Stranger than Fiction

The creation of two short theatre of the real plays
about Closed Stranger Adoption in Aotearoa

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

2017
Abstract

My MFA explores how a range of theatrical techniques can be used to stage autobiographical and biographical narratives. Using practice-led research I created and staged two theatre of the real plays: Close Stranger and Between Worlds. Both plays are solo performances where I (as the performer) play multiple roles. The subject matter of both plays is the adoption of Māori children into Pākehā families through the New Zealand government’s policy of Closed Stranger Adoption, and the subsequent themes associated with this kind of adoption. Close Stranger is a devised autobiographical play. Between Worlds is a theatre of testimony play that uses the testimony of Māori adoptees (including my own), along with historical and contemporary research data on Closed Stranger Adoption in Aotearoa. I sought to use a variety of theatrical techniques in my plays, so as to make thought provoking, engaging and entertaining theatre that has didactic underpinning. With these works, I also seek to develop my skills and understanding as a theatre artist – in particular as a playwright, devisor and performer. This exegesis is a companion document to my two plays and explains the methodological and artistic choices I made in creating them, and maps out the process of each play from concept to performance.
Acknowledgments

From the bottom of my heart I thank EVERYONE who has helped me on my MFA journey:

My daughter Olive for your prolonged patience and support.

My husband Pete for your encouragement, support, generosity, and music.

Carol Taurua for your openness, generosity, and trust.

Maria Heanga-Collins for your generosity, warmth, knowledge, support and encouragement.

To the Māori adoptee participants from Maria’s Masters’ thesis: thank you so much for your openness and generosity in sharing your adoption narratives.

Rua McCallum for being my kaitiaki, and for gifting me your haka, and for your encouragement, support, and expertise.

Emere Leitch-Munro for your Māori translation, support, encouragement, and kapa haka expertise.

Martyn Roberts for your technical support, encouragement, expertise, time, photographs and films.

Fran Kewene for your support, encouragement, and time.

Jennifer Cattermole for your enthusiastic support, advice and encouragement.

Kim Clifton for your time, support and generosity.

Val Smith for your support, choreography, and time.

Stuart Young for encouraging me throughout my time at Otago University, and for supporting me in Heidelberg, Germany.

Lisa Warrington for your expertise, encouragement, and belief in me.

Suzanne Little for your expertise and support throughout my time at OU.
Richard Huber for your time, support, expertise, and encouragement.

Janis Balodis my MFA supervisor and dramaturg, for your support, advice, encouragement and belief in me.

Pauline Balodis for your expertise, support, and encouragement.

Erica Newman for your time, and expertise.

Ana Rangi for your encouragement, warmth and support.

Kelly Tikao for your time, support and encouragement.

Fraser Brown for your help, and calm demeanour.

Ariana Roberston for your help, and calm demeanour.

Heidelberg University: Peter Bews, Kirsten Hertel, Jeff Silence, Laura Hopp et al, Vielen Dank!

The Noni Wright Scholarship Fund: Many Thanks!

The Māori Summer Bursary Fund: Many Thanks!

The University of Otago Māori Masters Scholarship Fund: Many Thanks!

The Performing Arts Fund at Otago University: Many Thanks!

My parents for their love and support.

Mary-Jane Campbell for your help and support.

Thelma Fisher for your time and library expertise.

And my supervisor Hilary Halba; you went above and beyond to support, encourage, advice, mentor, counsel, and believe in me. None of this would have been possible without you Hilary. Thank you!

I would also like to thank friends and family who have supported me during my MFA.
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INTRODUCTION

Fig. 1. Me and my siblings.

Those who do not have the power over the story that dominates their lives, power to retell it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts.

-Salman Rushdie-
(qtd in Garvey, 16)

As a human being I never want to feel powerless. As a theatre maker, I cannot be powerless. Theatre is a powerful medium, and more so when it is entertaining and educative. Mordecai Gorelik says that “Didactic theatre (...) has the obligation to use all its colourful resources in order to make its teaching the highest degree entertaining” (33). For my Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Studies, I experimented with different theatrical devices in order to create,
stage, and perform two theatre of the real plays, *Close Stranger* and *Between Worlds*. My MFA research question was:

How can a range of theatrical devices be used to tell autobiographical and biographical narratives of Māori children adopted into Pākehā families, through the New Zealand policy of Closed Stranger Adoption?

The Close Stranger Adoption policy was in effect in New Zealand from 1955-1985. I am a Māori adoptee, and as an auto-ethnographic theatre-maker I am passionate about communicating the subject matter and the themes that arise from this kind of cross-cultural adoption. I wanted the plays that I wrote for my Master of Fine Arts to inform the audience about this questionable aspect of adoption in New Zealand’s history, while also making thought-provoking engaging and entertaining theatre that “uses all its colourful resources” (Gorelik 33). Gorelik also says that “Good dramatic writing (…) must be *interpersonal*. But it should describe individuals in relation to the social, historical, and political circumstance under which they live” (34); both of my MFA plays operate this way. I also approached the making of my plays with a similar aim to how theatre-maker Moises Kaufman describes Tectonic Theatre Project’s “mission” when creating their theatre projects, and that is to: “(1) Examine the subject matter at hand, and (2) Explore theatrical language and form” (Kaufman, vi). I used a number of theatrical devices in my plays, including aspects of: Māori performing arts, performance poetry, raps, solo performance with the actor playing multiple roles, shadow-play, physical theatre, direct address, and taonga pūoro (Māori musical instruments).
The subject matter of adoption is very important to me. Because of my Māori ancestry, my adoption experience differs to that of my adopted brother and sister, who are both Pākehā. I am not saying that there are not issues that my siblings may be dealing with because of their adoption, and certainly I have issues that stem from my adoption that are not related to being a Māori adoptee. However, alongside themes that are universal to many adoptees’ experiences, such as issues of abandonment and trust (Newton Verrier 1998, Else 1991), as a Māori adoptee I, along with many other Māori adoptees, endured racism, both from within our homes as well as outside of them. Furthermore, many of us suffered a sense of not belonging, not fitting in, and of not knowing where we come from in terms of our whakapapa. In the Māori world, whakapapa is the cornerstone of Māori identity (Kukutai qtd in Haenga-Collins, 26). Māori who were adopted into Pākehā families, were often physically different in appearance to their adopted families, which added further to the feeling of not fitting in. I was aware of this difference within my adopted family from a very early age. It is true to say that my adoption has both coloured, and shaded, much of my life. When I embarked on my MFA I wanted to bring this aspect of New Zealand history to the fore. Lagos Egri states “that all plays (...) are better when the author feels [she] has something important to say” (265). To me, it is important that people know that Closed Stranger Adoption in New Zealand has been equated with “lies and social engineering” (Gillard-Glass & England 24), and the adoption of Māori children into Pākehā families, has been seen as “No less severe than the Aboriginal Stolen Generations” (Jackson & Walker qtd in Haenga-Collins 28). These are both very loaded statements, but still not much is known publically about the New Zealand government’s policy of Closed
Stranger Adoption, let alone how the majority of Māori adoptees were systematically placed with Pākehā families.¹

I locate both of my plays as coming under the umbrella of Carole Martin’s term theatre of the real (“Theatre of Real”). I wanted to work in this genre because it is important to me that the voice of Māori adoptees be heard, and theatre of the real is a direct means through which adoptees can communicate their experiences. Moreover, Roma Potiki says that “Māori theatre must deal honestly with what has happened and is happening to Māori people” (Feminist Voices 162). What could be more candid than Māori adoptees communicating their experience of cross-cultural adoption through the medium of theatre of the real? In researching the subject matter for my MFA, I was also interested to see if other adoptees’ experiences were similar to mine, and although I used only the testimonies of a small number of adoptees the similarities between narratives was highly significant; all participants had experienced racism, and a feeling of not belonging, of not fitting in, and of struggling to find an identity.

There are a number of similarities between my plays Close Stranger and Between Worlds, such as: both plays belong to the genre of theatre of the real; both are performed as solo pieces; both contain poetry; both experiment with form; both use non-naturalistic modes of staging and acting; both use staging signifiers to create meaning, and the themes are the same for both plays. The plays complement each other as companion pieces, but can also be viewed as

independent pieces in their own right. Even though there are many similarities between the works, they are also very different plays.

In the first chapter of this exegesis I discuss how I framed my work within the theatre of the real, particularly in relation to ‘theatre of testimony’ and autobiographical and solo performance. I then examine my plays in relation to Roma Potiki’s and Hone Kouka’s definition of Māori theatre. Thereafter, I explain the research method I used in the process of creating my plays, and go on to discuss the ethics involved in using other people’s stories. In the second chapter of this exegesis I discuss the different developmental stages and creative strategies I used to stage my devised autobiographical one-woman show Close Stranger. In the third chapter of this exegesis I discuss how I crafted my play Between Worlds from the testimony of Maori adoptees, and the creative decisions I used in its staging. Finally, I reflect on what I have learnt during the process of my MFA, and my hopes for the future of the two works that I created for my MFA.
CHAPTER ONE

FRAMED: Methodology & Artistic Framing

In the writing and staging of my two plays Between Worlds and Close Stranger, my research enquiry focused around how a range of theatrical techniques could be employed to stage testimonial narratives of individuals, and how historical and contemporary research data on the theme of adoption could be incorporated into the work. In the following section I will discuss: the framing of my plays, Māori theatre, the research method I used, and the ethics of working with other people’s stories.

Close Stranger and Between Worlds: Theatre of the Real

Carol Martin’s term “Theatre of the Real” best describes my work, because this type of theatre “includes documentary theatre, verbatim theatre, nonfiction theatre, (...) and autobiographical theatre” (Martin, “Theatre of Real” 5). Other forms of theatre are also identified under the umbrella of theatre of the real, and include, tribunal theatre, “theatre-of-witness, theatre-of-fact, (...) docudrama, testimonial theatre, and theatre of testimony” (Maedza 16). Martin contends that “the array of terms indicates a range of methods of theatrical creation that are not always discrete, but may overlap and cross-fertilize” (“Theatre of Real” 5). I have found the ‘array of terms’ down-right confusing and frustrating, and within the body of this exegesis it is not my intention to confuse the reader, but I may use the terms interchangeably.
depending upon to whom I am referring to and the term/s with which they classify their work. For instance, in New Zealand, the term “verbatim theatre” typically describes plays that use only the spoken (and edited) testimony of interviewed individuals, whereas in other countries such as the UK and Australia “Verbatim” is considered a broader category. Australian playwright Alana Valentine extends the term verbatim further still by referring to her play Run Rabbit Run (2004) “as ‘pure’ verbatim, where interviewees’ stories are faithfully transcribed and presented as they were told by real people” (Brown 60, 68). While, she categorizes her play Parramatta Girls (2007) as ‘massaged’ verbatim (Brown 60), where she “shapes her collected interviews around an invented narrative structure” (Brown 60). No matter the confusion that this terminology might throw up or how one chooses to classify a piece of work, the unifying factor in the term theatre of the real is that it “identifies a wide range of theatre practices and styles that recycle reality, whether that reality is personal, social, political, or historical” (Martin, “Theatre of Real” 5). Consequently, Martin says that this type of theatre functions to: “reopen trials in order to critique justice; to create additional historical accounts; to reconstruct an event; to intermingle autobiography with history; to critique the operations of both documentary and fiction, and to elaborate the oral culture of theatre” (“Bodies” 12 – 13). Furthermore, theatre of the real shares certain objectives, such as to generate greater understanding of social and political dynamics; to open up debate, and to motivate spectators to respond to issues more actively and energetically (Young & Halba,“Class Notes” 2). Indeed, this is what I hoped to realize with my plays by foregrounding an aspect of New
Zealand’s adoption history. Before I discuss my work in detail I will situate it as specifically as possible within the umbrella of theatre of the real.

**Between Worlds: Theatre of testimony**

I classify my play *Between Worlds* as belonging to the ‘theatre of testimony.’ Maedza states that although the terms verbatim and theatre of testimony “are often used interchangeably (...) for the most part they are concerned with staging the stories of real people or accounts of events” (17). However, she goes on to express that “Using the word testimony conjures up notions of someone testifying to their knowledge about a particular event, rather than the semantic notions of ‘word for word’ that arise when using the term verbatim” (27). I use the term ‘theatre of testimony’ for *Between Worlds* because the play uses the testimony of adoptees sharing their knowledge about adoption. It is important to note that all theatre of the real is “created from a specific body of archived material: interviews, documents, hearings, records, video, film, photographs, etc. (Martin, “Bodies” 9). The documents that I employed to create *Between Worlds* were garnered from a number of sources, and were either used directly (although edited), as with the testimonies of participants, had an influence on the writing of the play, or acted as the inspiration for the raps, poems, and set design. Maedza comments “what makes a document is the fact that it is (...) a trace or depiction that can potentially be authorized to stand in for the thing itself” (18). Although the play uses transcribed or published documentation, the majority of that documentation is drawn from participants’ memory, and in this way, I assert that it correlates to the ‘trace’ that Maedza identifies. Martin says that “testimony involves the narration of memory and experience”
(“Bodies” 11), and that “memory is used to form pictures, construct cases, make arguments, create historic ruptures, and situate the spectator in history” (“Theatre of Real” 59). Between Worlds weaves testimony from the fabric of memory, to construct a narrative of social, political, and historical importance in Aotearoa.

Melissa Salz posits that “theatre of testimony can be divided into two broad camps: on the one hand plays that can be read as social and/or political; and on the other hand, plays that are personal and/or autobiographical” (qtd in Maedza 23). I contend that both of my plays straddle both of the “camps” that Salz identifies. Linda Ben-Zvi classifies theatre-maker Nola Chilton’s work as “theatre of testimony” (Ben-Zvi 45), and says that Chilton’s work, “along with a number of other documentary plays that are interview-based or oral projects – such as Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project’s The Laramie Project, and David Hare’s The Permanent Way all have three things in common:

(1) a desire to reinstate the voices and experiences of those written out of history; (2) a belief that the words of individuals telling their stories can provide a powerful corrective to the mediatized version of reality claiming legitimacy; and (3) a recognition of the power of performance to challenge the master narratives and discourses of history. (45)

Between Worlds fits this description, because where Chilton’s work “has provided a space for (...) ignored “others” (...) to be seen and heard, to tell their stories (...)” (Ben-Zvi 44), Between Worlds provides a similar space for the
unknown, ignored, and the unheard to tell their stories. In the case of Between Worlds these are Māori children adopted out to Pākehā families, where authorities gave no consideration in regards the child’s cultural heritage, where “To deny someone their whakapapa is one of the worst things (...) that can happen to you in Māori terms” (Else 194). It is these ‘unknown’ Māori and their testimonies that are the focus of Between Worlds and whose stories are heard in the play.

**Close Stranger: Autobiographical and Solo Performance & Between Worlds: A Solo Performance**

With Close Stranger, it was never my intention to simply relay a personal story, but rather to highlight, through aspects of my personal experience, the policy of Closed Stranger Adoption and its ramifications. Close Stranger is autobiographical, and is framed around the story of the first time my I met my birth mother. It is a solo show where I play three characters, one of whom represents me. According to David Hare, the most difficult aspect in a one-person show using your own story, is “Inventing your own character. You have to let go of who you really are and create a sort of fictional character” (Hammond & Steward 68). I invented fictionalised characters for Close Stranger, because, aside from the ethical dimensions, the play is not naturalistic, and therefore required characters that would render the performance more dramatic and theatrical than if I had played an unmediated version of myself. However, Deidra Heddon states that “Autobiographical performance brings to the fore the ‘self’ as a performed role, rather than as an
essentialised or naturalised identity” (39). For example, in actor Spalding Gray’s autobiographical works, “the performed Gray [is] understood as a ‘persona’” (Heddon 8). Autobiographical performer Lisa Kron states that “the goal of autobiographical work should not be to tell stories about yourself but, instead, to use the details of your own life to illuminate or explore something more universal” (qtd in Heddon 5). *Close Stranger* seeks to do just that by foregrounding issues of adoption, abandonment, government policy, social conditioning, belonging/not belonging, racism and rape.

Because *Close Stranger* is autobiographical it was only fitting that I perform it myself, but I also agree with Heddon who says that “Autobiographical performance is, potentially at least, extremely economical (...)” and where “Creating a solo autobiographical show means literally creating a part [acting role] for yourself” (18). Indeed, I would probably not have considered taking the play to Germany if I’d had to finance another actor or two as well as myself. Within a New Zealand context George Parker also considers “solo performance as an expression of the search for post-colonial identity in New Zealand” (Parker 21-22). The theme of identity and searching for an identity is a potent theme of both of my plays.

I decided to perform *Between Worlds* as a solo performance as a way for me to expand my acting skills, along with making the show more economical to perform Post-MFA. Parker also comments that “solo performances are often referred to as ‘vehicles’ and as a showcase for actors, a way to get him or her

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2 I discuss taking the play to Germany on page 21 of this exegesis.
places at various stages in a career” (160). Aside from these pragmatic considerations, it was also important for me that the Māori participants’ stories be told by a Māori actor. Another reason for performing Between Worlds as a solo performer, is that according to Jonathan Kalb, a solo documentary play has the potential for being an enduring piece of theatre, as opposed to plays concerning topical issues where “groups of documentary plays are almost always disposable, their full power dependant on the ephemeral newsworthiness of their topics. This danger is much less so with solo pieces” (Kalb 22). Also, David O'Donnell states that in William Brandt and Miranda Harcourt’s play Touch and Go “The play featured two characters (…) played by Harcourt and a male actor” and that the “two-hander format was less intimate than the direct address of the solo actor in [Brandt and Harcourt’s play] Verbatim, and the show had less immediacy as a result” (O'Donnell 119). I wanted my plays to have a sense of intimacy and immediacy. Of course, employing other actors to perform in Between Worlds would have worked, although I think for reasons that Kalb and O'Donnell state, the play has more potential as a solo piece.

