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The dialectics of textile hand production : In search of poetic content : an enquiry into the position of the traditional textile crafts

Jane Donlin
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The dialectics of textile hand production

In search of poetic content:
an enquiry into the position of the traditional textile crafts

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Master of Arts
(Visual Arts)

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Edith Cowan University

Faculty of Education and Arts

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Abstract

This thesis frames the significance of traditional textile hand production as a means of furthering the concept of aesthetic socio-cultural development. It approaches the traditional textile crafts in relation to the proposition that contemporary society is post-traditional and has broken away from nature. By examining the concept of tradition and the processes by which society transforms from the pre-modern context into the late modern, the changing nature of the crafts is explained. The research also examines wider social losses, gains and unforeseen consequences that occur in the continuous process of social transformation. My art praxis is contextualised within the framework of reflexivity, the idea that creative art practice and theory build on one another. Two research methods are used. The first is a reflection on my situation as a maker. Integral to my work is the actual experience of traditional textile hand production. The second, in drawing on the literature from critical theory, proposes the concept of reflexivity as a means by which to rethink the position of the traditional textile crafts, particularly in relation to questions concerning tradition, culture, society, identity, nature and responsible human action.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- i. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;*
- ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or*
- iii. contain any defamatory material;*

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Date:

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Introduction

The aim of this research paper is to explore the creative, poetic potential of traditional textile handcraft production. A further aim is to understand the cultural phenomena that have caused craft knowledge to change, to become secondary and even to decline in importance. An important reason for starting this project was my concern for the position of the traditional textile crafts. I am a textile artist and a maker, whose praxis is set in the context of post-tradition (c.f. Giddens, 1994), but whose understanding of craft originated from the traditional crafts of Germany. Central to my art practice are traditional textile hand production methods, such as weaving, spinning, stitching. However, the work that I do in Western Australia is frequently misunderstood or not taken seriously. For example, it is very difficult to earn a serious income from the work. Tradition's etymology is in the word tradere, which means to pass on the knowledge of previous generations. In the pre-modern context, social values were passed on together with the knowledge of craft. Making then was a socially accepted, everyday practice. In the contemporary context of post-tradition, the knowledge of craft is no longer passed on as a natural course of events. It means that if someone wishes to learn traditional techniques, they must learn from doing a course at an educational institution, or from the study of technical books. Giddens (1994) has theorised that contemporary society has changed the concept of tradition and nature, even ended traditions and nature. He contends that questions of detraditionalisation have emerged as fundamental contemporary sociological problems, changing the development, structure, and functioning of human society, also changing the natural course of the ecology. A post-traditional society is subject to immense globalising influences. Conditions of detraditionalisation have changed our understandings of craft, often resulting in a disregard for the crafts. Habermas (1984) also expresses concerns about the process of detraditionalisation. For him, detraditionalisation is a process of social transformation coinciding with "the desocialisation of nature and the denaturalisation of society" (p. 48), perhaps also coinciding with the changing nature of the crafts. The essence of my art praxis, therefore, is to explore the role that traditional textile craft production might play in contributing on a constructive level to influences of detraditionalisation by

- renewing and sustaining the knowledge of craft in the area of textiles
- questioning the value of textile hand production
- understanding craft's historicity
- learning from the experience of the past rather than suggesting a return
- proposing new ways of thinking about the role of traditional textile craft practice

The method of reflexive investigation, the notion that the theory informs the practice and the experience of practice determines the theory, is used to find understandings. I begin this paper by situating my praxis within my own lifeworld experiences, and with the understanding that my praxis

operates within the context of a post-traditional society. In Australia, I found it difficult to communicate my relation to what I perceive as the poetic-aesthetic content of a textile craft. Traditional methods of hand production depend greatly on technical processes, the careful choice of materials, skill, time, labour intense work and repetition. Traditional methods also depend a great deal on tacit knowledge (c.f. Polyani, 2009). Tacit knowledge is an innate, intuitive understanding that cannot be easily articulated or conveyed to others. Since influences of detraditionalisation appear to change our perception and the nature of the crafts, I begin this research by focussing on the concept of tradition. I wish to understand, is there an aesthetic-poetic content in tradition; what is tradition's relation to the crafts; what are the processes that threaten to destroy our understandings of the traditional crafts and what sets a traditional craft apart from other crafts. The enquiry into the position of the traditional textile crafts includes historical, social transitional, cultural, ideological, economic and contemporary issues. To approach these issues, I draw on a wide range of literature from critical theory, craft theory and history.

The theoretical part of the research proceeds through five chapters, using the following key theorists: Giddens (1991, 1994; 1998) for his study of tradition; Habermas (1984, 1987) for his analysis of the process of social transformation; Adorno (1977, 1984, 1993; 1944) for his critique of ideologies and for his theorisation of aestheticism; Ruskin (1907b, 1907c, 1964, 2009b), a social thinker from the Victorian era, for his push to revive the traditional arts and crafts. Risatti (2007) and Adamson (2007), contemporary craft theorists, help articulate the importance of craft; Fuller (1982b, 1985, 1987, 1988, 2008), an art critic, promotes the preservation of traditional technique; Herzfeld (2004), an ethnographer, describes the position of contemporary craftspeople; Hobsbawm (1983, 1998) and McGarry (1976), historians, are used to illuminate and distinguish between the concept of historicity and past experiences; Epstein (1998; 2008), also a historian, describes the medieval craft guild activities.

In Chapter 1, I use Giddens (1994) to research the notions of tradition. Giddens argues that tradition "is not the mechanical following of precepts accepted in an unquestioning way" (p. 62), but that it is a medium of past realities. Giddens shows that traditions have contemporary value. They are bound up with concepts such as ways of life, ritual, repetition, social solidarity and collective memory. Central to tradition is its connection to "a formulaic notion of truth" (p. 63). The study reveals that tradition has evolved from superstitious belief systems (Adorno, 1977; Giddens, 1994; Habermas, 1984). Its superstition or its 'truth' is analogous to sacred knowledge, a knowledge which has emerged from a more unconscious, mythological way of understanding the world (Habermas, 1987, p. 43). These mythological understandings are simultaneously the source of cultural repression and cultural poetry. Hence, emancipation from repressive forms of tradition was necessary, but it came at a cost. The poetic content of tradition was dissolved. Giddens (cited in Giddens & Pierson, 1998) posits that social

action today is a reflexively critical endeavour that is no longer based on mythological understandings of the world: “Social reflexivity refers to a world increasingly constituted by information rather than pre-given modes of conduct. It is how we live after the retreat of tradition and nature” (p. 115). Social reflexivity is a more conscious way of interacting in the world.

Chapter 2 entails an investigation into notions concerning the past and history. Tradition is often defined through its historic qualities; it implies an orientation to the past, “such that the past is made to have a heavy influence over the present” (Giddens, 1994, p. 62). Hobsbawm is used to establish the importance of historicity and past experience and also, to define characteristics concerning tradition’s authenticity. Drawing on Habermas (1984), it is ascertained that tradition has contemporary qualities, which relate to the human lifeworld. Habermas’ interpretation of the threefold nature of the human lifeworld is discussed and the ways in which the traditional crafts relate to all three components.

In Chapter 3, questions of social transformation are researched. Significant to this chapter are the questions, how does the process of transition change tradition and shift understandings of craft. The enquiry focuses on the nature of the crafts and the differing social contexts in which the crafts are set. Understandings of craft are often mediated by the social context in which people operate. This means that embedded beliefs and meanings make craft what it is, a socially accepted activity or one that is rejected. Risatti (2007) helps define the concept of craft. Barber is used to provide a short outline of the historical evolution of the textile crafts. I draw on Epstein and Prak (1998; 2008) to help identify the activities of the European medieval craft guilds. The medieval craftsmen played a major role in changing the nature of the crafts and advancing the crafts towards high levels of skill and towards sustaining their society economically. Thereafter, the Victorian arts and crafts movement and the Bauhaus activities are cited as further contexts for transformation. Ruskin (2009a) is used to re-iterate the point that first worldviews emerged from the imaginative powers of ‘wise man’. Ruskin shows that there is poetry in the myth. Drawing on Habermas (1984) and Giddens (1994), the final section of Chapter 3 explains the process of social transformation, a process by which the mythological understandings of a world are increasingly replaced by more rational ways of thinking. This is the process of detraditionalisation.

In Chapter 4, Giddens (1991) is used to show that detraditionalisation in late modernity introduces risks and threats to society and nature that were unknown to previous generations (p. 4). This is our current period of so-called post-tradition and is marked by the global expansion of capitalistic institutions and their tendency to destroy traditional ways of life. There are the questions, what happens to the individual and to society at large when those identity-securing properties of tradition are dissolved? Habermas (1984) argues that the dynamics of social transition tend to remove certain lifeworld qualities, often overlooking in the process the need to replace those qualities with something

else. He claims that the push for economic growth has “dissolved traditional forms of life without salvaging their communicative substance” (pp. xxxvi-xxxvii). Drawing on Herzfeld (2004), Adorno (1993) and Adamson (2007), I examine how the commodifying influences of tourism and the market change ‘the communicative substance’ of the crafts, also affecting understandings of hobbyism and the work of the amateur. Essentially, the theorists argue that activities of creating and making are removed from everyday experiences. With the removal of the experience of making, the arts separated from the crafts and the crafts became marginalised. As Attiwill (2000) ascertained, in early modernity, textile hand production methods moved into the realm of craft activities (p. 34). Although, as Adorno (1984) establishes and as is discussed in Chapter 5, the separation between the arts and crafts was already happening in antiquity. The final section of this chapter uses Fuller (1985) to discuss issues and concerns relating to new textile art forms. Important to Fuller is his push for educational institutions and other institutions to help keep the traditional craft techniques alive.

The final chapter, Chapter 5 is concerned with the role of my art praxis and the potential for reflexive action. There are the questions, what is the value of the handmade in a world that has become highly industrialised and globalised. In such contexts, can traditional textile hand production methods be considered an art form; do the textile crafts take on new meanings; can the art praxis change general outlooks and re-establish a more profound understanding of craft. In this chapter, I first summarise the core issues underpinning my praxis. Second, a detailed account of my practice is given and I cite Ann Hamilton (2004; 2002) as an example of an artist who works reflexively and who shares concepts similar to mine. I conclude my study into the position of the traditional textile craft object by drawing on Adorno’s (1984) theory of aestheticism. For him, the experience of aestheticism helps develop autonomous cognitive thought and action. Essentially, Adorno shows that making art, entailing technique, skill and material sensitivity is part of the aesthetic experience. Although he contends that questions of aesthetics are controversial (p. 457), he suggests that the truth content in a work of art is an aesthetic reflection of ‘real’ human values. For Adorno, aesthetic growth is geared towards a growth in human consciousness and freedom in spirit. In summary, the research reveals that tradition means social renewal and that the past is an experience from which to learn, implying that traditional hand production is an experience of aestheticism from which to learn and with which to renew or even to advance certain forms of cultural understandings.

The background to the research

The reasons for choosing the topic ‘the dialectics of textile hand production’ is to examine the position, the value and the meaning of the traditional textile crafts. As a textile artist of German origin, I come from a culture where medieval buildings and craft traditions are an intrinsic part of the cultural

heritage. I was predominantly raised in Braunschweig. Although the city was badly bombed in World War II, much of the old architecture was rebuilt in the years following the war. The crafts adorning the buildings in the Altstadt (old town) of Braunschweig show the extraordinary skills of the medieval craftsmen. Art education in Germany often involved excursions to museums, observing and drawing medieval architecture and crafting objects based on the experiences of making. Objects, such as carefully constructed geometrical stars or paper windows would be modelled on medieval stained glass patterns or other medieval crafts. Making for annual festivities was a recurring tradition. Making has always been significant to my lifeworld activities. From studying the beauty or the poetry of the medieval crafts, I had developed a high regard for the historical crafts and arts and thus, I had my own idea of what craft was.

In 1982 I migrated to Perth in Western Australia. Here I encountered a different relationship to craft. High-level craft activities did not seem to be part of the Australian culture, yet the easy crafts of the craft industry seemed popular, and these, in my mind, lacked substance. With the exception of the traditional Aboriginal crafts, which have an intrinsic poetic content, I felt disconnected from the Australian craft culture.¹ When I first arrived in Perth, I intended to continue with the tradition of making and joined a group of patchwork quilt makers, but I could not share their enthusiasm, I did not see my understanding of craft reflected in theirs. Some quilters had purchased kits, containing a pre-conceived pattern, templates, printed fabrics and other resources needed to complete the project. This was the 'craft'. Later, I attended a workshop on scrap booking, and again, I could not understand how scrap booking was classified as craft. For this workshop all materials were provided, along with a book, shapes, cut-out guides and assembly instructions. I felt disconnected from these crafts too.

When TAFE, a vocational tertiary education institution, offered a course on weaving in 1987, I enrolled. However, the funding for this course was cut soon after it had been introduced because a certificate of weaving did not lead to a vocation in industry. Nonetheless, at TAFE I gained a basic understanding of weaving technique, material sensitivity and skills, enabling me to teach myself from books more complex techniques and weave structures. The choice of materials, the right use of tools and equipment and the techniques were important elements to learning the craft. The work was slow to develop and labour-intensive. Before the act of weaving could commence, a pattern had to be designed, the loom prepared, the appropriate materials selected and the exact number and length of threads calculated, and so forth. The craftsperson was actively involved in the creative process on every level. At this stage in my life I was a stay at home mother to three children. Thus, I balanced home life with the learning of a craft, and I struggled for acceptance. Few people understood the significance of the craft, weaving was a time-consuming activity and my motivation for making was

¹ The theme of Aboriginal crafts is beyond the scope of this research; therefore it is not discussed in further detail.

also mostly misunderstood. I sought poetry or an experience of aestheticism, yet for others, my work suggested a return to the past, nostalgia or a nice activity to practice in my free time. The poetic content did not seem visible to those who had no experience of making. I was asked about the meditative, therapeutic effect of the labour, and for some, it seemed incomprehensible that I would spend time engaging in such a slow, monotonous activity. Socially, the work is also insufficiently appreciated because it is difficult to make an income. However, in my mind, the traditional crafts like weaving are an important part of the human inheritance and misconceptions about textile hand production were undermining its real social value.

Barber (1994) has collected enough archaeological evidence to suggest that textile hand production defined women's roles as early as the Palaeolithic era. Notably, cloth was produced long before the historical recordings of first civilisations. Barber's study shows that in every epoch of human development, the hand production of cloth has been important to place, culture and society, yet the ideas concerning tradition and the crafts are based on a wide range of interpretations, many of which are disparaging. Adamson (2007) for example concedes that craft is often misconceived as "something mastered in the hands, not in the mind" (p. 1). Frequently, distinctions are made between "something of physical actions, rather than abstract ideas" (p. 1). Important to tradition and craft is that they are interlinked on many levels, both have emerged from a historical context, they imply a connection to the past, they are subject to influences of change, and they have a deeper tacit-poetic quality about them. Hence, I needed to understand what this tacit-poetic quality is about and why it was not sufficiently understood in metropolitan Perth. Habermas (1984) and others show that traditions have emerged from superstitious belief systems, and that the poetic content of tradition is sought in such inexplicable content. Habermas has argued that in a modern society, superstitious thought is threatened by universal disbelief with the result that entire social groups are jeopardised by "the widespread disinclination to treat them seriously" (p. 81). I wondered whether the disinclination to treat traditions seriously applied to the crafts as well.

