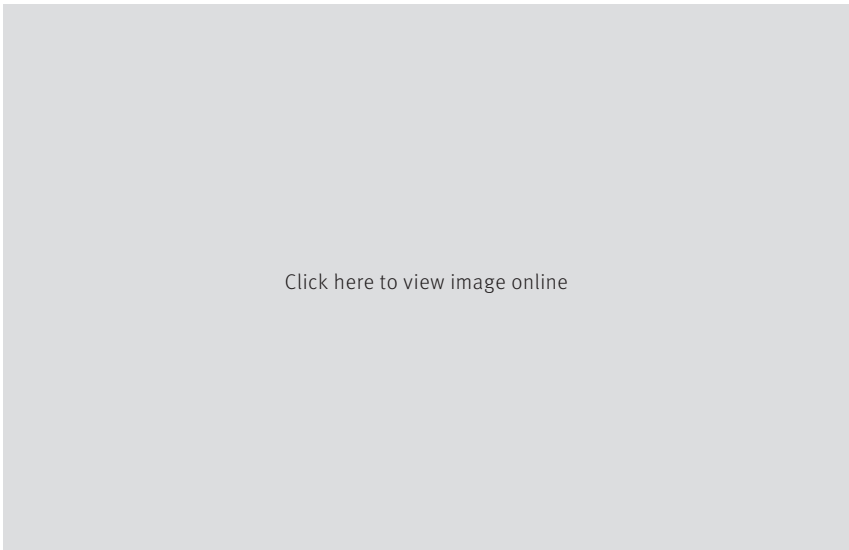
This quote emphasises that the project was a vanguard of the time and served as an overt comment on women, domesticity and creative arts, thus calling into question historical and patriarchal perceptions. Through parody and sensorial play, the multiple installations within the house drew attention to the gaps (social, economic, historical, relational) between men and women in a provocative way: "they were men so separated from a woman's intimate world as to make it nonexistent" (Schapiro 1987, 29). Despite Schapiro's reservations, ultimately what the men thought was insignificant compared to how women reacted to the art in *Womanhouse*: "we were speaking to women for the first time" (Schapiro 1987, 29).

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[30] I acknowledge the importance of feminist writing in the area of women's work and craft practices. For a thorough account, see Rozsika Parker's (1984) *The Subversive Stitch*, which deals particularly with the decorative crafts as a platform for discourse, subversion and creative expression by women. Additionally, writers such as bell hooks and Alice Walker highlight the possibilities for subversion from the margins through writing and embodied knowledge (Buckley 1999, 58; Tulloch 1999, 111-12), with a particular interest in the historical marginalisation of African American women.

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Figure 28. *Womanhouse*, January 30 – February 28, 1972, organised by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, co-founders of the California Institute of Arts (CalArts) Feminist Art Program. Pictured here, cover of the original exhibition catalogue designed by Sheila de Bretteville.

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Figure 29. Ann Hamilton, *Indigo Blue*, 1991/2001, blue work clothing, steel and wood base, wood table, chair, light bulb, books (military regulation manuals, blue bindings), saliva, pink pearl erasers, erasures, net sack, soybeans.

Since this frontline in feminist art, a number of women artists have come to prominence using craft methodologies within their oeuvres. Janine Antoni frequently uses her body as an impetus and in the artwork *Slumber* (1993) she wove the rhythms of her sleep in a cyclical performance of weaving and sleeping within the gallery space. The performance embodied women's work, and crafted an experience of the female body in exhibition. Ann Hamilton, in her expansive and interactive installations, often incorporates materials associated with the feminine, such as fabric, stitching and tissue paper. An example of where craft in contemporary art practice extends beyond feminist comment but continues to be used as a form of protest, or to draw attention to broader social issues, is Hamilton's *Indigo Blue* (1991/2007) *(Figures 29 and 30)*, which was originally commissioned for Places with a Past: New Site-Specific Art at Charleston's Spoleto Festival. This installation and performance piece comprises hundreds of blue work uniforms piled high, while seated in front of the accumulated clothing, an attendant erases a series of books, line by line. The inclusion of soy beans, which sprouted and then rotted during the exhibition, compounds the association between the site and the social and political aspects of the labour that was enacted there and in the broader history of the city of Charleston (Ann Hamilton Studio n.d.).

Craft has been successfully incorporated into contemporary art practice, at times seeking to query and destablilize the status quo, as seen in *Womanhouse*. At other times it works more subtly to evoke questions about perceptions of women's work and the rights of marginalised groups, as in *Slumber* and *Indigo Blue*. Having briefly outlined the important interaction between feminism, craft and contemporary art, I wish to direct the conversation to the particular practice and place with which this research project is concerned.

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Figure 30. Ann Hamilton, *Indigo Blue*, 2001, reinstallation at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Plain Sewing at Home: Reimagining and Making Place

It is not unusual for dressmakers to work from home rather than a shopfront, often for reasons of economic necessity by avoiding additional mortgage or rental expenses (Tulloch 1999, 112; Buckley 1999, 57; Palmer 1999, 208). Beyond reasons of economy, the activities of dressmakers working from home signifies the complexity of the domestic sphere and challenges patriarchal expectations of a woman's role within the home (Buckley 1999, 57). The sewing machine was initially marketed as a way for a man to keep his wife contented, thus leading to a more efficient household with such benefits as better prepared meals; an alternative consequence was that a woman might see a sewing machine in the home as more useful than a husband (Fernandez 1999, 165). When a domestic environment becomes a hybrid of both family and work space (either client centered or for the thrifty running of a household), it can cause internal boundaries to blur, drawing creative and profitable work into proximity with household chores and the responsibilities of motherhood (Buckley 1999, 57). Some of the consequences of this hybridity[31] include the creation of a dynamic home and creative practice, and a resultant connection with community in the provision of services for fiscal gain.

Buckley and Tulloch have suggested that a creative, habitual practice can be integral to an individual's sense of place and belonging, and in fact enhance their experience of place and their life journey as they are drawn into dialogue with others in the provision of services (Buckley 1999, 58; Tulloch 1999, 122). Although records of home sewing and other more localised (less high profile) histories of the industry are slight (Buckley 1999, 65), it appears that home dressmaking is meaningful work for many women by offering additional income, as well as providing a valuable service to clients who seek alternatives to poor quality ready-mades, overly expensive designer clothes, or who have difficult figures, and those who live remote from shopping facilities (Palmer 1999, 208-209). There is diversity in the client bases and reasons for dressmaking across various contexts, from cosmopolitan cities to small rural towns and villages.

Throughout the exegesis I have made reference to my grandmother's dressmaking, a skill learnt as a youth in her home village in Italy. As a young woman she worked for a number of years under Madame Marchese in an independent fashion house in the Northern Italian city of Turin where she perfected the profession. Upon marrying my grandfather and immigrating with him to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), my grandmother started to sew garments for the farming community in and around the town of Bindura. Rural communities often experience limited access to clothing stores (Gordon 2004, 70) and Bindura was no different. The situation provided a good business and creative opportunity for my grandmother as women sought her services when they required bespoke clothing. The economic transactions, client engagement and creative production all took place within the home.

In the early years, whilst residing in the original farmhouse at Marston, my grandmother complicated the domestic environment by establishing dual-purpose spaces in the home. A section of the front porch served as her sewing space where she would receive clients and spend much of the day working until the new house was built in the 1970s, at which time my grandmother stipulated a sewing room be incorporated into the design. Although a sewing space was ultimately *physically* sanctioned within the home through the building process, there remained a tension around work and domesticity within the house. It was necessary for my grandmother to invite clients into the home to participate in the creative practice of dressmaking, thereby amplifying the experience and significance of that place as both a workspace and domestic environment. My grandfather largely supported and celebrated my grandmother's professional practice, but there were times when his frustration with her devotion to the work would become apparent, although delivered in a jocular tone. My grandmother recalls, "I always remember he used to come in and say, '[s]o what we having for dinner? Some dresses.'" However, she goes on to reflect that he eventually accepted her commitment to dressmaking.[32]

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[31] For an expanded account of the complexity, porosity and politics of place as space, see Doreen Massey's (2005) seminal work, For Space.

[32] Quote taken from an unpublished interview between Catterina Rossetti and myself, conducted on 28 December 2012.

When practiced within a domestic framework, plain sewing has the capacity to extend the parameters of home by providing a meeting point between domestic and broader social and community concerns (Tulloch 1999, 122). Along with hundreds of hours of labour directed toward dressmaking, discussions concerning the design of garments and customer expectations took place in the sewing room too. In addition, fittings were an essential part of the development of the garment and customer satisfaction. In this instance, plain sewing and dressmaking enabled my grandmother to connect with her community. Beyond a wife, mother and farmer, my grandmother was a maker; she transcended social, cultural and language barriers encountered as an Italian immigrant in an English colonial context via her plain sewing practice, thus establishing her importance within the farming community. In some contexts, sewing circles, where people gather together to practice a particular technique, have been noted for their ability to form identity and companionship (Gordon 2004, 80); however, my grandmother achieved this as an independent dressmaker, as evident in our conversations,

> Yes, because...with that [sewing] I meet lot of people...all those Greek in Bindura...were making a stack of dresses. So it was always full up. And then I was going to Bindura to fit them. So I had party there. [33]

Plain Sewing and Embodying the Memory of Place

Having outlined the social complexities of plain sewing, work and domesticity, my discussion now turns to the materials of plain sewing and the embodied act of sewing as it relates to built environments and memory. Scholar Victoria Mitchell suggests that textiles are capable of embodying both an interiority and exteriority, referencing the understanding of being within textiles (clothing, blankets), and observing them from outside; all these characteristics are representative of a corporeal experience translated to a conceptual one. Mitchell likens this translation to the initial formation of thread through the action of spinning, where the raw material of thread is stretched and twisted in the spinning process, moving from a mass into a malleable line capable of defining a space (plumb line, marking or measuring) or being woven into a form that occupies or covers (lines) a space (Mitchell 2006, 342-43).

Mitchell contends that the "manipulation of fibrous matter results in the possibility of knowing and articulating the relationship of the body with space" (Mitchell 2006, 344) and in doing so has the potential to extend the individual into space through the act of spinning. While Mitchell's essay is concerned with metaphors of spinning and bodily experience of space, she also expands the argument to the work of artist Fred Sandback *(Figure 31)*, as he delineates spaces via the thread-line within gallery spaces, and engages with the environment *in situ* (Mitchell 2006, 354). A similar engagement with thread and place can be applied when dealing with the metaphor and memory of places and spaces that are not easily experienced or revisited by the maker in order to make them manifest in the here and now.