Māori Theatre

In Between Worlds I tell narratives of Māori participants, including aspects of my own story, and in Close Stranger I tell my own story while using a range of theatrical techniques including, aspects of Māori performing arts. I am a Māori playwright, and the themes and stories of both plays are about Māori lives and Māori characters. Hone Kouka states “if the play (…) conveys the thoughts and ideas of a Māori writer, and the writer is presenting the world through their
own eyes, then it is Māori” (21). Roma Potiki contends that “Any theatre that upholds the mana of tino rangatiratanga is Māori theatre. The writing and the production must be both written and controlled by Māori, and largely performed by Māori” (Feminist Voices 153). Indeed, both of my plays fit Kouka and Potiki’s definition of Māori theatre. Potiki also states that “the central question for some [Māori playwrights] are, ‘Who am I?’, ‘Where do I come from?’, ‘Where do I belong?’ (A Māori Point of View 59), and these statements really do form the crux of both of my plays.

**Practice Led Research**

In addition to being an artistic project using theatre of the real methods, mine is also a research project. There is a plethora of terms used for research within the arts. To name but a few there is: ‘Practice-led Research’ (PLR), ‘Practice-as Research’ (PaR), ‘Performance-as Research’ (PAR), ‘Practice-based Research’ (PBR), and ‘Practice-as Research in Performance’ (PARIP) (Little 20). Often these terms relate to slightly different practices. Suzanne Little states, that “while some terms may be used in different countries, [the research] may involve different practices and foci. Thus, definitions in the field tend to be somewhat blurred and often contested” (20). The methodology I used to explore and answer my research question is that of Practice-Led Research, or, hereafter PLR. This type of research is practical, exploratory, experimental, and can utilise a range of methods for its enquiry, where “practice-led researchers (...)

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3 Tino rangatiratanga = Self determination of Māori by Māori
move eclectically across boundaries in their imaginative and intellectual pursuits” (Sullivan 50). This type of research also requires that “the object of study is also the means of investigation” (Little 20), and therefore the practice is the vehicle that drives the enquiry. PLR enabled me to address my research question in a multifaceted, practical, and experimental manner. The horizon of my research possibilities was able to be broad, and draw on a number of methods and ways of knowing such as: somatic engagement, journaling, memory, contextual reviews, intuition/hunches, devising, conversation, performance workshops, interviews, photography, film, play readings, performance, and audience feedback. I found the application of this type of research to be both fluid and malleable, where outcomes were not necessarily arrived at on a one-way continuum, but rather evolved in a multi-directional manner through practical application and contemplation. PLR enabled me to recognize and subsequently understand and reflect upon why something worked in the process of making my art, or, why something did not work. Through this process, I was able to justify and articulate my findings and contextualize why I deemed something to be ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’ for my particular project.

Through the process of PLR, not only was my research question interrogated but my research also informed the writing and staging of the plays, and vice versa. Therefore, these two aims were always in conversation with each other, and my work adopted the practice of self-reflexivity. Hausman and Mafe state that “Reflexivity is one of those ‘artist-like processes’ which occurs when a creative practitioner acts upon the requisite research material to generate new
material which immediately acts back upon the practitioner who is in turn stimulated to make a subsequent response” (219). Also, through the practice of self-reflection I was able to better understand how I operate as a theatre practitioner, while also equipping myself with tools for future artistic endeavours. Through my experience with this type of research I can better understand both the practical and theoretical elements of another artists’ work, and in turn, this develops my knowledge base within my chosen field, and successively informs and grows my practice as an artist. Hausman and Mafe state that “for the practice-led researcher, just as the research problem emerges and evolves during the study, so the benefits of the research are likely to evolve and transform over time” (217), and these “benefits” can possibly add to the body of knowledge within the chosen field of the arts; in my case, Theatre Studies.

Indeed, a desired outcome of PLR is to add to the body of knowledge within the given field (Little 23), and it looks to achieve this “through creativity and practice, to illuminate or bring about new knowledge, and understanding (…)” (Arts and Humanities Research Board, qtd in Sullivan 47). Further still, PLR aims to make the knowledge known through the production of an artefact along with an exegesis to accompany it. Little explains that “the exegesis details and extrapolates on the research process, explaining methodological and conceptual frameworks, detailing the work and findings in a reflective and critical manner” (26). Therefore, the artefact and the exegesis can be seen as two sides of the same coin. It is the artefact and its production that are the means through which the exegesis can be written, and in turn the exegesis
informs and extends the artwork, allowing the artwork to be understood as being more than the sum of its parts. Consequently, (along with the artefact) it is the breaking down and reporting of the research, and the practices and concepts that informed the production of the artwork, that can alongside the artwork, lead to new knowledge, or knowledge being used in new ways.

PLR gave me the license to explore and create, knowing that at the outset there were no right or wrongs, only things to discover. In many respects, PLR allowed me to play, and in the playing my ‘doubting voice’ was subdued, freeing me to be in the moment and open to findings. In many instances this type of research got me out of my head and into my body enabling me to respond to data and research problems somatically. The benefits of this approach allowed me to not only comprehend findings and work through problems at a deeper physical level, and at times a higher spiritual level, but also once an idea was embodied through practical application I found it easier to solve or to recreate the idea when required. At times, I can find it difficult to grasp a concept or work through a problem at a purely theoretical level, so addressing issues and discovering and knowing through my body was a definite bonus of PLR. Trevor Curnow says, “If thinking about a problem does not get us anywhere, it may be that it is the thinking that is the problem” (131). The practicality of this type of research also permitted me to sample or workshop methods formulated by leading theatre practitioners, and this was invaluable in the creation, rehearsing and staging of my plays.
I found that because the scope of PLR is so broad, virtually anything could be relevant to my enquiry and the making of my art, from formal lines of investigation to that of my quotidian life. For instance, when I was searching for characters for my play *Between Worlds* I would play at being different characters while I performed household chores such as vacuuming and washing the dishes. This way I could experiment with and ultimately try to discern how these characters moved and felt in their bodies, and what their idiosyncrasies might be while executing housework (an individualised task). As a practice-led researcher I found many situations or opportunities can bring about new discoveries. Graeme Sullivan says that, “Serendipity and intuition that direct attention to unanticipated possibilities has long been part of experimental inquiry” (48). The latest discovery for me is the changing of one of my play’s names. Although perhaps only a small detail, I think it goes to illustrate my point. The working title of one of my plays has been *Walking Between Worlds* from the outset, but on collecting the filmed recordings of my performances from lecturer and Allen Hall Theatre Manager Martyn Roberts, I noticed he had abbreviated the title to *Between Worlds*, (possibly for economical-reasons of fitting it onto the DVD). This title instantly spoke to me, and without further deliberation I made the decision to change the name of the play. Of course, not all outcomes of PLR are arrived at in such an effortless manner, with some findings suffering a very painful birth (for the researcher that is). In fact, I acknowledge that the broadness of this type of research can at times leave one feeling as if they are out to sea with no shore in sight, but this is where the framing of my research through the theatre of the real gave me guidelines and a boundary.
Ethics

Martin asserts that “more often than not documentary theatre is where “real people” are absent – unavailable, dead, disappeared – yet re-enacted” (2006: 9), and Rand Hazou claims that “Most verbatim practitioners appear to speak for, rather than with the others who are the subjects of their projects” (qtd in Gibson 5). Furthermore, Linda Alcoff states that “in the very act of speaking for the ‘other’, the speaker may not only misrepresent that ‘other’ but also, in the very act of attempting to give them a voice, one may contribute further to their silence” (qtd in Maedza 28). I contend that the case is different with Between Worlds because although participants are unavailable, as a fellow Māori adoptee I am in a position to speak with, rather than for them. Janet Gibson affirms that “Speaking with … always involves a choice for negotiation instead of appropriation” (5). Even though I spoke ‘with’ the participants, the writing of the play nevertheless, foregrounded ethical dilemmas for me, because, as Gibson maintains “Any work that engages with others will (...) have an ethical face” (1), and this is something theatre of the real practitioners need to be aware of.

Stringent ethical protocols underpinned the process of making my two plays. Even though the play Close Stranger was autobiographical, it also had ethical dimensions to contend with, because it contained aspects of my birth mother’s story. Therefore, I created characters for the play: Te Kare (myself), and Mary (my birth mother), as a way to conceal my birth mother’s identity, and I also changed names, places and other particulars so that characters would not be
identifiable. Apart from in this exegesis, I never made it plain that Close Stranger was my own story. For my MFA project, I gained category A ethics approval from the University of Otago, where “All research involving human participants undertaken by University of Otago staff or students should be reviewed by a research ethics committee” (U of Otago). I also received ethical permission from Maria Haenga-Collins, (who also adhered to strict ethical protocols), to use aspects of her thesis to inform the writing of Between Worlds including using aspects of her participants’ testimonies. Gibson states that “There are ethical responsibilities when verbatim theatre is created, especially to those from whom stories are mined” (Gibson 2). I felt this ethical responsibility very strongly when writing Between Worlds, because, not only was I using other people’s testimony, but as a fellow adoptee I found myself emotionally close to the material and for these reasons, personally and ethically, I felt a duty to let each person’s story be told.
Chapter Two:

The Creation and Staging of *Close Stranger*

My play *Close Stranger* is a devised autobiographical piece that uses a number of different theatrical devices to tell its story, and can be understood in much the same way as Deidra Heddon describes autobiographical and solo performer Tim Miller’s work: “Miller uses various modes of address, plays multiple roles and *shows* his stories using his dramatic skills. There are moments of enacting events, there are moments of narrating events, there are moments of acting out other characters and staging dialogues” (45). As a solo performer in and creator of *Close Stranger*, I incorporated similar techniques to Miller into my play.

The Beginnings

I began to develop *Close Stranger* over the summer of 2015/2016 after I had been awarded a Māori summer bursary. This bursary is awarded to a select number of Māori students who are about to embark on post-graduate study, and is used to help them commence the initial stages of their research. I used my bursary to research and experiment with a variety of theatrical techniques, such as: physical theatre, poetry in performance, shadow-play, Māori performing arts, and solo performance, with the aim of creating a piece of theatre about the Closed Stranger Adoption of Māori children into non-Māori families, including my own adoption experience. At the beginning of my
summer bursary project I began devising using aspects of my own adoption story that was spurred from a video recorded interview that my supervisor Hilary Halba conducted with myself as the interviewee. As my bursary phase progressed I created vignettes from my memory of the first time I met my birth mother, along with other aspects of my adoption. I formed these vignettes through a range of devising methods, informed by various university class devising projects I took part in, and my work of devising with Ad Hoc Productions theatre company in Dunedin. I used different methods for devising which I used in a hybrid manner, such as, Moment work, and Laban. I must admit that the making of Close Stranger was an enjoyable, uncomplicated process, however, because of the plays web-like development, and its stages of performance, I have found writing about it rather difficult.

Phases of Development

In late January 2016, the ‘bursary’ phase of my research culminated in a ‘bursary showing’ of the vignettes I had created during the summer, for an invited audience of theatre makers and academics. After the ‘bursary-showing’ I embarked on my MFA, where I continued working with the vignettes, shaping them dramaturgically into a more succinct structure. The play was next presented as a ‘work-in-progress’ showing in May 2016, where it had a season of three shows. This showing was an opportunity for me to test out my re-structured and reworked piece. I next presented the play in July 2016 when I performed it at an international playwriting conference: the inaugural UNESCO Cities of Literature Short Play Festival in Heidelberg, Germany. After Germany,
I was satisfied with the draft of Close Stranger because it was dramaturgically, and physically complete, and so I commenced work on the second play for my MFA, Between Worlds (39). The next presentation of Close Stranger was in June 2017 as part of the assessment for my MFA.

I will discuss Close Stranger in relation to phases of its development: the summer bursary research and devising phase, which culminated in the ‘bursary showing’, staged in the Mary Hopewell Theatre; the script development phase that led to the ‘work-in-progress’ showing, staged in Allen Hall Theatre, and my ‘assessed’ performance, also staged in Allen Hall Theatre.

**Devising**

My devising process was focused on aspects of my own adoption story. Norman Denzin states “The performance text is the single most powerful way for ethnography to recover yet interrogate the meanings of lived experience” (Denzin 93); but where to start ...? Alison Oddey asserts that “Devised theatre can start from an infinite number of possibilities, such as an idea, image, concept, object, poem, piece of music, or painting, and the precise nature of the end product is unknown” (7). I chose to begin with two poems I had written on the theme of my adoption, and with a song I had been listening to that had sparked my interest because, in a number of respects, I associated it with adoption. Therefore, I utilized these elements as a springboard for physical aspects of my devising. Dymphna Callery states that “At its simplest, physical-theatre is theatre where the primary means of creation occurs through the
body rather than the mind” (4). Indeed, I was on my feet much of the time devising Close Stranger, experimenting with physicality and movement, as well as exploring technical aspects of theatre to compliment the physical score I was creating.

Callery also states that “Structure is complex (...) One way of ensuring you are clear about the way the piece hangs together and its potential effect on the audience, is to write each scene – however small – on a 5x3 card” (194). This was the system that I used when structuring Close Stranger, which worked well, because I could visually play around with the plot by repositioning the cards until I found the sequence that best suited the story I wanted to tell. Another aspect of structuring that Callery also suggests, is that the deviser “regard the images [they] create as ‘cells’ that form a network (...). It is how the cells relate to each other and the cumulative effects of them as sequences or in counterpoint which determine the spectator’s experience” (190). The vignettes I presented for my ‘bursary showing’ were distinct units or cells created through devising, but in the plays next phase of development I needed to structure it as a more coherent whole. In order to achieve this, I wrote dialogue between the characters so as to connect the scenes, and the result of this work became the one-woman autobiographical play Close Stranger.⁴

⁴ I have Janis Balodis to thank for suggesting the name Close Stranger.
Poetry in Performance

Poetry is a significant feature in both of my plays, in the forms of spoken word, rap and lullaby. Poetry “invites us to experiment with language, to create, to know, to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience” (Leggo 5). Spoken word (also known as performance poetry) is poetry that is written to be performed, and through the performative aspect the poem is able to convey meaning beyond the words alone. Jill Kuhnheim states that:

Voice adds volume, texture, aural punctuation, and vocal markers of gender and race, among other sound elements (such as noise and music), and when poetry is embodied, we must take into account the gestures, costumes, and many other visual elements that multiply with contemporary technological possibilities (...). (4 -5)

Fig. 2. Pete Stewart & Kiri Bell performing “Stark Relief”. Photo M Roberts.
I sought to experiment with the theatrical delivery of performance poetry as a way to impart information, narrative, and emotion, in a direct and potent manner. Poetry has the capacity to get to the heart of the matter more economically than prose (often using fewer words to convey meaning), and “as a medium has the potential to connect with audiences on an emotional level, and through this connection it touches the hearts and minds [of the audience]...” (Fenge, et al 3). Elliot Eisner professes “words, except when they are used artistically, are proxies for direct experience” (4), and so, words used artistically have the potential to affect audiences in such a way that they are able to connect with the experience, the emotion, the moment, that the poet talks of. Although my poems are not essentially slam poetry (although they could well be performed at a ‘Slam” event), yet what Susan Somers-Willet states is relevant to my pieces: “Slam’s commitment to plurality and diversity has led slam poets to linger on personal and political themes, the most common of them being the expression of marginalized identity” (7). Most certainly the themes of my poetic works in both Close Stranger and Between Worlds correlates to Somers-Willet’s statement, because both plays express the marginalized identity of Māori adoptees.

One of my poems “Stake” (83), was so called because, due to my adoption, I do not know my birth whanau, hapu or iwi, so this means that I do not know where I belong, and hence I feel I have no stake that I could plant in the earth. I sought to perform this poem as a way to highlight this aspect of Closed Stranger Adoption. Another of my poems “Tar Black”, (82 & 87), served a different dramaturgical function from “Stake” because it was a reflection of my
experience of being in the womb, and being unwanted in the womb, and was therefore more figurative.

For some months prior to the beginning of my devising process I had been inspired by the song *Angel Baby* by Rosie and the Originals (1960) because, apart from being a romantic love song, I also saw it as a song a mother could sing to her baby. Subsequently the image of a mother singing this song to her baby evoked for me my adoption, along with a measure of sadness. On so many levels sadness is an emotion that I equate with Closed Stranger Adoption; babies were torn away from their mothers, and mothers from their babies. I also found the song relevant to the devised autobiographical work I was creating because it was released in December 1960, and this date coincides with the early stage of the Closed Stranger Adoption policy in New Zealand. Yet another potent aspect of *Angel Baby* was that it reminded me of the kind of song screenwriter, director and actor, Quentin Tarantino might use in one of his films. I am very much a fan of the way he can use songs that speak to the scene but, at the same time, are strangely incongruent to it. Two examples of Tarantino’s deployment of this technique include *Stuck in the Middle with You*, from the torture scene in the film *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), and *Girl, you’ll be a Woman Soon*, from the drug overdose scene in the film *Pulp Fiction* (1994). In both of these films Tarantino’s use of these songs is as diegetic sound, which is also how I chose to use the song *Angel Baby*. In choosing songs for his films Tarantino says he is “trying to find the personality of the movie, find the spirit of the movie” (Tarantino). *Angel Baby* encapsulated the spirit of *Close Stranger*, and also operates in a similar fashion to the above-mentioned songs that Tarantino uses,
because while it is a romantic love song, played when the character of Mary and the character of my birth father first meet in the play, it also underscores the scene as it unfolds in a deeply traumatic way. This song was also a catalyst for the initial stage of physical devising.