The social circumstances in which we live have changed and nowadays the majority of the population is not needed for craft production. Thus, craft has become secondary almost by default. Also, today, many textile artists have a different relationship with craft and, of course, it is necessary to experiment with new methods and develop new techniques, this is part of the evolutionary process. Michael Brennand-Wood (2007) is an example of a textile artist who trials innovative methods. Brennand-Wood, who defines his work as a "conceptual synthesis of contemporary and historical sources", works with new techniques and new materials. New approaches play an important role in art and society, they help advance concepts and understandings, however, they tend to dissolve old ways of doing things. Hence, new knowledge plays a significant role in changing our understandings and experiences of craft and tradition, but the understandings and knowledges of the older crafts are at

risk. Fuller (1982a), a strong proponent of keeping the traditional crafts alive, argues that if higher level craft skills are not taught at educational institutions, the crafts will be not be valued on a wider social level. Adorno (1977, 1984) contends that art is a reflection of real human values and that the participation in real activities is ‘an authentic mode of experience’. He furthermore argues that traditions are living entities based on real or authentic experiences and when traditions are dissolved, people are denied such ‘authentic modes of experiences’. Ruskin (1907a) also has put forward the argument that without having the experience of making, the real value of craft or art remains unrecognised.

As a maker I draw on many techniques and processes to create work. As noted above, techniques, processes and skill are significant to my art practice. The word maker has many meanings, referencing amongst others the old Scots word ‘makar’ (15th century), which translates as poet. The etymology of maker can be traced to the Greek word *poetes*. For the ancient Greeks, *poiesis* means the creative production of a work of art ("Oxford English Dictionary," 2009). For the Greeks, the creative production of art was poetry. This idea of maker as poet and art as poetry is central to contextualising my art praxis and is developed incrementally throughout this paper. Adorno’s (1984) theory of aestheticism is particularly important to helping contextualise the poetic content of art.

In 2001 I attended Edith Cowan University (ECU) art school. Here I was introduced to new ways of thinking about the textile crafts. The craft that I had learned at TAFE became the art. At the educational institution I learned to distinguish between the commodified crafts of the craft industry, those crafts and arts that Adorno (1984) has defined as ‘being for itself’ or being for the interests of the ruling force and those crafts informing the arts, ‘being for the other’, i.e. being for real human values (p. 336). Importantly, in the context of art and education, I was presented with a model of craft production that differed from my initial relationship with craft. In Western Australia there are a number of craft-oriented contemporary textile or fibre artists. Nalda Searles, Elsje King and Holly Story are three examples. Searles, King and Story share common elements in their work in that they use natural materials and vegetable dyes from the bush, recycled cloth and they engage with traditional textile techniques and processes in order to express a sense of belonging and personal identity in relation with the land.

For many years the ECU textile lecturers and artists Rinske Car and John Parkes organised a textile camp at Elachbutting Rock in Muckinbudin in the West Australian wheat belt. The ideas behind the camps were that living in accord with nature over a period of time would generate ideas and inspire the processes about the artwork. In 2002 and 2004 I attended these camps. Searles, who was a regular contributor to the camps, shared her ideas about her relationship with the natural environment, humanity, the making, and her methods and processes. I learned from Searles early traditional textile

techniques, such as the making of string from grass and other fibres, netting string bags, plaiting with cordyline fibre and coiling with grasses and found materials baskets and objects. Learning archaic textile techniques in the contexts of the natural environment was a defining experience that influenced my later praxis. Notably, I learned about the poetic content of ancient textile techniques in the context of an educational institution. Searles herself uses in her artwork mostly found, gathered and recycled materials, employing ancient techniques. She coils large-scale ornate baskets created from various grasses and cloth; she sculpts objects from natural fibres and also tends to stitch plant materials onto cloths and clothes. Searles creates large-scale installations with her work. *Drifting in my own land* (2009) is the name of her current exhibition, which is touring Australia from 2009 – 2013 (Searles, 2009).

King (in O'Brien, 1997) uses quilting, felting, screen-printing, plant-dyeing and stitching techniques, also to create poetry with cloth. *Spinifex stitching* (1997) for instance represents King's poetic/aesthetic relation with the making and with the Western Australian bush (O'Brien, 1997, pp. 12-13). *Spinifex stitching* is a cloth created from silk and wool fabrics, dyed with vegetable dye, screen-printed and embellished with hand-stitch. To create this work, King camped for several days next to Ethel River, taking rubbings of spinifex tussocks on soft Chinese paper. The rubbings then became a screen print image. For King, the experiences of the making and the experiences of being in the bush are central to understanding her work. As she maintains, the power of the work comes from "the aura of real experience that is entrenched in the material body" (p. 24). As discussed, Adorno (1984) too emphasises the importance of experience. For him, such 'authentic modes of experience' are central to creating a poetic-aesthetic quality of life (p. 311). King (cited in O'Brien, 1997) says of her work, "It's about a feeling I can't quite describe, probably fragility or even vulnerability" (p. 10). For King, the work is about an experience that needs no words to explain.

Story (2000) is a contemporary migrant artist from the UK who draws much of her inspiration from the Deep River in the South West. Like Searles and King, to express her ideas of culture, place and identity, she brings together traditional techniques of stitch, print and plant dye. *Fancywork* (2000) is a body of work that explores the tension Story experiences as a migrant between place and identity. In *Fancywork* Story juxtaposes traditional European domestic embroidery with large-scale photographic images of the Australian landscape. There seems to be little logic between the oversize depictions of English nursery rhymes and the large-scale Australian bush imagery, yet there is a definite poetic-aesthetic relation between the traditional European stitchery and the images of the Australian bush.

These three artists are important to my art praxis for many reasons. They have influenced my work for their conceptual thinking, entailing the themes of working with land and identity; for their use of natural materials and dyes; for their close interaction with land and fibre; for taking their lived-

experiences with the land and turning it into art; for making the crafting and creating of objects into an everyday occurrence; for placing high value on process and experience; for taking traditional techniques and turning their work into poetic artforms; for taking everyday, commonly available materials and turning them into something precious (c.f. Murray, 2005). Most importantly, as I view it, their work falls into the category ‘being for the other’ (c.f. Adorno, 1984, p. 336), i.e. the works of art are signifiers for real human values. The art shows simultaneous deep respect for the land on which the artists live and for the real human need to make. However, in some of their artworks, they appear to have a different relationship to techniques, materials and skills to the relationship that I seek. Techniques, material sensitivity and the development of skills frame my conceptual thinking about a textile craft and are essential for the realisation of my ideas. This conundrum between the logical employment of technique, materials and skill and the poetic realisation of an idea frames a large part of my research. Through the objects that I make, I aim to communicate the importance of skill, materials and technique and change the way we think about craft.

In his *Theory of Communicative Action* Habermas (1984) proposes that there are three interrelated sets of actions to reflexive change: first, the phenomenon of modernity needs to be made subject to continuous and meticulous analysis. Second, a two-level understanding of society needs to be developed, one that integrates the paradigms of the lifeworld with those of the system. Third, in building on the two previous sets of actions Habermas propounds to develop “a critical theory of modernity which analyses and accounts for its pathologies in a way that suggests a redirection” (McCarthy cited in Habermas, 1984, p. vi).

I argue a similar three level approach. First, to understand the changing nature of the textile crafts, it is necessary to examine the concept of tradition, to analyse the evolutionary process of social transformation, and to understand how evolution has resulted in ‘the post-traditional order’. I hope to show that with each level of transformation, textile hand production takes on new meanings. Second, I propose that the significance of the traditional textile crafts can be seen, once it is realised that it is the mechanisms of social transformation that have resulted in a change in attitude, changing our understanding of the crafts and changing the nature of the crafts. Third, in building on the understandings of the preceding enquiry, to consider on a wider social level the re-integration and re-appropriation of traditional textile hand production. To make integration possible, craft needs to be redefined, conveying more complex and realistic ideas, also conveying the significance of historicity. The premise is, that in a post-traditional society it is on the basis of understanding that the potential cultural poetry inherent in traditional craft production might be continued and developed, rather than set adrift.

These ideas are closely intertwined and embedded in my work. I choose to make handloom cloth because weaving pertains to a high-level craft that originated somewhere in the world and sometime in the Palaeolithic era. Cloth production has always played an important role in social life, that is, until machine production replaced handloom cloth. In my work, there is an ongoing dialogue between the development of content (tradition, social evolution, detraditionalisation, the ending of nature and so forth) and imagery. Following on from *mixtape* in 2003 and 2006, *remix* 2011 is an invited exhibition of twenty contemporary Western Australian works, curated by the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA) and shown from April 15th to August 15th 2011. To be invited to participate in *remix* and have my work shown in the state art gallery perhaps negates my argument that handloom cloth is a secondary or inadequately recognised form of art. However, after consulting with the curator and giving an artist's floor talk, I believe that I was given the opportunity to show the poetry and share my concerns about the position of the traditional textile craft object. Feedback from the audience reinforced my concerns and the importance of the research. Thus, to contextualise my art praxis and to understand how the textile crafts are situated in a society that has become thoroughly post-traditional, in the five chapters that follow, the research takes a more critical theoretical approach.

1. On Tradition

The effect of the poetic, aesthetic content in the art made by hand is profound. As my research aims to establish, traditional methods of art or craft production are a contemporaneous, inseparable part of every society. Craft is a sophisticated art form that has originated from the high civilisations of antiquity. The technical processes of the crafts have evolved and continue to evolve from the complexity of historical influences and continuous social transformation. Important to the high crafts of the medieval era, as is discussed in Chapter 3, and important to my art practice also, is that traditional craft production means to lift the standards of the making, to pay a great deal of attention to technique, skill, materials and detail, regardless of the time and effort it takes. However, Giddens (1994) contends that the world in which we live nowadays is post-traditional, suggesting that tradition has ended, suggesting in turn that traditional ways of practicing the textile crafts have become either obsolete or at the very least, less significant. Herein lies the core problem and the challenge to my art praxis because traditional significance is integral to my work. Hence, in order to understand what has become obsolete, I begin this research with an enquiry into the nature of tradition. I draw on the literature from Giddens (1991, 1994), Habermas (1984, 1987), Adorno² (1977), Hobsbawm (1983, 1998) and Weber (cited in Habermas, 1984), but also on the writings from Ruskin (1907c), Yanagi (1972) and Fuller (1987) to find the link between tradition, the poetic, aesthetic content in a work of art and the experience of textile hand production. Due to the complexity of this topic, this first chapter is divided into twelve sections.

The first section, *Understanding tradition*, reveals that general ideas of tradition are subject to many conflicting interpretations. Central to understanding tradition is understanding that the irrational, mythic views underlying tradition are simultaneously the cause of antagonisms generated towards tradition and the source of tradition's aestheticism. Adorno (1977) identifies tradition as a living entity that manifests itself in the way life is lived. Tradition's etymological roots are from the Latin word *tradere*, which means to physically pass something on. Adorno thus is the first to show the conceptual link between tradition and hand production. In the next section, *The mythic origins of tradition*, I use Giddens (1994), Adorno and Habermas (1984) to determine that traditional ways of life are pre-determined and have originated from a mythological, irrational, cultic understanding of the world. In the third section, *The way of tradition*, I examine tradition's characteristics and tradition's prime function: social renewal. Here it is established that the inculcation of beliefs and the enforcement of cultural dogma is a

² All references to Adorno, T. (1977). *Über Tradition Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (Vol. One, pp. 310-320) are translated by the author of this current research.

significant part of tradition's way. The fourth section, *Tradition's claims to knowledge*, re-enforces briefly the significance of tradition's inherent link to mystical values. Following this study, the research proceeds to a discussion about *The tacit knowledge claims of the crafts*. Although I extrapolate on this point in Chapter 3, I introduce here the innate relation between the mythic understanding of the world and the tacit knowledge of the crafts. The further development of the next section, *The end of craft*, is taken up with an investigation into the contemporary position of the textile crafts. Using Adorno, Ruskin (1907b) and Fuller (1988), I examine the importance of technique and what Adorno terms 'métier'. The seventh section, *Tradition, inherited or invented* uses the literature from Hobsbawm (1983), Giddens (1994) and Benjamin (2008) to identify distinctions between inherited and invented tradition. Essentially, inherited tradition is governed by ritual and the symbolic nature of sanctity, whereas invented tradition is more recent and institutionally established. Both are concerned with power relations, however Hobsbawm considers inherited tradition more authentic. Benjamin is relevant to this debate because he reflects on the concept of authenticity. For him, the poetic, auric nature of tradition and its ritualistic connection to works of art constitutes authenticity. His writings establish also, that the shifting values of society change the nature of perception. In section eight, *Tradition, a medium of identity formation*, I focus on tradition's identity-securing properties. The routinisation of everyday life is key to providing individuals with a sense of ontological security. Section nine, *Tradition – a medium of collective memory*, examines the function of tradition in the contemporary context. Giddens shows that tradition today is a continuous collective re-enactment or reproduction of past experience, bestowing 'continuity upon experience'. The relevance of this section is that it helps further to contextualise my art praxis. In section ten, *The changing nature of tradition*, I outline how tradition has become reflexive in nature. Relevant here also, is the understanding that tradition refers not only to human relations but to material objects too. Section eleven, *Detraditionalisation – who or what is responsible for the changing nature of tradition*, draws on Hobsbawm (1983), Giddens (1991, 1994), Adorno (1977) and Herzfeld (2004) to establish that the political hegemony produced by the thinkers of early modernity was the initial influence causing tradition to change. In the contemporary context, there has been another shift in influence. Today, the disembedding influences of institutional reflexivity pose the prime threat to tradition. The final section, *In defence of tradition*, discusses the notion of reflexivity, the re-appropriation or re-organisation of new knowledge, as a potential space for an art praxis and as a possibility of redirection.