Korean artist Do Ho Suh attempts a reconstitution of place via the medium of woven fabric, in a process that is comparable to the unification of the spun thread Mitchell alludes to. Living away from home in New York City, Suh believes that, as an immigrant, his experience of displacement furnishes him with a critical distance with which he can perceive the world, make art that comments on life (lalulaTV 2011) and actively deal with concerns of longing for homes of the past. His artwork *Seoul Home* (1999) *(Figure 32)* derives from Suh's consideration of what it would be like to carry his Korean home with him everywhere he went—a notion that links well to Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling's (2006) assertion that home is a spatial imaginary that can transcend and connect places across time, as discussed in chapter one. Manifested from silk, this is a fabric replica of Suh's family home, light and malleable enough to be folded and packed in order to travel with the artist to different locations around the world where it is unfolded and installed once more to be spatially experienced. In order to achieve the project of reimagining his home in this way, Suh learnt how to sew, and in line with the precision and embodiment implied by Mitchell's discussion of spinning and the delineation of space,

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[33] Quote taken from an unpublished interview between Catterina Rossetti and myself, conducted on 28 December 2012.
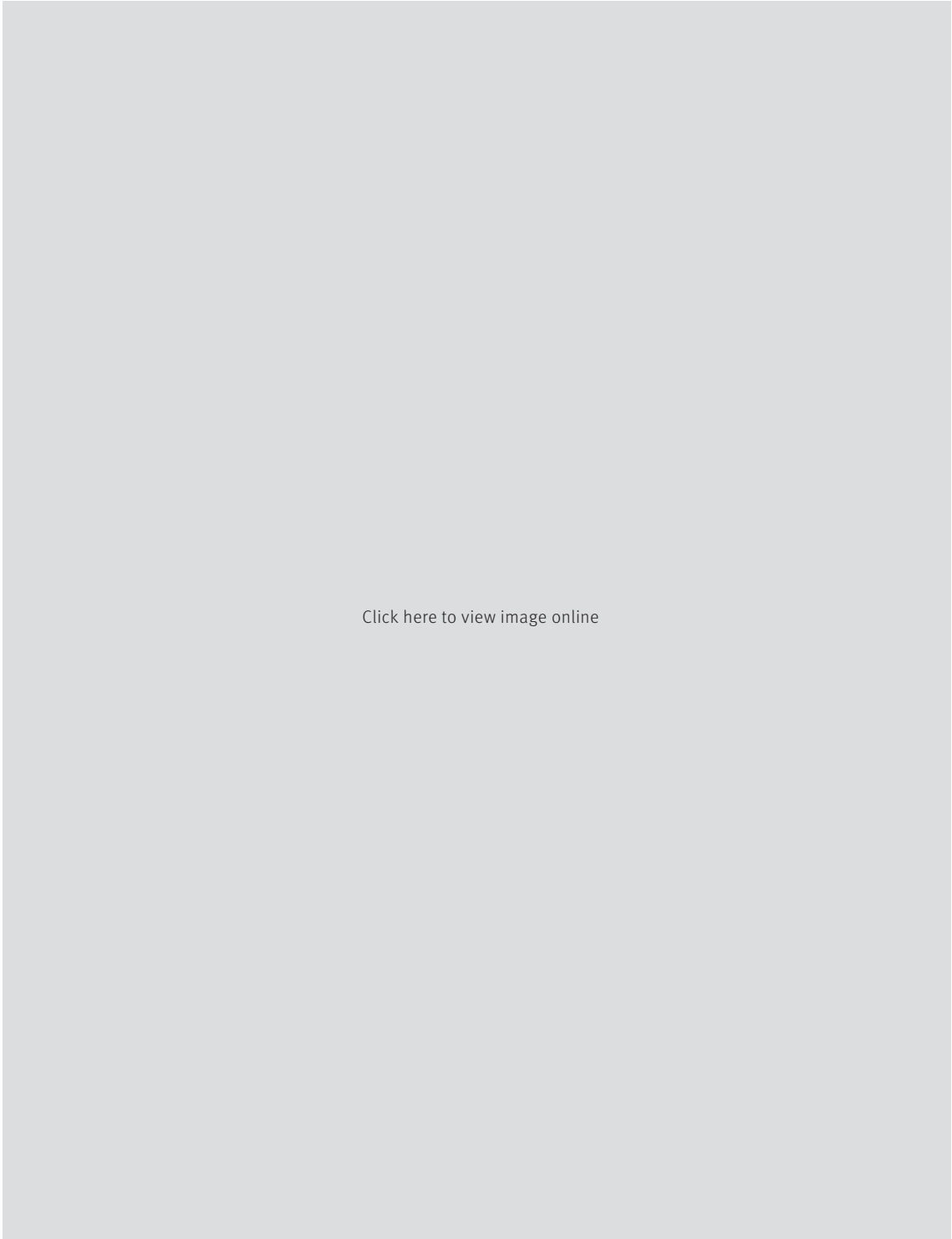
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Figure 31. Fred Sandback, *Untitled (Sculptural Study, Two-part Construction)*, 1974-2013, dimensions variable, black acrylic yarn.

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Figure 32. Do Ho Suh, *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home/L.A. Home*, 1999, 378.5 x 609.6 x 609.6 cm, silk and metal armatures, installed at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

Suh measured in minute detail his family's house in Korea before undertaking the task of recreating it. This textile piece exemplifies the concept of travelling fabric (discussed further in chapter four) and manifesting home elsewhere. Appropriately, the title of the work evolves as the house travels and is installed in new cities around the world, progressively becoming a *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home/L.A. Home.*

In contrast to Suh's lightweight and infinitely transportable home, Rachel Whiteread's *House* (1993) *(Figure 33)* was manifestly solid and immovable except by force, as evidenced by its eventual demolition in 1994. *House* was a cast of a typical Victorian terrace house—a structure familiar to many living in or travelling through British cities—and perhaps this is one reason for the work's ubiquitous title. In addition, there is scholarship to suggest that the concept of home does not sit comfortably within social paradigms of inner city living, and in its place the suburban house is constructed as the ideal home (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 107). It is understood that Whiteread did not intend to make a nostalgic artwork and that *House* "challenges concepts of community, place and security" (Hornstein 2011, 88) to the extent that the existence of the artwork was contested and negotiated with community stakeholders prior to and throughout its year-long existence.

Whiteread's cast of the interior of the house exemplifies the familiar spaces within, and yet such an intimate portrayal paradoxically renders the known structure of an urban house somewhat alien. The casts in Whiteread's oeuvre are of common objects and sites, and yet the cast itself renders them unknowable by amplifying their materiality as viewers are drawn to understand the spaces in-between made physical through the casting process. By drawing attention to the materiality of overlooked aspects of objects and sites, she questions the notion of attachment to those objects and sites as repositories for memory and sentimental connections (Hornstein 2011, 86). *House* is no less accurate than Suh's—in fact it is more so—and the truthfulness of the cast forms an impenetrable structure, offering a different, less porous and malleable tactility than *Seoul Home*. Whiteread's casts are monuments to imperviousness, and yet "by framing the objects with a mold, she frames objects for us to consider...exposes what she wants us to pay attention to and separate from the everyday, so that we take notice" (Hornstein 2011, 90). Consequently, with artworks like *House*, we look at the familiar in a new light, objectively.

Both artists have engaged with the original structure of the houses they reference in order to produce their artworks—Suh on a visit to Korea, and Whiteread by physically casting *House in situ*. My challenge is to engage with home from a distance, and speculate on the (im)permanence of architecture. Hornstein reminds us that "our belief in architecture as permanent results from the legacy of Antiquity, and the treatise *De Architectura* by the ancient Roman, Marcus Vitruvius, who established an architectural canon of strength, utility and beauty as key components of any built structure" (Hornstein 2011, 81). Suh's *Seoul Home* derives from a carefully measured and plotted original structure based on a traditional Korean home built by his family, yet its very material components are ephemeral in nature and the form manifests out of a need to negotiate distance and the experience of migration. Whiteread's *House* existed because a bank of terrace houses was due to be demolished, and could only be manifested through the physical dismantling of the architecture in the act of casting. *House* is made of solid stuff, but as a consequence of decision-making processes of local councillors and stakeholders, the artwork made from architecture was also demolished a year after its emergence (Hornstein 2011, 88).

Click here to view image online
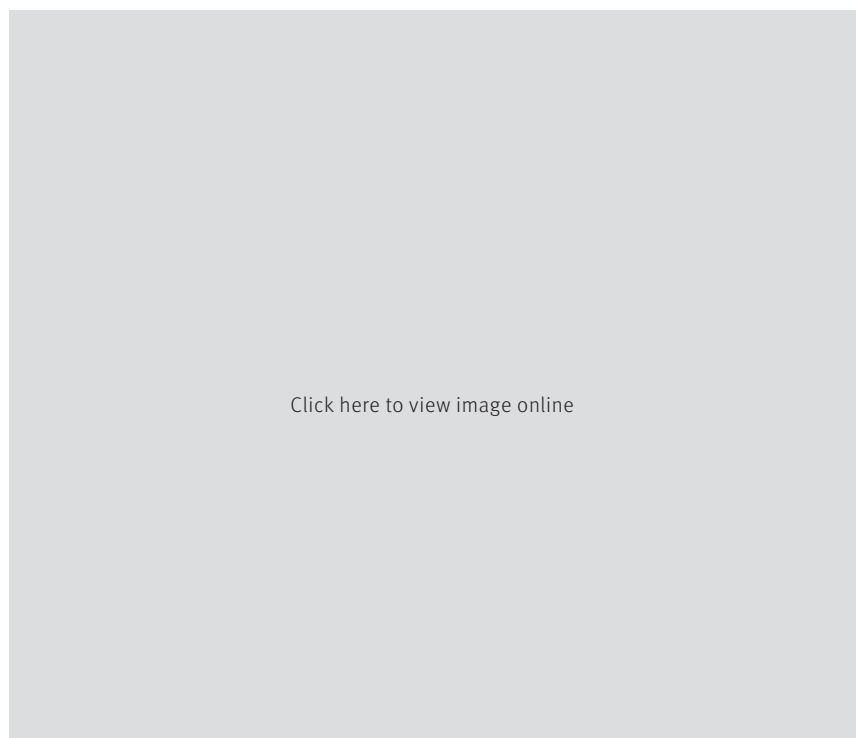
Figure 33. Rachel Whiteread, *Untitled (House)*, 1993, commissioned by Artangel.

Broadly, the notion of *home* is connected with place and acts of dwelling, and the concept of *houses* refers to architecture and a site where home-making can occur (Blunt and Dowling 2006).[34] With the permanence of architecture drawn into question by artists like Whiteread and Suh, I reflect on the houses at Marston. As mentioned in chapter one, the houses still stand (confirmed by a recent search on Google Earth) but their meaning has shifted. The houses there are inhabited by other people now and have become a home for them—a home that is different to the one for my family. The permanence of architecture is transported into a phenomenological realm, though still tied to the material experiences of home. In *remembering* Marston, I think of the houses there as my home, whilst acknowledging that in the present reality they are the structures that enable home-making for other people; they have become home to someone else.

In considering my memory of the houses-as-homes at Marston, I am reminded of Edward Casey's assertion that buildings have the ability to condense culture within a place, therefore intensifying an experience of that place that endures over time (Casey 1993, 30-31). In the case of Marston, the endurance over time occurs memorially, where the material efforts at building a dwelling strengthen and mediate my memory of home. For those presently living at Marston, the acculturation of the houses manifests as traces and echoes of their former inhabitants.

The condensation of culture in the homestead occurred in a number of ways. Firstly, there was the physical construction undertaken by my grandfather, with the incorporation of design elements derived directly from our Italian heritage and my grandfather's early profession as a blacksmith. These were physical, cultural and visual investments in home-making, in place-making, enacted over a long period of time. Beyond my grandfather's input, my mother and her siblings contributed to the visual experience of the home through the selection of their bedroom colour schemes. When the house was being built, my mother and her siblings were invited to choose a colour for their rooms and decide which hue they wanted for their curtains and carpets. My mother chose red, her brothers selected burnt orange and olive green respectively, and her youngest sister chose turquoise blue. These colours were to remain at Marston until we departed, and it is likely they exist there today. The olive green room, once occupied by my mother's younger brother, was adapted into a guest room when he left home to attend university, and at times, clients were shown into this room for a fitting. I have a strong memory of a client visiting for her wedding dress fitting, an exciting affair that I was privy to as a young child. We were forced by necessity to move to the green room as the full skirt and train of the dress was so enormous there was not space enough for four people and the dress to be in the sewing room at the same time.