Physical Devising

The first piece of physical devising for *Close Stranger* took place one morning during the ‘summer bursary phase’ of my process when I was standing at my kitchen bench pondering my conception. All I knew of my conception was that my birth mother was raped, and that my birth father was Māori. Along with the knowledge of the rape, I deduced that I was potentially conceived on New Year Eve, (my birthday is in late winter). With this idea and the song *Angel Baby* in mind I began to imagine that my birth parents met at a New Year Eve’s party, as *Angel Baby* played. From here I started to map out and rehearse a sequence of physical actions – a ‘moment’, which is “a method to write performance as opposed to writing text” (Bremmer et al 241). I performed this ‘moment’ alone, involving two young people having a good time dancing together, and progressing to the point that leads to the rape. I knew I did not want to show the rape, but through stylized physical movement and gesture I wanted to make apparent that the rape was going to happen. I duly experimented with a sequence of small violent movements, such as groping my crotch from behind, grabbing my ponytail and yanking my head backwards, to depict sexually harassing physicality. When I staged this, I had the scene culminate with Mary being dragged up-stage behind a backcloth lit by red back-lighting. As the
struggle continues Mary is dragged closer to the light source causing her shadow to grow and distort, adding to the potency of the scene, and conveying the ugliness of its subject matter. As a solo performer, I needed to depict this struggle taking place between the two characters, where the character of the Birth Father is undoubtingly stronger than Mary. These two characters were mapped onto my body, depicting the relatedness of all. Hone Kouka says that he wrote the play Mauri Tu “specifically as a solo piece” because “all four characters are of the one whanau (...) Therefore they [are] inseparable” (Mauri Tu x). This scene can also be read as me fighting with myself, struggling with the knowledge of my conception.

**Biography**

One may well wonder how this imagined scene that I have just outlined can be classed as biography, but for an adoptee who at best only has wisps of information and impressions, the imagination is all that is left to fill in the gaps. Denzin says in talking about interpretive biography in performance that “The life story becomes an invention, a re-presentation, a historical object ripped or torn out of its contexts” (Denzin 2). The knowledge of my birth mother’s rape (and ultimately my conception) are what Marianne Hirsh calls a “Post Memory”. Hirsh states that “Post-memories are traumatic memories that precede one’s own life narrative, but nevertheless define it, [and] that while all memory is mediated, post-memory (...) is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation” (qtd in Heddon 68-69). For Close Stranger, I used just such an “imaginative creation” to depict the lead up
to my birth mother’s rape, and in doing so I was able to relay in a stylized theatrical manner a very poignant aspect of my adoption story. This scene was the conception of the play (pun intended), and other scenes were subsequently created around it.

![Image](image.jpg)

Fig. 3. Mary dancing with Te Kare’s birth father. Photo M Roberts.

**Devising and Shadow-Play**

The next ‘moment’ that I started to devise during my summer bursary phase grew from my poem “Tar Black” (82, 87), concerning my experience of being in the womb. I wanted to experiment more with the technique of shadow-play because it is a very potent theatrical device that is able to dramatically convey emotion through its visual imagery. As Aleksandra Dulic states, “The audiences of shadow theatre (...) are engaged in the emotional space of image” (Dulic 55).
I thought shadow-play would also be a fitting theatrical technique to characterize the surreal nature of the scene, as well as it being comparable to how babies are seen in utero through scans – as outlines and shadows. I wanted the physicality of the ‘womb’ scene to depict a macabre rendition of myself as an unwanted foetus in the womb. I wanted a macabre effect because, unlike many pregnancies that are associated with joy, my birth mother’s pregnancy was associated with ugliness, shame, secrecy and lies. For this scene, I used what Tina Landau terms “expressive gesture” to communicate my impressions of being in the womb. For Landau, “Expressive Gesture expresses an inner state or emotion. It is abstract and symbolic rather than representational. It is universal and timeless (...)” (22). Therefore, I devised a sequence of expressive gestures, where initially I placed myself close to the light source behind a backcloth, thus rendering my shadow and physicality grotesque and exaggerated. These movements began with me standing side-on to the audience, but in a curled-up position, so my projected shadow looked like a large formless blob, and as I deeply inhaled and exhaled the blob expanded and contracted, (representing that the blob had life). Then I began protruding my fists out of the shadow of the blob in different directions; this movement corresponded with the line in the poem “Pushing with tiny clenched fists”. Next, I turned front on to the audience, and while standing slightly bent forward I extended my arms out either side of my body with my arms bent downwards at the elbows and my fingers splayed, symbolising female reproductive organs. Throughout this sequence, I slowly moved closer to the audience and further away from the light, causing my shadow to become more defined so that by the end of this scene my shadow represented a fully formed human.
I used red pulsing light for the shadow-play in order to represent both a womb and a pulsing heart with blood pumping through it, with the blood representing life, and blood-ties, which is why at the end of the poem the red-shadow snaps to black-out, depicting the severed blood-ties of adoptees. I decided to pre-record the poem “Tar Black” which I spoke in a robotic manner to give the impression of detachment, and as a comment on the factory-like operations that Closed Stranger Adoption denotes, while also further stylizing the story. For the ‘bursary-showing’ of this scene, I also had an amplified recording of a
foetus’ heartbeat, although, later I dispensed with this sound effect, as I sought something more theatrical and less literal to symbolize a heartbeat.

**Taonga Pūoro**

I wanted to experiment with taonga pūoro because I find these instruments deeply moving and evocative, with a deep history and symbolism in the Māori world, and the power to bring a spiritual dimension to the play. As Brian Flintoff says “These instruments (...) convey a spiritual dimension that transcends the sounds they create (...)” (14). Therefore, for the ‘work-in-progress’ showing and all subsequent performances of *Close Stranger*, I engaged Pete Stewart as a live musician. He and I attended a number of taonga pūoro evening classes, and sought advice from taonga pūoro researcher Doctor Jennifer Cattermole from the University of Otago. When Stewart and I researched taonga pūoro to represent a baby’s heartbeat we decided the porotiti would be ideal because the instrument produces rhythmic humming sounds. Porotiti are wind instruments that belong to the family of the Māori god Tāwhirimātea, the god of winds, and these instruments are associated with the spirit world (Flintoff 57). Stewart recorded the porotiti live, then looped it, and played it back sped up. The sound had to be sped up to match the very fast heartbeat of a baby in utero.

In the scene that precedes the ‘womb’ scene, which I will refer to as the ‘daydreaming’ scene, Stewart played a kōauau, a flute-like instrument which is associated with Raukatauti, the goddess of flutes (Flintoff 65), while I recited
the poem “Stake” (83). Among other uses, the kōauau were used for “healing and grieving and to ease pain” (Te Ara 2), which is pertinent for this scene where I enact daydreaming about meeting my birth mother for the first time. Stewart played the kōauaua again at the end of the play when Te Kare, holding the Teddy Bear at her side is silhouetted in green shadow, before the light slowly fades to black out.

Fig. 5. Girl with Teddy Bear. Photo M Roberts.

Set

In order to use shadow-play as a theatrical device I needed both depth of stage and a screen on which to project the shadow. The need for a screen evoked in me a daydreaming memory I used to have as a child, of meeting my birth mother as she hung laundry on a washing line. Therefore, for my ‘bursary
showing” and ‘work-in-progress’ showing I decided to experiment with using a washing line suspended across the acting space. Sheets hung from the line as a very practical yet symbolic aspect of the mise-en-scene, symbolising not only my childhood daydream of meeting my birth mother, but also, domesticity, homeliness, cleanliness, and safety, attributes ideally associated with motherliness. In all performances of Close Stranger, I used an end-stage configuration. In the ‘bursary showing’ and the ‘work-in-progress’ showing, the stage was a large, bare space bisected by a washing line that was approximately five metres in length and two metres in height and that ran horizontally across the stage, with a set of white sheets hung from it. Down-stage of the washing line the bare stage represented the void between myself and my birth mother, and the ‘gap’ that can never be filled because of the years of absence. The use of a washing line afforded me two distinct acting spaces: one down-stage directly in front of the audience, and the other up-stage behind the washing line where I could perform shadow-play. The washing line also acted as a screen onto which I could project images of myself as a child with my adopted family.

In the scene that I call the ‘daydreaming’ scene, I use green shadow-play while hanging laundry as I recite the poem “Stake”. I chose green back light for the shadow play in this scene, because in the daydream of meeting my birth mother, we meet on lush green grass. I also associate the colour green with Aotearoa, and land, and of being grounded, and of belonging somewhere, while the poem “Stake” expresses the notion of not belonging, of feeling lost. Once I had hung the laundry I slowly moved back and forth in shadow, parallel with the sheets (as if lost), an action that was representative of being caught
‘between two worlds,’ the Māori world and the Pākehā world. Because “A recurring theme [for cross-cultural adoptees] is that of walking between worlds and occupying a marginal space at familial, societal and cultural levels” (Trenka et al, qtd in Haenga-Collins 30). In this sense, the washing line is also symbolic of a ‘fringe’; of Māori adoptees being on the fringe of both the Pākehā world, and the Māori world.

When I staged the play for my ‘assessed’ performance I chose to use the cyclorama as a screen to project shadow onto instead of the washing line, for a number of reasons. With the washing line, I used two sheets that met in the middle as the screen; they also allowed me to part them in order to enter and exit. However, this set-up caused a distinct crumpled join which I was never aesthetically content with, because it affected the impact of the shadow-play, rendering it less crisp and less stylized. Also, because of the weight of the sheets, the washing line tended to sag in the middle, and the aesthetic of this image was sloppy, which is not an idea I wanted to communicate to the audience.
When I decided to use the cyclorama instead of the washing line as the screen, I had to adjust my entrances and exits to either stage right or stage left, which resulted in compromises: I could no longer enter through the middle of the sheets which had been symbolic of being born, and in the ‘rape’ scene “Mary” when is dragged up-stage into the red shadow and the exit between the sheets was symbolic of the rape (in both instances, the parting in the sheets was representative of a vagina). On the whole, however, I was happy with the aesthetic of using the cyclorama, and I decided to frame all the shadow-play within a large circle of light on the cyclorama which was achieved through using a round gobo on the green and red back-lights. This circle became representative both of the womb and the ‘mind’s eye’, which I interpreted as conjuring up the notion of memory, as visual images from my mind played out in shadow.
Hanging laundry in the ‘daydreaming’ scene not only related to my daydream of my birth mother, but also served as a metaphor for ‘airing one’s dirty laundry’, therefore acting as a subtle preface of the highly personal information that was to follow. In the ‘bursary showing’ I hung tea towels on the washing line, but in the ‘work-in-progress’ showing I experimented with hanging underclothes, such as bras, slips, vests, and other underwear, as this was a visual signifier of that ‘dirty laundry’. However, I concluded that hanging underclothes was too ambiguous, hence, for my ‘assessed’ performance I chose to hang small children’s clothes, which added another meaning: the mother hanging the clothes of the absent (adopted-out) child.
Framing the Story

The work generated from my initial phase of devising at the beginning of my summer bursary (the ‘rape’ scene, the ‘womb’ scene, and the ‘daydreaming’ scene) led to the idea of exploring (in the next phase of devising) the first meeting between myself and my birth mother. Although I had set myself limitations by using only autobiographical material for this piece, I concur with Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett,⁵ who state that “limitations create freedoms

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⁵ Artistic directors of devised theatre company Frantic Assembly.
“Essex” appears in the play as a response to Te Kare being asked the questions “What was it like?” and “Where did you live?” by Mary about her early life in the UK. The poem takes the form of a matter-of-fact recall of my early impressions and memories of Essex as a ten-year-old. In the delivery of this poem I use the Essex accent as a way of aurally transporting the audience to the location of the poem, and marking myself out as ‘different’ from a New Zealand Māori context, just as my Māori-ness had marked me out as ‘different’ in the UK when I was a child.

Māori Performing Arts

In the poem “Essex”, Te Kare informs Mary that she was mistaken for a gypsy in the UK, leading Mary to express at the end of the poem, “You’re actually more Māori than I thought you would be”. This statement inflames Te Kare and leads her to retort with a form of haka called a Pātere. In consultation with my

and breed creativity” (Graham & Hoggett ?). I was now able to draw on memory from my first meeting with my birth mother and use key aspects of our conversation as the impetus to create more moments that tied the piece together dramaturgically. This in turn presented me with the freedom to create, within the framework of that meeting. I realised that any material was to spring from the conversation that took place between me and my birth mother, and also return to it. Subsequently I linked the theatrical vignettes I had created, by using questions or statements from that conversation. An example of this is the poem “Essex” (85-86), which then leads into the haka (86-87).
kaitiaki, Rua McCallum, I chose this form of haka because they are “used to restore self-respect or reply to insults or slander” (Ka’ai, et al 108). Te Kare perceives Mary’s comment as an insult, and her response is one of both disbelief and anger: anger that yet again (as in the poem “Essex”) her identity is questioned and commented on, and disbelief, because both know that Te Kare’s birth father is Māori. Rua McCallum gifted me her haka “Haka Mo Ka Wahine” and, with McCallum’s permission and advice, I used only a section of the haka that was most pertinent for Te Kare’s response to her birth mother’s statement (mentioned above). Te Kare’s response to Mary:

Me pehea te o What about the world
Kakano, purapura The seeds planted
Ko te wai In the fluid
O Papatuanuku Of the womb
Waka āhuru The nurturing vessel
Waka whangia The vessel that feeds
I ā ha ha Yeah that’s right
Nana te hua His is the seed
Uru ara tō tika That entered the straight path
Uru ara rapu ana That entered the path searched for
Tane whakatipuranga e Tane the progenitor
Haea te pukenga The source was split
Haea te whanau The source was split and there was birth

Kss Aue Kss Aue Aue Ha – Hi

(Written and translated by Rua McCallum)
The haka was a powerful and apt response for Te Kare; I did not incorporate it lightly, as Māori theatre practitioner Roma Potiki warns, that in Māori theatre “if you use strong symbols [such as a haka] the onus is on you [the theatre maker] to see that they are not hollowly re-created” (1991, 62). In consultation with wahine kapa haka expert Emere Leitch-Munro and my kaitiaki, the use of the haka in Close Stranger was certainly not “hollowly re-created”. Te Kare’s response with the haka also functions as a slight to the generation of Mary’s parents who did not provide sex education for their children, but then chastised young girls, and unmarried women for falling pregnant. The haka also functions as a derisive lesson in sex education for Mary.

I chose to incorporate McCallum’s haka instead of writing my own, not only because she gifted it to me, but also because her haka was so pertinent to the response I had envisioned for Te Kare (almost as if it had been written for this character), and therefore the thought of me writing anything else would have been redundant.

**Voice and Physicality**

I worked on a number of aspects to do with my voice, which included working on my breath, voice projection, voice and characterization, and intention behind a character’s words. All the vocal work I undertook functioned as a way to unlock my voice. Callery asserts that “Breath is the key; altering the rhythm of breathing generates a powerful link between patterns of movement and emotion expression” (152). I broke down in tears more than once during voice
work sessions, because, at times I found myself caught up with the emotional journey of the character of Te Kare. My voice coach Pauline Balodis helped me by instructing me to be outside of the character, to feel the emotions but at the same time to be separate from them, so as the emotions would not overwhelm me ("Workshop Journal" 31 May 16). Working on voice and characterization, I used the character’s psychology to locate where in the body the centre of the character comes from in order to know where the character speaks from, which ultimately affects the character’s vocal mannerisms. For example, the centre of the character of Mary is in her thorax; she has pushed all of her feelings deep down into her abdomen where she can ignore them and not talk about them, and so she speaks only from her upper chest. This gives her a light breathy voice that works, albeit at an unconscious level, to mask her pain. Balodis coached me on a number of warm-up exercises for my voice that incorporate the whole body through stretching and awareness along with exercising the vocal chords and facial muscles. These exercises continued to be very beneficial throughout the process of making both of my plays as they enabled me to be more connected with the characters in performance.

I worked on aspects of my character’s psychology, particularly on how the character’s psychology related to and informed their physicality and physical movement, using techniques of Laban movement. Laban movement comprises four components, each of which has two elements, and these factors are combined with what is called the “Eight efforts” (Espeland). Jean Newlove states that the eight efforts “are the foundation of your work as a performer” (127). They help define character, in movement, rhythm, and tempo, and this
“embodied work helps the actor in understanding internal impulse and in developing an expressive body that can make clean, precise choices” (Espeland). I found Laban a very efficient and effective working model, which enabled my characterizations to be clearer and more defined, which was very beneficial as a solo performer playing multiple characters.