1.1 Understanding Tradition

For Giddens (1994), central to the concept of tradition is the way in which it is associated with endurance, continuity, authority, history and the past, but also to the way in which it is associated with the formation of trust, faith, group solidarity and identity. Tradition is a form of knowledge that is transmitted from person to person, from generation to generation. It references concepts such as ritual and cultural customs (p. 62). Tradition for Habermas (1984) represents all the irrational faculties associated with the concept of the lifeworld: subjectivity, doctrines and belief systems, which in archaic societies were rooted in a mythological understanding of the world. Habermas describes traditional societies as centred, closed, less institutionalised and their “lifeworld is presumed as unproblematic” (p. 70). A lifeworld informed by the knowledge of tradition is a pre-interpreted, given world of which its social structures are non-debatable (p. 70). However, as Giddens (1994) argues, as archaic as a tradition may seem, it still informs almost every aspect of social life (p. 62). Giddens suggests that tradition only presumes endurance. Like all things, tradition is subject to the disembedding influences of social change. Traditions change as each new generation reconstructs or reinvents its social rituals, customs and belief systems. The role that tradition plays in people’s lives has changed. Tradition conceptually was originally linked to the notion of superstition or power. Today, tradition is characterised by its identity-forming role (p. 62).

Giddens (2000) posits that the term tradition, as is understood today, is an invention of modernity. Before modernity, tradition was everyday custom and habit (p. 39). Today, however, understandings of tradition are often construed as dichotomies. Notions of endurance, permanence, invariance, fixity and stability are contrasted with ephemerality, impermanence, flux, change and temporality; the irrational faculties of subjectivity are separate from the rational faculties of objectivity: faith, superstition and poetry competes against science, reason, technological progress, economics and innovation. Traditional societies emerged as centred societies. They were less-institutionalised, personal and dependent on traditional practices such as rite and routine. Modernity in contrast is more concerned with institutional transition and represents all that is decentred, institutionalised, interdependent and impersonal. Under the conditions of tradition, duties and obligations are pre-determined and group solidarity and identity formation are a given. Under the conditions of modernity everything is open to question, nothing is fixed and actions taken are often globally consequential (p. 64). According to Giddens (1994), modern circumstances are reflexive circumstances in which group solidarity and identity formation are self-determined. Amid a myriad of external influences, personal identity is structured due to individual choice and decision-making processes (p. 64). However, the distinctions between tradition and modernity are not that clear cut. Tradition is not as

unproblematic, fixed, puerile or invariant as presumed, and yet tradition is characterised by certain established procedures. To that extent, modernity's constant flux poses a threat to tradition. Giddens' (2000) claim is that modern society has come to the end of tradition, implying that traditions are no longer "lived in the traditional way" (p. 43). Implied also, that craft production is no longer practiced in the traditional way. Giddens second significant claim is that modern society is living after the end of nature, entailing a decline in the belief in the myths of the pre-given world and a break from the natural order of things (p. 43).

Giddens (1994) notes that in a traditional society social positioning is often a given and individual choice is limited. Tradition is frequently associated with authority and authority justifies norms, enforces obedience and determines social status (p. 64). Hobsbawm (1983) also contends that tradition is tied up with authority: tradition is the bonding agent for group cohesion and a legitimator of social action (p. 12). Archbishop Florovsky (1987), in writing on the authoritarian nature of the ancient Catholic Church, posits that tradition was "Scripture rightly understood" and Scripture was "the only, primary and ultimate canon of Christian truth". Religious power in particular had the ability to achieve certain goals, influencing both group and personal identity. The ritualised actions of jurisdiction are other examples of tradition's authority (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 3). Giddens (1994) argues that understandings of authority are ambiguous. For him, authority is "the capacity to issue binding commands" (p. 82), indicating the hold that an individual or a group may have over others, or authority might be a reference point of knowledge. In a post-traditional society, often the differing understandings merge, then authority becomes a matter of ideology as well as a means of impersonalising power (p. 82). In the period of Enlightenment, however, the authority of pre-industrial superstitious belief-systems was an issue open to question. Only then, Giddens (2000) contends, was the idea of tradition born (p. 39). He concedes that in setting out to destroy tradition, the Enlightenment thinkers created the concept of tradition. Before Enlightenment, this idea of tradition did not exist: tradition was simply what one did everyday. Hobsbawm (1983) also surmises that in early modernity tradition received a bad name because of its association with power and superstition (p. 12).

Adorno (1977) defines tradition as a living entity; tradition asserts itself via its pure existence (p. 318). Tradition is associated predominantly with the succession of groups of people, who over time preserve ways of life that are meaningful to them, and who bequeath these meanings to the next generation (p. 318). According to Adorno, tradition's etymology is derived from the Latin *tradere*, which means to experience or to pass from hand to hand the knowledge of generations. Before writing was invented, the act of *tradere* was done by word of mouth or acted out as in ritual (p. 310). For Adorno, tradition simultaneously refers to the handing on of craft

techniques, skills and tasks, to the communication of doctrines and instructions, and to the acting out in ritual. Thus, tradere is concerned with the inculcation of beliefs, values and norms and with the passing on of practical knowledge. In the pre-modern context, the knowledge of tradition was handed on in a seven to twelve year apprenticeship. In medieval times, trainees lived in close, intimate relationships with the master, providing the trainee with an experience of intimacy and immediacy. In this context, the transmission of tradition means that social norms are handed on together with the master's understanding of craft skill and knowledge. Adorno places a great deal of importance on this experience of intimacy and immediacy. He argues that in any relationship, lasting for many years, there is always an experience of intimacy and immediacy. It is this that constitutes – more or less – the naturalness of family relationships and social life. The experience of intimacy and immediacy is as much the way of tradition as it is the way of craft (p. 310). In the circumstances of modernity, however, Adorno contends that the context of tradition has changed: technology has replaced the human hand. Technological evolution has caused the hand to be forgotten, the very hand that made it possible for technology to evolve. As a result, people are being denied this experience of intimacy and immediacy (p. 310). Moreover, Adorno notes, even though the basic principles of handing something on have not disappeared completely, contemporary society places little value on the understanding of craft skill and technique. Subsequently, the standards of skill in the arts have declined. In addition, under the influences of technical reproduction, the aesthetic substance of the arts has become hollow, and the handcraft trades have become unessential, especially those that endorse traditional, aesthetic knowledge, techniques and skills (p. 310).

For Yanagi (1972) also, the notion of intimacy is highly relevant to the concept of craft and tradition. In his book *The unknown craftsman* Yanagi concedes that intimacy is a natural component of life and at the core of intimacy is an experience of the everyday, the routine and the familiar. On Yanagi's account, intimacy is a key characteristic of tradition and constitutive to the concept of the genuine or the natural. Intimacy represents the "naturalness of the everyday", and this 'naturalness of the everyday' is simultaneously a key trait of the handmade object (p. 198). For Yanagi, the crafts are defined by the intimate relationship people have with the making. Close and 'natural' relationships with ways of life are experiences of life. It is this day-to-day experience of making that determines the aesthetic content in the handmade object:

The special quality of the beauty in crafts is the beauty of intimacy. Since the articles are to be lived everyday, this quality of intimacy is a natural requirement.... The beauty of such objects is not so much of the noble, the huge, or the lofty as a beauty of the warm and familiar. Here one may detect a striking difference between the crafts and the arts. People hang their pictures high up on the walls, but they place

their object for everyday use close to them and take them in their hands. (p. 198)

However, as Giddens (1994) has determined, under the conditions of modernity, the concept of tradition has created a lot of antagonism (p. 56). The reasons are sought in the mythic roots of tradition.

1.2 The mythic origins of tradition

In this section, in order to better understand the hostilities generated towards tradition, but importantly, to also understand the poetic, aesthetic notions underlying the concept of tradition, I discuss the mythic cultic origins of tradition. Adorno (1977) contends that the antagonisms towards tradition were first generated in early modernity and since have been the cause of obdurate conflict (p. 310). Adorno suggests that antagonisms are generated because tradition contradicts rational thought. Tradition is the source of irrationality; it communicates not through the faculty of reasoning but via a kind of given, unthinking commitment towards certain social forms. (p. 310). In the radically modernised America, where Adorno lived in exile during the Nazi era, tradition was totally misunderstood. According to Adorno, in America tradition was viewed either with apprehension or as an article introduced from a foreign source, embodying a value of imagined rarity (p. 310). Habermas (1984) posits that tradition finds its origin in mythological, cultic values. The notion of irrationality has therefore originated from a primeval mythological understanding of the world (pp. 46-47). Campbell (1969), who engaged in an extensive study of comparative mythology, also ascertains that myth is created through illogical thought, “myth is not something that is invented rationally or something that can be rationally understood” (p. 42). However, as Habermas (1984) implies, our contemporary structures of consciousness and ways of thinking are formed within a rationalised, “occidental understanding of the world” (p. 44). Accordingly, occidental thinkers naively assume that the claim to rationality is universal and in ‘rational’ circumstances, mythological worldviews are anathema: “within the cultural traditions accessible to us ... [mythological worldviews] present the sharpest contrast to the understanding of the world dominant in modern Western societies” (p. 44). Habermas concedes that the study of rationality cannot be separated from the study of irrationality. He suggests that in order to understand the ailments of contemporary society a comparison should be drawn “between a mythological understanding of the world and a rational one” (p. 44). In African pre-modern societies, Habermas explicates, despite the occidental perception that there is no rational orientation to life – no logic to a belief in witchcraft – irrational myths fulfil perfectly well the task of social unification and integration. In pre-modern

societies, myths permeate every aspect of life, structuring on every level the everyday lifeworld activities of its members (p. 44).

For Adorno (1977), processes of rationalisation destroy mythical understandings of tradition. He defines rationalisation as the process by which tradition has withdrawn instinctively beyond reach, and which under the conditions of rationalisation transforms into something insubstantial and artificial. On the one hand, this notion of irrationality in tradition is not limited to pre-modern ways of life nor is it necessarily a desirable condition (p. 311). On the other hand, Adorno argues, the entire process of rationalisation – those precise methods of productivity that cause constant antagonism in the modern world – remains as irrational, subject to destiny and threatening as the irrationality of tradition. The more that reason questions, excludes and rejects this whole idea of irrationality, the more its ‘dreadful power’ over the living grows, including its inability to change a course of action, and the more rational rationalisation becomes, which is itself irrational. When individuals, living in this contemporary sphere of irrationality, wish to justify themselves rationally, they must seek support, usually from the irrationals, from those people who contributed in the first place to the eradication of traditional ways of thinking. (p. 311). Tolstoy (2008) comes to a similar conclusion, for him, “rational knowledge does not provide the meaning of life, but excludes it; while the meaning given to life by the millions of people, by humanity as a whole, is founded on some sort of knowledge that is considered false” (p. 53). Moreover, rational knowledge, as “the learned and wise” portray it, “negates the meaning of life, yet the vast masses – humanity as a whole – recognise that this meaning lies in irrational knowledge” (p. 54). Central to tradition’s notion of irrationality is that it has an intrinsic human value, and that aestheticism is oddly missing in the rationalisation of technology and production.

Giddens (1994) also puts forward the argument that tradition is irrational, not understood with words and governed by the authority of the sacred: “tradition has its most salience when it is not understood” (p. 66). For Giddens, “the sacred is at the core of tradition because it invests the past with a divine presence” (p. 104). Giddens calls this sacred knowledge ‘formulaic truth’ and it is this sacred knowledge or formulaic truth that renders tradition “‘untouchable’ and confers integrity upon the present in relation to the past” (p. 104). The irrational knowledge of tradition becomes a mode of access to a spiritual experience, or a mode of access to the ‘divine truth’ (p. 204). The truth cannot be conveyed to the outsider, Giddens contends, tradition therefore needs guardians to interpret the truth. The guardians are the agents of tradition’s arcane powers; they are the dealers in mystery; their task is to interpret the inherited symbolism and to communicate to their community the “formulaic notion of truth” (p. 65). The guardians of pre-industrial tradition are the mystics, shamans, sages, wise persons and elders. In later periods they are

known as the intellectuals, scholars and philosophers. In the patriarchal system of most traditions, guardians are revered as the holy men; they precede what we now call the expert, yet they are not the same as the expert because they participate in the domain of the sacred. The guardian's position in society is defined by his high status, the expert's by his or her competence. The guardian's power comes from his mastery of tacit, esoteric knowledge and from his rank: guardians know what we cannot know. The special gift of interpretation, which understands to integrate skill, the knowledge of tradition and states of grace, has developed from a very long apprenticeship (p. 65). For the expert, competence and proficiency in the respective fields of expertise is much more important than status. Also, competency is learned in an institution rather than acquired over a very long time in an apprenticeship (p. 65).

Like Adorno, Giddens (1994) ascertains that traditional societies have the tendency to pass on skills, the majority of which are the crafts (p. 80). However, Giddens makes a distinction between tradition and the crafts: the crafts are not quite the same as tradition because they are removed from ritual and ceremony. Crafts are taught by apprenticeship and example, yet the knowledge claims they incorporate are similar to the formulaic truth of ritual. The knowledge of craft is tacit, arcane and esoteric. Hence, in a traditional society the knowledge claims of the crafts are protected in much the same way as the formulaic truth claims of tradition. Accordingly, Giddens assumes the bearers of craft skills effectively as guardians, "even if those skills are kept relatively separate from the more overtly apparitions of the society" (p. 80). Herzfeld (2004) illustrates how under circumstances of post-tradition just how difficult it is for artisans to maintain the status of 'craft guardian'. He conducted from 1992 to 1994 field research into the life of the Rethemnos artisans. Rethemnos is a small town on the north coast of Crete, Greece. Rethemnos, according to Herzfeld, was once known as the centre of skilled traditional artisanship. In Rethemnos, the artisans had taken on the position as "possessors of a specifically local cultural heritage" (p. 54), yet it was a position that proved increasingly difficult to maintain because of outside market influences. Market invasion was displacing the tacit, arcane and esoteric knowledge of the local crafts:

A walk down any street in the Old Town of Rethemnos reveals that artisans are still active there. But what one finds is more complex than the tourist agencies' proclamation of traditional arts and crafts might lead one to expect. Much of what the tourist shops sell is not made in Rethemnos at all; the ubiquitous woollen bags, some of them decorated with crude classical motifs or even maps of the island, are usually made in some of the remoter villages and brought to town by middlemen. The little busts of ancient Greek heroes and philosophers are produced in mainland factories; the ceramic coasters are largely from Rhodes; and the hand-painted copies of Greek vases are mostly produced in Athens and other urban centres. (p. 54)

Despite the increase in outside influences, the Rethemnos artisans continue to work in the traditional manner, which includes the training of apprentices (Herzfeld, 2004, p. 33). Like Adorno (1977), Herzfeld (2004) has recognised that the function of the apprenticeship goes beyond the passing on of manual knowledge and technical skills. The apprenticeship plays a key role in processes of social renewal (p. 50). Often idealised as a mentoring process, Herzfeld contends, the apprenticeship was more concerned with social transmission than with the learning of skill. I discuss this issue in more detail in Chapter 3, for now it is important to note that it was the apprenticeship that “equipped young people with the social skills needed to function more efficiently in the larger society, of which they are members” (p. 50). Hence, tradition, so often associated with scripture, power and authority, is also concerned with the passing on of human values.