The memory of the rooms, the hybridity of the domestic and work related spaces within Marston, and how they might aid the reimagining of place as repositories of memory, are significant aspects of my creative enquiry. Though not *physically* palpable anymore, they act to order and arrange my memories of Marston. The colours have a particular resonance, as do the activities that went on in spaces such as the sewing room. Increasingly I acknowledge the way that these spaces and activities have pervaded not only my creative research, but also the way I think about this lost home from here in my Perth home. This creative investigation has been about a venture to reclaim, reimagine and remember a lost home from another, new home—thinking about home from within a different dwelling, linking place to place through common practices such as plain sewing, and letting myself be influenced by the sensory perceptions of remembered spaces *(Figures 34, 35 and 36)*.

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[34] For a more thorough account of the complex relationship between the conceptualisation of house, home and house-as-home, see Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2006).

Figure 34. Melanie McKee, studio research, 2016, digital images testing how I might view my Perth home through the colours of Marston's interiors.

Figure 35. Melanie McKee, studio research, 2016, digital images testing how I might view my grandmother's Perth home through the colours of Marston's interiors.

Figure 36. Melanie McKee, *Gathered in Two Places*, 2016, 28.5x20cm each, screen print and monotype.

Time spent reflecting on the rooms at Marston is evident in the artwork *Emplacement I (grey powder room)* (2016) *(Figures 37 and 38)*. This piece emerged from hours of hand-stitched labour, marking out and manifesting hundreds of small grey squares, a metaphor for the grey mosaic tiles in the powder room off the hall of the bedroom wing at Marston. As a child, restless and eager to return to play, a quick dash to the loo hardly necessitated closing the toilet door, and thus through the open door and to the right of the line of sight, could be glimpsed a slither of gold from the gold mosaic tiles of the adjacent main bathroom. This artwork is motivated by a memory of the interior of the homestead and so it is a reflection on architectural space, pondered through the hand gesture of infinite stitching that is an action also derived from Marston, but which now takes place in Perth.

Testing the form this reimagining of place should take, I folded, bundled and compressed the artwork in an action of condensing space and time, rendering *Emplacement I* transportable *(Figure 39)* like Suh's *Seoul Home*. Untethered, the artwork has the potential to be encompassing, like a blanket or covering, enhancing the physical experience of the work initiated in the action of stitching. In another version, the artwork is stretched over a frame, to emulate a formal, structural entity, with the seam of gold evident when viewed from the appropriate angle. Certainly in this final expression, the artwork is structural, but perhaps more abstract, causing an engagement with the conventions of form. Site-specific works like those of Suh and Whiteread might more accurately engage with the conventions of form, where measurements are exact and the textures of surfaces are literally transferred. *Emplacement I* is a reimagining of place from fragments of memories—no one thought to photograph the powder room. Rather than accurately recreating the architectural space of the site, I am interested in the bodily experience and physical memory of the site—where the act of monotonous marking and stitching across grey suiting fabric facilitates a sense of lingering in a past place and manifesting it elsewhere.

Figure 37. *Emplacement I (grey powder room)*,
2016, 129x97cm, fabric and cotton thread.
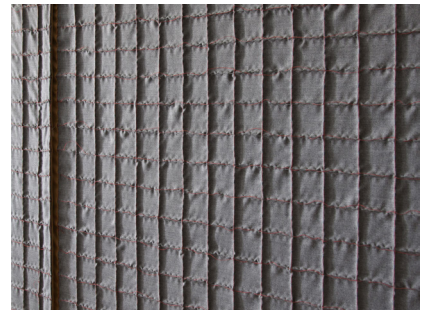
Figure 38. *Emplacement I (grey powder room)*, 2016 (detail).

Figure 39. Melanie McKee, process
documentation of *Emplacement I (grey
powder room)*, 2016, dimensions variable,
fabric and cotton thread.

In chapter two I outlined the importance of photographing the homes that my grandmother and I live in here in Perth, as the sites from which we contemplate Marston. While the photographs have been incorporated into the textile artworks as printed images, the studio research tests *Interior Contemplations I* and *II* (2016) *(Figures 40 and 41)* use the images in another way, by transcribing the architectural details obtained from the photographs into a pattern. These pattern elements are then pieced, in the manner described at the start of this chapter, to reform the interior space as a material entity. In doing so they enable me to reimagine the environment, to contemplate a lost home from my new home and to reconfigure a space that encompasses work, domesticity and home. However, the form at times fails to be neatly complete, with cornices fraying and jutting out, not caught by the stitches that seek a reconstitution of place.

Figure 40. Melanie McKee, *Interior Contemplation I*, 2016, 50x40 cm each, calico and cotton thread (detail).

Figure 41. Melanie McKee, *Interior Contemplation II*, 2016, 50x40 cm each, calico and cotton thread (detail).

Sewing was important to my family's experience of Marston—as a means of income—and at times it became a contentious issue as domestic and work values blurred conventional divisions of home. The practice provided professional as well as personal gratification for my grandmother, who used sewing to cement a significant place in her rural community in Zimbabwe. As discussed in the previous chapter, sewing, as a form of habitual body memory, is integral as a means of remembering Marston for my grandmother and I. It also travelled with us, with my grandmother continuing to sew here in Perth. The emphasis has shifted, though, due to age and my grandmother typically does alterations now for a smaller, though more diverse, client base. The clients range from elderly men and women seeking to rejuvenate quality clothing, to those seeking to extend the life of favourite items with the adjustment of a hem or seam, or the replacement of lost buttons. In addition, young brides commission alterations for their 'off-the-rack' dresses, or bridal gowns ordered from overseas via online boutiques. With the move to Australia, and the growth of online shopping, my grandmother's practice has evolved to suit the circumstances of her age and individual clients. No less resourceful, her skill has established her once more in a new context.

Through the action of sewing I have generated several potentially ambiguous garments that take as their reference original garments made at Marston. I do not intend these artworks to be perceived as replicas of clothes made on the farm. By drawing inspiration from, rather than directly copying, clothes from a particular time and place, the artworks facilitate an accessible body of work, enabling me to reimagine a lost home. Their conception emanates from there (Marston) but is reimagined and manifested here (Perth), working alongside my grandmother in a collaborative and reflexive approach to labouring over the memory of home. The *Dress in Landscape* (2014) *(Figures 42 and 43)* series was studio research to test the ways in which a dress derived from Marston might manifest itself back into the landscape. The dress design developed from remembered garments worn by my grandmother in the 1950s. The landscape photographs are of Marston and have been digitally projected onto the garment, displacing the landscape as the light literally bends to accommodate the form of the dress. In this instance, the dress is not hung loosely, as though on a hanger; it looks as it would when worn by someone, it appears as though embodied. The dress emerges from the land, and the effect echoes the narrative of our displacement, by visually and physically dislocating the landscape.

Given sewing's prominence in my research, cloth has been an appropriate material employed within my practice and it will be discussed further in the following chapter concerning material culture. Cloth is familiar in its materiality. Individuals can relate to the texture of cloth, to the wear and tear of fabric borne over time, and they are perhaps aware of a lived, embodied history inherent in fabric in the form of clothing. The use of cloth in my creative practice enables me to move beyond conceptual and physical boundaries into liminal space (Barnett 1999, 32), where I am free to encounter the narratives of place evident in the artwork. The significance of material culture and the implication of this field of study on the memory and making of home will be explored in relation to plain sewing methods in my creative practice.

Figure 42. Melanie McKee, *Dress in Landscape I*, 2014, dimensions variable, digital image projected over calico dress.

Figure 43. Melanie McKee, *Dress in Landscape II*, 2014, dimensions variable, digital image projected over calico dress.

CHAPTER FOUR

FITTING: Material Culture and Migration

"Yet, writ large among the individuals of a...sometimes disparate population, these personal mementoes provide the material markers of templates, inscribed with narrative and sentiment, which may later re-articulate the shifting boundaries of a socio-cultural identity." (Parkin 1999, 313)

When the garment has been pieced and taken a coherent form, it is time to perform a fitting where the client dons the garment for the first time. Now the true sense of how the fabric corresponds with the contours of the figure becomes apparent. If there are any adjustments to be made, they are noted at this stage—perhaps the lengthening of a hem, the pinching in of waist seams or a dart. The dressmaker handles and responds to the nuances of fabric and form to accommodate the peculiarities of a person's body. The wearer has physically experienced the garment for the first time. The fabric is the mediator between the maker and the wearer who will eventually carry the garment forward into the world.

This chapter considers cloth as material culture and explains my interest in the ability of material objects to store knowledge, and their potential to transfer this knowledge to those who encounter them as memory objects. My understanding of memory objects has been influenced by Caitlin DeSilvey who speaks of human engagement with objects that generate perceptible encounters with the past (DeSilvey 2004, 143-4). Further to DeSilvey's exploration on memory, I will discuss Nadia Seremetakis' writing on encountered memory and material culture. The link between migration and material culture will be considered in line with the work of scholars Divya Tolia-Kelly and David Parkin.

Garments and the practice of plain sewing will be discussed in relation to my creative practice, specifically the way in which garments have acted as vehicles for locating and negotiating displacement in a process of migration. The artwork of contemporary practitioners Yinka Shonibare, MBE, and Kimsooja will be examined in terms of how fabric serves as a means of journeying through narratives of memory and migration, while Jane Whiteley's textile work will be considered in relation to embodied making and the ability of cloth to contain memory.

Material Culture: Memory Objects and the Reimagining of Home

Anthropologist David Parkin's quote that introduces this chapter states, "personal mementoes provide the material markers of templates, inscribed with narrative" (Parkin 1999, 313), which indicates that material culture has the capacity to transfer knowledge and memory, therefore providing guidance to individuals in new contexts. My particular interest lies with cloth and the making of material memory objects, engaging with cloth's ability to transfer knowledge and narratives imbued within via creative practice. I use memory, creative process and clothing references from Marston in order to acknowledge displacement and the memory of things left behind. By doing so I hope to retrace, retain and convey the narrative of a lost home via the memory object.

The artworks discussed so far have effected a reaching back into another space-time, a return home via creative processes. How, then, when considering the central research question that seeks to test the ways in which an artist evokes their lost home through embodied memory and creative practice, can the memory be made physical in Perth? This question, combined with the rich engagement with my grandmother's sewing practice, leads to a consideration of creative practice as it relates to the materiality of the plain sewn artworks discussed toward the end of the chapter.

Material culture is broadly described as "objects, their properties, and the materials that they are made of, and the ways in which these material facets are central to an understanding of culture and social relations" (Woodward 2013). Material culture studies tend to reject the assumption that objects act merely as symbols of pre-existing culture, and instead posit that "material properties of things [are] central to the meanings an object might have" (Woodward 2013). Similarly it is important to acknowledge the significance of the human player in generating objects, thereby "avoiding a conceptual separation of subject from object" (Tilly 2002, 27).