“Act of Recovery”

With Close Stranger, I sought to create a play where every aspect of the play was thought out, and nothing in terms of text, narrative, props, or mise-en-scene was surplus to requirements. Being autobiographical, Close Stranger was an emotional roller-coaster ride, but can also be seen as what Heddon calls, an “act of recovery” (Heddon 54) for myself. Just as autobiographical performer Linda Montano says about performing personally traumatic autobiography, “Somehow along the way I heard that, if you verbally repeat things over and over, they diffuse. I knew that the internal combustion would begin to lessen if I talked about it” (qtd in Heddon 55). Although Close Stranger was emotionally difficult for me, the making of it however was akin to birthing a three-kilo baby after only three hours of labour. Whereas, the next play I wrote for my MFA, Between Worlds, was akin to giving birth to a 10-kilo breach baby after 36 hours of labour!
I developed my play *Between Worlds* in a very different manner from the devised process that I used to create *Close Stranger*. *Between Worlds* was developed from the transcribed testimonies of a number of Māori adoptees. Therefore, my process of making this play focussed more on the selecting, editing, and shaping of the data as opposed to the physical approach I took with *Close Stranger*. I struggled writing *Between Worlds* for a number of reasons, including as Gibson states, because, “Working verbatim is not an easy task. It is challenging not least because there are palpable tensions between the ethical challenges of dealing with people’s stories and the aesthetic challenges of creating interesting theatre from them” (Gibson 12). In this chapter I will discuss the process of collecting and selecting data for *Between Worlds*, along with dramaturgical challenges I encountered in the writing and staging of the play, and how I remedied these issues. I will also discuss aesthetic and performance choices I made in the staging of the play.

**The Personal is the Political**

I concur with Gibson when she states that “In the re-telling of people’s lives, in the use of their experiences, understandings and words can lay a tremendous political potential for change” (Gibson 14). It was always my intention that *Between Worlds* would be understood as a political play that foregrounded the effects on Māori who were adopted into Pākeha families, and that would effect
change. From the outset of writing my play I felt the same way as theatre maker Nicholas Kent regarding the making of his verbatim plays, when he says that they “often stemmed from my feeling that there was a large injustice somewhere that needed highlighting, or a piece of history that was somehow obscured and needed some light shone on it (…)” (Hammond & Steward 135). With *Between Worlds* I hoped that once this little-known aspect of New Zealand’s history was recognised, it could pave the way for change, in the form of acknowledgement and an apology to Māori adoptees from the New Zealand government, and also acknowledgement and acceptance from within the Māori world for the adoptees. For these reasons, I decided that theatre of the real was the most appropriate form of theatre through which to relay Māori adoptees’ stories. *Between Worlds* afforded Māori adoptees a platform from which their testimonies could be seen and heard.

**The Beginnings**

I began the process of writing *Between Worlds* by reading a number of transcribed interviews of Māori adoptees. Additionally, I interviewed and video recorded testimony from other adoptees, as well as using aspects of transcribed video testimony of my own adoption story. I drew on other information from Haenga-Collins’ thesis research, which I mainly used to develop the spoken word poem and raps that I wrote for my play.

My first draft of *Between Worlds* did not work because I incorporated testimony from all of the participants, along with almost all of their adoption narratives.
This led to a very long and discursive draft that tried to encompass too many themes. Because I felt obliged to use all of the participants and their stories in this draft, I had created eleven characters, and whilst this might not be a problem in itself, issues arose because many of their adoption experiences were similar; this led to a great many parallel narratives on themes such as, racism, abandonment, and not belonging. Therefore, “There [was] a tendency for [the characters] to become repetitive and blur into one another, and become confusing” (Balodis), as this example from my first draft shows:

**CAROLE B:** I still walk nowhere. I still walk between worlds. I walk not in the Pākehā world, but neither do I walk in any ethnic world. So, I can’t fit into the white world and yet I don’t fit into the Māori world.

**ELIZABETH:** I think I just sort of struggle with the Māori way and the Pākehā way.

**CAROLE A:** I will never have a Māori history, and I don’t want my adopted history, because I don’t belong to them (...). So, where do I belong?

**CAROLE B:** I can still feel like I don’t belong. There’s all these core things inside of me. And it did matter when the department of social welfare put me in with a Pākehā family (...).

**CAROLE A:** I didn’t fit in anywhere. I didn’t fit in there, and it seemed like I didn’t fit in over there either. And I was in the middle, not belonging to anything or anybody.
KAARE: Tell me about it. Like with me, there’s still not a sense of belonging totally to one or the other. It’s like ... being in no-man’s land.

(_Between Worlds_ Draft #1)

In my first draft, another problem that arose from using eleven characters and their parallel narratives was that I intended to perform _Between Worlds_ as a solo performer. However, unlike, for instance, Doug Wright’s play _I Am My Own Wife_, where one actor plays multiple characters, the characters in Wright’s play are different nationalities, ethnicities, genders, ages, with many having had different life experiences, whereas, all the adoptees in _Between Worlds_, are of the same ethnicity, all grew up in New Zealand (as I did for my first 10 years), and all were within a twenty-five-year age range of each other. Because of these similarities and the parallel narratives, my supervisor Janis Balodis stated that the first draft would require “a group of actors embodying and playing individual characters to avoid confusion. As it stands it cannot (…) be played by one actor and be comprehensible and accessible to the audience” (Balodis). It was important to me that I perform the adoptees’ stories as a solo performer because “finding an identity is a moving, morphing, shapeshifting, juggling act for an adoptee (in my experience anyway),” (“Journal Notes” 10th Dec 15). Additionally, I relate to Doug Wright when he was asked with regards to _I Am My Own Wife_: “Why did you chose to write a play as a one-actor play?” He replied, “Charlotte adopted many guises in order to survive; how appropriate that one actor adopts many guises to tell her tale!” (Stanescu 103). Because I,
like many other Māori adoptees, have struggled with forming an identity as a result of our cross-cultural adoption, I thought it only fitting that *Between Worlds* highlighted this issue, no matter how abstract the concept was for the audience.⁶

**Composite Characters**

In order to remedy the problem of too many characters with parallel narratives, I created composite characters, but in doing so, a number of new dilemmas arose. They included: how to select data and remain true to the participants; whose story to omit and why; and which stories to blend together to form a composite narrative and character. I found the process extremely difficult, not least because I found it hard to step outside of the work and be objective about it. The process was akin to putting a puzzle together. William Brandt says that in creating composite characters from verbatim testimony for his and Miranda Harcourt's play *Verbatim*, “the drafting of the text was a very complex and challenging process” (PlayMarket Annual 53). For *Between Worlds* I had to know each individual participant’s narrative inside out, so, that when I combined stories I knew that the character I was creating was Māori from either their birth mother or birth father’s side, whether they had siblings, whether they had found their birth whanau, and so on. Even though a certain amount of invention was taking place, I still did not want to change the testimony, only to edit and combine it.

⁶ See Erica Newman’s Masters thesis “Identity Formation of Māori Adoptees”
I created six composite characters for the second draft of the play. In so doing I sought to use a process similar to the way Harcourt and Brandt created *Verbatim* (1994), where they “conducted over thirty interviews” (*Verbatim* 27) from which they created nine characters, six of whom are played by a solo performer, while three of the characters were pre-recorded voices (6). The creating of *Verbatim* was similar to Alana Valentine’s *Parramatta Girls*, where Valentine interviewed over thirty-five women, and she “then ‘collapsed’ her source material into eight distinct characters” (Brown 60). While both of these plays consist of composite characters derived from verbatim testimony, both plays are also structured around an invented narrative. *Parramatta Girls* is set within the framework of a reunion, where “a group of ex-Parramatta Girls come to the reunion, they look around, they leave” (Valentine qtd in Brown 60), while the focus of *Verbatim* is “six people plunged into the aftermath of a homicide” (Brandt, *Verbatim* Cover). With *Between Worlds* I struggled with how to structure the narratives into a framework.

**Non-Working Framework**

However, in my first two drafts I decided to set the play in a kind of encounter group or therapy session scenario, although this concept was not explicitly stated in the first draft (a problem in itself). The group therapy session may have worked, such as is the case with the verbatim play *Stories to Heal Violence* (2016), devised by Fran Kewene, where there is genuine conversation and acknowledgment between characters, because the original interview had been recorded in a group setting. However, because the interviews that I was
working with had been recorded separately to one another, and because (in my first draft) I did not want to alter or add to the testimonies to render them more conversational, the group scenario came across as un-genuine, un-natural, and stilted. Balodis commented that “The work seems to be (...) conversational without characters really talking or listening to each other” (Balodis). This example from the first draft illustrates this point:

CORDELIA: There’s two of me, and one hated the other.
LOU: There’s two of me too. And ah, they’re at odds. One feels detached. Detached and alone.
CORDELIA: I had no-one.

(*Between Worlds Draft # 1*)

In my second draft, I sought to make the framing of the group scenario more explicit than I had in the first draft, and I achieved this through inventing the initial dialogue between characters as they gathered for the group session:

FRAN: Carole, this is Lou, and Nola, and Kerry. I don’t know if you know each other?
CAROLE: No. Hello, Carole. [*They all greet each other]*
LOU: Tēnā koe Carole, I’m Lou. [*Lou kisses Carole on the cheek]*
NOLA: Hi Carole, Nola. [*She gives Carole a hug]*
KERRY: Carole, Kerry, lovely to meet you. [*He warmly shakes her hand]*

50
There’s tea and coffee, or juice, and water, please feel free to help yourselves, and make yourselves at home.

KERRY: [Goes to coffee table] I could murder a coffee. Can I get you you ladies anything?

(Between Worlds Draft #2)

However, after the opening scene, the play soon digressed back into the same situation as I had in the first draft, where characters did not really appear to be conscious of each other. Although, now, because I had explicitly set-up the encounter group scenario where people usually listen and interact with one another, the characters instead “came across as uncaring, bad listeners, with no empathy, and rather narcissistic” (Personal Notes 16, Feb 17). An example from the second draft shows this problem:

CAROLE: I didn’t stand up for myself. I let people walk all over me. And I had absolutely no confidence. I used to get called nicknames “fireworks can’t crackle” sort of thing.

CONNIE: What’s that?

CAROLE: “Fireworks can’t crackle” That’s what one kid called me.

CONNIE: What does that mean?

CAROLE: Stuffed if I know. And other kids would spit on me. Others would throw stones at me.

FRAN: The same with me at school. It’s like the Māori kids treated me Pākehā because I had Pākehā parents and the Pākehā kids treated me as Māori because I had dark skin. And I used to get spat at on my way to school.

NOLA: Because you were dark?

(Between Worlds Draft #2)
Parallel Narratives

In the first draft of the play there were multiple characters but no clear set of given circumstances. In the second draft, there were fewer characters and their given circumstance was an adoption encounter group. However, in the second draft, as in the first, there were still too many parallel narratives, which meant that the story seemed to stagnate at times, and spin around on itself. Moreover, the characters came across as stuck in their past, with no clear objective, and unable to move forward. I felt that the audience would soon tire of the characters and ultimately the play, because they were constantly being confronted with a barrage of repetitive unresolved hurts, and the play was unable to advance. Kaoime Malloy warns that “Without an objective and action that leads towards it, the play will flounder and struggle to maintain the attention of the audience” (36). Therefore, I had to do a lot more editing, which again I found so hard to do, because I was still subjectively caught up in the work. I had real trouble realizing that the best way I could honour adoptees’ stories and communicate effectively with the audience was to cut out all parallel narratives, or only incorporate part of a parallel narrative if it also functioned to stress a point and, or advance the story as a whole, or a character’s journey. Verbatim theatre-maker Robin Soans comments “Characters should be shown to undertake a journey of discovery of some kind (...)” (Hammond & Steward 26). Through the process of editing out any repetitive narratives the characters became more distinct entities and their journeys became more evident and refined.
Character’s Journeys

For my third draft, I created four composite characters: Joan, Frances, Kauri and Odette, along with an entity called ‘Mask’. Mask was a persona who took a political stance while delivering the spoken word poems and raps that punctuated the performance with statistical and historical information, and other documentation regarding Closed Stranger Adoption of Māori children. Now that I had four distinct characters I was able to map out their trajectories. I sought to realise what Halba and Young said about the writing of their verbatim play *Hush*, that they were “mindful (...) of such conventional playwriting principles as identifying strong narrative arcs, breaking the routine, and positioning characters and stories in relation to one another in order to highlight points of both commonality and contrast” (Halba & Young 105). Through incorporating these “conventional playwriting principles” into *Between Worlds*, I now had a much stronger and clearer script and characters. In this draft, I no longer had the characters interacting with each other, instead the characters (unaware of the other characters) directly addressed the audience in a series of monologues and accounts. According to Richard Toscan “A monologue is a tiny play with a beginning, a middle, and an end. (...) It tells a story, usually a short one (...)” and that it is “the climax or curtain line of the monologue that catapults us into the next scene (...)” (165). I sought to achieve the trajectory Toscan talks of, both within each monologue and with the juxtaposition of the monologues. Now that the characters did not inhabit the same space as each other I decided to set each character within a world, a space, a place of their own.
Place and Space

The play was set in another-worldly place, a psychological space, a place of memory and of ghost-kingdoms. According to adoption therapist Betty-Jean Lifton, the Ghost-Kingdom is a place of imagination for all members of the adoption triad\(^7\), and is a place where ghosts reside. For example, the birth mother is a constant ghost for an adoptee (prior to reuniting), and the birth mother is also a constant ghost for the adopting parents, and so (Lifton 72). I see the staging of *Between Worlds* as similar in part to how writer and director Terence O’Connell explains the set of his verbatim play *Minefields and Mini Skirts*. “It was set in an extraordinary bamboo tea room, house of the imagination (...) showing you somehow that a good part of these women’s hearts and minds were still in [Vietnam] at the time [of the Vietnam war] and, indeed, still are…” (Brown 53-54). Although *Between Worlds* shares a similar concept to O’Connell’s setting because it relates to the imagination and memory and the “still being there”, it differs because in *Between Worlds* the space is not a shared space. Instead each space is unique to each character, relating to their adoption experiences.

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\(^7\) The adoption triad is made up of the adoptee, the birth mother, and the adopting parents.
For *Between Worlds* I used an end-stage configuration, with the cyclorama as a backdrop onto which characters’ names and ages were projected for the first two times they were introduced.⁸ On stage-right and the stage-left hung vertical translucent gauzes of approximately two metres in width, that sat on a slight diagonal and were lit by down lights whenever a rap or spoken word was performed by Mask. The raps and spoken word were always performed from behind the gauze stage-right, where a microphone on a stand was set.

An armchair with a shawl on it sat one and a half metres down-stage from the cyclorama. Two and a half metres in front of the armchair lay a Māori korowai (cloak) (unrecognizable until it is revealed towards the end of the play). All

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⁸ Due to technical problems these projections did not work as planned for my ‘assessed’ performance.
around the acting space lay numerous shoes. Stage-left of the armchair by one metre, and sat on a slight diagonal, were a pile of 30 dolls and a doll’s cot. Also, once the character Joan entered with her suitcases and bags, these props added to the narrative and scenic elements of the play.

I see the acting space for *Between Worlds* as being analogous to Erica Newman’s description of the “third space” where she states that “As a [Māori] adoptee comes to terms with their adoptive identity, they can feel as if they are in a ‘third space’ a space where they are neither complete within their adoptive or biological families or within their community. This third space I call the adopted space” (111). Janinka Greenwood correlates “an emergent bicultural space as a third space” (“Journeys” 10), and that “the third space is emergent, unscripted, [and] it holds possibilities and challenges” (Greenwood “Education”). In *Between Worlds* the stage is the third space, where according to Greenwood “the third space takes place not only in actual time and place, but also in a space of intention and understanding” (“Journeys” 10). The set is also analogous to the “adopted space” that Newman describes, where the different props and objects within the space were exclusive to each character’s “adopted space”. The shoes were solely associated with the character Kauri, the dolls with Frances, the shawl and Māori cloak with Odette, and the suitcases and bags with Joan. In particular, the shoes and the dolls formed a large part of the scenic design of the play. All the props worked as a device to deepen characterization, and to advance the story and each character’s journey.
Shoes

Kauri interacts solely with the shoes, and throughout all of her scenes she is constantly preoccupied with trying to match up pairs of shoes, and place them in neat rows on the floor in front of the audience. Even when she cannot find a matching pair she resorts to placing an odd pair of shoes together (even though ideally, she wants to match pairs). The shoes proved to be an evocative talking point for the audience, and meant different things to different people. They symbolized rows of shoes outside the wharenui on a marae, highlighting among other inferences, a cultural aspect of the Māori world denied to Māori adoptees. The shoes that could not be matched represented adoptees unable to be matched to a whanau, and when Kauri mismatched the odd shoes, this represented adoption of Māori into Pākehā families, where the physical
differences were as visible as an odd matched pair of shoes. Kauri’s adoption story is traumatic, so keeping herself busy as she relates her narrative, operates as a way for her to defer her trauma. Her fixation with matching shoes, and finding the right pair, and neatly lining the shoes up, belies the light, bubbly and out-going persona that she presents to the audience. Therefore, along with the many symbolic inferences that the shoes evoke, they also operate to colour the character’s psychology. Kauri tries desperately to match shoes as a way of matching like with like, trying to find the perfect pairing, trying to find balance. Her constant searching also represents her constant search for validation. She says “Validation is what I’ve always craved” (Between Worlds 106). By constantly looking outside herself for validation, Kauri unfortunately never realises that the validation she so desperately craves can only come from within herself. Therefore, her journey within the play is one that does not advance, and by the end of the play (unlike the other characters) nothing is resolved for Kauri. Further still, the neat rows of shoes that Kauri creates become grave stones, highlighting a number of meanings, including the fact that her constant searching for validation outside of herself always results in a dead end. The shoes as gravestones also represent ancestors, lost whakapapa. Potiki states that she “cannot recall having seen a play by a Māori writer that did not make some reference to tūpuna. The emanations/spirits of the dead most certainly rattle our bones” (qtd in Peterson 21). The gravestones also represent the lost whanau of adoptees, and subsequently the lost tamariki to that whanau. Adoption therapist Betty-Jean Lifton states that “The story of adoption is a ghost story, full of fantasy, mystery, and missing persons, who, for the most part, are “as if” dead, unlike respective ghosts, who are unambiguously
dead” (Lifton 72). The empty shoes suggest missing people, ghosts, emptiness, a void, waiting to possibly be filled one day. Kauri hopes that her fixation with shoes will one day result in her finding the perfect pair that she will feel worthy enough to fill. The shoes work as a highly symbolic prop in the play, where still more meaning can be inferred by the audience.