1.3 The way of tradition

Giddens (1994) maintains that all pre-modern cultures are “thoroughly shot through with tradition of one kind or another” and that most traditional societies do not even have a particular word for tradition because tradition is what people do everyday (p. 66). According to Giddens, traditions have certain generic characteristics, of which he has identified four. First, tradition depends on ritual. Ritual is a collective involvement often taking the form of collective ceremony. Patterns of ritual survive into this day such as christenings, weddings, funerals, annual commemorations and other recurring ceremonies and festivities. Second, tradition involves the notion of repetition and repetition is absorbed with the notion of time. Tradition and time are associated with an orientation to the past. The past is not preserved but reconstructed continuously in the present on the basis of past experiences. Third, tradition implies a connection to mystical notions such as to ritual truth, to sacred truth or to what Giddens terms ‘the formulaic notion of truth’. Finally, like language, tradition is always a collective asset. An individual can have his/her own ritual but traditions are always properties of groups, communities and collectives (p. 63).

The function of tradition suggests social renewal (Giddens, 1991, p. 146). Social renewal is an act of cultural transmission. It is a complex procedure, involving many different but related processes. In the pre-modern context, social renewal involves the ritualistic re-enactment of mystical notions and the handing on of craft skills. For my art practice, it suggests that when I focus on traditional textile hand production techniques, I participate in activities of social renewal. However, my praxis differs from tradition because production techniques were not passed on via an apprenticeship. Herzfeld (2004) explicates that in a traditional context, the

crafts are learned in an apprenticeship. The apprenticeship provides the social context for complex forms of cultural transmission, including the acquisition of social values and the learning of craft technique and skill. In the pre-modern context there is a generally accepted attitude that it is social responsibility to pass craft skills onto others. In the contemporary context, in contrast, the crafts are affected by prejudice. Herzfeld maintains that one of the prejudices that affect the crafts is that craft is presumed nonintellectual: a limiting factor that prevents individuals from developing thinking skills is the assumption that “people who work with their hands.... commonly profess to despise learning from books” (p. 33). Artisans are thought to be people who relate to reality (the act of making) rather than to abstraction (the act of thinking). Artisans are thought to “craft in life” (p. 33). Herzfeld’s study shows that the opposite is the case. The apprenticeship becomes a model for reflexive learning because it necessitates “learning the craft – with all the obstacles that this entails” (p. 51). Reflexive learning entails thinking about the design, thinking about which materials and techniques to use and making the object based on the decisions made, as well as learning about everyday social life skills. Herzfeld in fact places the greater emphasis on the learning of social skills: “The apprenticeship has more to do with the inculcation of beliefs and values into the management and protection of common social intimacies than the learning of skill” (p. 33). In the apprenticeship, the trainees learn more about how to become valuable members of society than about the craft. The life skills then become the social aesthetic. What the trainees learn, “has more to do with the survival in an often adversarial social system than with the acquisition of technique” (p. 51). Herzfeld suggests that in the conditions of adversary, apprentices “gain a more comprehensive mastery” of life skill. Apprentices become “effective and knowledgeable members of their respective local communities” (p. 51). This in turn suggests that a craft apprenticeship provides the reflexive learning conditions for social renewal.

In pre-modernity, the peasants formed the majority of the population, living mostly in small agrarian communities. Giddens (1994) argues that tradition’s hold over these small communities was not as absolute as presumed (p. 92). He expands on his study of tradition with the claim that pre-modern traditions were simultaneously dualistic and segmental. Traditions were dualistic because small communities were governed by their ‘little traditions’: their unique customs, rituals and everyday habits. Small communities fostered a variety of cultural practices based on sorcery, magic and superstition, but their activities were also regulated by the ‘great traditions’ of the larger governing body, typically the Catholic Church or the Monarch. Pre-modern traditions were segmental because the centres of power did not reach all subjects in their vicinity and therefore small communities were cut off from outside influences. Being removed from the centre of politics, small communities avoided the full impact of the great traditions, remaining oral and remote (p. 92). Nonetheless, “under the unifying influence of the centralized

symbolic order” (p. 92), eventually the great traditions succeeded in reaching the segmented communities. To this end, the religious influences of the Catholic Church played a key role in ending the mystical belief systems of the locals, exposing magic and superstition as an irrational fear of something unspecified (p. 92). Via the influences of its monumental power, as Giddens postulates, the secularised and rationalised world religions of the Church re-contextualised tradition and ‘scriptural tradition’ gradually replaced ‘little tradition’. Then, with the consolidation of the ‘power-containers’ of modernity – capitalism, the nation-state and the introduction of democracy – the little local communities and their little traditions of magic, mysticism and superstition finally came to an end (p. 92). Giddens suspects also that it was the presence of the great scriptures that suggested the existence of long-term traditions. The scriptures had survived well beyond the traditions of oral cultures: “for the first time a tradition could know itself to exist ‘from time immemorial’” (p. 92). As the cathedrals, palaces, the scriptures and the crafts and arts of the medieval period signify, the great traditions were monumental in size, power and influence. *The Bayeux Tapestry*, which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England in 1066, is a case in point. *The Bayeux Tapestry* is monumental in work and size. The tapestry, which is actually embroidered cloth, measures 70.40 x 0.51m. Stitched into the cloth are 1,512 images, with more than 600 humans and 700 animals (McGarry, 1976, p. 544).

1.4 The knowledge claims of tradition

In Giddens’ (2000) account, the enforcement of mystical values is part of the way of tradition. To live the traditional way is to invest unquestioned, basic trust into tradition’s internal claims to truth and to defend through the act of ritual these internal claims to truth (p. 43). Giddens (1994) postulates that in traditional societies, basic trust is interpreted as “a faithful adherence to the natural world” (p. 104). Basic trust, which is essential to the formation of identity and ontological security, is the confidence invested in this kind of truth. Tradition’s internal claims to knowledge are closely connected to a higher understanding of human values, which are a revelation, “a kind of stored-up wisdom that is not necessarily communicable to the outsider” (p. 104). This truth or wisdom then finds its expression in tradition’s symbolism and is acted out in the form of ritual, which according to Giddens is both moral and collective. The truth is that constitutive element that links together mystical, sacred knowledge with tradition (p. 104). Weber (cited in Habermas, 1984) finds similar definitions of truth. For him, the truth of tradition is “a store of knowledge out of which special spheres of value and systems of knowledge are formed under different validity claims” (p. 84). Hence again, the truth is both moral and collective.

Yanagi (1972) stipulates also that tradition is an inexplicable but vital kind of truth that informs aesthetic human action. For him, tradition consists of a 'Given Power', which manifests itself in ritual action. Given Power entails "the accumulation of the experience and wisdom of many generations" (p. 135) and is not subject to question. As Giddens (1994) accentuates, at the core of tradition is repetition. Tradition is a set of fixed actions that people perform everyday. This daily re-enactment of actions forms part of the ritual that gives meaning and form to human activity, especially when it is performed as part of a ceremony. Thus, in a traditional society ritual functions to structure personal identity and to establish group solidarity. When tradition dissolves, these highly influential, identity-structuring rituals are drained of their power (p. 56). Therefore, tradition's erosion changes core aspects of social life, at both individual and collective levels. I return to this issue in Chapter 4. However, as Adorno (1977) emphasises, the influences of tradition are not always desirable. Tradition has had its share of destructive ideologies, therefore change or emancipation from the narrowness of 'bad tradition' has been necessary (p. 313).

1.5 The tacit knowledge claims of the crafts

Yanagi (1972) shares ideas similar to those of Ruskin and Morris. The theories of Ruskin and Morris are discussed in Chapter 3. In the discussion that follows, the literature of Yanagi and Ruskin is compared and contrasted because it is central to understanding the tacit knowledge claims of the crafts, the importance of repetition, the aesthetic nature of the crafts and the relation that craft has with tradition and nature. Three of tradition's four core characteristics apply to the field of the crafts: both traditions and crafts are a collective asset; both imply a connection to tacit knowledge; and both entail daily repetition. Yanagi for instance claims that "crafts are of and for the great mass of people and are made in great quantity for daily life" (p. 117). Yanagi holds the view that the perceived aestheticism in the craft object is due to patterns of repeat and these patterns of repeat are derived from observing the patterns of nature. His claim is that the aesthetic craft object is in a state analogous to "the divine beauty of nature" (p. 117). On Yanagi's account, to determine the patterns and the aesthetic results of the craft object the experienced craftsman draws inspiration from the laws of nature : "the further the disciplines of nature are accepted the better the results will be... for our undertaking as craftsmen is to act as humble and loyal agents of the divine will inherent in nature" (p. 117). In his discussion on 'the beauty of irregularity', Yanagi places a great deal of importance on the influences of nature (p. 119). He defines nature's irregularity as an index of imperfection. The imperfections in the craft object are signifiers of the grotesque and a manifestation of freedom:

The term 'grotesque', which has an important, rather, a solemn significance in aesthetic history has unfortunately been misused and debased in modern times. All true art has, somewhere, an element of the grotesque. Thus the principle of irregularity, or departing from fixed form, is not new. It is merely that it has come to be employed consciously. Freedom always resolves into irregularity in the end. 'Free' beauty of necessity boils down to irregular beauty. (p. 119)

Yanagi's (1972) interpretations about the relation between craft and nature and his emphasis on the imperfection in art bear many resemblances to Ruskin's (2009b) theories and his analysis of medieval Gothic art and architecture. For Ruskin, Gothic work is defined by its savageness, imperfection and irregularities:

Examine once more those ugly goblins, and formless monsters, and stern statues, anatomiless and rigid; but do not mock at them, for they are signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charters, no charities can secure. (p. 42)

Ruskin (2009b) proposes that "the rudeness of the Gothic, or any other kind of imperfection" is an admirable phenomenon because these qualities are an expression of life-lived, freedom and creativity. Also, imperfection means that the work is unique because same form is never seen twice (p. 45). Hence, "it is in this very character that it deserves our profoundest reverence" (p. 36). I return to Ruskin's theory of aestheticism in Chapter 3. Many of Yanagi's expositions parallel those of Ruskin's, perhaps suggesting that he modelled his ideas on Ruskin.

According to Yanagi (1972), the concept of repetition features very prominently in the development of a craft skill. Endless repetition is at the core of the work of a master craftsman (p. 135), and endless repetition is at the core of my art practice. It takes many hours of repetitious work to weave a length of cloth. Yanagi postulates that the repetitious hard work that young people were forced to accept as their inevitable destiny in pre-modern apprenticeships is anathema to our contemporary ideals of freedom and autonomy. To many, this kind of work would be dismissed as too limiting, monotonous, mindless and non-creative, yet it is precisely the repetition that possesses "the compensatory quality of imparting beauty to the work" (p. 135). For Yanagi, the concept of repetition goes beyond the development of skill. The work of craft is a form of health-giving labour that helps build personality and gives meaning to life: "work done with heart and hand is ultimately worship of Life Itself" [capitals as in the original] (p. 90). Again, the similarity in thought and language between Yanagi and Ruskin is remarkable. In 1860 Ruskin (1907c) coined the axiom, which is written in capitals: "THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration" (p. 48). Ruskin's vision of true wealth is rooted in his ideas about living life in a

meaningful way. For Ruskin (1968), 'healthy labour' is work that is meaningful. Most importantly, it incorporates the human intellect, the body and the soul: "labour of good quality, in any kind, includes always as much intellect and feeling as will fully and harmoniously regulate the physical force" (p. 176). On Giddens' (1991) account also, the psychological significance of repetition should not be underestimated. In his view, repetition is central to the development of ontological security: "acquired routines are constitutive of an emotional acceptance of the reality of the external world, without which a secure human existence is impossible" (p. 42).

1.6 The end of craft

Ruskin's (1907c) and Adorno's (1984) theories still have relevance to contemporary conditions because market influences continue to persist. Ruskin lectured repeatedly about the defilement of nature and human problems instigated by the introduction of machines. He derived his ideas about the aesthetic value of a work of art from the medieval era where everything was manufactured by hand and where the crafts were indistinguishable from the arts. For Ruskin (1968), the aesthetic value in a work of art originates from technical mastery, healthy labour and, importantly, imagination: "incommunicable emotion and imagination ... are the first and mightiest sources of all value in art" (p. 153). Adorno (1984) points out that the blurring between the crafts and arts "goes back to antiquity when the arts were classified as crafts" (p. 303). In the medieval era, the distinction between the crafts and arts was still obscure but craft was already evolving rapidly towards material goods production. The role the medieval craft guilds played in pushing the crafts towards industrialisation is explored in Chapter 3. Then, in early modernity, Adorno posits that the crafts evolved in two opposing directions: industrial production and art (p. 303). With the rise of the Industrial Revolution, factory manufacture replaced hand manufacture and the wider need for handmade objects dissolved. However, Adorno postulates, art never completely severed its ties from the medieval crafts because both are opposed to capitalist integration (p. 303). For him craft and art are integral to one another, both rely on technique and 'métier' to make art "commensurable with consciousness because much of it can be learned" (pp. 304-305). Techniques are skills that are learned, and for Adorno, technique is needed to make art. Thus, "technique is much more important than mindless irrationalists would have us believe" (p. 305). Adorno defines *métier* as the totality of skills learned (p. 64), and both technique and *métier*, Adorno contends, are at the core of "the enigma of works of art" (p. 304). *Métier* is the skill needed to create an atmosphere or an experience. Adorno describes the *métier* in art as:

the totality of abilities that an artist brings to bear on the task of realizing an aesthetic conception, cutting the umbilical cord between himself and tradition in the process.... That totality of abilities called *métier*, while merely subjective in appearance, is in fact the potential presence in the art work of society defined in terms of its productive forces. Thus the work is a windowless monad of society. (p. 64)

However, understandings of technique and *métier* are often subject to contradictory interpretations, depending on whether techniques and *métier* are associated with industrial production or art production. According to Adorno (1984), true *métier* creates a sensation associated with the aura in a work of art: “The auratic moment is aligned with *métier* – an apparent paradox” (p. 305). For Adorno, the aura is “reminiscent of a hand that tenderly, almost lovingly, strokes the contours of an art work” (p. 305). Benjamin’s (2008) elucidations about the meaning of aura and its historical decline will be discussed later in this chapter. Essentially, Adorno posits that technique is the vehicle that links works of art to the inner side of human nature, whereas *métier* is the skill needed to create an experience of aura, the aesthetic poetic substance of a work of art: “The experience is the nexus between substance and technique” (p. 308). Thus, he suggests, “in the vocabulary of art, terms like technique, *métier* and craftsmanship are synonymous” (p. 308). Essentially, Adorno (1977) is concerned about the overall aesthetic status of the arts. He believes that work standards have degenerated steadily and for him, this is an all too common phenomenon. Poor quality materials and careless workmanship have replaced the traditional truthfulness of materials and the sensitivity of finish. Adorno attributes this apparent lack of general standards in contemporary works of art to the decline of technique and *métier* (p. 311).