According to cultural anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis, our body's existence in the world necessitates communication with objects via our senses and gestures. This interaction between our body and objects enables the manifestation of truth that is beyond spoken language, and the result is a performative interaction with material culture and the conditions of embodiment (Seremetakis 1994, 6). The cutting, marking, stitching and piecing involved in plain sewing are gestures that reinforce the memory of Marston for me as I make the artwork. Together the manifesting gesture and resultant artwork may generate an experience of the place they emanate from, feeding directly into notions of a lost home, remembered via creative practice. The following extract elaborates on the importance of objects as they relate to the research project:

> As a sensory form in itself, the artifact can provoke the emergence, the awakening of the layered memories, and thus the senses contained within it. The object invested with sensory memory speaks; it provokes recall as a missing, detached yet antiphonic element of the perceiver. The sensory connection between perceiver and artifact completes the latter in an unexpected and non prescribed fashion because the perceiver is also the recipient of the unintended historical after-effects of the artifact's presence or absence (Seremetakis 1994, 10-11).

Drawing on the dressmaking metaphor that structures this exegesis, the wearer (perceiver) physically experiences the garment (object) for the first time during the fitting stage, while the fabric is the mediator between the dressmaker and the client. In my creative practice, the material qualities of the garment are the mediators between the maker and audience rather than client, and so the antiphonic relationship perpetuates in the audience encounter with memory objects that emerge from Marston. Unlike Seremetakis' allusion to *unintended* historical after-effects, I intentionally incorporate memories of place into the objects I make. Therefore I am also interested in the antiphonic relationship that I observe between the artist and artwork during the creative process. An antiphon refers to chants or verses intended to be sung in response to a preceding chant or verse. Perceived in this way, the artwork and maker respond to one another, completing a picture, augmenting an experience. In reference to the piecing process that framed the previous chapter, an antiphonic relationship builds an experience through gestures while adhering to a particular pattern dictated by the marks of the formative garment. A maker enables the garment to become whole and knowable, whilst the garment guides the making process, in this instance coaxing forth a narrative of place through innumerable gestures (stitches) emanating from my memory and experience of Marston. Further, the artwork, which is garment-derived, echoes something familiar in the language of fabric, stitch and form—they have the potential to become graspable and knowable for the uninitiated, for those who have not experienced Marston first hand. As garment-artworks they are detached yet knowable to a broader audience.

If material properties of objects are central to their meaning, and if there is an acknowledged relationship between object and subject, and object and maker, then the possibility that objects convey memory, as imbued within their material construction, has merit. Cultural geographer Caitlin DeSilvey speaks of human engagement with objects that generate perceptible encounters with the past even if the original 'rememberer' has passed on and therefore cannot recount the original memory (DeSilvey 2004, 26, 143-4). DeSilvey's findings relate to objects and farming paraphernalia encountered for the first time by volunteers and members of the public on an abandoned Montana homestead. Through these object-subject encounters the volunteers began interacting with the objects, some of which were recognisable to them, while others were more ambiguous with their function requiring interpretation and reimagining. Those people encountering the objects did not make them, however, at times they did reconfigure and repair the objects. DeSilvey notes that "as people rework, reclaim, and reanimate things they open up self-directed engagements with the

multiple traces of the past" (DeSilvey 2004, 143-44). In doing so a kind of 'living history' is generated that is in communion with a past, present and future interaction with place. While DeSilvey's findings are concerned with individuals interacting with found objects to engage past with present in situ, my creative research seeks to generate new objects *out-of-place* in order to recall and engender an experience of place, drawing on embodied making and memory through creative practice.

DeSilvey's contention that "the capacity to 'remember' extends into the world" (DeSilvey 2004, 26) through objects *in situ*, raises questions concerning the object in place versus the object in a museum context as an artifact. With a particular emphasis on sites of heritage, she probes the expectations of objects to be representational of a prescribed version of the past, and suggests that curation of objects in such a context is designed for public consumption and is in danger of 'thinning' the meaning imbued in an object, and thus enabling it to fit comfortably within an archival or collection context (DeSilvey 2004, 16-17). Despite DeSilvey's caution, I acknowledge there is a certain amount of comfort to be found in the concept of archives and collections as repositories for memory and cultural relics; they are evidence catalogued for posterity. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, "We value genealogical trees, grandfather clocks, and cluttered ware of a local museum because they suggest that our identity, far from being a transient and elusive thing, is fixed in extensive time and space" (Tuan 1980, 472). It is reassuring that we can *locate* ourselves in time and space through the archive, or memory collection.

As an artist dealing with memory and whose practice is intimately involved with the material cultures so specific to a place and to plain sewing, perhaps there is evidence of a latent desire to preserve memory of place for posterity. Yet I also understand the futility and impossibility of doing so, and it is in this in-between space where the value in reimagining becomes apparent.

Beyond the physical distance imposed by my family's displacement, there is a temporal distance between my contemplation of Marston here in Perth, and the lived experience of that place of my childhood. Ethnographer Ruth Behar speaks of the frustration of the distance between an adult and their childhood self, where an individual will "search and search in [their] adult language for that child, but will find...the place markers have vanished" (Behar 1996, 134-5). In the artwork *Party Dress, for girl aged 6* (2012) I sought to reimagine a dress my grandmother had made for me when I was a young girl. The original dress is no longer in my possession, and I only have photographs of me wearing it as a six-year-old. However, even with these visual reminders, there were difficulties in making the garment in another place and time from where it originated. My grandmother could not remember making the dress, but she could reconstruct the pattern from the available photographs. She had not made the white embroidered collars and thought they must have been purchased ready-made. We had to adapt, interpret, recall and then reimagine the dress from the context of Australia, thousands of kilometers and 25 years away from that dress, time and place. It became a collaborative exercise with my grandmother guiding me with her expertise in a process of making the past tangible in a crafted material form as a memory object.

Curator and scholar Janis Jefferies says, "Crafting...a material object can be an embodiment, a sign of personal knowledge... This is also what connects craft to the work of narratives, as both weld disparate elements to memory and to the construction of what we would call the self" (Jefferies 2011, 226). The craft of plain sewing in the context of this research project can be considered a means of giving form to narratives and memories associated with Marston and our displacement from home. The narrative is imbued and unfolds in the action of constructing garments, where the reference for these garments and the practice of sewing are intimately bound to place. My embodied memory of place and the embodied action of sewing give form to memory and instill narrative content into the garment through action, culminating in the transfer of knowledge, experience and memory of place to the artwork and to those who encounter it.

The development of narratives via craft practices is evident in the artwork *Party Dress, for girl aged 6* (2012) *(Figure 44)*, where the process of making the garment elaborated and confirmed an account of our displacement and migration, as well as the complexity of the process of remembering home via creative practice wherein I found it necessary to reinterpret and reach compromises in the process of making. This is a dynamic process of interpretation, reimagining and evolution, rather than a finite memorial to a place. Craft processes serve to materialise narratives of Marston in the making of memory objects (garments) and the collaboration between generations.

Figure 44. Melanie McKee, *Party Dress, for girl aged 6*, 2012, dimensions variable, Japanese lawn cotton, ribbon and lace.

Other textile works made during this creative research project exist as fragments or abstractions of garments rather than wearable clothes. In chapter three I discussed a calico dress that appeared to emerge from landscapes of Marston projected over it. In its final version, the artwork *I stitched this dress about you, for you, from you* (2014) *(Figures 45 and 46)* underwent a transformation as I applied a basting stitch that sealed the garment and made it unwearable, flat and fixed; fixed, but not limited. The basting was a drawn out, temporal process that took several weeks, forcing me to linger with the garment. After each row of stitching was completed, the thread was knotted off and a small tail left hanging. As a result, the artwork is not a seamless shape. There is woolliness to the form where short tails, or tales, trail and lift off. It is not a full stop, but an attempt at a full stop in an effort to locate myself by labouring over a memory of place. By spending time contemplating place through acts of making, the illimitable result speaks to Boym's reflective nostalgia discussed in chapter two, where the longing for home does not strive for utopia, rather it embraces the impossibility of reconstitution and affords a richer engagement with the memory of a past home and the experience of a new home.

In my practice I acknowledge and embrace the inexactitude of memory in recalling the narratives of home. Yet I basted the dress in *I stitched this dress about you, for you, from you* in a repetitive, obsessive action in order to fix it in some way, attempting to secure a memory and appease the disquiet of displacement. However, in doing so the dress has evolved into something that cannot be physically worn. It is no longer a garment that my grandmother could have donned at Marston. In the shape of a dress, but flattened down and sealed, transformed through creative practice, it now has ambiguous edges.

The artwork *Sundered Dress* (2014) *(Figures 47 and 48)* references my grandmother's early days working as a dressmaker for Madame Marchese's fashion house in Turin, Italy. Following Madame Marchese's annual visit to Paris, templates of the season's patterns were made in calico. Exactly one half of each garment was made in detail for clients to view, and then the selected garment sewn to specification in the chosen fabric. I drew inspiration from the notion of the half-garment, an incomplete prototype designed to illustrate the look and function of an outfit that facilitates a decision-making process.

Figure 45. Melanie McKee, *I stitched this dress about you, for you, from you*, 2014, 110x55 cm, calico and thread.

Figure 46. Melanie McKee, *I stitched this dress about you, for you, from you*, 2014 (detail).

I was struck by the idea of the emptiness of the other nonexistent half of the garment, and when making my own versions here in Perth I sought to question whether they spoke of missed opportunities, of lost possible futures. *Sundered Dress* is fragmented like our time at Marston, cut short and now displaced. In an effort to metaphorically fill the void left by the absent half, I applied hundreds of small stitches to the fabric. This became, in part, a tribute to my grandmother and the infinite stitches she carried out in her sewing room at Marston, marking time, constituting her place there, and reinforcing my memory of home. Additionally, it was an opportunity to spend time manually handling the garment—lingering with, and labouring over, what had come to stand for a fragment of Marston, here in Perth.

The protracted nature of plain sewing techniques has proved fundamental to my understanding of my experience of migration and my location in time and space. Time spent physically making an artwork reinforces my link to habitual body memory as discussed in chapter two; the action of sewing engages and orients in place the maker who in this case is the rememberer too. Australian artist and writer Sera Waters reflects on the generation of laborious, crafted artworks and compares the relationship to work—not of an economic or remunerable kind, but rather the output of human energy via gestures of repetition. In particular she notes the ability of this extended creative effort to transfer energy from the maker to the material properties of the artwork (Waters 2012, 71). Prior to any engagement with a finished object, the making of the artwork itself—its creative generation—can reinforce the existence of the artwork as a memory object. Within this project the repeated sewing gestures are intimately tethered to place and the memory of a lost home. Waters goes on to state that,

> In repetitively crafted artworks such skills as willpower, endurance, striving for the impossible and transferring the commonplce into the extreme, are shared to suggest possibilities for their renewed application and understanding elsewhere. Skill is thus no longer limited to technical proficiency, but has the possibility of being non-material, organic, transferable and relational (Waters 2012, 84).

Artworks that become relational in this way draw individuals into dialogue—via the comprehension of recognisable gestures such as the stitch or familiarity with the vernacular of garment making. I have witnessed this during the exhibition of *I stitched this dress about you, for you, from you* in 2014, where people sought to handle the garment or wondered at the sheer number of stitches applied to it. This is akin to Waters' suggestion that repetitively crafted artworks, when viewed by an audience, "enter into the relational sphere as unexpected encounters with ordinary materials and gestures" (Waters 2012, 84).