Fig. 11. Kauri. Photo M Roberts

Dolls

I chose to use dolls as a scenic element of the play, because not only are they associated with the character of Frances’ adoption narrative, but they also represent children adopted through Closed Stranger Adoption in New Zealand. There are a number of similar narratives among adoptees of how their adopting parents chose them from among many other children. When the audience is
first introduced to the character of Frances, she enacts this ‘choosing,’ by looking at the pile of dolls, approaching them and scanning them until she finds the one that she wants and picks it up. Frances’ choosing the doll represents adoptive parents choosing a baby, while also emphasizing the notion that the choosing was comparable to choosing a doll in a toyshop.⁹

Fig. 12. Frances looking at the dolls. Photo M Roberts.

Fig. 13. Frances Chooses a doll. Photos M Roberts.

⁹ KAURI: I was told I was picked up off the special counter; I was chosen. And, ‘they’ chose ‘me’ over all the other children that were there (Between Worlds 4).
The doll that Frances chooses takes on different meanings and personas during the play, including: representing herself as a baby; representing her birth mother dying in her arms, and as a symbol of both her and her birth mother’s ghost kingdom. Lifton says the ghost kingdom can “be seen as an alternate reality. It is a Land of What Might Have Been” (72). As this example of the character Frances talking about her birth mother shows:

FRANCES: Over time we kind of re-storied my childhood, and I would always talk to her about what I had wanted as a kid. Such as, [the doll becomes deactivated] “when I was little I had lots of dolls didn’t I?” And she went, “yes you had about 30 of them, and every night we would put them in their nighties, brush their hair, and put them to bed.” And she’d just give me this whole story, and I remember thinking, oh my god this is incredible, how she wouldn’t even flinch, how she’d just carry on with the story! (12)
The doll also represents shame and secrecy (as when Frances stuffs it down the side of the armchair) (Between Worlds 3-4). At one point in the play, Frances puts herself among the dolls and talks about not fitting into her adoptive family, and so the visual image of a grown women among the dolls becomes a visual cue to what she is saying.

FRANCES: I think if I had been raised within a Māori family where I would have shared similar physical features ... I could’ve gone home, home to a family where I would have fitted in, where I would have been normal (...) (96).

Fig. 17. Frances amongst the dolls. Photo M Roberts.
Cocoon and Butterfly Wings

In using the shawl and the korowai as a prop for the character of Odette, I wanted to map out her metamorphosis. Odette’s journey begins with her cocooned and hiding in an old shawl. The shawl symbolizes shame and guilt that burdens and weighs Odette down, while also providing her with a covering so she can hide. As her story progresses she slowly but surely uncovers herself, and unburdens herself, until she discards the old shawl altogether, along with everything it represents. Her journey has led her to discover the korowai, which she adorns herself with, and in doing so she claims her Māori-ness and her place within the Māori world. Odette’s journey through the play is one of change and growth. With the use of her costume elements, in unison with her physical actions, her journey can be seen as analogous to a caterpillar evolving and then coming out of its cocoon as a butterfly. When we are first introduced to her, she is hiding under her shawl, attempting to make herself disappear into the back of the armchair. As her story progresses, she grows in statue, to the point where she is standing upright and proud, wrapped in her korowai (her butterfly wings), and directly addressing the audience.
Baggage

The audience are first introduced to the character of Joan as she awkwardly enters the stage, weighed down with suitcases and bags. The bags, of course, are a simple metaphor for emotional baggage. The baggage is very heavy and cumbersome, and hinders any progress for the character, literally and metaphorically. In the third draft of the play I had the character Joan enter and also exit with all of her baggage, because this was the testimony I was working with, where the participant did not appear to find any peace or any resolution with her adoption story. However, when I met with this participant to show her the transcription of her testimony that I was intending to use, she said to me that the process of sharing her story and participating in the project had been
very therapeutic for her. Halba and Young reported a similar response from participants in their play *Hush*, where participants stated “that watching a performance of the play (...) was in psycho-therapeutic terms, a deeply affirming, even empowering experience; it confirmed self-esteem and self-confidence” (113). Soans says that after interviewing a participant for one of his verbatim plays, that participant told him, “You made me feel [my story] was important; that I am important. That’s worth everything in the world to me” (Hammond & Steward 38). After I received this new information from my participant, I changed the ending of Joan’s story to facilitate the change of attitude from the participant on whom the character was based.
JOAN: Although I’ve had counselling, grief counselling, the legacy of my adoption will always be with me. Pause On saying that, I now have friends, and I have my faith, and I believe, I believe that sharing my story with you, is a path to my healing. [She bends down to pick up the bags – then she hesitates] I don’t need them anymore. [She looks at the bag she is holding, she quickly looks through it, then places it on the ground also] I don’t need this one either. She looks at the suitcase on wheels, then looks at the audience] Oh, I’m not ready to give this one up just yet. [She laughs and then exits stage left, lighter and freer] (106).

There was a lovely moment between Joan and the audience as she exited the stage while chuckling, the audience also chuckled with her. They were privy to this significant turning point in the character’s life, and they were happy for her. Callery states that “It is not just the cause-and-effect logic that holds an audience but the emotional journey of characters” (198), and this was evident as Joan left the stage.

**Ghost-Like Gauze**

The white translucent gauzes that made up part of the set for Between Worlds had a number of functions, including representing the Ghost Kingdom, the spirit world, and the ‘faceless’ face of bureaucracy. The gauzes were lit only when they became activated during the raps and the spoken word poetry, and at these times they were lit using down lights, which further added to their
ghostly appearance. The curtains also functioned as a metaphor for drawing a veil over the issue of the adoption of Māori children through Closed Stranger Adoption, but then this is juxtaposed with the raps and poetry readily imparting the information they contain about this form of adoption. Because the gauze hides the speaker's real identity, they allow a space for adoptees to speak out without the fear of hurting or upsetting adoptive parents, while also providing a place from which objective information such as statistics and historical data can be voiced. Behind the gauze becomes a place where information other than personal testimony can be communicated.

Fig. 21. Ghost. Photo M Roberts.

Fig. 22. Gauze. Photo M Roberts.
Political Rap

For *Between Worlds* I wrote the raps “Stats”, “Matching for Marginality” and “GSA” which I consider to be political raps. Layketa M. Bonnette classifies political rap as a “subset of the larger rap genre” stating that “political rap is rap music that provides political information by detailing political strategies, injustices, and grievances” (23). She also states that political rap music “provides information, in addition to making issues salient that otherwise may not have garnered much attention outside minority communities” (15). Bonnette’s statements ring true for the raps in *Between Worlds*, and is precisely why rap was an appropriate theatrical technique for me to experiment with in my play. However, in retrospect, I realized that the rap “GSA” (which details a phenomenon called “genetic sexual attraction”), was not needed, because prior to it being performed the character Odette summarizes the content of the rap in a “Wikipedia” quote, thus making the delivery of the rap double percussive

A Difficult Labour

The process of writing and staging *Between Worlds* was very different to that of *Close Stranger*. Because of my status as an auto-ethnographer in *Between Worlds*, I found the journey a very difficult one, but ultimately through my experience I have learnt skills to better help me write a compelling play using other peoples’ testimonies, and feel better equipped for my next theatre of the real endeavour.

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10 Double percussive is where something on the stage is illustrated twice, thus making one illustration redundant.
Conclusion

I embarked on my Master of Fine Arts as a way to experiment with and explore different theatrical techniques in relation to staging autobiographical and biographical narratives. I also wanted to gain more experience and knowledge as a theatre practitioner as well as a better understanding of how I operate as an artist. The scope of my research has been broad, and this has afforded me many opportunities to experiment and learn in the theatre, while also allowing me the space to get things wrong. Callery says that “Doing things where we fail is important. We are so hung up on getting things right, we tend to focus on the result or product rather than the process” (124). Through the process of my MFA I am more confident as a theatre practitioner, because I have developed a number of resources to help me in future theatre projects, such as, being disciplined, focussed, and adaptable. I have learnt to trust in my instinct, and am aware that my instinct may take me on a path different to how I had envisioned it would go, and to be open to the possibilities that may arise. I have learnt that theatre is not a linear process (particularly in relation to devised theatre), but derives in a more web-like fashion. This knowledge has helped me work in a more relaxed and patient manner in the theatre. Another important tool that I have learnt is to always be open to suggestion, always be open to feedback, and to humbly accept critical criticism (it is your friend). Practice-led research has been a wonderful tool in the process of creating my two plays, because at the beginning of my MFA I only had an unwritten story I wanted to tell, and a keen interest in exploring ways of presenting theatre of the real. PLR gave me the freedom and the tools to experiment and explore as I researched,
workshopped, rehearsed, staged, and performed my plays. My research has also connected me with other Māori adoptees. I know I am not alone. We belong to a unique group of New Zealanders, whose collective narratives form part of a shady side of New Zealand’s post-colonial history. It is a history that needs to be told. Theatre of the real is a powerful platform from which to tell stories of social, historical, and political issues, which have been all too neatly ignored by the hegemony. My aim for Close Stranger is to tour and perform it in Fringe Festivals, and I am considering directing another actor in Between Worlds. I also wish to look into other aspects of adoption with the aim of producing more theatre from the research. I will continue to use PLR because it is a methodology that fits well with the way I work. Because of my MFA I am more knowledgeable, practiced, and confident as a theatre-maker, and am eager to kept exploring different ways of staging stories and making theatre. I hope, with both of my plays, that by “Looking at the past through the present we are urged to consider the future and what we might choose to make there” (Heddon 172). Let us learn from our mistakes.
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Appendix 1: The Script of Close Stranger

Close Stranger
Devised and Performed by Kiri Bell

CHARACTERS:
TE KARE: Female, 30 years old
MARY: Female, 45 years old
MAN: Male, 20's

A cyclorama. Behind this is for the shadow play. The play begins in shadow play with red strobe lighting. In front of the cyclorama is the musician far stage right. There is a stool and a microphone on a stand next to him. Stage left there is a tall side stand. Centre of the stage is a Teddy Bear sitting on the floor. Behind the cyclorama is a wash basket with children’s clothes, pegs, and a washing line to be strung up.

Black Out
The music begins, red strobing back light up. ACTOR to move in shadow. The pre-recorded poem “Tar Black” is played.

TE KARE:
Pushing with tiny clenched fists
Against amniotic universe
Pulsating with colours
Swirling, churning
Tar black, liver mauve, shit brown
Unwanted puke enhancing heartbeat
With eyes and nails
Umbilical-chord to cauterize
Mongolian spots to categorize
Sexed to definitive eyes
Severed blood ties
Society lies

Black Out
Fade-up to green back light. Toanga Puruo to play. TE KARE hangs clothes as she recites the poem “Stake”.

TE KARE:

Kaore taku tumu
E kore nei au e herea
E kore nei au e totoka
He mokenu
He kōhimu
He kohu
He whaka pāha
Iti iho?
Nui rawa?
Kei hea tōku tūrangawaewae?
Kaore taku tumu
Korekau he tūāpapa
Kei waenga Ao au e hikoi ana

Back light down. TE KARE to enter from stage right. She looks searchingly around the room. She addresses the audience.

TE KARE: When I was 30 I met my birth mother for the first time. It was a cold grey day. She had chosen a hotel lobby for our meeting. Beat [She scans the room. She laughs briefly] You know as a kid I used to daydream about meeting her as she hung laundry from a wash line. And in my day-dreams the sky was always blue, the grass was always green, and the sun was always shining. And she had white sparkling teeth, and long, long jet black hair. Beat All I had ever known about her was that she was Pākehā and very young when she had me. And that my birth father was Māori. She had given me up for adoption as a new born baby, under the New Zealand policy of Closed Stranger Adoption. Beat That was where all birth records were meant to be sealed forever, never to be opened. The birth mother and the adoptive parents were to never know one another, and so the babies blood-ties were severed. Which meant that if the baby was like me and of Māori descent they would never be able to whakapapa, Beat a corner stone of Māori identity. [She looks sharply stage left] I knew it was her, and she knew it was me, before any feet were crossed. [To the audience. She laughs] If she had crossed her legs we wouldn’t be here.

TE KARE becomes MARY
MARY: Tea? Ta, Ta, Kerry? Ti Curry? [MARY struggles to pronounce TE KARE’S name correctly] Oh my gosh, you’re all grown-up! Pause I’m Mary.

TE KARE: You’re blonde?

MARY: Yes... Beat [She picks the Teddy Bear up and passes it to TE KARE] This is for you. I wasn’t allowed to give you one when you were born, and I really wanted to, so you would have something from me.

Beat So you would know that I cared. Awkward Pause They wouldn’t let me see you when you were born. But I made such a fuss that eventually they did, not to hold you though, only to see you through a window. Briefly. Beat You were in the corner, all bound up in black, little brown face, you could have had jaundice, I didn’t know. Beat “They” said that seeing you wasn’t good for either of us. [MARY is lead stage right. The Teddy Bear is dropped on the ground] And “They” led me away. [MARY now stage right interacts with the musician to see if the stool is free, she then returns with the stool to the centre of the stage and sits down. Awkward Silence]

MARY: So...

TE KARE: So...

MARY: So...

TE KARE: So... do you have kids? I mean, do you have other kids?

MARY: Yes, yes, I do. I have a daughter and two sons.

TE KARE: Who’s my father?

MARY: I was raped.

TE KARE: I know. Aside I knew. But she never asked me how I knew.

Anyways that’s another story altogether. But you know, even all these years later, I’m still gob-smacked that she told me within the first five minutes of us meeting, that my existence came about through the violent act of rape. [To MARY] I guess that’s as good a reason as any to be abandoned.

MARY: Oh, it might feel like I abandoned you, but I didn’t. I couldn’t keep you, I couldn’t, they wouldn’t allow it. What could I do, I was only 15 years old? Beat I had no choice. I had to do what my parents told me.
And besides, it wasn’t the done thing. **Awkward Pause** And there were decent people. Married people. Married people who wanted babies. Married people who wanted babies but couldn’t have babies. **Beat** And the authorities said it was selfish to keep you. And they said adoption was best for both of us. **Pause** I tried to find you though. I tried to find you when the laws changed in 1985. But you had moved to the UK. **Beat** That must have been fun, an adventure. I’ve always wanted to go Europe; what was it like? **Beat** Where did you live?

**TE KARE:** Essex. But I ain’t no Essex girl

Never danced around me handbag
In me white stilletos
With me mini riding high
On my cellulite thighs
That I attempted to disguise
With Majorcan Sunrise
Self-tanning lotion from Boots

And the house where I lived
Was all joined to others
Like grey concrete Lego
No-one had bothered to colour
Yeah 8 of us lived
In that tiny 3 up 2 down
4 in 1, 3 in the other
And 1 in the matchbox over the stairs

And me new friend Gale
Lived 8 doors down
She was half-caste too
Half white made her brown
But her black were from Africa
Via like Jamaica
And she was the first person too
That was adopted that I knew
And her mother were Pākehā
Just like mine
But she didn’t understand the term
I probably never explained at the time.

Debbie was another black girl
Wanted to be me blood sister
But on the day of the ceremony
I bottled out
Didn’t show
Debbie took it like
I thought I was too good for her, though.
But I didn’t want to cut me finger
I don’t like pain
Didn’t want to share me blood
In some voodoo ritual
On the doorstep of AIDS
So, Debbie and I went our separate ways.

And there was Gypsies
Who dwelt on the fringe
By the common
With ponies and dogs and babies and rubbish
And no-one liked em
No-one wanted them there
With their Majorcan tanned complexion
Shifty eyes
And black hair
And I was darker than Celtic or Anglo Saxon
But harder to place than
Indian, West Indian, Asian
So, I fit the bill for a Gypo quite well
Copped a share of racism
Yeah, swallowed that pill

And there was what looked like old fashioned money
And two ounces of sweeties (all in rows of glass jars) galore
And market places were men shouted
Hello darling what can I do you for?
Apples and pears?
Plates of meat?
A dog for your bone?
All that kind of banter
That was so alien, so different from home

And the kids (thefuckers) kept telling me to count to ten
Well, I’d get to sex
And they’d start laughing again
So, me accent changed
Cause I learnt back then
You don’t want to be different
You want to fit in
You don’t want to be different
You might be abandoned again

MARY: That’s... different. Beat Gypsy? You’re actually more Māori than I thought you would be.