At its core, tradition is not rational. Adorno (1977) concedes that modernity’s aspiration to be rational and objective has turned into a kind of animosity towards tradition’s irrationality or subjectivity, affecting the way in which art is made and interpreted. However, the claim that tradition has healing qualities is equally ineffectual in practice and contradicts tradition’s inherent meaning: social renewal (p. 311). Accordingly, as Adorno claims, since the beginning of the bourgeois period, people have sensed that with the irrevocable advance of science, technology and economics and their emphasis on the development of reason and logic, something in life was missing (p. 312). A case in point is the contemporary position of the traditional textile crafts. When the understanding of technique and *métier* decline, the tools and the materials needed for textile hand production disappear too. In Perth, where I currently live, and Perth is symptomatic of many cities, most large retail chains no longer stock basic textile craft equipment and materials. Knitting needles, crochet hooks, sewing needles, fabrics, embroidery yarns, sewing cottons and knitting yarns have all but disappeared from the inner

city stores. Craft stores, now catering for so-called craft and home decorating needs, are based on the outskirts of Perth. However, it requires time and transport to reach outer city stores. Also, specialist equipment, tools or materials as required for my work are not available in either stores. I have learned to maintain and make my own equipment for weaving cloth, whereas I purchase my materials online from overseas. Subsequently and frequently, the materials are overpriced and do not meet the criteria.

Fuller (1983a), an art critic of the 1980s, also expressed concerns about the status of the modern crafts, particularly when he compared the standard of modern work to that of traditional work. Like Adorno, he thought something about modern work was lacking:

That something [lacking] has nothing to do with the individual abilities of particular craftsmen... it is rather the absence of a living tradition of good pattern and sound ornament, through which the great craftsman can realise himself in something other than, or more than, an individualised gesture. (p. 207)

Fuller (1983b), who says of himself, “I came to realise that my views are radically conservative, though I hope not, reactionary” (p. 192), is a strong advocate for the maintaining of traditional skill in art and education. However, Fuller’s views are not always well received. The Australian art critic Timms (2004), for example, condemns Fuller for being “nothing if not parochial” (p. 26). In Timms view, Fuller was rather narrow and provincial in outlook because he retained a negative attitude to modernist abstraction (p. 26). As a result, as Timms interprets it, Fuller’s reputation went into decline after his death in 1990 (pp. 26-27). Fuller (1987) had attacked a number of leading artists, among them Schnabel, Stella and Pollock. Fuller postulated that there was little or no aesthetic content in Pop Art, Minimalism, New Expressionism or New Sculpture. He opined that too much prominence was given to “‘Works of Art’ that apparently embody no imaginative (or indeed physical) transformation of materials”. In addition, in Fuller’s view, in this kind of art there was “no sense of tradition, nor of skill. These works possess no identifiable aesthetic qualities, and offer no aesthetic experience”. Essentially, Fuller hypothesises that modernity’s tendency to destroy tradition has resulted in “the anaesthesia of Late Modernism” (1987). As an art critic, Fuller thought his task was “one of fostering those circumstances in which the aesthetic potential can thrive.... [because] the central aesthetic problem of our time is the apparent lack of aesthetic experience”. In his book *Theoria*, Fuller (1988) reinterprets Ruskin’s ideas about the aesthetic potential of humanity and relates them to contemporary times. Like Ruskin, Fuller (1983c) argues that the aesthetic dimension in art needs to be maintained, regardless of the cost involved, because the aesthetic potential is a vital element of social life (p. 21). Again, this point relates to my art praxis. The core decisions regarding my work are concerned with the significance of the aesthetic experience and, as

Adorno, Ruskin and Fuller attempt to highlight, an understanding of technique and *métier* are essential to achieving the aesthetic substance in a work of art.

1.7 Tradition – inherited or invented

According to Hobsbawm (1983), tradition implies a reference to the past (p. 6), yet he makes a distinction between the past and history, the importance of which I discuss in Chapter 2. On Hobsbawm's account, it is also important to differentiate between inherited and invented tradition because the understanding we might hold about tradition is affected by a difference between the ways in which old traditions and new traditions are perceived. Hobsbawm maintains that inherited traditions are long established. They are closely associated with historicity, ritual, the symbolic nature of sanctity, repetition, social customs, norms and identity formation. They imply continuity, strength, authority and adaptability. Old traditions are authentic because they are inherited and they differ from new tradition because they need not be invented: "where the old ways are still alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented" (p. 8). Moreover, old traditions are fairly specific because their social practices are pre-established and strongly binding. Social ideals such as patriotism, loyalty, duty, responsibilities and obligations are not open to question (p. 8). New traditions in contrast, are recent inventions (p. 10). New traditions are formally instituted and in some cases have been established over a matter of only a few years (p. 1). Although invented traditions are also a set of practices that seek to inculcate certain values and norms, their practices are unspecific and vague. The nature of social values are more general and open to much debate and question, whereas the rights and obligations of a group membership are mostly undefined and imprecise, (p. 10). Hobsbawm suggests that invented traditions are created as a response to modernity's circumstances of transience and reiterability. New traditions have evolved from a desire to structure "at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant" (p. 2). New traditions often reference an old situation, attempting to "establish a past by quasi-obligatory repetition" (p. 2). The past, to which tradition always refers, is viewed as a way in which to impose "fixed or invariant practices" on the members of a given group (p. 2). Therefore, a social custom may not represent ancient tradition at all, but a dispute about land between peasants and lords; or a custom may have recently evolved due to a claim to some right between the people of two villages. As one group of people gains authority over another, social circumstances change, customs change and traditions change. Hence, the decline of certain customs shifts the power and changes the tradition. Under new influences, then, any repeated social practice may develop into a new set of conventions, new routines and a new tradition. Tradition therefore, Hobsbawm argues, is not as fixed or invariant as presumed, indeed it "cannot afford to be invariant, because

even in traditional societies life is not so” (p. 2). Hobsbawm maintains that new inventions happen more frequently when old ways disintegrate (p. 3). Giddens (1994) concurs, stating that societies are subject to continuous change, hence traditions are always changing too. Traditions have an organic character and modern times have not always been post-traditional: “for most of its history, modernity has rebuilt tradition as it has dissolved it” (p. 56).

Hobsbawm (1983) contends that new traditions are institutionally construed and are characterised by three closely interconnected factors: first, they establish or symbolise social cohesion and group membership, both of which are important for the formation of group solidarity and personal identity. Second, they are tied up with power relations, implying that those in power legitimise certain institutions in order to establish status or relations of authority. Finally, their main function is that of socialisation, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour (p. 9). Hobsbawm emphasises that new traditions have not replaced the social context left by the secular decline of old tradition. As a consequence, the past has become increasingly less relevant as a model for influence or inspiration. How and what should be done is structured less and less by traditional form. Instead, behaviour, thought and ontology are influenced increasingly by “the external compulsions” of economic, technological and institutional influences, including political decision-making and “other forces that neither rely on nor develop tradition” (p. 11). Giddens (1994) concedes that Hobsbawm’s interpretations of tradition are fundamentally correct. However, Giddens argues that Hobsbawm’s concepts are debatable (p. 93). In Giddens’ view, all traditions are invented, old and new alike. For Giddens, the notions of integrity and continuity in tradition are much more important than tradition’s longevity. He suggests a tradition only indicates longevity because tradition presumes a set of rules and regulations which appear to be very old (p. 93). Like Hobsbawm, Giddens proposes that older traditions are governed frequently by overt or tacit customs of a ritual or a symbolic nature. Ritual re-enacted repeatedly and recurring customs and habits is what instills values and norms into the members of a group. It is the repetition in tradition that ensures longevity and the continuity with the past (p. 62).

For Benjamin (2008), traditions are still alive. They are not as fixed as presumed, the opposite, they are “extraordinarily changeable” (p. 10). In Benjamin’s view, traditions are of immeasurable social importance because they are immersed in historical and cultural meaning. Traditions have a potential aesthetic power and act in reverse to “the current crisis and renewal of mankind” (p. 7). Benjamin claims that true cultural meaning has a unique kind of authenticity, a “one of a kind value” that is embedded in the historical context of tradition. Tradition implies longevity, whereas longevity exerts “authority over the thing” (p. 5). Benjamin calls this ‘authority of the thing’ the aura and the aura is associated with how

something is perceived. Although the aura refers to an experience of “the here and now of the work of art” (p. 5), its “original, initial utility value” (p. 11) was born from the ritual magic of tradition. Benjamin argues that the first art works of antiquity were the materialisation of ritual; early works of art were objects of worship. For instance, he interprets the paintings of the animal hunt on the walls of a cave by stone-aged man as “instruments of magic” (p. 12). The paintings were created for the spirits and had a cultic value rather than an art value. Similarly, in primeval times a God statue was set in the context of religious ritual and the statue was revered for its magical rather than for its artistic value (p. 13). Then, in the course of historical development, perceptions about spiritualisation changed and attitudes towards art changed.

Throughout the different eras of human development, tradition and its material artefacts meant different things to different groups of people. For example, Benjamin (2008) posits that an original Venus figure signified something very different to the early Greeks than to a medieval cleric. For the Greeks, the figure was an object of worship; for the cleric, an idol of intimidation. However, the figure’s uniqueness, its aura captivated both the Greek and the cleric in equal measure. Thus, Benjamin argues, this “one-of-a-kind value”, this “genuine work of art”, which originated from ritual, maintains its auric value throughout the centuries. Also, the “auric mode of being never becomes completely separated from its ritual function” (p. 11). As secularisation to an ever-increasing extent progresses, “along with changes in the overall mode of being of the human collective, there are changes in the manner of its sense perception” (p. 8). For Benjamin, the changes in the nature of perception was analogous to “a fading of the aura” (p. 15). Gradually, the collective aesthetic value of the work of art is transformed into an individual value. Today, the aesthetic judgement of the work of art is “in the eye of the beholder”, with what the artist perceives. (p. 40). As secularisation proceeds, the cultic value of an art object is driven out and replaced with what Benjamin calls “the artist’s creative achievement” (p. 40). For Benjamin, a case in point is film. Film is a form of mass communication that has had a powerful impact on what Benjamin calls the “upheaval of tradition” (p. 8). In Benjamin’s view, “film is unthinkable without this destructive, this cathartic side: namely, liquidation of the value of tradition in the cultural heritage” (p. 8). In the era of mass-production and reproducibility, infinite copies are produced, an abundance of imitations replace uniqueness and auric value is dissolved.

In summary, according to Benjamin (2008), an authentic work of art is characterised by its “uniqueness and duration”, whereas art that is easily reproducible is marked by its “transience and reiterability” (p. 10). *The Bayeux Tapestry* characterises the former, whereas all mechanical print production, film and most digital images are examples of the latter. Benjamin is apprehensive about setting art free from its cultic value of tradition. Even though the

technological reproduction of an original work of art does not remove the existence of an original, reproduction changes or destroys the aura. Benjamin contends that when the auric value of an artwork is destroyed, so is its connection to historicity and tradition, and so “is the quintessence of everything about it since its creation that can be handed down, from its material duration to the historical witness that it bears” (p. 7). When “reproductive technology removes the thing reproduced from the realm of tradition” (p. 7), Benjamin reasons, it extinguishes “the light of [art’s] autonomy forever” (p. 15). For Benjamin, the mechanical reproduction of a work of art lacks aura for three core reasons: it no longer has a one of a kind value; it does not attest to any form of cultural heritage; and it has no lasting qualities (p. 7). Essentially, Benjamin’s argument is that the reproduction of a work of art is a poor replacement for a unique work of art. His assertions reinforce the importance of traditional textile hand production: cloth made by hand has a one of a kind value; the process attests to tradere, the passing on of a form of cultural heritage; and the work has a collective value, in the sense that it is a poetic-aesthetic interpretation of tradere, and therein lies its auric value.

1.8 Tradition, a medium of identity formation

Tradition has strong identity-securing properties. Accordingly, Giddens (1994) argues, “a threat to the integrity of tradition is very often experienced as threats to the integrity of the self” (p. 80). I reiterate here tradition’s connection to poetical, mystical notions and its relevance to identity formation. Like Giddens, Habermas (1987) contends that tradition is associated with the simultaneous structuring of group and individual identity. In the pre-modern context, he ascertains, identity is “established and renewed” through the identification with the sacred. This sacred is manifested through the repeated act of ritual. Ritual in turn is a consensus forming act and is guided by the moral structures of the sacred (p. 53). Giddens (1994) also states that the truth of tradition is “anchored in the sacred” (p. 76). Key to understanding pre-modern tradition is to recognise that its normative or moral content is informed by mystical truth. The moral content of pre-modern tradition represents “what is done” and what “should be done” in society (p. 104). Ritual then is a mechanism of tradition’s truth because ritual is acted out according to a certain formula, “the formulaic notion of the truth” (p. 104). Moreover, ritual expression is performative, communicating words or practices that few understand. In antiquity, tradition’s mystic truth and nature’s powers were external to the understanding of the world. Thus both originated from the mutual phenomenon of externality. Giddens’ claim is that it is more accurate to accept that like nature, tradition renders many things external to human activity (p. 76) and herein lies tradition’s inherent poetic link to nature. For Campbell (1972) also, there exists a mutual poetic relationship between mysticism and nature. He contends that all mystic

traditions and religions are great poems. Their first function was to render people's lives in accord with the "wonder, at once terrible and fascinating, of ourselves and of the universe" (p. 266). Campbell questions, what might the new mythology be. He replies, it is "the old, everlasting, perennial mythology, in its 'subjective sense', poetically renewed in terms neither of a remembered past nor of a projected future, but of now: addressed ... to the waking of individuals in the knowledge of themselves" (p. 275). In other words, the new mythology is a poetic re-interpretation of the old. The function of new mythology is to establish that conscious experience which advances human spiritualisation and lifeworld values on an intellectual and an emotional level. Using Adorno's (1984) *Aesthetic theory*, these points will be discussed in Chapter 5.

This antinomian combination of power and identity-securing properties produces a paradox: on the one hand tradition is bound with oppressive power, on the other hand the rites of tradition protect, guide and strengthen identity. It is Giddens' (1994) claim that the formulaic notion of truth, consisting of routine and social norms, gives tradition a strong binding force, exerting considerable moral, ethical and emotional pressure over its group members. Tradition gives to those who adhere to its teachings a deep sense of ontological security (p. 104). According to Giddens, the deep emotional investment in the mythological or religious worldviews of tradition arises in part from methods of anxiety control. As he explicates, in a traditional order, ontology is secured through routine. Routines are filtered through and reconstructed on a day-to-day basis by its guardians. Tradition is customs, habits, duties and obligations re-enforced through ritual. This daily routinisation of life attests to communal activity, whereas the shared duties and obligations testify to tradition's persuasive powers. Under the conditions of imposed norms and duties, it makes no sense to disagree, because to disagree would mean to separate from the identity-securing surroundings of the community (pp. 65-66). Hence, tradition becomes "an anchorage for basic trust" (p. 80), functioning as a guiding mechanism for many other forms of trust relations. Giddens argues that the notion of familiarity, which is born of everyday routine and social norms, is fundamental to the development of trust (p. 80). Giddens raises a further point: the close relation between tradition, identity, familiarity and trust has made the difference between friend and stranger "sharp and distinct" (p. 81). In a traditional order, the friend represents the known, the familiar, the stranger the unknown. The friend is "structured by traditions with which the collective identifies" (p. 81), whereas the stranger has traditions and worldviews with which the collective cannot identify. Accordingly, the unknown separates the outside world from the familiar, posing a further threat to basic trust (p. 81). Giddens' interpretations provide possible explanations for many of the world's disparities and antagonisms. They suggest also explanations for the disconnectedness people sometimes experience when confronted with a traditional craft. Notions related to the crafts such as

process, repetition, time, labour, intimacy, immediacy and so forth are very likely outside their immediate field of experience.