The action of repetitive crafting is significant. Instead of encountering found objects with their own inherent histories, the act of imbuing narrative into an object via gestures has been recognised as a means of inserting knowledge within material culture (Jefferies 2011, 226). *Sundered Dress* and *I stitched this dress about you, for you, from you* seek to operate in this way, providing a tangible link to place through material culture and the process of piecing and stitching. The artwork *Tunic* (2016) *(Figure 49)*—whilst evolving in a similar manner by following the signposts of pattern, and responding to the form and function of the garment and sewing process—also contains more figurative elements such as photographic transfers and illustrative embroidery. The artwork's centre panel comprises a photographic transfer, while the side panel is embroidered and stitched, where the image slips away from the viewer's perspective when the garment takes the form of the body. The inclusion of these two panels of imagery is an alternative investigation into the digital projection method used in the *Dress in Landscape* series outlined in chapter three. In this work I sought to physically imbue images from a past place onto a garment generated out-of-place.

Waters contends that time spent repetitively crafting "can create other spaces for the mind to 'work' while the hands continue on into habit" (Waters 2012, 80). Crafting *Tunic* through stitch (embroidery and basting) enabled my physical and temporal engagement with material culture via habitual body memory, and generated a space in which I conceptually encountered Marston. For this particular artwork, the material encounter mattered more for me as the maker, and the final version of the artwork does not permit a material encounter for an audience. As an artwork-garment, *Tunic* can be worn, unlike *Sundered Dress* and *I stitched this dress about you, for you, from you*. This is something that troubled me as I contemplated my dislocation from home during the process of making, and I came to the decision that the ability to be worn, along with the sense of newness evident in the crisp white satin, sat awkwardly with a project concerned with memory of an inaccessible place; this garment could be worn but had not yet been worn. I reached the conclusion that an alternative response to *Tunic* was required, and by photographing the garment I sought to engender a different, less physically tactile reading of it as a memory object; as a photograph, *Tunic* can no longer be worn.

Scholar Janis Jefferies suggests that "the materiality of cloth (and clothes) lies in the way it receives the human imprint; cloth smells of mortality" (Jefferies 2007, 284). Where *Tunic* potentially could, but does not receive the human imprint, in contrast there is an inherent sense of embodiment and corporeality in artist Jane Whiteley's work, enhanced by the abstracted vestments generated from her engagement with ready-made clothing and the residues of domestic cloth. The result is a familiarity with the textiles, a well-worn and laboured engagement with material forms that are relatable and gently nostalgic in their ubiquity. By using cloth with an evident worn history, Whiteley evokes the possible narratives of the cloth and engages with the "metaphoric language of cloth and clothes" (O'Brien 2012, 12). Her creative practice is not overtly concerned with place, but more so with personal histories that at times recall uneasy pasts, as in the work *says she hears her mother's voice* (2010) *(Figure 50)*. In this piece, Whiteley laboriously stitches over a garment reminiscent of a straight jacked in order to engage with a secret family history concerning an aunt who was committed to a mental asylum. The personal nuances here also link to broader concerns about the histories of women (Schilo 2012, 19). Other artists based in Australia, such as Fiona Hall, Julie Gough and Anne Ferran, share Whiteley interest in marginalised histories *(Figures 51–54)*. By incorporating material culture elements into their creative practices, they mine social and political histories, and narratives related to memory and place. Their artworks transport these understandings elsewhere, out of the archive, dresser drawer or community park and into a creative, critical space of enquiry. The ability of cloth, as a material culture, to convey and carry its meanings into new contexts will be discussed further in the following section.

Figure 47. Melanie McKee, *Sundered Dress*, 2014,
dimensions variable, calico and thread.

Figure 48. Melanie McKee, *Sundered Dress*, 2014
(detail).

Figure 49. Melanie McKee, *Tunic*, 2016, dimensions variable, solvent transfer on satin, thread.

Image redacted for copyright reasons
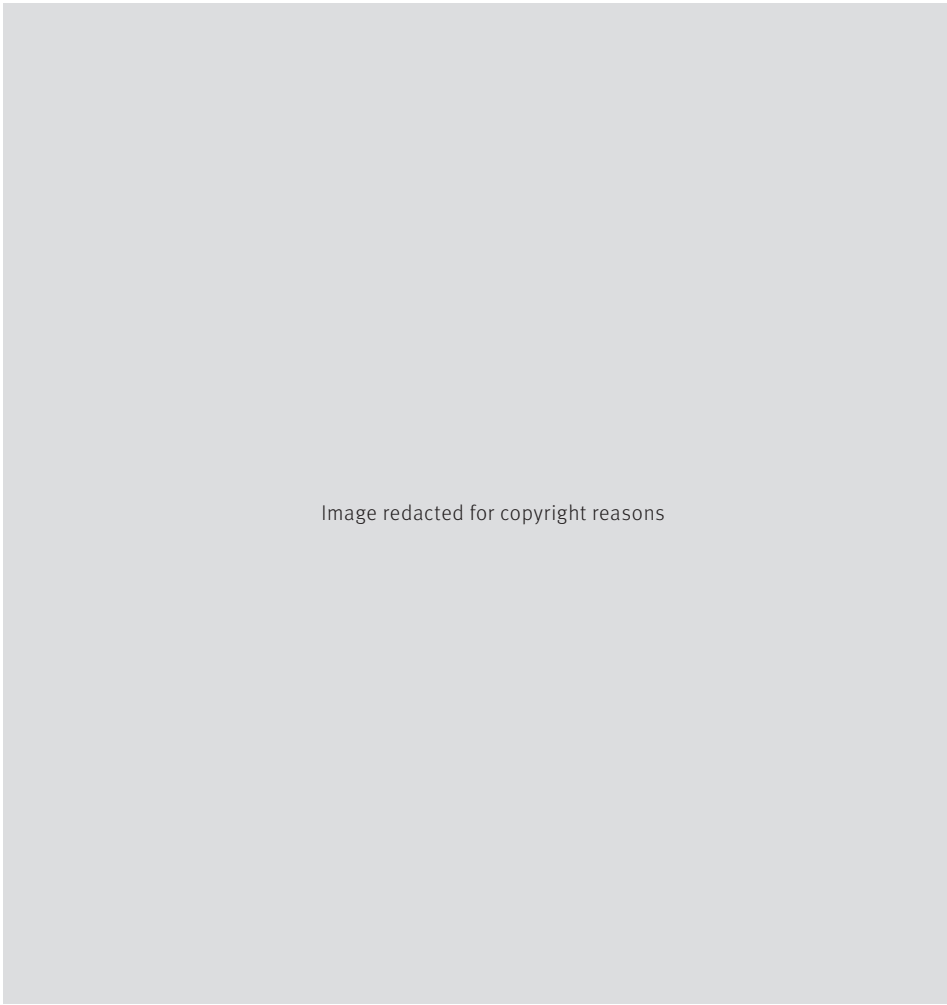
Figure 50. Jane Whiteley, *says she hears her mother's voice*, 2010, 67 x 68 x 9 cm, linen, cotton blanket, hand and machine stitch.

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Figure 51. Fiona Hall, *All The King's Men*, 2014-16, 150 x 63 x 35 cm, knitted military uniform (Italy), wire, dice, courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney (detail).

Figure 52. Julie Gough, from the series *Hunting Ground VI*, 2014, 50x125 cm, edition of 5, pigment on rag paper.

Figure 53. Anne Ferran, *Spill (drawer 2)*, 2001, 146 x 108 x 78 cm, transparency film, MDF, electronics.

Figure 54. Anne Ferran, *Spill*, 2001 installation, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania, 2008.

Material Culture and the Immigrant Experience

There is an extensive body of research on the importance of material culture to the immigrant experience (Boym 2001; Hecht 2001; Marcoux 2001; Miller 2008; Tolia-Kelly 2004; Tuan 1980; Tulloch 1999; Westwood and Phizacklea 2000). In the introduction and chapter one I outlined the significance of incorporating elements from home when building dwellings in the new home-place, in order to reinforce a sense of belonging and solidarity within a new context. As Boym indicates, this is not always a limitation; migrants use material objects from their past home in order to facilitate dialogue with others who have experienced dislocation through migration, even though they may not be from the same origins (Boym 2000, 251-2). Cultural geographer Divya Tolia-Kelly has written extensively on the migration experience of British Asian women. She has a particular interest in the role material culture plays in the experience, and re-experience, of home, where "[s]olid materials are charged with memories that activate common connections to pre-migratory landscapes and environments" (Tolia-Kelly 2004, 314-315). Rather than limiting a person's experience of place, material memory objects may serve to connect the individual to places within their migratory experience. Tolia-Kelly refers to these places as post-colonial space-times (Tolia-Kelly 2004, 314-315), which can be tethered to Doreen Massey's suppositions on the porosity of place and time, and the multiplicity of place, which I previously discussed in relation to Marston. The notion of the porosity and multiplicity of place underpins the importance of plain sewing as a transferable practice that travelled with my family from Italy to Zimbabwe to Australia. As a methodology, sewing sustained both temporal and spatial experiences of place during multiple migrations; it is a creative practice that generates material culture that, in turn, embodies the experience of place, both past and present.

My recognition of mobility in migratory experiences has enriched the considerations of this research project so intimately concerned with the memory of a lost home, and with the endeavour to reimagine and re-experience it post migration. Through my creative process I have become aware of how important Perth is as a place from which I actively and creatively remember Marston. So now there are two homes, and a distance between. I have considered the importance of plain sewing in instances of displacement, emplacement, embodiment and orientation, and from these investigations I have come to understand the relevance of the movement of fabric itself as a material so essential to sewing. The global machinations of mass production and consumption are relevant to this understanding (Norris 2005). Industries of exchange and need have evolved across the globe, with Western countries donating unwanted or obsolete garments, in an altruistic gesture, to companies and charities that distribute them to developing countries where they are resold in local fashion markets, or deconstructed into shoddy thread and woven into new fabrics and reincorporated into the local clothing vernacular (Norris 2005). As a result, a sense of the global movement and evolution of fabric as a material culture is evident, where fabric as a useful, familiar and ubiquitous material remains a constant entity in human experience, and is reimagined and incorporated into various contexts around the world.

British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare, MBE, draws heavily from the history of cloth as a travelling and traded entity in his oeuvre, and comments particularly on imperialist and colonial narratives. Shonibare's medium of choice is the batik fabric that has become synonymous with West African fashion and identity. He is drawn to the fabric for its ability to "challenge claims of authenticity" (Jefferies 2007, 293), where the evolution of this 'African' fabric is ironic and follows a journey of its own. Originating in Indonesia, batik was exploited and commodified by the Dutch through industrialisation. However, the Dutch encountered Indonesian resistance, as the population preferred authentic locally produced cloth. As a result, the Dutch had to innovate and promote the cloth elsewhere, and through their trading and shipping routes, West African countries were exposed to and eventually adopted the fabric. Through the convolutions of colonialism, the newly West African fabric has been distributed within minority communities in London and sold in local markets like those in Brixton. Shonibare recognises the longing for home felt by expatriates and those African descendants born in Europe and England. For some, batik fabric offers the possibility to "identify with an idealized, invented homeland" (Shonibare 2007, 296). How aware they are of the homeland's invention and batik's imperial convolutions remains unknown. Shonibare's textile pieces typically take the form of the imperial costume of the coloniser, but they are emblazoned with the colour and visual vocabulary of the colonised other, thus invoking playful subversions that elicit sober social and political comment *(Figures 55 and 56)*.