TE KARE: [Performs a haka]
Me pehea te Ao
Kakano, purapura
Ko te wai
O Papatuanuku
Waka ahuru
Waka whangia
Nana te hua
Uru ara to tika
Uru ara rapu ana
Tane whakatipuranga e
Haea te pukenga
Haea te whanau
Kss Aue Kss Aue Aue Hi

MARY: That’s... um, that’s interesting. Beat We’re actually of German
descent. German descent on my father’s side.

TE KARE: German? I’ve got German blood?

MARY: Yes. And you’re Māori.

TE KARE: Yeah... sorry for that. Beat Sorry you were raped.

MARY: Well you’re not to blame. Pause Do you not like the Bear? I
hunted high and low for it.

TE KARE: No. It’s... cute. [She picks the Bear up] Aside It’s sad, and I can
still get choked up at times, you know the adoption thing. Feel hurt,
wounded. And it’s the kind of wound that refuses to heal, like an ulcer
on Nana’s rice paper thin skinned leg that weeps poisonous sap. And no
matter the amount of cleansing, tending, bandaging, salting, it will not
right. [To Mary] It’s touching. Beat Look, I’m sorry that I was the cause
of so much shame. Guilt. Secrecy. Lies. Believe me I am more than
aware of it all. [TE KARE sings to the Bear]

Pushing with tiny clenched fists
Against amniotic universe
Pulsating with colours
Swirling, churning
Tar black, liver mauve, and shit brown.
Unwanted puke enhancing heartbeat
With eyes and nails
Umbilical-chord to cauterize
Mongolian spots to categorize
Sexed to definitive eyes
Severed blood ties
Society lies
La la la la la la la la la
MARY: You know when they let me see you, I sensed that you sensed I was there. I felt we had a connection.

TE KARE: That's... touching. Beat Sorry, I don't remember. ASIDE It was 30 years ago, and I would have only been a day or two old. Beat Not that I don't have memories from way back because I do. I remember being inside her womb. [She places the Teddy Bear on the stool] Like, I know she starved me, because I know she starved herself. Beat I'm not that bothered about seeing her these days. It's awkward, not comfortable. Always feel as if I have to talk to fill in the silence. Her silence. Beat Like, I get to fill in silence surrounding “the conception.” [She makes her way to the stand, stage left. She puts on a posh English accent. She sings a song in a straw voice] So, she goes out and about. Drinking. Under-aged. Unpolished. Unprotected drinking. Partying! [She mimes knocking a drink back] Why its New Year’s Eve isn’t it? Even silly young girls like to have fun and Fuck-up sometimes! [She stumps the cigarette out on the stand. The song Angel Baby starts to play. The cigarette becomes a straw in a coke bottle] And their eyes met across the dance floor. And she likes him. [She meanders to the other side of the stage and becomes MAN] And he likes her. [He runs a comb through his hair as he eyes ‘her’ up and down. He puts the comb in his back pocket, takes a long hard drag on his cigarette, then flicks it towards the cyclorama. He crosses the stage and takes her hand and they start to dance] And she’s just a child. And he’s a fruit picker. And she likes him. And he likes her. But her no means no. But he likes her. [He gropes her] And sometimes somethings are just destined to be. [She is dragged offstage left. The struggle continues in red shadow-play.

As the song fades out, TE KARE enters stage right.

TE KARE: So...
MARY: So...
TE KARE: So...
MARY: So... what’s your adopted mother like?
TE KARE: My mother!
MARY: Yes. Your other mother?
TE KARE: I've only got one mother.

MARY: Of course. **Pause** Well... do you have brothers and sisters? **Beat**

Do you look alike?

TE KARE: Do you mean, are they Māori too?

MARY: I... I, don't know...?

TE KARE: I know... [She goes to the microphone. The bass plays]

I remember the day I knew
Sun drenched porch
In Kodak flickers
Prism etched in sprinklers spray
Orange flannelled
White socked
Lemonade clicks
Against odd one out
Shhh don't shout
Don’t you know it’s shameful to be illegitimate child?
More so if brown
Bastard
Scratch in the vinyl black
Chorus skipping to repeat, repeat, repeat
Negatives jest in stark relief
But prints don’t lie
Framed in their two shades Imperial casing

Blonde and blue eyed
With burnt and blistering skin
You take a fine picture
Fine family
And serve hors d’oeuvres
And talk of progress and politics and pennies
I'm sorry I didn’t fit the bill
Through I tried
I heard that lemon juice lightened the tone
But it stings and marks
Under Midas’ cosmic rays
I’m sorry I didn’t blend
Like an artist’s palate of
Ochre, pink, and pale, pale, pale
You could have passed you four
Your genes snug so well

And I...
The little made tarnished girl
Pounamu eyed
Raven haired
And sex shades too dark to fool
I muddied the shot in the sun
On the porch
When I remember the day, I knew
And retreated in
Breath, breadth, and depth
And shame chose to move in my shadow
See it crouched in the corner?
On the porch
In the shade...

MARY: Well... I'd love to see some photos. And you know my daughter
would love to meet you. She wanted to come here with me today. But in
the end, I thought it best if I came alone. Beat But, why don't you come
back to my home and meet my family? Beat Oh... and don't worry, they
know all about you. Beat Don't forget your Bear.

TE KARE: [Picks up the Bear, and talks to it] If I had you I would never have
given you away. I would have loved you and cared for you and protected
you... and I would never have given you to strangers. [She exits and
walks centre stage in Green shadow with the Bear at her side. The
sound of the porotiti]

Fade to Black-Out

THE END.
Between Worlds
Written and Performed by Kiri Bell

CHARACTERS:

JOAN: Female, 61 years old
ODETTE: Female, 37 years old
KAURI: Female, 48 years old
FRANCES: Female, 53 years old

The staging is end-on, with a cyclorama as a backdrop, and for projections. Stage right there is a book flat and hanging one metre in front of this is a white gauze and a microphone on a stand. Centre stage sitting approximately 1.5 metres in front of the cyclorama is an armchair. Stage left of the armchair is a collection of 30 dolls, and a dolls cot. Stage left of this is a book flat and another hanging white gauze to mirror the same stage right. Centre stage approximately three metres in front of the armchair is a korowai crumpled on the floor. There are lots of shoes scattered around the stage. Each character has their own colour of light.

Black Out

The microphone only becomes activated in the first line of the Rap only after “two.” The lights and music to come up after “out,” on the third line.

MASK:

Testing, testing, one, two, three
Aotearoa’s a social laboratory
Check, check, check, check this out
Stranger statistics to stutter about
Forty-five thousand adoptions by strangers
No stranger danger, precursor arranger?
Unwanted babies taken from the manger
Factory, no back-story
Just a hairy fairy untested theory
Blank slate, clean break, tableau rasa to make
The sins of the mother’s washed clean
Pristine, polished sheen
But the crack in your veneer will smear
As unwanted Māori babies appear
Seeking retribution for the Country’s ablutions
Was it its solution to Māori dilution?
Facts, stacks, a significant proportion of Māori lacks
A waka, a mountain, a river, a tribe
Knowledge that keeps its culture alive
Given to Pākehā families
Under the closed stranger adoption policy
Circa fifty-five to the middle of the eighties
A quarter of the population affected directly
Testing, testing, one, two, three

**Black Out**

[JOAN’S light up. JOAN to enter stage right, weighed down with a number of heavy bags. Her name is projected. She acknowledges the audience, then the armchair. She decides to sit down. She places her baggage next to the armchair]

**JOAN:** I think the best place to start is the beginning. I was the product of a guilty bed. And, I’m quoting from the book of – one of the biblical books. A book “blessed be the woman who knows no guilty bed, for she will be known at the scrutiny of souls.” And that’s one of the books of the Apocrypha. I was ten years old before I found out I was adopted, and it sort of just came out suddenly, and my world sort of just dropped out, out of the bottom of the bucket. Adoption wasn’t talked about, it was something to be hidden within the context of my family, taboo – forbidden. And I can recall the one and only time I ever mentioned anything about being Māori, I was just about shot down in flames by my
adopted mother. Beat Because being Māori was something to be ashamed of. Oh, yes, and I remember, and this was before I knew I was adopted, I remember one day I asked my mother why I was brown and her and my father were white, and she said it was because they had tipped a bucket of brown paint over me. Beat It’s left scars. I had two mothers, one gave me away, and the other one hated my guts; so, I learnt at a very early age that I had to walk alone.

FRANCES: My mother was very young when she had me... just a child. [She views the dolls, then goes over to them and picks one up] I was seeing this Māori counsellor once, and I said, there’s all this... stuff, and she said yeah cause ... its... oh what do I say? It’s like I remember being in my birth mother’s womb. And I think that sounds a bit crazy, but I remember, I remember not being wanted.... I know that when I met. When I say, I know, it’s like no one’s told me, but I know in my bones. Anyway, this lady, this counsellor said to me, yeah, it’s because you’re in touch with, you know at a deeper spiritual level. And, I remember not being wanted, although when I met her she said, [she holds up the doll and speaks to it] “oh I wanted you.” [She lowers the doll and holds it in front of her belly] And I believe that when she had me she wanted me. But society wouldn’t let her have me. And imagine being just a child and finding out you were pregnant, [acknowledges the doll at her belly and slides it behind her back] and the shame, and the... augh! And I felt her shame, I developed in there with all the... [starts to cry – laughs at herself – moves on], all the things she was absorbing from the outside. Because she didn’t manufacture shame on her own, did she? It arrived because how other people were treating her – society. Beat And that’s another thing that would happen, so many girls would get sent off to Aunties on the other Island. Beat My birth mother’s family kept her. Imagine the shame; trying to keep up appearances; not wanting the neighbours to know. Beat [She makes her way to the armchair, and places the doll down the inside of the arm on the chair] And that’s how I came into this world. Shrouded in secrecy and shame.
ODETTE:  [She wraps the shawl around her] I was conceived through the incestuous rape of my mentally ill and institutionalized mother.

KAURI:  [Throws the shawl off, jumps off the armchair and addresses the audience. She starts pairing shoes and placing them in neat rows] Kauri, Kauri’s my name. Kauri, not Codey, not Cowrie, Kauri, you have to roll the ‘R’. [She exaggerates rolling the ‘R’] I was told I was picked up off the special counter; I was chosen. And, ‘they’ chose ‘me’ over all the other children that were there. Because I was special. And I was special because I was chosen. Beat Funny thing is, you know as a kid I always wondered, how does being chosen make me special, when I was only able to be chosen because at first I had been rejected? And I always wondered, if I’m special because I’m adopted, what does that make kids who aren’t adopted, are they not special too? Then why not say – you’re special because all kids are special – all people are special? [She makes her way to the chair and sits down]

ODETTE:  [She puts the shawl around her] I was special. I was told that my mum couldn’t look after me, and that’s why ‘they’ had me, and I was special. Beat Felt like special fucking needs!

KAURI:  At one stage, yeah when I was... I don’t know how old, but I thought, oh yeah special, I’ll show you how special I am. And away I went, Boom! Self-destruct... Beat I guess I just never felt validated, even though they tried; my adopted parents tried, and you know my adoption was... good... like I can’t really complain, but.... [She interacts with the shoes] Well, I’ve always felt this core thing of rejection and not belonging and not feeling adequate enough and not feeling like I could be a positive in the equation. You know I always felt like I was a negative, a subtraction as such, or something that was distracting from the actual flow.

ODETTE:  [She wraps the shawl around her] Apparently, it’s quite common. Beat Adoption, it really does your head in. That whole thing about being given away..., and there’s a real level about that. And, I don’t think people know when they’re not adopted what it’s like. To literally feel like no-one has your back.
JOAN: [She begins to rummage through her bags. Music (Sirens) begins to play which prompts her memory.] There was this song that came out in the sixties, and it was a song sung by a male singer, and the lyrics of the song, seem to indicate that this man, this boyfriend, had lost his girlfriend, and he could hear her voice mournfully singing in the wind, and it went… “Johnny remember me.” And I used to listen to this song on the radio, and I’d be sitting at the table all on my own. And that’s the image I’m getting right now is of that little girl sitting at a large table – this is at home, eating this plate of cornflakes and milk, or a piece of bread, and nobody insight, and listening to this Johnny song with this female voice saying… “Johnny remember me.” And it sounded like a song of loss – of feeling lonesome, as if there was nobody there. And there’s me, wishing somebody would remember me… Abandoned! That’s what I felt like. To be homeless – to not belong somewhere is like being swept along on a current – not beholden to anything – to a place – to a family – to an identity. Because to Māori identity is vital. To be able to understand oneself. And I didn’t have that. I didn’t fit in anywhere. I was in the middle, not belonging to anything or anybody. Like being in no-man’s land, or, or, like walking between world’s. Because I don’t walk in the Pākehā world, and yet I don’t fit into the Māori world either.

ODETTE: [She wraps the shawl around her. Laughs] You could tell I didn’t fit in. I was darker than everybody else in my adopted family. I’d get lots of responses from people like, “Ahhh, is that your family?” [Laughs] Yeah, I stuck out a mile all the time, and I had a strange name. Māori didn’t know what to make of me; Māori kids treated me as Pākehā because I had Pākehā parents, and Pākehā kids treated me as Māori because I had dark skin. And I always felt too Pākehā to be Māori, but too Māori to be Pākehā. So… what does that mean?

KAURI: Nigger! Beat My first memories of being different was… we used to have this little black book called ‘The Little Black Sambo’ and my brother, my older adopted Pākehā brother, wrote on top of it ‘nigger’ and said that it was me, and then put my name there. Because I was different he was ashamed of me. And he called me nigger, and sambo,
and wog, and told me that I wasn't his sister, and as far as he was concerned I didn't exist. And I think's that's because if it wasn't for me, my family could have passed as you know a... biological family. Beat Because they were all had blonde hair and blue eyes. Beat And, I remember being held down by kids in the neighbourhood and them writing 'nigger' across my forehead with a big black marker pen, and spitting on me, and throwing stones at me; all that kind of thing. I lived in a prominently white neighbourhood.

FRANCES: [She arranges the dolls] I think if I had been raised within a Māori family where I would have shared similar physical features, so any racism I may have encountered out and about, I could've gone home, home to a family where I would have fitted in, where I would have been normal, where the racism would have been a negative. But when you’re Māori and your family is white it re-enforces the idea that you are different, and that difference is not always a positive. Like, I always grew up with... when Māori were spoken of it was... “them,” you know this was in the home. And my parents I wouldn't say were racist, no, no they weren’t, I wouldn’t say.... But its, it was always like “them.” And I remember over-hearing conversations “da da da da, oh ‘them.’” You know not so much as in a bad way, but at the same time not in a good light. And you know, even in my young mind I fathomed that Māori were ‘the other,’ Māori were ‘them,’ and I knew I was ‘them.’ [She walks to the chair and sits down]

JOAN: My adopted mother was mentally ill, and I've often thought, oh God, if she was diagnosed at the time would it have made much difference? And I think no! I don't think so because Māori children were ten a penny, there were lots of them. So, anybody that stepped up and said yes, we will adopt, were sort of given a perfunctory back-ground check. And if it looked well that was it, on the surface level. Because there was none of this going into psychological, psychology background or anything like that. None of it. And Māori kids being ten a penny were just shipped off to white homes. It was just like... a transaction. [Rap music up. ACTOR to go to the MASK]
MASK:

Matching for marginality
That was the reality
Those who at first were rejected
If they took a brownie were excepted
Don’t trip on your signatures please
Secrecy and lies
False allegation
Fabrication denies fornication
An alien in your own nation
A lost soul of your generation
This back-lash, hap-dash, mish-mash
Of supply needing supplies
Demand demanding specials
Similarity for matching
Blonde, blue eyed, straight
But when it comes to Māori
Wait... Spots? Disparity?
Needing some clarity?
Brown baby boy swaddled in black
Couldn’t pass for Greek/Italian?
Then put him back
But wait...
Where before you weren’t enough you’ll do
Because unwanted until you wanted me
When you wanted one
One happened to be free
Marginal you, marginal me
We matched for marginality
Matched for marginality
Matched, oh lucky me!

FRANCES:  [She backs away from the MASK and makes her way to the dolls]

Much can be said about adoption for all children, but, when you’ve got a
culture that is so tied to the land and its people and its ancestors.... And that's a huge thing that I've learnt, is that Māori walk into the future backwards, acknowledging everything that came before, learning from it, growing from it, and that just really hit me when I found that out. Because it's like, how can I go into the future when I don't know... can't see backwards? So, when this closed stranger adoption came about, that was just like [Makes scissor cutting action with fingers] there was no... what's the word I'm looking for...? Respect! There was no respect shown for this culture and its traditions.