In the era of Enlightenment, the esoteric authority of tradition was viewed as intrinsically conservative. Tradition's authority was considered resolute, unyielding and damaging to innovation and progress. Thus, the Enlightenment thinkers set to erase tradition's superstitious dogma (Giddens, 2000, p. 39). However, there were consequences, both good and bad. The expert has replaced the guardian, and competence has replaced status. Evidence-based knowledge has replaced the truth and the expert accordingly has been given much more credibility than the guardian. At the same time, frequent addictive behaviour and obsessive traits have given way to the naturalness of tradition's routine and repetition (Giddens, 1994, p. 76). I extrapolate on this point in Chapter 4. Important to this debate, increasingly, truth is replaced by rationalisation, yet as Giddens (1991) ascertains, traditions persist. Traditions continue to endure because they are predominantly communal, active and interpretive on an aesthetic level (p. 102). Giddens argues that cultural routines, ritual and ceremony will always play an important social role in people's lives because tradition's organising structures still give continuity, form and meaning to the human lifeworld. Ritual, ceremony and routinisation are practical ways of expressing the ethical, poetical content of tradition, unifying individual action with the moral collective of the system. Ritual and ceremony are the means with which to preserve a tradition, whereas routinisation gives structure to lifeworld activities. Giddens ultimately posits that without tradition, ideas, thoughts and action would have no real focus and life would take no real direction (p. 202). Giddens' expositions suggest that traditional craft production, and its entire repertoire of skills, techniques, processes, abilities, might still play an important role in giving focus and direction to contemporary human lifeworld activities.

1.9 Tradition, a medium of collective memory

Tradition is a medium of collective identity that is more concerned with memory than with power relations or esoteric interpretations (Giddens, 1994, p. 64). According to Giddens (1994), tradition is the prime force that creates steadfastness in a world of flux: tradition is the manifestation of the existence of the past, bringing "the past into conjunction with an anticipated future", creating "constancy over time" (p. 80). Giddens maintains that it is an assumption to think that the repetitive character of tradition held societies together in earlier times. For him, the relationship between ritual and social cohesiveness is no longer self-evident. Rather, tradition's symbolism is valued and the past is honoured because they perpetuate the experiences of generations (p. 62). Hence, tradition's rituals are more related to an experience of

time than to social cohesiveness. Giddens therefore understands tradition as “*an organising medium of collective memory*” [italics as in the original] (p. 64), which is not an individual recollection of past events but a kind of collective memory or persistent memory. The memory requires constant explanation and constantly organises the past in relation to the present. The aim is not to preserve the past but to reconstruct it continuously for contemporary purposes in the present. Giddens maintains that from this continuous work of interpretation and reconstruction, group integrity is achieved. The meaning of social norms is perpetrated through the process of “rearranging collective memory into a coherent memory” (p. 64). It is the continuous re-enactment or reproduction of past experience that bestows “continuity upon experience” (p. 64). The reproduction of past experience is acted out in ritual, in the process uniting morality and emotion and thus structuring group identity (pp. 67-69).

The above interpretations help contextualise my art praxis. They infer that traditional textile production does not necessarily suggest a reference to the past, rather that traditional techniques are valued and reproduced for contemporary ends. Importantly, the understanding of traditional textile technique is drawn from the collective memory or the collective experience of a vast number of past generations. The naming of my body of work *continually* references this situation. On the one hand, *continually* is an index for tradition’s tendency to continuously reconstruct the experiences of past generations in the present. It is also an index for the poetic, aesthetic substance of tradition. On the other hand, *continually* is a signifier for modernity’s tendency to destroy tradition and separate from nature. The later examination of the literature from Ruskin and other theorists show that processes of detraditionalisation cause human alienation and separation from nature. I address this point by incorporating into the tablet-woven band a quotation from Ruskin (1907c). In the Chapters 4 and 5 I discuss the significance of Ruskin. A barely discernable fragment of a lizard is stitched into a narrow length of handloom cloth. Ruskin’s quotation and the fragment both indicate that detraditionalisation also implies ecological concerns.

1.10 The changing nature of tradition

The primary challenge my art praxis faces, is that it is set in a globalised, rationalised, post-traditional context. Giddens (1994) proposes that the contemporary trend to globalise the world has resulted in the ‘ending’ of both tradition and nature. Habermas (1984) shows that the prime processes that dissolve tradition are the demystification of mythologies and the achievement of new understandings. For Habermas, “the disenchantment of the manipulation of things and events” is closely associated “with a demythologisation of the knowledge of what is” (p. 213).

Accordingly, Giddens explicates, tradition's sacred influences have become highly obscure. Tradition as it was known no longer plays a role in everyday life and the esoteric knowledge claims of tradition have dissolved into an allegedly more rational, cognitive way of thinking (p. 56). However, Nietzsche (cited in Giddens, 1994) argues, Enlightenment was equally obscure. Enlightenment was a revelation that raised more questions about power and knowledge than it solved, creating many new uncertainties (p. 56). Giddens in fact alleges that "the circumstances of modernity have created greater uncertainties, of a very consequential kind, than ever existed before" (p. 59). Giddens warns that late modernity is fraught with global hazards and "concern over global warming comes from the fact that the climate of the earth is no longer a naturally-given order" (p. 77). The parallels between processes of demystification, detraditionalisation, ecological concerns and global industrialisation are almost self-evident. Detraditionalisation, Giddens contends, has resulted in ecology becoming almost wholly the product of human decision-making; hence, "we are now dealing with a human rather than a natural order" (p. 77). Despite the trend to rationalise the world, there is an extensive present-day resurgence of religions, traditions and new spiritualisms: "not only has religion and its traditions failed to disappear but spiritual concerns seem fairly wide spread in societies everywhere" (p. 207). Giddens opines that the persistence of tradition is linked primarily to the moral meaning of existence, "a morality which modern institutions tend to dissolve" (p. 207). This truth or morality is the subject of constant contestation with the result that today "the narrative of self-identity has to be shaped, altered and reflexively sustained in relation to rapidly changing circumstances of social life, on a local and global scale" (Giddens, 1991, p. 215). Accordingly, the nature of tradition has changed.

Giddens (1994) contends that tradition has become collectively reflexive. Although different in form and content from previous generations, tradition still has "to be re-invented and re-established with each generation as it takes over its cultural inheritance from those preceding it" (p. 63). Giddens (1991) notes that "reflexive system reproduction" has replaced tradition's "inertia of habit" (p. 150). Hence, tradition persists but its role has changed. It is no longer the 'inert' superstitious belief systems outside of human control that inform tradition but its consciously implemented identity-forming forces. Traditions are still significant to the development of ontological security. However, the challenge individuals face today is that self-identity has to be constructed under conditions that are constantly influenced by the "standardising effects of commodity capitalism" (p. 196). For Giddens (1991), self-identity now has to be achieved actively and reflexively (p. 215). In summary, key to understanding the contemporary aesthetic value of tradition is to understand that tradition has trust-building, identity-forming capacities, which do not have to be established in a mechanical, unquestioning manner. Giddens in fact terms a person who constructs identity according to mechanical,

habitual commitments “a rigid traditionalist, in a compulsive sense” (p. 190). Equally, a person who adopts a personality as proffered by certain cultural patterns has erased “original acts of thinking, feeling and willing which represent the true motivations of the individual” (p. 190). When for instance people are drawn uncritically to the persuasive influences of the market, and if they adopt unquestioning solutions catered for by lifestyle industries, then “ontological security is as weakly founded as in the case of the rigid traditionalist” (p. 191). Nevertheless, the “tensions between reflexive system reproduction and the inertia of habit or the externalities of tradition” (p. 150), still evoke ambiguities, as Giddens notes:

The case of tradition is complicated because appeals to traditional symbols or practices can themselves be reflexively organised are then part of the internally referential set of social relations rather than standing opposed to it. The question of whether tradition can be ‘reinvented’ in settings, which have become thoroughly post-traditional, has to be understood in these terms. This observation applies not only to the human connections involved in social relations, but to material artefacts too. (p. 150)

Thus, as Giddens (1991) highlights, the debates about the revival of tradition in post-traditional conditions concerns not only human relations, but material artefacts also, and these would include textile craft objects. For Giddens, the key issue is whether discussions against modernism help sustain elements of tradition, or “whether alternatively they have become thoroughly embroiled in an internally referential system” (p. 150). Giddens’ concern is with the degree to which a material artefact has become involved in argument. When there is a lack of critical awareness in terms of tradition’s truth content, then “attempts at revival of traditional styles are likely rapidly to degenerate into kitsch” (p. 150) or heritage. On Giddens’ (2000) account, “tradition that is drained of its content, and commercialised, becomes ... kitsch – the trinkets bought in the airport store” (p. 44). On other occasions, tradition might be confused with the heritage industry:

Heritage is tradition repackaged as spectacle. The refurbished buildings at tourist sites may look splendid, and the refurbishment may even be authentic down to the last detail. But the heritage that is thereby protected is severed from the lifeblood of tradition, which is its connection with the experience of everyday life. (p. 44)

Adorno (1984) shares similar views. For him, art that has become absorbed into the commodified practices of industry degenerates into kitsch. Also, art that “brackets the world of commodities” is denied its true existence, it is “condemned to being kitsch because latent in there is the commodity form” (p. 337). Adorno contends that art dissolves into kitsch when art is created for the interests of the market, then art is “only for-itself, i.e. the ruling interests of

society” (p. 336). When art advances society on an aesthetic level, it has social value. This kind of art Adorno classifies as “being-for-society” (p. 336). Key to understanding the contemporary position of craft is to understand that the role of craft has changed. In the present day, textile hand production is set outside a traditional context. Therefore, textile hand production has to be pursued reflexively.

1.11 Detraditionalisation: who or what is responsible for the changing nature of tradition

From Enlightenment onwards, traditions became increasingly subject to change. Hobsbawm (1983) questions whether the decline of old ways was the result of tradition’s irrational and superstitious worldviews or whether it was caused by the assumed “inadaptability of pre-industrial ways to a society revolutionised beyond a certain point” (p. 8). He argues that the emancipation from unacceptable tradition and the denigration of old ways by the irreversible political hegemony produced by the thinkers of early modernity were two influential but distinct sources of change. Emancipation from ‘bad’ tradition was necessary, however, the “rejection of old ways” (p. 8) presented the greater problem to society because it put the poetic aesthetic content of tradition at risk. In Hobsbawm’s view, tradition’s decline had less to do with its hypothetical inadaptability or with ‘bad’ tradition, rather, it was related to the hostilities that developed towards tradition’s so-called “customary practice reminiscent of some dark past” (p. 8). Enlightenment thinkers were simply “unreceptive to traditions, old or novel” (p. 8). Accordingly, the dominant discourse of “the impassioned believers in the verities of the Enlightenment” and in particular of “those who regarded [traditions] as obstacles to progress” was responsible for initiating the decline of tradition.

Both Adorno (1977) and Giddens (2000) maintain that the criticisms of the Enlightenment thinkers gave tradition a bad reputation. Baron d’Holbach (cited in Giddens, 2000), a French-German philosopher of the Enlightenment provides an example:

Instructors have long enough fixed men's eyes upon heaven, let them now turn them upon earth. Fatigued with an inconceivable theology, ridiculous fables, impenetrable mysteries, puerile ceremonies, let the human mind apply itself to the study of nature, to intelligible objects, sensible truths, and useful knowledge. Let the vain chimeras of men be removed, and reasonable opinions will soon come of themselves, into those heads which were thought to be forever destined to error. (p. 38)

According to Adorno (1977), the dissolution of old ways was essentially linked to this advanced anti-traditional ideological consciousness from which the dialectics of reasoning has evolved (p. 319). With the inevitable reflection on what was now achievable, Enlightenment thinkers turned their attention towards understanding relations between technique and materials, ignoring the aesthetic connection to the human condition. In focussing on the development of technological progress, no further thought was given to the concept of tradition. Tradition as a subject of veneration was replaced by history as a subject of veneration of (p. 319). Adorno posits that the dominant/subordinate positioning between modernity and tradition is forged in such conflict, as is the dominant/subordinate positioning between the technical processes of machines and the technical processes of the crafts and ultimately between the arts and crafts as well.

Herzfeld (2004) shows that tradition in the contemporary context is still a poorly understood concept. He argues that tradition has difficulty in continuing to exist as a well-accepted concept because “The irony of tradition is precisely that it cannot exist except in relation to a self-serving concept of modernity” (p. 31). Herzfeld suggests that when the concept of tradition is replaced with the concept of history, the emphasis shifts to a more sentimental, nostalgic kind of thinking and the past becomes idealised. The misconstruction of tradition into the notion of nostalgia is illuminated by Hill (cited in Herzfeld, 2004): “The rhetoric of nostalgia is a privilege of power, one that seeks to maintain the status quo by lamenting the disappearance of a suppositious ideal world of mutual respect that was in fact a rigid class structure” (p. 31). As a result of the feudal pre-modern social system of Western Europe, conditions in which pre-industrial societies lived were far from ideal, yet, as Herzfeld maintains, paradoxically, “the glorification of the traditional is the one reliable means of ensuring its preservation” (p. 31).

Giddens (1994) posits that today the dissolving content of tradition is closely associated with institutional reflexivity, the prime disembedding mechanisms of modernity. As he notes, not anti-traditional ideologies but “institutional reflexivity became the main enemy of tradition” (p. 93). Giddens (1991) explains that institutional reflexivity is the general, shared reflexive actions of collective influence. This means that under the current conditions of escalating technological advancement and the globalisation of new knowledge, information is continuously “reconstituted or reorganised” by large groups of people into new “environments of action” (p. 243). Institutional reflexivity can have both positive and negative effects. As Giddens posits, in a post-traditional order life no longer exists according to pre-established precepts. Rather, social life is determined by choice and decision-making processes. People collectively make decisions about everything. They make good and bad decisions on how nature should be managed, how life should be lived, how the crafts are valued. This continuous re-constitution of knowledge “is the context of the thoroughgoing reflexivity which is [a] major influence on the dynamisms of

modern institutions” (p. 20). This “chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge” (p. 20) potentially opens up a space for my art praxis in which to review, rethink and revise general attitudes towards the traditional crafts. In Chapter 5 I extrapolate on the role of the art praxis.