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Figure 55. Yinka Shonibare, MBE, *End of Empire*, 2016, 296 x 510 x 99 cm, fibreglass mannequins, Dutch was printed cotton textile, metal, wood, motor, globes and leather. Kinetic Sculpture.

Click here to view image online

Figure 56. Yinka Shonibare, MBE, *Scramble for Africa*, 2003, 132 x 488 x 280 cm, 14 life-size mannequins, 14 chairs, table, Dutch wax printed cotton.

Korean artist Kimsooja's textile works make physical journeys through place and time, a passage that is evident in the video work *Cities on the move: 2727 Kilometers Bottari Truck, Korea* (1997) *(Figure 57)*, where a truckload of colourful *bottari* traverse the cities and countryside of the artist's homeland. *Bottari* are bundles of multicoloured cloth that encompass basic household goods. They are a means of transporting the necessary items of everyday use when families and individuals relocate. For Kimsooja, cloth has the ability to contain and transmit memory, and she often uses Korean bedcovers in her artwork; gifted to newlywed couples as a symbol of posterity, they are entities that accompany and encompass life's major events, such as births and deaths, and the intimacy of slumber (Jacob 2007, 311). Kimsooja has tied these meaningful textiles into *bottari* as a means of conveying the human experience of movement, be it near or far: "They were used both by refugees and merchants who transported their wares in them. On a metaphorical level the *bottari* also function as signifiers of mobility in unbound space, and thus are, at the same time, containers that include their own contents" (Dziewior 2007, 298).[34]

In a recent installation Kimsooja adapted the *bottari* into a different context. In *Bottari* (2016) *(Figure 58)*, exhibited at the 20 Bienal De Arte Paiz, Guatemala, instead of using Korean bedcovers the artist has incorporated Guatemalan textiles in her creative methodology. Kimsooja's versatile use and interpretation of textiles is expressive of the ability of cloth to "speak across borders, to be both local and universal" (Jacob 2007, 314). *Thread Routes* (2010-present)[35] is an ongoing project by Kimsooja that provides further evidence of the universality of thread and textile craft. She considers this project to be a "visual poem" that "traces the formal and psychological threads encompassing the textile structure to that of the body and the world, and human desire to culture" (Kimsooja 2016). I am drawn to the repetitive motion evident in each of the textile processes recorded in *Thread Routes*. The artisans linger on the material artifact in the labouring and making process, which is a common thread in both traditional textile work, and in the contemporary art practices discussed in this chapter.
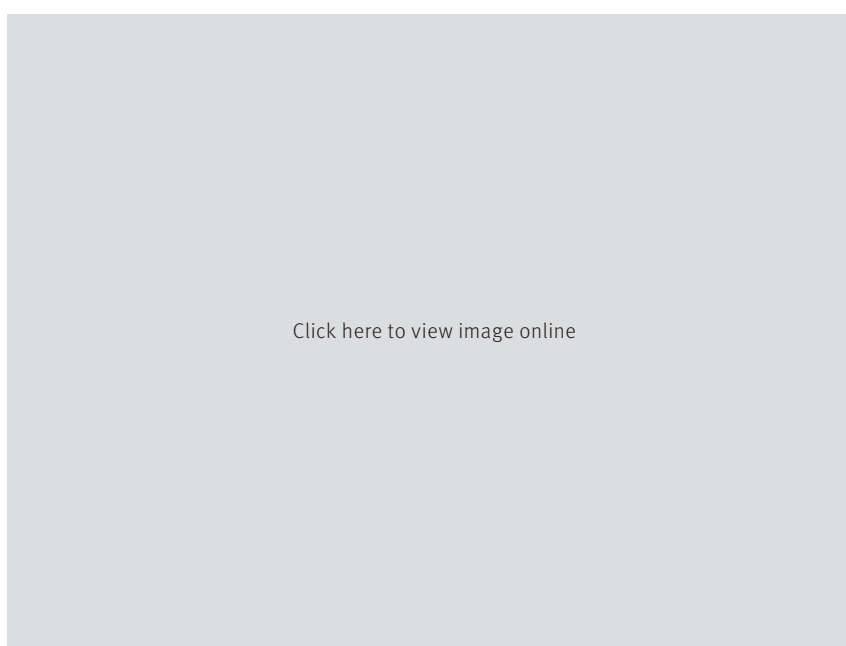
Figure 57. Kimsooja *Cities on the move: 2727 Kilometers Bottari Truck, Korea*, 1997, single channel performance video, 7:03 minute loop, silent.

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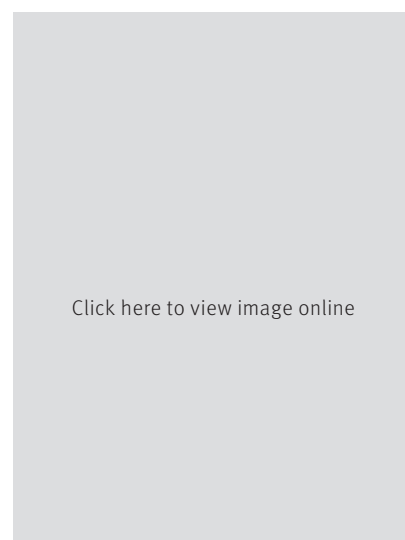
Figure 58. Kimsooja, *Bottari*, 2016, site-specific installation consisting of used bedcovers, clothing, and objects from Guatemala, installation at 20 Bienal de Arte Paiz, Guatemala, courtesy of Fundación Paiz and Kimsooja Studio.

[34] Kimsooja modified the *bottari* performance in 2007 to acknowledge the difficulties faced by Korean immigrants in France in the 1990s as they sought to stay despite having their residency rejected (VAL 2010). Kimsooja traces a symbolic journey through the north of Paris atop a truck loaded with *bottari* consisting of donated clothes bundled into sheets and bedcovers, making her way to the église St-Bernard where Korean communities protested in the 1990s (VAL 2010).

[35] Link to extracts from Kimsooja's *Thread Routes*: http://www.kimsooja.com/works_video_thread-routes.html

Scholar Mary Jane Jacob's contention that cloth has the "ability to translate between generations over time, to transgress the realms of the living and the dead, and to mediate between the domains of past and present" (Jacob 2007, 311) is in line with Parkin's suggestion in the opening quote of this chapter, that objects act as material markers. Cloth, along with other material artifacts, can be seen to facilitate remembering in actions of peregrination, displacement and migration for many people, enabling the establishment of social and cultural frontiers elsewhere (Parkin 1999, 313).

In 2001, having made the decision to emigrate from Zimbabwe, my family had a choice of what artifacts to bring with us on that journey. Two years later, after the seizure of Marston, my grandmother left under more rushed circumstances, travelling only with a large suitcase, while a selection of fabrics, her two sewing machines, a dressmaking model, ornamental coffee and tea sets given as wedding gifts, and some bedding and blankets, all followed by sea. In his essay "The Refurbishment of Memory", ethnographer Jean-Sébastien Marcoux expands on the importance of the objects people carry with them when moving house,

> We could say that the things that people take with them, those 'aide-mémoires', help preserve a certain consistency and continuity. Going further, we could also say that memory may be *constituted in motion through the displacement of objects. Bringing things with oneself, then, is to make the choice of remembering* (Marcoux 2001, 73; emphasis added).

My grandmother made a conscious decision to bring with her to Australia those objects and tools that attest to the sustaining ability of her sewing practice. Her sewing machines were an aid to her sense of belonging in new contexts during her first migration experience. While it has been noted that in less stressful circumstances moving home facilitates an ordering of memory through the selection of what objects to take to the new home, this process can also be said to repair the self through reflection and contemplation of objects and their personal histories (Marcoux 2001, 83). Choosing what objects to bring to a new context helps constitute the self and facilitates settlement and orientation out-of-place. Parkin goes on to suggest that "items taken under pressure and in crisis set up contexts less of use and more of *selective remembering, forgetting and envisioning*" (Parkin 1999, 304; emphasis added). Parkin's findings are concerned with refugees fleeing home, and I acknowledge our status is not that of refugees, although my family's departure from Marston and Zimbabwe was indeed traumatic. Perhaps under the pressure of the eviction process, the sewing machines became part of my grandmother's envisioning of life elsewhere. It would have been incomprehensible for her not to take the machines to Australia.

Cloth, too, has a history of migrating with our family, with two boxes of fabric brought over from Zimbabwe to Perth for my grandmother when she left Marston for the last time. Selected from a great store of cloth accumulated over the years, these two boxes have in turn been stored here. Amongst the many fabrics was a length of floral cotton, purchased in 2002 in Perth by my grandmother when she made a visit to Australia before her permanent emigration and when Marston was still ours. She took it back with her and never made anything from it, and so the fabric remained stored, only to travel once more across the Indian Ocean to Perth upon her emigration from Zimbabwe after the eviction. It remained here, stowed for 10 years, until she made herself a housedress out of it; her wayfaring fabric became *located (Figures 59 and 60)*. Fabrics, linen, cloth, and the machines used to work them—her choice to bring them was a choice to remember Marston through creative practice and through the wearing of garments made from fabric that has lingered both here and there. My grandmother's housedress, made from the travelling floral cotton, forms part of a dialogue with material culture on familiarity and persistence; existing through multiple migrations as a familiar and useful entity; a companion of sorts.

Figure 59. Melanie McKee, documentation of my grandmother's closet here in Perth, the wayfaring dress pictured, 2016.

Figure 60. Melanie McKee, *Wayfaring dress*, 2016, 20x26cm each, screen print and monotype on BFK.

The propensity of cloth and plain sewing to transcend or shrink the distance engendered by dislocation can be understood through my aunt's 'migrating' jacket. My aunt lives in Sydney and recently commissioned a bespoke, lightweight winter jacket to be made by my grandmother. The physical distance between Perth and Sydney means that the usual fittings cannot readily take place. My grandmother found a solution to the problem of distance—one that I feel resonates with the identification of location, dislocation, and the understandings of home evident throughout this research. On a recent trip to Sydney, she took my aunt's physical measurements. Upon her return to Perth, she designed the pattern according to these measurements with reference to a sample image of the desired jacket.

My grandmother proceeded to make a calico version of the garment in full, though only tacked, not machine sewn *(Figure 61)*. In the meantime, a package arrived via post from Sydney containing the fabric to be used in the final version. When the calico proxy was finished, my grandmother fastidiously folded it and placed it in packaging, and dispatched it to Sydney where my aunt performed the fitting, marking any required amendments on the garment itself. As the metaphor that frames this chapter suggests, the cloth is the mediator between my grandmother and my aunt in the fitting process. In this case, the intimacy of the sewing room is forgone and replaced by the distance between Perth and Sydney; yet the cloth continues to facilitate creative engagement and closeness through fitting and making. The amendments having been recorded, the garment travelled for a second time across the girth of the country, constituting a type of long-distance fitting. Once it returned to Perth, my grandmother started to make up the final garment, taking any necessary adjustments into consideration *(Figure 62)*. Eventually the finished jacket will make a final migration to Sydney where it is likely to reside permanently. The evolution of the jacket over great distance demonstrates the creative to-and-fro between distinct locations; it is evidence of the issues that have pervaded this project. Plain sewing continues to transcend displacement and dislocation through the act of *making* material memory objects; it is a means of tethering places, actively traversing distance and transforming along the way.

Figure 61. Melanie McKee, documentation of my aunt's migrating jacket (details), made by Catterina Rossetti. Picture here after the first long distance fitting, with creases intact from its postal journey, 2016.