KAURI:  
[She stands in front of audience wrapped in the shawl and to begin with she addresses them as if she is a child in primary school]  
Kaore au I te mohio. Beat When I was younger I had to learn my mihi, and the teachers had to include in mine, “Kaore au I te mohio, “I don’t who I am.” I don’t know, I can’t whakapapa. Still can’t. And that’s still within this time of that age of political correctness and Māori awareness and tinorangatiratanga and everybody standing up for their rights. But, I find there is a lot of Māori bashing from Māori because I don’t speak the language, because I don’t know my whakapapa. [She makes her way with determination to the MASK]  

MASK:  
Kaore au I te mohio, I don’t know who I am  
It feels like I’m decaying. I have no roots to nourish man  
Just like that Dylan song, I’m blowing in the wind  
Just like a ghost, in my kingdom wearing thin  
Kaore au I te mohio, I don’t know who I am  
Teachers made me say that, I had no say in that man  
And I have no confidence, feeling faker than fake  
A fucking crumbling 99 cent Pseudo Māori Flake!  
Cause brother I’m the sister you don’t bother to fit in  
So, I walk my line, which you keep pencil thin  
Cause I’m brown on the outside, white as mother on the in  
Just like a potato you say, only thinner in the skin  
And I’m versatile, I’m versatile, but you won’t fit me in  
Yeah this, pegs got you pegged keeping up appearances
So, go on flow on, have a joke, have crack, have a jab
Keep on scratch, scratch, scratching
At my pickled pus filled ‘I’m not a proper fucking Māori’ scab
I’ve always gotta peel it, boil it, mash it, bake it
Hash-tag ‘Fake til you make it’
Only one whakapapa away, you can almost taste it! But....
Kaore au I te mohio, I don’t know who I am
I’ve got no place to lay bro, got no place to stand
I’m just a half-caste, an out-caste, a shadow in this land
And I feel you jabbing and a jiving twisting the Kane knife in
Yo bro won’t call me homie, thinking I’m a ten penny phoney
Well fuck you, you can blow me!
Cause brother I’m the sister you don’t bother to fit in
So, I walk my own line, which you keep it pencil thin
Cause I’m brown on the outside, white as mother on the in
Just like a potato you say. But I’m thicker in the skin
And I’m versatile, so versatile. But still... I don’t fit in!

ODETTE: [Wraps the shawl around her and sits in the armchair] My kid’s
dad was abusive; physically, verbally, and he used that as an excuse
that I was no-one because I was adopted, because I couldn’t whakapapa.
Māori being Māori, that whole, if you don’t whakapapa you’re no-one
[laughs] yeah, he used that fairly well. So, I made sure my kids knew
who they were. You get to the point now where they say, “Mum we know
who we are, we know we’re Māori, you can just shut up about it now.

Beat But, I don’t want my kids to know what it feels like to be a non-
person in a Māori world.

JOAN: After I had found my birth family, (on my mother’s side, only on
my mother’s side), I visited my Aunt and Uncle and stayed with them
once. And my Uncle, now my late uncle gave me the name of the waka
and the mountain and my hapu and iwi. Iwi and hapu. And that’s
something I can hang on to – it’s something that belongs to me. Now my
uncle was a kaumatua of the local hapu, and he was able to show me, he
took me to the urupa and he said to me, these, this, these are all your
tupuna. And I sat down on the ground and I balled my bloody eyes out [laughs] 40 plus years of tears. I said to him, looking round and seeing all these people buried in this place, but... at the same time that I had these people, these people belonged to me, and I belonged to them... I didn’t.

FRANCES: [She makes her way to the dolls] When you can say where you’re from, it goes along way when you’re Māori. If you can whakapapa it’s enough to stand on [She sits down amid the dolls] So, I think there’s a challenge within the Māori world to find a space for people who don’t know their whakapapa Māori. I think it’s important for Māori to understand that we don’t know where we’re from because, I don’t know, some kind of term.... You know something where we don’t have to... go into our whole adoption story. Pause [She picks up a doll] I was two weeks old when I was adopted. The lady at the hospital rang my mum one morning and said, [Makes as if she is on the phone, and pinches her nose to make the sound of the lady at the hospital] “I know you weren’t expecting to hear from me just yet, and when you did hear from me you were wanting to adopt a little boy, but the thing is I’ve got this little part Māori baby girl up for adoption, would you care to view her?” So, my mum says, [She pretends to be her mum on the phone] “I’ll be there in my lunch hour.” And she saw me and rang my father who said [She pretends to be her father] “yes,” and they took me home. Beat And my mum says that the lady at the hospital practically threw me in the back of the car and told my dad to, “drive, drive, drive!” And, “Don’t look back!” You know this was in case my birth mother was prowling around, got a good look at my parents, or got their car’s number plate, found me. Beat And stole me back. Beat I don’t remember when I was told I was adopted, I think I’ve always known. [She moves away from the dolls] But I do remember as young as age seven, even though I didn’t know anything about sex or anything like that, I thought, oh, people might think that my mother had had an affair... like I’m the milkman’s, you know? Because people wouldn’t necessarily assume you were adopted, would they?
KAURI: When you don’t know where you’re from your imagination kicks in. And you live in that ‘ghost kingdom’ fantasy world and you can make it whatever you want it to be... and then you find out the truth and it’s not so fantastical. Like, ok, I never looked for my birth family initially, it was my sister, my younger, adopted, Pākehā sister, well she ended up finding her birth family in an unconventional way, then she pretended to be me and ordered my original birth certificate! So, then I had my birth mother’s maiden name. Now my mum and dad had always told us that if we ever wanted to search they would help us. And.... Oh, ok now when I say my mum, I mean the lady who brought me up, and when I say my other... mother, I mean my birth mother. Anyway, in the end my dad did help me make first contact with my birth grandmother; this is the Pākehā side, I don’t know the Māori side. And we were able to do that because we had my birth mothers maiden name. So, we looked in the phone book. It was an unusual name. We found two. Picked one. And it was my birth grandmother! And then we went to visit her! Just like that! So quick! Too quick! Anyway, on that visit she turned to my father and said, [Makes as if she is doing an aside] “what is she after, after all these years?” Beat I just... you know... I just wanted to be validated. But she wouldn’t do that. Beat I had nothing more to do with her. Beat She’s dead now.

FRANCES: [Sits on the chair brushing the doll’s hair] When I first met my birth mother, our very first night actually, she came and tucked me in bed. And one time just out of the blue I said to her, “when I was little I used to do ballet didn’t I?’ And she just played along and said, “Yes you did, and I used to take you on the back of my motorbike.” And I remember thinking, oh my god she just totally played along with my game! And so, over time we kind of re-storied my childhood, and I would always talk to her about what I had wanted as a kid. Such as, [the doll becomes deactivated] “when I was little I had lots of dolls didn’t I?” And she went, “yes you had about 30 of them, and every night we would put them in their nighties, brush their hair, and put them to bed.” And she’d just give me this whole story, and I remember thinking, oh my god this
is incredible, how she wouldn’t even flinch, how she’d just carry on with
the story!

JOAN: I met my birth mother in 1997 after doing my own search, and
when I got to meet her, the first thing I wanted to do was to rush up and
fling my arms around her and just hug her. Beat But she wasn’t like
that. She was... reserved, cold. I couldn’t identify with her. Beat I
couldn’t identify with her. I couldn’t identify with my adopted family, I
couldn’t identify with Maori.... So, my identity, well my only anchor has
been my religious faith. That’s the only thing. Everything else was taken
away from me. I was stripped of everything. So, the only thing I’ve been
able to hang on to was my religious beliefs, and God.

FRANCES: [She undresses the doll] You know when I first met my birth
mother she was just a person. And that was something I didn’t know
whether other adopted people felt. It took me a long, long time to
respond I suppose; to actually bond with her. And it kind of happened
when we were heading back to this wedding, and it was a really hot day
and we needed a shower and I said to her, “you go, go and have a shower
first,” and she said, “we haven’t got time,” she said, “you have to get in
here too.” You know here I am, I’m stripping off and I’m in the shower
with my mum, and it was from then, for the first time that I could really
say that I loved her.

ODETTE: [She stuffs the naked doll down the side of the armchair] Pause I
developed an attraction to my birth brother. He had also been adopted
out. I mean I don’t even know what it means to have a birth brother. In
fact, I don’t even know what it is to have whanau. So, I should be
allowed to be given a voice, and I shouldn’t be punished for a decision
made by the department of social welfare forty something years ago!
Pause I felt like I was going mad... And, we went through this stuff...,
trying to remember...., and..., we had to touch one another. We know
this stuff happens. Apparently, it’s quite common, so I know I’m not a
freak. It’s called Genetic Sexual Attraction, or GSA, and apparently, it
can happen when this thing called... the Westermark hypothesis doesn’t
happen. Ok, yeah [She pulls a piece of paper out of her pocket, and reads
The Westermark hypothesis, to quote Wikipedia, is “reverse sexual imprinting, an effective through which people who live in close domestic proximity during the first few years of their lives, become desensitised to sexual attraction. But when proximity during this critical period does not occur, for example, when a brother and sister, who have been raised separately, never meeting one another, they may find one another highly sexually attractive when they meet as adults or adolescents, according to the hypothesis of GSA”, or Genetic Sexual Attraction. **Beat** You know, the best help I ever got was from a psychotherapist, and she was so very clear about the fact that with adoption the rules go out the window, they do not apply anymore. **[She raises to her feet. Stands square on facing the audience]** Not in this situation. **Pause** You know, me and my brother have lost a lot of stuff through being adopted and being Māori. We’re walking on new territory being involved in this type of relationship. **[She walks with determination to MASK. Music up]**

**MASK:**

We’re talking relative figures, with memory ellipsis
All DNA subjective; this collective is rejected
But we must debunk this mind-set because the imprinting is defective
The Westermarck hypotheses in this case not effective
Just like Jocasta giving head to the master
It’s bait, don’t take it, it’s time for you to mediate it.
I’m talking GSA, what’s that I hear you say?
Genetic sexual attraction, come to fuck and play
GSA, Government should aid
Because the Governments directive was CSA
Fifty percent you see, attraction
With a fraction wanting sexual action
Leviticus prohibits it. But Greek myth exhibits it
And everyone’s confused as shit
We’re talking GSA
A moral interdiction, but the Governments infliction
So, defamatory, thinking it’s insanity
Because the imprinting’s defective
The Westermarck hypotheses in this case, not effective
Just like Jocasta giving head to the master
It’s bait, don’t take it, it’s time for you to mediate it
Because peoples feeling bad
Finding relative relations that they never knew they had
Sometimes there’s connexion, but fear of admonition
Everybody saying that its sin, sin, sin
But here’s a word of warning with the future always dawning
Think your egg donations, test tube ejaculations
Hijacking your equations
Your IVF babies be needing information
Because their imprinting will be defective
The Westermarck hypothesis in their case not effective

KAURI:  [She interacts with the shoes] I was talking to a friend once, you know about the whole adoption thing, and about my Māori birth father, and she said, “You know there will be a whole whanau out there wanting to meet you, grieving for your loss.” And, I’d never thought of that before. I’d never thought of it as their loss too. It had always only ever been my loss. Like, like so many things. Beat Ok, so my parents gave me a Māori name, I think as a way to validate my Māori-ness. But hardly anyone pronounces it correctly, especially my parents! Oh, and one time this guy comes up to me and starts speaking to me in Māori, and I didn’t have a clue what he was saying. So, then he starts to abuse me in English, saying, “what kind of Māori are you? You don’t even speak, you know te reo!” And he’s shouting at me. Beat And you know, I’d never been to a marae, and I’d never eaten a hangi. I never done anything about that because I just didn’t have those opportunities. And I was... 30 the first time I set foot on a marae. And I was... 31 at my first hangi. And I’m a vegetarian, and I had to put in this special order for a vegetarian hangi. And I remember showing up and getting my food and just feeling immensely out of place, as a Māori, [As to do an aside, with a
Wee laugh] and as a vegetarian! **Beat** But you know despite any validation, I am Māori. I am!

**ODETTE:**   [She stands centre stage wrapped in her shawl] You’re Māori because you say you’re Māori. You’re Māori in your heart. That’s what people would say to me. **Beat** [Laughs] You know a really big question that stumps me? **Beat** Growing up I wasn’t even told that I was Māori. I wasn’t told! **Beat** I just can’t believe that no-one thought that was important enough to tell me! **Beat** But despite of that I’ve always felt... this thing of the heart connection. And I was always drawn to things Māori, [she sits down on the ground] and I would go to the marae, and I’d think, yeah, gee it’s nice here. I feel comfortable here. I could never understand why? [She makes her way back to the chair] Then it wasn’t till I found out I was Māori, and I thought, oh, now I know; now I know that’s why I was drawn to that part of my life.

**KAURI:**   [She interacts with the shoes] Oh, I was overseas this time, in the States, and I meet this woman, who didn’t know me from Eve, seriously, where I was from, nationality, anything. And she meets me and she says, “I see all there are all these grey, haired woman with tattooed faces standing behind you, protecting you.” No shit! It’s the wairua, it’s the wairua guiding me through my path.

**ODETTE:**   [She walks to the korowai, picks it up, looks at it, then wraps it around herself] Now I clearly identify as being Māori and again for my children. And I want my kids to be part of the Māori world, because it’s part of their world, and I want it to be part of their natural world. Like, I want my kids to be fluent in te reo. And I want them to have grown up with the Māori culture, because I didn’t have that. And I don’t want them turning around when they’re older, saying, “What’s going on?” “What’s this all about?” Like, I want them to know waiata, I want them to know it because they’ve heard it all their lives. Not to have to learn it like I’ve had to. Yeah, so my aspirations for my kids are that they know their whakapapa, as much as they can. That they relate to things Māori, and processes and systems that are Māori **Beat** because I tell you, they’re going to have enough Pākehā. Yeah, I just think if they have
those connections they’ll just be more adaptable and confident. [She walks backwards with mana] Because that’s a huge thing isn’t it, knowing who you are and where you’re from? As a Māori. [She places the korowai on the back of the armchair]

KAURI: Validation is what I’ve always craved. [She looks for shoes, her energy is low] So shoot me! Beat [She sees the shoes sitting centre stage, which gives her more energy] You know, I still hold on to the hope that there is a whanau out there that will actually come for me one day. Beat [She can tell the shoes will not fit, deflated, she places them with the other shoes] But in my case I don’t think my lot are too forthcoming. [She goes back to the chair and sits down, deflated]

JOAN: [Stands and starts collecting her bags, then makes her way to centre stage] I’ve always felt like I was on the outside looking in, because I know dash well what it’s like to feel the odd bod out from the rest of the crowd. The picture I’m getting at this very minute is of a square peg, no a, round peg in a square hole. That’s what I’ve felt like all my life. [She puts down a few bags] And although I’ve had counselling, grief counselling, the legacy of my adoption will always be with me. Pause On saying that, I now have friends, and I have my faith, and I believe, I believe that sharing my story with you, is a path to my healing. [She goes to pick the bags] I don’t need them anymore. [She looks at the bag she is holding, she quickly looks through it, then places it on the ground also] I don’t need this one either. She looks at the suitcase on wheels Oh, I’m not ready to give this one up just yet. [She laughs and then exits stage left, lighter and freer]

FRANCES: [She makes her way to the chair, once there she brushes the dolls hair, puts its nightie on, and wraps it in the Māori shawl] I went down to look after my birthmother, because I don’t have any family and my birthmother didn’t have any family, and I was her main carer. And that was an absolute, incredible privilege – absolute privilege. And I really got to know her in that time. And there were special moments when I was the only one who could lift her spirits up. And you know, lots and lots of lovely times. [The doll is now cradled in her arms] Pause She
died in my arms. I watched her die, and when I watched her die, I realized I had an adult experience of what I watched as an infant, or what I experienced as an infant. Yeah so that was really, really profound. I watched her leave, so there was nothing I could say, no words. Beat I saw that last breath and yeah, for some reason, at that time, it connected to me being taken away from her as an infant. Beat There was nothing I could say, no words.

[Fade to Black Out]

THE END
Appendix 3: Ethics Forms

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPLICATION FORM: CATEGORY A

1. University of Otago staff member responsible for project:
   Surname        First Name    Title (Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr/Assoc. Prof./Prof.)
   Halba          Hilary        Ms

2. Department/School:
   Theatre Studies Programme Department of Music and Theatre Studies

3. Contact details of staff member responsible (always include your email address):
   hilary.halba@otago.ac.nz

4. Title of project:
   Walking Between Worlds: A Bicultural Documentary Theatre Project

5. Indicate project type and names of other investigators and students:
   Staff Co-investigators X Names: Janis Balodis
   Student Researchers X Names: Kiri Bell
   Level of Study (PhD, Masters, Hons): MFA
   External Researchers Names: 

6. Is this a repeated class teaching activity?
7. **Fast-Track procedure**  
Do you request fast-track consideration?  
NO

8. **When will recruitment and data collection commence?**  
As soon as ethics approval has been granted.

**When will data collection be completed?**  
By June 2016

9. **Funding of project**  
Is the project to be funded by an external grant?  
NO

If commercial use will be made of the data, will potential participants be made aware of this before they agree to participate? If not, explain:  
YES

10. **Brief description in lay terms of the purpose of the project** (approx. 75 words):  
This is a bicultural documentary theatre project with the working title *Walking Between Worlds*. The project, itself, investigates techniques for creating documentary theatre from autobiographical and biographical stories, and its subject matter focuses upon Māori who were adopted into Pākehā families under the New Zealand government’s policy of Closed Stranger Adoption. In particular, the project will look at how their experiences of being ‘other’ than their adopted family has impacted on their lives, and how these verbatim stories can be retold for the stage.