1.12 In defence of tradition

Clearly, tradition has continuing relevance. Key to tradition is that it determines meaningful ways in which life is lived. Habermas (1987) argues that traditional ways of life form a fundamental part of everyday lifeworld activity (p. 116). Adorno (1977) also asserts that all societies have a relationship with past ways of life, not one that attempts to conserve the past, but one that helps some people, by means of its incorruptibility, to survive. Traditionalists of past generations, Adorno claims, are a case in point, such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Stefan George or Wolfgang Borchert. These writers and poets privileged not idealistic themes, but sober and powerful ones, Adorno maintains. They contributed to the literary culture for its enigmatic, mystical and political themes. They valued the traditions of high culture and were influenced by classical, or high forms of art. They experienced the transformation of high forms of art into unremarkable and insubstantial forms of art not as something self-evident, but as a tremendous loss to human society. For them, the truth content in high culture had already been long established. For them also, Adorno claims, high culture was superior to the new art that hovered on the surface of society in the shallow form of an ideology, which it was not (p. 316).

Essentially, the debate above raises the question of whether, under the conditions of late modernity, there is a context in which it has become necessary to defend traditional textile hand production. For Giddens (cited in Giddens & Pierson, 1998), there are many reasons for defending tradition, however, society should avoid defending tradition “the traditional way” (p. 132). Adorno (1977) holds a similar opinion, he cautions that reflexive tradition will barely tolerate adherence to traditionalism as a role model. Traditionalism or instructions from a divine revelation do not provide society with direction or inspiration (p. 316). When tradition is defended the traditional way, as Giddens (cited in Giddens & Pierson, 1998) explains, it degenerates into other forms, it becomes kitsch, a pseudo-tradition or even dissolves into fundamentalism: “Tradition can’t be the same in a world based on discourse and the giving of reasons” (p. 132). Hence, reflexivity, the re-appropriation of new knowledge, rather than traditionalism suggests redirection. Ultimately, Giddens argues that traditions have to be justified and in the pre-modern context they are justified through their claims to ritual truth (p. 132). In the post-traditional context, traditions are justified as an ‘organising medium of

collective identity', through their capacity to collectively organise the past in relation to the present.

In conclusion, in the post-traditional context, traditional textile hand production is justified through crafts' claims to authenticity: a handcrafted object has a one of a kind value; it evidences a cultural heritage; it has a poetic-aesthetic content, it has lasting qualities; it relates to real human values; and the making is a physical, tactile experience of intimacy and immediacy. In relation to questions about how to respond to social and ecological concerns, Giddens (1991) suggests that if there is a way, it is through reflexive action, not through continuous economic growth. In the light of new understandings, if the majority of individuals were to choose to live responsibly, so would humanity on a collective level. Similarly, if enough individuals were to understand the real human value of traditional textile hand production, particularly in relation to personal and socio-cultural advancement and in relation to the environment, so would society on a collective level. "As individual life decisions become more prominent, they may alter the value systems which have been created by systemic dominance", Giddens declares (p. 214). Ruskin and other thinkers of the Victorian arts and crafts movement have proposed that the 'health-giving' labour of the arts might help alleviate some of society's problems. For Yanagi (1972), the setting of standards and the pursuing of qualities associated with aesthetic ways of life is "a release into healthy normality, into a freedom without overtones of wilful artistry" (p. 124), a view that Ruskin and his contemporaries had articulated.

2. The implications of historical context

The enquiry into the notion of tradition has shown that traditions are both past and contemporary assets, suggesting that traditional textile hand production may have aesthetic potential to the cultural traditions of a modern society. Hobsbawm (1998) argues that traditions always imply a reference to the past and therefore the study of tradition cannot be separated from the wider context of history (p. 12). There are three sections to this second chapter. In Chapter 3 I research the historicity of craft, whereas in the first section of this chapter, I draw on the literature of the historians Hobsbawm, Jenkins (2007) and Cartledge (2006) to examine what is the relation between tradition, the past and history. Both Jenkins and Hobsbawm argue that the past and history are two completely different concepts and therefore, a distinction between the past and history needs to be made. The importance of discussing the historian's view is to argue that working with traditional textile technique does not necessarily suggest nostalgia or a return to the past. Rather, as the theorists of history contend, the past is an experience from which humans learn, whereas history is an ideological construct of past events. The second part of this chapter discusses the distinctions between what Hobsbawm calls authentic tradition and invented tradition. Again, the idea of authentic tradition is linked to an experience of lifeworld activity. This notion of life lived or experience is an important point that relates to my art praxis. The third part examines the theories of Habermas (1984, 1987), Adorno (1977) and Giddens (1991, 1994) to help resolve ideas about tradition's innate interconnectedness with the human lifeworld or with life lived. It touches on Habermas' theory of systemic colonisation, which explains ways in which the market has infiltrated the lifeworld, contributing to the destruction of traditional ways of life. Herzfeld (2004) illustrates how systemic colonisation impacts on the ways of life of the craftspeople of Rethemnos. The chapter ends with an introduction to Habermas' theory of communicative action and Giddens' concept concerning 'the reflexive project of the self'. Both theories are viewed as potential means with which to communicate my ideas about the aesthetic potential of traditional textile production.

2.1 Differentiating between the past and history

History is usually conceived of as a field of research that constructs a narrative of past events ("Oxford English Dictionary," 2009). Jenkins (2007) however, argues that nothing is known about the past, hence nothing can be written about it. The past is irretrievable, therefore its realities elude us (p. 67). History in contrast is what historians make of the world (p. 7). Hobsbawm (1998) argues differently, for him the past provides an experience from which people learn. The proverbial child who burns his fingers in the fire and who subsequently will not touch the fire again illustrates how people learn from the past. Importantly, as Hobsbawm

argues, “we cannot help but learn from the past” (p. 33). Hobsbawm maintains that society is mentally abnormal if it does “not learn from the past”: if nothing is learned from past experience, nothing is learned at all (p. 33). Hobsbawm’s interpretations are relevant to the crafts, because the understanding and skills of traditional textile craftwork is mostly learned from past experiences. Thus, if society ceases to learn traditional textile hand production, it ceases to pass on a form of cultural knowledge.

The concept of the past is complex and is often linked to the concept of nostalgia (Hobsbawm, 1998, p. 34). Nostalgia is a kind of sentimental longing for an imagined period of the past (“Oxford English Dictionary,” 2009), a longing to return to “the good old days”, a “return to the good old morality, that old time religion, the values of small-town America in 1900, the literal belief in the Bible or Koran – which are ancient documents – and so on” (Hobsbawm, 1998, p. 34). Hobsbawm (1998) maintains that whenever the present proved unsatisfactory, there was a tendency to look back. However illusory, the past was a more desirable place to be: it provided a reliable model for recreating the present in a more satisfactory manner. The past was worth returning to (p. 34). Similarly, such idealised attitudes are often superimposed on the crafts. Carter (cited in Attiwill, 2000), a craft theorist, notes, “Craft proposes a world, it ... projects a desirable place to be” (p. 36), suggesting a world that is free of conflict. Hobsbawm states that this utopian desire to return to the past still exists in many parts of the world (p. 34). For example, some nation states today still base their ideals on past social forms. Hobsbawm cites Zionism – the international Jewish political movement that established a homeland for the Jewish People in Palestine – and forms of modern nationalism, such as Stalinism, Nazism, or Apartheid as concrete examples of nations desiring return. None of these social forms represents a return to a historical past because the kind of territorial nation state each envisioned did not exist before the nineteenth century. Accordingly, nationalist leaders had to invent their history (p. 34). Similar to Jenkins, Hobsbawm affirms that a return to the past would be to something that had never existed. In fact, the desire to return to past social forms is so unrealistic that these social forms would have to be reconstructed or reinvented, particularly after so many centuries of oblivion (p. 35).

The significance of the past is that certain experiences from the past are relevant for future social developments, yet in many situations, such experiences are not taken seriously (Hobsbawm, 1998, p. 36)³. Hobsbawm (1998) claims that modern social science and its political ideals of economic growth has pursued a model of technical progress and social

³ Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*, which is discussed in Chapter 5, reinforces this point. For him, the concept of experience, more specifically, authentically lived experience, is a core element that helps advance society emotionally and intellectually.

manipulation that has, systematically and deliberately, not merely neglected the importance of past human experiences (i.e. tradition) but that has displayed a complete disregard for such experience (p. 36). This disregard extends into the realm of the crafts. Carter (cited in Attiwill, 2000) for example contends that the historical role of craft in contemporary society has been often overlooked or disregarded repeatedly. Such disregard has produced cultural indifference or even ignorance to the importance of the human experience of hand production (p. 36). Taking into account the social context in which a craftsperson operates, Smith (1997), also a craft theorist, suggests that cultural indifference is the result of market influence. The basic motives of mass-production have played a dominant role in creating indifference: markets are not merely craft indifferent; they are outright anti-craft. Mass-production, which Smith defines as a means of organising productive processes, was “specifically directed at overriding the accumulated craft knowledge and skills of artisan workmen and women” (p. 18).

2.2 The construction of history

Like tradition, the concept of history has been subject to a wide range of interpretations. Hobsbawm (1998), Jenkins (2007) and Cartledge (2006) all argue that the concept of history is a social construction reflecting the powers of dominant social forms. Specifically, as Jenkins interprets it, history is not a realistic representation of the past, but a form of narrative that has been “composed, created, constituted, constructed” and positioned within the context of the historian, or within the context of the ideological expectations of socially dominant groups (p. xi). Jenkins argues that:

history is intersubjective and ideologically positioned;
[history’s] objectivity and being unbiased are chimeras;
[history’s] empathy is flawed;
[‘original’ histories] do not entail anything ‘genuine’;
history is, in opposition to it being an art or a science, ... a worldly,
wordy language game played for real, and where the metaphors of
history as science or history as art, reflect the distribution of power
that put these metaphors into play. (p. 67)

Thus, from Jenkins’ (2007) understanding, historical discourse is a form of ideological discourse in which history is interpreted and re-interpreted repeatedly by historians who in turn are influenced by the power relation of their day. The ideas of those who are in power define the past. Those in power use their ideas to legitimise their interests and to justify their practices. Jenkins reasons that millions of people have lived in the past, but only a small number of socially dominant groups or persons appear in the history texts. Subsequently, indefinite numbers of groups of people have been systematically “hidden from history” (p. 9). For

example, the achievements of women have been largely excluded from many history texts and feminists are concerned with “writing women back into history” (p. 9). Similarly, little attention has been given to the development of the textile crafts and the role that women played in advancing the textiles. Barber (1991, 1994) is one author who has committed herself to writing about women and textiles and the roles that both have played in advancing society. I make reference to Barber’s study later in this chapter.

Jenkins (2007) argues that historical discourses are the “inter-textual, linguistic constructs of historians”; historical discourses are mythologies reproduced in books, periodicals and journals (p. 21). Hobsbawm (1998) concurs, contending that history is neither ancestral memory nor collective tradition; history has nothing to do with the memories of the past or with the authenticity of established tradition (p. 35). If history consists of memories, Renan (cited in Hobsbawm, 1998) claimed more than one hundred years ago, then “getting history wrong is an essential part of being a nation” (p. 35). Like Jenkins, Hobsbawm maintains that history is primarily “what people learnt from priests, schoolmasters, the writers of history books and the compilers of magazine articles and television programmes” (p. 10). Unfortunately, Hobsbawm explicates, historians have been subservient to the ideologies of their society and therefore ideology has played a significant role in creating the myths of history (p. 35). Jenkins and Hobsbawm’s interpretations suggest that ideology has also played a significant role in creating the romantic myth of craft production, a point that I wish to challenge through my art praxis and which is investigated in Chapter 3, where the historicity of craft in relation to the circumstances of social transformation is examined.

The notion that history is an ideological construct is not confined to contemporary conditions. Cartledge (2006) argues that Herodotus (c. 484 BC – c. 425 BC) had already illustrated that “history is a complex, indeterminate and messy affair, that people’s perceptions of it differ greatly” and that “history is therefore more or less invented” (p. 218). In Western culture, Herodotus was possibly the first person to ‘research’ human achievement. He recorded his findings in books of several volumes called *The Histories*. He formed his *genômê* (judgement or opinion) of human societies through the combined practice of *theoriê* (critically informed travel) and *historiê* (inquiry or research). However, according to Cartledge (2006), Herodotus’ *logoi* (narratives or lectures) often appear too inaccurate and too unrealistic to be believable (pp. 218-220). For example, the importance that Herodotus attached to the Spartan/Greek victory in the Graeco-Persian Wars was a patriotic and hence inaccurate ideological reflection of his “most cherished panhellenist sentiments and tenets” (p. 221). In addition, when the phenomenon of nature or that of human behaviour was too obscure for any other explanation, Herodotus would opt for a theological explanation. Herodotus placed too much emphasis in ‘the hand of God’ and

in 'the divine utterances of oracles' to be taken seriously (p. 223). Hence, Cartledge thought that Herodotus was a challenging historian to interpret, but he was a "rewarding literary artist" (p. 221).

Essentially, Hobsbawm (1998) postulates that the myth of history was invented because the past embodied a standard of perfection that was assumed worthy of emulation. History's basic function was to provide a model for present and future social structures, based on the substance of old and well established tradition. Old tradition represents 'authenticity' and 'wisdom', not only in terms of lengthy relationships and comprehensive experience, "but of memory of how things were and were done, and therefore how they ought to be done" (p. 33). However, social circumstances are changing continuously. Hobsbawm therefore concedes that society has not only had to adjust to a context that is at odds with the past, but in order to conform with the rapidly shifting circumstances society has also had to invent something new repeatedly (p. 34). Continuous innovation has resulted in people becoming unreceptive to the traditions of the past. Furthermore, new understandings have resulted in tradition's 'wisdom' being interpreted as irrational or as superstitious. Today, tradition's customary practices are viewed frequently as something "reminiscent of the dark past" and a widespread hostility has developed towards them (p. 8), yet historical artefacts are revered. For instance, there exists a wealth of books, Internet sites and other resources that research and document historical textiles, and undoubtedly there are a number of museums around the world that are committed to collecting, recording, and exhibiting textiles. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has a collection of textiles that covers a period of more than two thousand years. The museum's collection focuses on European traditions, European tapestries and English medieval church embroidery (n.a., n.d.). Hobsbawm's, Jenkins' and Cartledge's elucidations highlight the ambiguities of tradition, illustrating that the present cannot duplicate the past or be modelled on it, yet there is a kind of authenticity in old tradition that should not be dismissed uncritically. For example, working with traditional technique implies not a replication of the past but participation in an authentic form of experience. As Barber's (1994) study illustrates, the hand manufacture of cloth is highly labour-intensive, arduous work. In traditional societies, a large part of the women's day (and occasionally the men's day) was assigned to textile related activities (p. 31). Cloth-production began with the spinning of fibre:

It takes several hours to spin with a hand spindle the amount of yarn one can weave up in an hour so women spun as they watched the children, girls spun as they watched the sheep, both spun as they trudged or rode muleback from one village to another....In fact, if we reckon up the cleaning, spinning, dyeing, weaving, and embroidering of the wool, the villagers appeared to spend at least as many labour hours on making cloth as on producing the food to be eaten. (p. 31)

In pre-modern circumstances intense labour was not a choice but a social obligation. In our current post-traditional context the opposite is the case: to engage in traditional textile hand production is not a social obligation but a choice. In relation to my art praxis, the time and the labour vested in cloth production is the result of reflexive realisation. Through my work, I wish to express that traditional textile hand production has more to do with advancing the aesthetic-expressive capacity of cultural knowledge, with advancing the aestheticism rooted in the accumulated knowledge of past craft practice. Hence, it is suggested that the continuation with traditional craft production is a social responsibility. Drawing on Adorno's discussion of the human experience in the aesthetic sense, I expand upon this point in Chapter 5.