Figure 62. Melanie McKee, documentation of my aunt's completed jacket,
made by Catterina Rossetti, photographed in Perth before making its voyage to
Sydney, 2016

The examples of the wayfaring dress and migrating jacket are evidence of the physical peregrinations of fabric as they relate to my family's specific migrations, and to broader concepts of the mobility of fabric in the garment industry. By understanding the orienting and sustaining quality of plain sewing within my family's personal history, I engage with fabric as a device that transcends distance and dislocation. It is through an acknowledgement of the role of cloth and plain sewing in my family's migration that I hope to metaphorically generate a return gesture to Marston through the materials so intimately bound to that home.

CONCLUSION

FINISHING: Concluding and Conferring the Memory of Home

During this final stage of the process, the dressmaker resolves their creative engagement with the garment by finishing the hems and removing all traces of tacking and marking. Buttonholes are slit and the garment is pressed in preparation for a final transaction between the wearer and the maker. After a prolonged and nuanced relationship, it is time for the wearer to carry the garment into the world. It is an entity tailored to their form and unique in its design. Finished, it recalls the skill of the maker and is embodied by the wearer; it has become a material object with the capacity to contain and transmit the memory of a creative process.

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In concluding this exegesis, I return once more to the metaphorical framing device of the dressmaking process, revisiting the elements that produce garments and the frameworks that build this creative research project. In the first instance, "Cutting" referred to the action of liberating pattern pieces from a length of fabric, and demonstrated the tractability of these pattern pieces in a metaphor of the migration experience, where distance and time render mobile the memory and experience of home. By establishing a contemporary theory context for the creative project, I discovered the possibility that conceptually and physically the experience of home might transcend the distance imposed by migration. Home-making is an important element of the experience of migration, and efforts at dwelling are imaginative and orienting, enabling past and present cultural and place-based experiences to coalesce via structural and practice-led renderings of home. My investigations have determined that places are multivalent and complex and they may be a home to many, both past and present. The artworks I have made for this project acknowledge this multiplicity of place, and are efforts in reaching back from one place to another in order to initiate a creative gesture of return, as evidenced in *Candy* and *Marston, memories from the faraway nearb*y.

"Passing the Mark" alluded to the transfer of pattern markings from one piece of fabric to another, framed an analogy for the function of nostalgia in the project, and drew the conclusion that reflective nostalgia is a nuanced and useful approach to longing for home that allows for subversions and imaginative engagements with memory and place. My discussion of the significance of photographs to the project positioned them as signifiers of place, time and visual mediators of distance; these findings were supported by the theories of Susan Sontag and Shelly Hornstein. When I combined photographs with printmaking, drawing and sewing processes in artworks such as *Entredeux* and *Now and then or Salvage to salvage*, I sought to question the fixity of a limited image of place in order to signify the multiplicity of place and the slippages of memory. It is evident to me that photographs enable a momentary connection to time and place, but are inherently limited in what they visually convey. However, in this project, through the creative acts within a contemporary art practice, they can be expanded in their role as a "pseudo-presence and a token of absence" (Sontag 1977, 16). Therefore a photograph can serve as a visual reminder of *being-in-place*, yet it also denotes our present dislocation or absence from that place, and forms one element of a multivalent creative reimagining.

In this project, plain sewing was found to be, and became established as, a key habitual body memory that enabled belonging and orientation in the experience of multiple migrations for my family members. By enacting a habitual body memory in a new context, I uncovered a tangible link via my body's internal history to Marston. The stitching process is inscribed in and emanates from Marston, and this relationship can be seen in artworks such as *An Interior Memory-scape.*

"Piecing" described the process of aligning the marks in order to pin and tack the pattern pieces together thus enabling the garment's form to become evident. In this chapter I situated the craft practice of plain sewing within the canon of marginal crafts that was being reappraised by feminists at a time when my grandmother was concurrently establishing her practice on a rural farm in Rhodesia. The implications of creative and gainful craft processes that complicate and enrich domestic spheres were revealed, as well as their capacity to provide opportunity for social and community engagement. In making artworks such as *Emplacement I* and the *Dress in Landscape* series, I encountered the significance of plain sewing as a means of reimagining and recalling a lost home from a new context. In examining how other artists have approached the challenge of engaging concepts of home in their oeuvres, I became aware once more of the multiple meanings inherent in identifications of house and of home, and what the ramifications are for individuals as they interact with these places.

"Fitting" referred to the penultimate phase of the dressmaking process, which enables the client to physically experience the garment for the first time. I discussed the relevance of cloth and material culture to the project, and discovered that material objects have the ability to absorb memory and narrative through the creative production process. In the artwork *I stitched this dress about you, for you, from you*, I sought to extend Nadia Seremetakis' 'antiphonic relationship' from object and perceiver, to artwork and artist, where one completes the other in a performative interaction. Beyond a contemporary art context, David Parkin argued that there is evidence of rich engagement and memorial relationship between individuals and material culture in the experience of migration. Cloth has been used in contemporary art to emphasise these social concerns by artists such as Kimsooja and Yinka Shonibare, MBE, who comment on broader societal and cultural experiences in circumstances of change and movement. I uncovered nuanced and personal examples of travelling cloth in my own family history that serve to focus the broader narratives of migration. These narratives feed into social histories of the global experience of migration.

Much original material evidence of my family's time in Zimbabwe has been lost, left behind upon our departure. This notion was a starting point that initiated a project that seeks to remember through creative practice. In acts of reclamation such as archiving—and I suggest the making of art, too—there is not only the opportunity to recoup some of the culture of a past thus enlarging our perception of the world, but also the opportunity to enrich ourselves through this process (Tuan 1980, 472). I am conscious of the limits imposed by restorative nostalgia, which might seek to simply replicate and preserve a memory of place through a collection of artifacts. Instead, my work seeks to engage with the complexity of migration, where material objects begin to signify both a past and a present relationship to self and place through the experience of dislocation. At base my work highlights the multiplicity of place.

My thoughts return to the discussion in Chapter One, of Rebecca Solnit and James Barilla's understandings of traumatic sites. Their struggles with the traumas linked to place resulted in a more objective, and perhaps less nostalgic understanding of problematised places, and a drive to return, either physically or metaphorically, to the site of trauma in order to excavate it (Barilla 2004, 27; Solnit 2011, 89). Recognising this as a possibility, and when considering my own creative artworks, I am able to to shed new light on Boym's reflective nostalgia, that as she contends, seeks to delay any sense of return wistfully and ironically (Boym 2007, 13).

Throughout this doctoral research I fought for a return, repeatedly and laboriously, through both metaphor and practice. My work strives for a legitimate experience of Marston via creative and memorial acts. Acknowledging the impossibility of a physical return, I realised it was important to understand the implications of both restorative and reflective nostalgia. I had a need to reimagine Marston in order to revisit it, but also to reconcile my conflicted experience of place – relating to notions of ownership, colonisation, and white privilege (Worby 2001; Fitzmaurice 2015; Pilossof 2012; Lessing 1993)). *Emplacement I (Figure 37-39)* substantiates the effort of physically remembering and re-experiencing place. Yet *I stitched this dress about you, for you, from you (Figures 45 and 46)*, most clearly addresses the multiple positions of suffering inherent in the experience of forced displacement. With this work, I have lingered and attempted a re-creation of a garment reminiscent of a particular time and place, and then methodically and meditatively sealed it, piercing through the imagined space of the body to render it mute – culminating in an examination of psychological trauma, manifested via creative and habitual acts.

In this instance, it was not enough merely to stave off return, as a reflective nostalgic approach may merit. My initial analysis and contextualization of this research outlined particularly in Chapter Two, lingers in a significant personal nostalgic drama, and yet understates the socio-political implications of an undertaking such as this. This is not to say I believe our claim to Marston valid in a social and political sense. My explanation of the dire impact of colonialism on the psyche of Zimbabwe in the Introduction makes this clear. However, I do seek to validate my relationship to Marston, as complex and contested as it is. It achieves nothing to simply bow out from Marston as though it had never existed for a period in that form, time and place as a home for a particular family, and for Indigenous Africans who relied on the tract of land for their livelihood and social/familial structure. And so, perhaps my work here does in some way form a monument to home, though certainly not a fixed, closed and reconciled one. The question remains as to what can be considered reconciled in the global and shifting experience of dispossession, and more broadly the experience of migration, forced or otherwise.

Figure 63. Melanie McKee, process documentation of *The Window*, 2013, 120x180 cm, muslin and steel dressmaker's pins.

Figure 63. Melanie McKee, process documentation of *The Window*, 2013, 120x180 cm, muslin and steel dressmaker's pins.

The artworks discussed in this exegesis and presented for examination are not intended to represent the memory of Marston as a fixed, finite and distilled. Rather they are a means of creatively negotiating distance and displacement through embodied actions that engage with the memory of place, and strive for a reappraisal of a reflective nostalgic approach. There are several ways in which this occurs throughout my investigation into various printmaking, photographic and textile methods. I suggest that by imbuing artworks with narratives of a remembered place via creative acts, there is the possibility of engendering a reimagining of place and a memorial experience of a lost home, which are concepts especially relevant to those who face dislocation due to forced migration and departures from home. It is my intention to test the strength of embodied making via the artwork, particularly as it relates to practices that emerge from Marston, through methods such as plain sewing. Drawing upon the metaphor of dressmaking, I offer a multivalent reimagining of home, and a personal project that seeks to comprehend the broader implications of memory about home and place.

By way of conclusion, and when considering body memory as a consistent orienting device in this project, the process of making *The Window* (2013) *(Figure 63)* put me 'in place', so to speak. The premise was to recreate my grandmother's sewing room window, specifically the wrought iron security bars designed and made by my grandfather. I plotted the dimensions of the ironwork to be transferred to muslin fabric with hundreds of steel dressmaker's pins. The choice of materials drew upon plain sewing as a method and practice, and using materials other than the original iron of the window bars allowed me to question more restorative approaches to remembering. Rather than engaging restorative nostalgia, the subversion of materials opened a dialogue about the materials and practices linked to place— feminine and masculine, cloth and iron. The fragility of the muslin foundation also speaks to the inability of the bars to prevent word of our eviction being delivered; the pins hold a double meaning as tools in my grandmother's creative practice and as bearers of bad news. By piercing the muslin fabric, I aimed to create depth in the artwork; shadows beyond the surface suggest the unwelcome presence of the man on the other side of the window who delivered the message, verbal and written, of his claim on our home. Making this artwork was a painstaking process, meditative and drawn out. Unlike the garment in the metaphor that frames this concluding chapter, this artwork remains unfinished. Ephemeral, and at the same time oddly weighty, the work transported me into a different space-time, opening new and ongoing possibilities for remembering home via creative practice.

Distance and Memory

The memory begins with a turning that follows the dirt road to home. Raising a column of rich dust and heralding our arrival in the landscape, the road brings us to an avenue of trees, past a high fence and diesel-infused yard, then past my grandfather's roses in the promenade, now a ruin. The road runs quartz flecked, between the old house and the dilapidated red brick furnace where once an errant snake was burnt after being shot for trespassing within the homestead. A little further and we arrive at the main house where a barrage of dogs welcomes us out of the car. Lulled by the drive, we emerge into my grandparent's embrace, arriving home to Marston Farm.