11. **Aim and description of project** *(include the research questions the project intends to answer, and the overall implications and benefits of the research)*:

The research question is: How might documentary and other theatre techniques be used to tell autobiographical and biographical stories about Māori children adopted into Pākehā families through Closed Stranger Adoption, in a way that can be performed in a coherent, engaging, and entertaining manner?  
Documentary theatre – also known as verbatim theatre or theatre of testimony – typically addresses issues deemed to be of compelling contemporary importance. These may be social issues, local and national stories and international political issues. Documentary plays aim to generate greater understanding of social and political dynamics, to open up debate, and to motivate spectators to respond to issues more actively and energetically. Makers of documentary theatre draw on a range of archived material and, by conducting interviews, they use the testimony of people directly involved in a certain issue. The creation of a documentary play is a complex dramaturgical process, involving research, data collection, editing, arrangement and rehearsal of the material.  
In this practice-led research project I will undertake to investigate a variety of documentary and other theatre techniques specifically in relation to performing
autobiographical and biographical narratives, with the research culminating in a bicultural documentary play. Theatrical styles investigated and used may include: waiata, traditional Māori narratives, Haka, mime, physical theatre, puppetry, mask, monologue, song, and poetry, among other possible techniques, in order to tell autobiographical and biographical stories of Māori children adopted into Pākehā families through Closed Stranger Adoption. The play will explore themes of identity, belonging, whakapapa, and discrimination, as well as commenting on whangai, the traditional form of Māori adoption. Along with my own story, I aim to collect a number of testimonies from adoptees’ and their families, as well as from agencies and academia. I will investigate how the above-mentioned theatre techniques could be interwoven with verbatim story-telling in order to create a performance. I will take a conversational interview approach with my participants, and any questions that I may ask will be broad and open ended, such as: “What is your adoption story?” The overall implications of the play are that it will foreground the diverse possibilities of documentary theatre, as well as documenting part of New Zealand’s history through the subjective lens of those directly involved. The subject matter upon which I wish to focus is the experience of people of Māori descent who were adopted into Pākehā families through closed stranger adoption.

12. Researcher/instructor experience and qualifications in this research area.

The supervisors for this project are Hilary Halba, Head of the Theatre Studies Programme, and Dr Janis Balodis, the William Evans Fellow in Playwriting. Hilary Halba has, over many years, created theatre as a director, devisor, dramaturg and actor. She also has many years of experience in creating documentary theatre. In 2009 she created, along with Professor Stuart Young the practice-led documentary theatre project, Hush (re-mounted in 2010-2011) focussed upon family violence. This piece of theatre was extremely successful and widely regarded. Participants especially stated that the experience had been an extremely positive one, and audiences and people who work in the area of family violence unanimously praised the piece. In 2011, they created the play Be | Longing (re-mounted 2015). Together Halba and Young have delivered a number of conference papers about their work in the U.K., Spain and Aotearoa/New Zealand, and have taught their documentary theatre techniques to students at the University of Otago and beyond.

The student Kiri Bell has experience as a playwright, director and actor. In 2012 she was a writer, interviewer, devisor, and actor for the verbatim play Passages as part of the 400-level Documentary Theatre paper at the University of Otago, taught by Halba and Young. In 2012, she created a piece of site-specific documentary theatre titled The Hall’s Brothers Experience, and in 2015/16 she co-wrote the documentary play The Iris Project. She is of Māori descent and was adopted into a Pākehā family through Closed Stranger Adoption.

13. Participants

13(a) Population from which participants are drawn:

Participants will be Māori adoptees who were adopted into Pākehā families through Closed Stranger Adoption. I will also interview families of adoptees, academics, and agencies.

13(b) Inclusion and exclusion criteria:
As above

13(c) **Estimated number of participants:**

5 to 10

13(d) **Age range of participants:**

Participants will be older than 20 years of age.

13(e) **Method of recruitment:**

Participants will be known to the researcher, and/or be recruited through word of mouth, and advertising.

13(f) **Specify and justify any payment or reward to be offered:**

There will be no payment or reward for participants, but they will be offered complimentary tickets to the performance of the play.

14. **Methods and Procedures:** *(Describe the design of the study and detail what participants will be asked to do. Provide the Committee with a copy of the interview questions to be asked of participants, or a general outline if the questions are not yet available.)*

Participants will be invited to discuss their experiences of being Māori adopted into Pākehā families through closed stranger adoption – in the form of in-depth unstructured interviews. The interviews will be recorded on both audio and digital video-tape. In the course of the interviews, interviewees will not be obliged to discuss any matter they do not wish to, and will be free to suspend or terminate the interview and recording whenever they wish. There is no specific template for questions, as a conversational approach of interviewing will take place where the unfolding of the interview cannot be prescribed. The interviews will also be tailored to each specific participant, with any questions asked being spontaneous, broad, and open ended. A Māori support person may be available to interviewees.

In the event a participant’s testimony is included in the eventual play, s/he will be advised and consulted. A transcript of the section(s) of the interview that may be included will be given to the participant for their approval, along with a form confirming they are comfortable with the material being used in the performance. All participants will be offered the opportunity to see their testimony performed by an actor during the rehearsal period. At any stage participants will be able to change their minds about whether they participate or are identified in the final product.

15. **Compliance with The Privacy Act 1993 and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994 imposes strict requirements concerning the collection, use and disclosure of personal information. The questions below allow the Committee to assess compliance.**

15(a) **Are you collecting and storing personal information (e.g.name, contact details, designation, position etc) directly from the individual concerned that could identify the individual?**

YES
15(b) Are you collecting information about individuals from another source?
NO

15(c) Collecting Personal Information
- Will you be collecting personal information (e.g. name, contact details, position, company, anything that could identify the individual)?
  YES
- Will you inform participants of the purpose for which you are collecting the information and the uses you propose to make of it?
  YES
- Will you inform participants of who will receive the information?
  YES
- Will you inform participants of the consequences, if any, of not supplying the information?
  YES
- Will you inform participants of their rights of access to and correction of personal information?
  YES
Where the answer is YES, make sure the information is included in the Information Sheet for Participants.

15(d) Outline your data storage, security procedures and length of time data will be kept:

All material pertaining to this project – written, video-taped and audio-taped – will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Theatre Studies offices at the University of Otago. According to the Ethics Committee’s guidelines, the data will be archived for five years. Data for documentary theatre is always highly sensitive and we are taking steps to ensure that access to material is strictly limited. Hilary Halba and Kiri Bell will be responsible for the eventual disposal of the data.

15(e) Who will have access to personal information, under what conditions, and subject to what safeguards? If you are obtaining information from another source, include details of how this will be accessed and include written permission if appropriate. Will participants have access to the information they have provided?

Access to primary sources of information will be restricted to the researchers, transcriber(s) and editor(s) of the taped interviews, and the actors, director and dramaturg involved in the workshops and rehearsals for the project. These individuals will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Tapes will be viewed in Theatre Studies offices, or in closed session in Theatre Studies’ edit suite and rehearsal spaces. Participants will be provided with a transcript of the section(s) of their interview we wish to use in the production. Because we shall only transcribe the section(s) of any interviewee’s testimony that we intend to use in the final production, we are unable to provide an interviewee with a full transcription of their interview, but they may have access to the digital video of their interview. They may also attend a rehearsal session during which time an
actor will perform the section(s) from their testimony that we intend to use in the final production. Interviewees will also be given complimentary tickets to a performance of the final production.

15(f) Do you intend to publish any personal information they have provided? YES
   If YES, specify in what form you intend to do this:
   Personal information may be published in the script, which will form part of the thesis and in the performances of the play created from the interviewees’ testimonies. The identities of participants will be disguised – names will be changed – unless participants give their permission for their identity to be acknowledged. The play may be reviewed and discussed in the public press and in scholarly publications.

15(g) Do you propose to collect demographic information to describe your sample? For example: gender, age, ethnicity, education level, etc.
   Because of the subject matter that the project is interested in investigating information to do with ethnicity and age will be collected.

15(h) Have you, or will you, undertake Māori consultation? Choose one of the options below, and delete the option that does not apply:
   YES We have ALREADY undertaken consultation. If yes, please attach the automated response from Ngai Tahu Research Consultation Committee.

16. Does the research or teaching project involve any form of deception? NO

17. Disclose and discuss any potential problems:
   No potential problems are foreseen, but there is a Māori support person available in case any problems do arise.

18. *Applicant's Signature: .................................................................
   Name (please print): .................................................................
   Date: .........................
   *The signatory should be the staff member detailed at Question 1.

19. Departmental approval: I have read this application and believe it to be valid research and ethically sound. I approve the research design. The Research proposed in this application is compatible with the University of Otago policies and I give my consent for the application to be forwarded to the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee with my recommendation that it be approved.
   Signature of **Head of Department: ....................................................
   Name of HOD (please print): ...........................................................
**Where the Head of Department is also the Applicant, then an appropriate senior staff member must sign on behalf of the Department or School.**
Walking Between Worlds: A Bicultural Documentary Theatre Project

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS or PARENTS / GUARDIANS ETC.

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

This is a documentary theatre project that investigates techniques for creating documentary theatre from autobiographical and biographical stories, the play that is being written for this project has the working title Walking Between Worlds, and its subject matter focuses upon Māori children adopted into Pākehā families through Closed Stranger Adoption. Parts of participants’ interviews may be used to form part of the play.

What Type of Participants are being sought?

We are looking for participants who are of Māori descent and who were adopted into Pākehā families as babies or very young children through Closed Stranger Adoption.
Ideally the participants would have grown up being the only child of Māori ethnicity within an all-Pākehā family. We are also wishing to speak to families of adoptees, as well as agencies and academics.
Participants’ will either be known to the researcher, or will be recruited through word of mouth or advertising.
Between five and ten participants will be involved.
There will be no reimbursement or payment for taking part in this project, although you will be offered complimentary tickets to the performance of the play.
Participants will be provided with a transcript of the section of their interview we wish to use in the production. Because we shall only transcribe the section(s) of any participant’s testimony that we intend to use in the final production, we are unable to provide a participant with a full transcription of their interview, but they may have access to the full digital video of their interview.
**What will Participants be asked to do?**

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to talk about your experiences of being Māori adopted into a Pākehā family through Closed Stranger Adoption. Likewise, if you are a family member of a Māori adoptee you will be asked to speak about your experiences. If you work, or have worked for an agency, or you are an academic, you will be asked questions in regards to your field of expertise around Closed Stranger and Transracial Adoption.

The initial interview will involve a time commitment of approximately between one and three hours. You may elect the time of day and place that is most convenient for this interview.

Should you agree, the interview will be audio and digitally video-taped. You may choose to stop the interview at any time without disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

It is not planned that recordings of interviews will be replayed in the play we create. However, your words may form part of the script, and actors may reproduce the way you spoke and your physical gestures in the performance, as well as speaking your words. You may decide if you wish to be identified by name or have your identity disguised.

You may bring a support person to the interview if you wish. If you and they agree, other people you know may be interviewed at the same time as you. We will continue to be available to you after your participation in interviews should you wish to talk further about your interview or the project. A Māori support person may also be available. Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

**What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?**

Data will be collected from you in an interview about your own experiences of being Māori adopted into a Pākehā family through Closed Stranger Adoption. Conversely you may be interviewed about being a family member of a Māori adoptee; from an agency, or as an academic in the field of Closed Stranger and Transracial Adoption.

You may be asked questions to do with your experiences of growing up as the only person of colour within your family, and what affect this has had on your life. You may be asked questions to do with identity, belonging, whakapapa and discrimination.

The information will be used to create a play called *Walking Between Worlds*. This play may contain part of your interview spoken and acted by an actor or actors word for word.

You will be audio and video taped. These tapes will be used in the following ways:

- Your words may form part of the script of *Walking Between Worlds*.
- In creating the performance of *Walking Between Worlds* actor(s) may recreate your words, the way in which you spoke and your physical gestures. This will be done in a way that honours what you said and how you said it.
- The actor(s) will use the tapes so that they can watch and listen to what you said as they rehearse the play.
The tapes will be viewed by the researchers: Kiri Bell, Hilary Halba and Janis Balodis, and possibly by Martyn Roberts, who is the Theatre Studies Technical manager, who will aid with technical and editing support of the play. The above-mentioned people will all be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement, which means that they may not discuss the identity of interviewees or the particulars of any interview with anyone outside the research team.

We will collect contact information from you so that we can contact you about the project. The data collected, including your contact details and the data collected from your interview, will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned above will be able to gain access to it. Data obtained as a result of the research will be retained for at least 5 years in secure storage. Video-tapes will also be retained in secure storage for at least 5 years as actors will need to have access to the original testimony for rehearsal purposes should Walking Between Worlds be performed again after the initial season. If any further performances of Walking Between Worlds are planned after the initial season of performances, the researchers would consult you. The results of the project will be published in a MFA thesis and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand), and every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

On the Consent form, you will be given options regarding your anonymity. Please be aware that should you wish, we will make every attempt to preserve your anonymity. However, with your consent, there are some cases where contributions made by individual participants might be attributed, such as on the programme for the performance of Walking Between Worlds. It is absolutely up to you which of these options you prefer.

If any section(s) of your interview are selected for inclusion in Walking Between Worlds, you will be given a transcript of that section of interview for your approval before rehearsals begin. You may ask us to delete any part of that testimony which you do not wish to appear in the performance. You may also come to a rehearsal session and watch the actor(s) who are performing your testimony. Again, you may ask us to withdraw any part of the testimony. On such occasions, we may also invite you to have a follow-up conversations, possibly asking you to reflect on what you saw in the rehearsal. You may decline to do so if you wish.

You will be given complimentary tickets to a performance of Walking Between Worlds.

This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes questions to do with your experiences of being Māori adopted into a Pākehā family through Closed Stranger Adoption. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used. In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.
Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What if Participants have any Questions?
If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Kiri Bell and Hilary Halba
Theatre Studies Programme
03 479 8925
beeki812@student.otago.ac.nz hilary.halba@otago.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage. I know that:

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary.

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage.

3. Personal identifying information will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years.

4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes: experience and information regarding the adoption of Māori children into Pākehā families through closed stranger adoption. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.

5. Because of the personal nature of the topic, I understand that there may be some stress to participants. I may bring a support person to an interview with me, and a Māori support person will also be available. I am aware that I may be interviewed in a small group with other participants who are known to me, if I wish. The researchers will be available to me following our interviews to discuss any aspects of the process.

6. No remuneration is available but I am aware that I will be offered complimentary tickets to a performance of Walking Between Worlds.

7. The results of the project will be published in a MFA thesis and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity should I choose to remain anonymous.

8. I, as the participant:

   (a) agree to being named in the research
   (b) would rather remain anonymous
I agree to take part in this project.

.............................................................................
(Signature of participant)          ........................................
                          (Date)

.............................................................................
(Printed Name)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 4: Ngāi Tahu Research Committee

Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee
Te Komiti Rakahau ki Kāi Tahu

Tuesday, 02 February 2016.

Ma Hilary Halba,
Music - Theatre Studies and Performing Arts Studies,
DUNEDIN.

Tenā Koe Ma Hilary Halba,

Exploration of Documentary Theatre Techniques to Tell Personal Stories.

The Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee (the committee) met on Tuesday, 02 February 2016 to discuss your research proposition.

By way of introduction, this response from the Committee is provided as part of the Memorandum of Understanding between Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the University. In the statement of principles of the memorandum it states “Ngāi Tahu acknowledges that the consultation process outlined in this policy provides no power of veto by Ngāi Tahu to research undertaken at the University of Otago”. As such, this response is not “approval” or “mandate” for the research, rather it is a mandated response from a Ngāi Tahu appointed committee. This process is part of a number of requirements for researchers to undertake and does not cover other issues relating to ethics, including methodology they are separate requirements with other committees, for example the Human Ethics Committee, etc.

Within the context of the Policy for Research Consultation with Māori, the Committee bases consultation on that defined by Justice McCauchan:

"Consultation does not mean negotiation or agreement. It means: setting out a proposal not fully decided upon, adequately informing a party about relevant information upon which the proposal is based, listening to what the others have to say with an open mind (in that there is room to be persuaded against the proposal); undertaking that task in a genuine and not cosmetic manner. Reaching a decision that may or may not alter the original proposal.”

The Committee considers the research to be of interest and importance.

As this study involves human participants, the Committee strongly encourage that ethnicity data be collected as part of the research project as a right to express their self-identity. That is the questions on self-identified ethnicity and descent, these questions are contained in the latest census.

The Committee suggests dissemination of the research findings to Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu regarding this study.

We wish you every success in your research and the committee also requests a copy of the research findings.

The Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee has membership from:

Te Rūnanga o Otaiko incorporated
Kāti Huirapa Rūnanga ki Puketāraiki
Te Rūnanga o Māverick
This letter of suggestion, recommendation and advice is current for an 18 month period from Tuesday, 02 February 2016 to 2 August 2017.

Nīhau noa, nā

Mark Brunton
Kaiwhakahihere Rangahau Māori
Research Manager Māori
Research Division
Te Whare Wānanga o Otago
Pht: +64 3 479 8738
Email: mark.brunton@otago.ac.nz
Web: www.otago.ac.nz

The Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee has membership from:

Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou Incorporated
Kotai Heirenga Rānuka i i Pakotereaki
Te Rūnanga o Moeraki