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List of Figures

Appendix

Terminus

5 October - 22 October

« Indefinite landscapes   Picturebook Redux »

Melanie McKee & Monika Lukowska

Exhibition: 5 – 22 October, 2016

Paper Mountain are proud to present Terminus, a collaborative exhibition between Monika Lukowska (Poland) and Melanie McKee (Zimbabwe). Born in opposite hemispheres and both currently living in Perth, Lukowska and McKee seek to explore how memories of a past home culminate within material culture. The exhibition features printmaking and multimedia works which address the concerns faced by migrant artists on divergent paths; including senses of place, belonging, memory and dislocation.

Pieces by each artist will exist alongside new collaborative works which merge their critical perspectives and experiences living far from 'home'. Throughout Terminus, Lukowska and McKee question how art can navigate an experience of dislocation, and draw the maker—and viewer—closer to an imagined, and perhaps (im)possible terminus.

Opening Night: Wednesday 5 October, 6pm
Artist Talk: Saturday 15 October, 1pm
Exhibition continues until 25 October

Pictured: Monika Lukowska and Melanie McKee, *Traversing the Terminus III*, 2016. Digital print.

• GOOGLE CALENDAR   • ICAL EXPORT

**Details**

Start:
5 October

**End:**
22 October

Event Category:
Exhibitions

Event Tags:
Exhibitions 2016

Melanie McKee and Monika Lukowska, *Terminus: in search of an (im)possible conclusion*, Paper Mountain, Perth, Western Australia (2016). Exhibition Invitation.

Terminus
in search of an (im)possible conclusion

Monika Lukowska
Melanie McKee

5 - 22 October 2016
Paper Mountain ARI

Monika Lukowska *Nieszowiec 1*, 2016.
Lithography, 30 x 40 cm

A terminus is a place of arrival and departure -
an airport concourse, a train station, bus depot,
a port-of-call that is often the end point of a
journey. As travellers, wayfarers, strangers or
welcomers, we have all been there, physically
and emotionally drawn into its machinations. As a
physical location, the terminus is a noisy place of
transit. Marc Auge (1995) contends such spaces
are 'non-places'. They are zones of mobility
whose architectural forms and configurations
present a generic view of the world, a nowhere
but everywhere that people pass through on
their way to somewhere. For many migrants and
refugees, the terminus is not just a physical place
of embarkation but a metaphoric location. It can
be both an ending and a beginning, offering
incalculable moments of transition and possibility
as the memories of the past succumb to the
cacophonous dreams and desires for the future.

Having arrived here from elsewhere, both
Melanie McKee and Monika Lukowska imagine
Perth as a kind of terminus. Yet unlike Auge's
contention that it is a generic 'non-place', they
picture its unique characteristics as a location
of affective and embodied sensibilities. Drawing
upon their experiences of residing in differing
locales, they render the paradoxical senses of
dislocation and belonging as they try to become
emplaced. Individually and in collaboration, they
mobilise their artistic expertise to respond to
the specificities of living here, in this place, as it
tugs at their memories, emotions and desires.
Thus this exhibition offers an appreciation of the
affective dimensions of emplacement and the
material conditions of knowing our place in the
world through the practices of two women artists
as they picture their (im)possible terminus.

Melanie McKee and Monika Lukowska, *Terminus: in search of an (im)possible conclusion*, Paper Mountain, Perth, Western Australia (2016). Exhibition Catalogue.

Melanie McKee whose family migrated here after being dispossessed of their home farm, Marston, in Zimbabwe, uses a combination of printmaking, digital photography and plain sewing techniques to explore the personal and historical narratives that surround her sense of both displacement and home making. Stitching together memories of the lost homestead, family stories, and understandings drawn from her doctoral studies, McKee creates highly accomplished and engaging works that evoke more than a memorial to the past or a passing nostalgic reverie. Rather she presents ways of reconciling there and then with the here and now. Such conjunctions of space and time can be seen in works like *Plication I* and *Plication II, reverie between two places* in which fabric - overlaid with solvent transferred, fragmented images of Marston and Perth - is pleated into a placed tactile intimacy. The plain sewing - a skill learnt from her grandmother - reflects a generational passage of time, while the printed images convey a fleeting familiarity with places lived and experienced.

Considering the affects of living far from her home town Katowice in Poland while undertaking doctoral studies, Monika Lukowska portrays her experiences of place making as she comes to terms with two radically different locations. The combination of lithography and digital technologies provides Lukowska with a perfect vehicle for picturing the particularities of each cityscape, their surface appearances, architectural forms, textures and emotive resonances. Her works not only reveal her deft skills as a printmaker but also highlight her sensitive apprehension of the material conditions of these differing environments. Lukowska's evocation of place can be seen in works like *Immersed in coal I*, and *Nikiszowiec II*, where the comfortable familiarity of coal soot that dusts Katowice's cityscape provides a visual leitmotif for rendering her sense of place. In these works, the embodied experiences and memories of over there are collaged into the present realities of now from the viewpoint of here in Perth.

Below:
Melanie McKee *Plication II, reverie between two places* 2016.
Solvent transfer on polyester, dimensions variable

Overleaf:
Melanie McKee *Candy,* 2015. Screen print. 84 x 60 cm
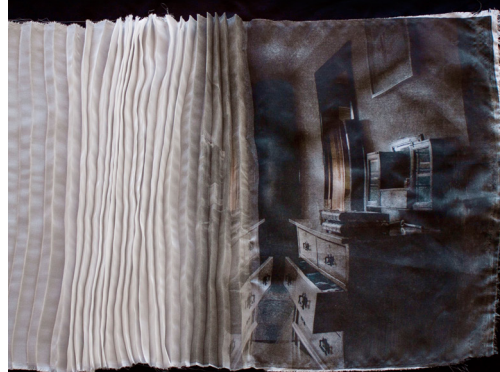
Working together for the first time, McKee and
Lukowska bring together a rich and potent
understanding of the complex experiences of
contemporary nomadic lifestyles, the interplay
of memories and everyday realities that are
imagined through the sensate material world. In
their collaborative work *Traversing the Terminus
I, II* and *III* the individual artist's concerns for a
sensed apprehension of places are brought into
dialogue to create a poetics of transition. This
panorama of stilled moments in time and space
is pleated into a subtlety nuanced meditation,
one that transcends nostalgia and sentimentality.
Through rendering the light, textures and other
aspects of the environmental locale in which
they find themselves, these two artists picture a
personal and intimate portrayal of this place, as
they create a home in the here and now.

In keeping with McKee and Lukowska's
contention that places are understood through
embodied sensitivities, while we may not be able
to smell the soot as it coats Silesia's architecture,
nor taste the fruit in the lost orchard left behind,
nor hear the sounds of unfamiliar languages as
we migrate to new destinations, through the art
works in this exhibition we can appreciate those
desires and affective experiences that are to be
found when travelling through the terminus.

Ann Schilo

References:
Auge, Marc. *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of
supermodernity*. London: Verso. 1995.

Dr Ann Schilo is a senior lecturer in the School of Design and
Art at Curtin University. She is a co-supervisor of the doctoral
studies of both Melanie McKee and Monika Lukowska.

Melanie McKee (b.1986) was born in Harare, Zimbabwe
and immigrated with her family to Perth, Western Australia
in 2001. She has undertaken study in the Fine Arts at
Curtin University, graduating with First Class Honours in
2011. Melanie completed an international study exchange
program at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts
de Paris in 2008-09. She has been heavily involved with the
Perth Centre for Photography and is a Sessional Academic
in the Department of Art at Curtin University. Melanie has
exhibited both locally and internationally, and is currently a
PhD candidate at Curtin University in Western Australia. She
has been awarded several government grants in order to
carry out her research and creative practice.

Monika Lukowska is a printmaking artists from Poland.
She obtained her MA in Printmaking from the E. Geppert
Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Wroclaw, Poland in 2011
and MFA in Printmaking from the San Francisco Art Institute,
USA in 2014.

Her artworks were exhibited internationally at: Student
Printmaking Biennale in Poznan, Poland; International Print
Triennial in Kraków, Poland; International Lithographic
Symposium in Tidaholm, Sweden; Freies Museum, Berlin;
Diego Rivera Gallery and SOMArts Gallery, San Francisco,
USA; Gallery 1010, Knoxville, USA, IMPACT Conference
at the Museum of Modern Art, Hangzhou, China, and
5th International Printmaking Exhibition, Istanbul, Turkey
among others. She is a recipient of a Minister of Culture and
National Heritage Award for the Best Graduate Diploma in
Poland 2011, Fulbright Graduate Student Awards, 2012 and
Murphy and Cadogan Contemporary Art Awards, 2013

Lukowska is working in the field of digital printmaking
and lithography and is currently pursuing her PhD at
Curtin University, for which she received Curtin Strategic
International Research Scholarship, 2015.

www.monikalukowska.com

Monika Lukowska and Melanie McKee
Traversing the Terminus I 2016. Digital print, 30 x 134 cm
Traversing the Terminus II 2016. Digital print, 30 x 155 cm
Traversing the Terminus III 2016. Digital print, 30 x 109 cm
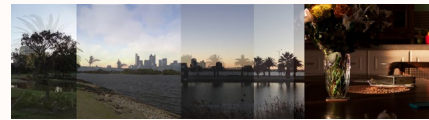
Monika Lukowska *Immersed in coal I*, 2016.
Digital print, 68 x 143 cm

Monika Lukowska *Immersed in coal II*, (detail) 2016.
Digital print, 68 x 143 cm

Melanie McKee and Monika Lukowska *Terminus: in search of an (im)possible conclusion*, Paper Mountain, Perth, Western Australia (2016). Installation views, courtesy of the artists, photography by Melanie McKee.

GMT+8, Museum of Contemporary Art, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China (2015). Group Exhibition Catalogue.

GMT+8, Museum of Contemporary Art, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China (2015). Installation views, courtesy of the artists, photography by Melanie McKee.

*Homing: Luxury and Necessity*, Sanshang-Art, Hangzhou, China (2015). Exhibition Catalogue.

Homing: Luxury and Necessity, Sanshang-Art, Hangzhou, China (2015). Installation views, courtesy of the artists, photography by Melanie McKee.

Homing: Luxury and Necessity, Sanshang-Art, Hangzhou, China (2015). Installation views, courtesy of the artists, photography by Melanie McKee.

Necessary Fictions
New Works by Melanie McKee and Fran Rhodes.
January 10-22, 2015
Kidogo Arthouse, Bathers' Beach, Fremantle

You are warmly invited to the opening of

Necessary Fictions
New works by Melanie McKee and Fran Rhodes

To be opened by Dr Ann Schilo on Sunday, 11th January 2015 between 6 and 8pm
At Kidogo Arthouse, Bathers' Beach, Fremantle.

Exhibition runs from 10th-22nd January 2015.

Opening hours 11-4pm, 7 days a week or by appointment outside of these hours.

Necessary Fictions, Kidogo Arthouse, Fremantle, Western Australia (2015). Exhibition Invitation front and back.

Studio documentation, photography by Melanie McKee

Studio documentation, photography by Melanie McKee

Publications

Melanie McKee. 2016 "Wrought-iron bars and sewing thread: The (re)construction of a lost home via creative practice". In *Dialectics of Space and Place across Virtual and Corporeal Topographies*, edited by June Jordaan, Carl Haddrell and Christine Alegria, pp. 87-95. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press. ISBN: 978-1-84888-510-3.

Melanie McKee. 2014. "Stitching in Place: Migration, memory and habitual practices". In *The Truth is Out There*, edited by Julie Lunn and Stephanie Bizjak, pp.111-125. Perth: Black Swan Press.