2.3 Learning from the lessons of the past

In summary, the concept of history is conceived as an ideological construct, whereas the past is more concerned with lessons from which to learn (Hobsbawm, 1998, p. 41). Thus, according to Hobsbawm (1998), the study of history as a field of research remains relevant, not to forecast hopes or fears but to understand the historical development of societies. History illuminates the patterns and the mechanisms of slow social change in pre-industrial times, emphasising the radical transformation that human societies have experienced during the previous two centuries of industrialisation. However, the technological advancement we have today has been made possible only through our pre-industrial predecessors, "through their participation in the productive process, primarily as peasants and craftsmen, who once were able to sell their product in the markets" (p. 41).⁴ Now, in Western society the majority of the population is not needed for craft manufacture or food production, it is needed for technological advancement.⁵ Hence, craftsmen, craftswomen and peasants have largely disappeared from contemporary society, yet Hobsbawm maintains that nobody seems to pay much attention to the lessons of history:

History can't tell us what will happen in the future, only what problems we might expect to have to resolve. History could be 'yesterday's deterrent', but one thing that history has taught us, is that nobody seems to learn from it. Still, we must go on trying. (p. 47)

Hobsbawm (1998) proposes that the lessons of history are not learned because society is challenged by two forces that conceal history's revelations: the advancement of technology and

⁴ Using Epstein and Prak (2008), these points will be examined in Chapter 3.

⁵ The distinction between technical and aesthetic advancement will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 (c.f. Adorno, 1984).

ideological influences. The advancement of technology is an 'anti-historical', 'anti-traditional', problem-solving approach via mechanical means. Hobsbawm asserts that technology has produced some extraordinary results, but as a model for social improvement, it neither has perspective nor does it allow for unpredictabilities. For instance, technology cannot predict all variables in a problem because "it does not take into account that all things outside [the model] are unequal" (p. 47). Hobsbawm suggests that the fall of the USSR should have taught us that. Ideological forces in contrast concern "the systemic distortion of history for irrational purposes" (p. 47). For instance, all forms of government put some history on their school curriculum, not to learn from it, "not to understand their society or how it has changed but to approve of it, to be proud of it, to become good citizens" (p. 47).

2.4 Craft and detraditionalisation

The ideological distortion of history, modernity's unsympathetic views towards tradition, together with the fact that the majority of the population is not needed for craft production might help explain the low status of the handicrafts. Herzfeld (2004) notes that the poor attitudes expressed towards craft production have impacted significantly on the work of the Rethemnos' artisans. He writes that the artisan, a principle bearer of tradition, because "quite literally, [he or she] is the one who inhabits tradition and who makes it a *vioma*, a 'thing lived'" (p. 53), is the first to experience the consequences of detraditionalisation. In Rethemnos, many artisans were forced to change their vocation because their work was not acknowledged as particularly valid and they did not receive adequate remuneration for their products:

In effect, artisans face a chilling choice among accepting their role as the picturesque bearers of an obsolescent tradition, becoming merchants in a rat race that most of them are destined to lose, or joining an international labour force in which the price of modernity is to lose one's identity as a skilled and individual personality. (p. 60)

Adorno (1977) too observed that artisans attempting to sustain the work of a dissolving tradition often experience rejection (p. 313). According to Adorno, the principles or values of tradition, when borrowed directly or indirectly from the archaic, are so often in conflict with the principles and values of progress. In such ambiguous conditions an association with tradition is viewed as regressive and rejection occurs. Consequently, in conditions of technical progress when artisans endeavour to uphold a traditional practice, they operate in the realm of the forbidden, risking exposing themselves to social ridicule (p. 314). Habermas (1984) helps explain this phenomenon by outlining that principles and values provide the framework for human action (p. 70). Concepts, validity claims, norms, worldviews and ideas of truth inform the way people act and think. The phenomenon of rejection then takes place because these ideas

of truth and so forth are not context dependent to the same degree. What counts as truth or as a value differs from one culture to another as it does from one period of human evolution to another. Values and norms depend ultimately on criteria that once changed gradually in the course of slow pre-industrial development, but now change radically in the course of rapid technological development. What was held in high esteem in one era, was not necessarily worth much in another (p. 70). For example, in early human societies textile craft production was held in high esteem, because it helped advance society on many different levels. In medieval times, master weavers held a high social position and were given ample remuneration for their cloth. In the shifting circumstances of the present-day, to weave similar cloth means to weave in a completely different context. The socially critical dimension of my art praxis aims to bring to light the shift in such cultural paradigms and the different social context in which a craftsman now operates. I received the opportunity to communicate this and the poetic aesthetic quality of textile hand production when I participated in the *remix* show.

Handloom production in a technologically developed society does little to help advance technology; accordingly, traditional textile production has become a poorly paid activity. Handloom production in the context of modernity means to produce not for commercial use but to participate in lifeworld activities. Cultural values, Habermas (1984) continues, are not universal. As the name indicates, cultural values are located within the horizon of a specific group or culture. These values can be made plausible only within the context of a particular way of life. Correspondingly, the critique of value standards assumes a shared pre-understanding “that is not in the hands of an individual but constitutes and at the same time circumscribes the domain of the lifeworld” (p. 42). Habermas implies that the validity claims of modernity are often subject to contestation for they rest not on interpretations of ‘truth’ – as was relied upon in more traditional societies – but on “insights and needs that can be variously interpreted in terms of changing frameworks or ‘languages’” (p. 84). Furthermore, Habermas argues that validity claims reference subjective experiences and subjective social norms rather than facts, they therefore have to be elucidated via a theory of argumentation (p. 22). Thus, our ways of life, our ‘lifeworld’ consists of collectively valid views. Collectively valid views are cultural views, which is knowledge that is shared by groups relative to certain times and periods. Under the contingent conditions of modernity, validity claims are very frequently open to criticism (p. 28). Habermas contends that questions of validity claims are best addressed through the logic of argumentation, because the reasoning in argumentation is a process that can change attitudes: “the appeal to reason can transform something collectively problematic into something collectively valid” (p. 29). Habermas’ argumentation implies that the collectively problematic position of the textile crafts can be transformed into something that is collectively more valid.

Textiles could be explained in terms of what they can do to advance society aesthetically, a point that I elaborate on in Chapter 5 when I reveal the context in which my work operates.

2.5 Tradition and the lifeworld

In order to understand the mechanisms that caused traditional craft production to become subordinate to social life, the influences of systemic forces – such as processes of institutionalisation and market influence – need to be examined. Drawing on Habermas (1984, 1987), the following section discusses the relationship between tradition and the lifeworld, both of which are subject to systemic influences. Habermas (1987) conceives of society as co-existing as a lifeworld and a system (p. 120). However, under the contingent circumstances of modernity the lifeworld and the system are becoming differentiated and are separating into two entirely different concepts. The primary concern is that subordination and differentiation undermines the poetic content in the craft object, a point that Herzfeld (2004) highlights and that is examined in more detail in Chapter 4. This section concludes with a brief discussion about the common points between Habermas’ theory of communicative action and Giddens’ theory of lifepolitics. It draws on Adorno (1977) and Attiwill (2000) to emphasise the importance of a critical relationship with tradition and craft.

The concept of tradition and the human lifeworld are closely interconnected. For centuries the cultural practices of tradition informed and shaped the lifeworld, yet older practices present a problem to the modern way of thinking about the world. Habermas (1987) claims that many contradictions of modernity are caused by systemic dominance impacting on lifeworld issues (p. 275). Habermas’ concept of the lifeworld is complex. It consists of three core structural components: society, culture and personality. These three components function as action systems that form social environments for one another (p. 153). Taken together, all three components are embedded in a complex web of social interconnections and all three are constitutive to Habermas’ theory of communicative action. In Habermas’ understanding, the primary function of communicative action is to maintain “the symbolic structure of the lifeworld” (p. 137). That is, the function of communicative action is to reproduce cultural knowledge, i.e. to renew tradition. This reproduction of cultural knowledge in turn maintains the social environment for all three structural components of the lifeworld. Cultural knowledge, however, evolves continuously. Simultaneously, social systems become evermore complex and the worldviews informing the lifeworld become increasingly rational, whereas societies become increasingly differentiated. These are processes of detraditionalisation and demythologisation (p. 153). Thus, Habermas understands social evolution as processes of rationalisation and

differentiation. However, increasing rationalisation and differentiation present irresolvable problems to the human lifeworld. The lifeworld is the key reference system for human interaction and cultural traditions. Tradition in turn is informed by irrational worldviews (p. 137). In Chapter 3, in which the process of social transformation is examined, the implications of demythologisation are revealed more clearly.

A cultural tradition's primary function is to achieve unity amongst groups of people; its purpose is to integrate people into the group to which they belong (Habermas, 1987, p. 139). Cultural practices of tradition are processes of socialisation; as such, they are subject to constant renewal, as Habermas (1987) notes: "the lifeworld consists essentially in a continuation and renewal of tradition, which moves between the extremes of a mere reduplication of and a break with tradition" (p. 139). Habermas regards forms of communicative action as means with which to secure the cultural knowledge of tradition. Communicative action is a kind of "interpretive mechanism through which cultural knowledge is reproduced" (p. 139). Communicative actions "are not only processes of interpretation in which cultural knowledge is 'tested against the world'; at the same time they are processes of social integration and socialisation" (p. 139). However, Habermas retains an element of pessimism towards the notion of unproblematic integration: modern societies have attained "a level of system differentiation at which increasingly autonomous organisations are connected with one another via delinguistified media of communication" (p. 154). That is to say, the lifeworld is subject to influences of market hegemony and other institutions of power. Markets and other institutional influences pose a threat to the lifeworld because they create systemic rules that are separate from the values of the lifeworld. Markets in particular are not constrained by humanity, democracy, traditions, other real human needs or environmental issues; markets are governed by mechanisms of supply and production. As Habermas argues, such organisations steer a social discourse that is largely disconnected from the norms, values and traditions of the lifeworld (p. 154). Key to Habermas' thinking is that what binds sociated individuals to one another and secures the integration of society on an aesthetic level is a network of communicative actions that flourishes only in the light of cultural traditions, not in the light of systemic mechanisms or market influences. The lifeworld that members construct from shared cultural traditions and experiences is what is coextensive with society, culture and personality (p. 137). Hence, the importance of textile craft production. Habermas' arguments show that the cultural traditions of handcraft production are coextensive with real human values, benefiting on many levels all three lifeworld elements. Based upon the premise that all three structural components of the lifeworld flourish in the light of the creative process, the following section examines the way in which each component forms part of the lifeworld.

The first element refers to society. Habermas (1987) understands society as that structural component that determines “reference systems of formal world concepts” (p. 137). Reference systems are formed through “legitimate orders through which participants regulate their memberships in social groups and thereby secure solidarity”. These ‘legitimate orders of society’ provide the guidelines for processes of social integration: “Under the aspect of coordinating action, [the legitimate orders of society] serve social integration and the establishment of solidarity” (p. 137). Essentially, Habermas interprets society as a reference system for norms, values, standards, principles and validity claims, which in turn determines the status, rights and duties of its group members. However, the importance of questioning ‘reference systems of formal world-concepts’ arises because reference systems are subject to the globalising influences of the market and other organisations, as the example of the Rethemnos’ artisans illustrates. Herzfeld (2004) argues that the artisans of Rethemnos are victims of society’s rationalisation processes and its capitalistic enterprises: “the rationalistic nation-state has so far failed to capture deep social acceptance in significant areas of everyday life” (p. 49). For Herzfeld, the tacit knowledge implicit in the context of craft production is one such significant area that has failed to generate social acceptance. Tacit knowledge cannot be learned from books, tacit knowledge is acquired through direct participation in an activity. For Herzfeld accordingly, society has failed to acknowledge the close relation between an apprenticeship, the hands-on experience in the practical aspect of craftsmanship and the reproduction of cultural knowledge (p. 49). The skillfulness of the hands is another area that Herzfeld designates as significant work, which achievements have been undervalued. Society has failed to recognise that norms, values and validity claims and the acquisition of tacit knowledge and skill are closely interconnected and dependent on each other. As Herzfeld explains, in an apprenticeship normative codes and idioms of social performance are passed on together with the master’s understanding of the esoteric and the tacit. Esoteric or tacit knowledge is the substance that informs the poetry in the craft object. Embedded in the substance are human values: the hand-crafted object is made with attention to technique, detail and materials, a significant aspect that also informs my work. Thus, within the normative context of their respective society, apprenticeship trainees learn as much about the craft as about the social norms, the traditions and the cultural knowledge that informs the norms and the traditions (p. 49). This point is taken up in more detail in Chapter 3, in which the function and influences of the medieval craft guilds are examined.

The second element concerns culture, which Habermas (1987) interprets as “the stock of knowledge from which participants in communication supply themselves with interpretations as they come to an understanding about something in the world” (p. 137). Culture is the field of ‘purposive activity’, which prime function is to pass on the knowledge of successive

generations. Accordingly, cultural reproduction is equivalent to “the continuation of valid knowledge”, which through the act of communicative action is transmitted and renewed continuously (p. 137). In relation to my art praxis, textile hand production, i.e. the physical act of the making is vital to contributing to the continuation of cultural knowledge. The direct participation in the activity is a form of communicative action through which the cultural poetry of a textile craft is reproduced. The making often takes place in a group situation, to this end the need to create is acted upon collectively and the practical experience of the making is shared and passed on.

The final structural component that informs the lifeworld is personality. Habermas (1987) refers to personality as those competences that put a person in a position to speak and act capably and responsibly. Competence empowers the individual “to take part in processes of reaching understanding and thereby to assert his own identity” (p. 138). ‘Responsible actors’, then, form associations with others in order to strengthen identity: “Under the aspect of socialisation, communicative action serves the formation of personal identities” (p. 138). Habermas maintains that key to developing this capacity to deal competently with a situation, is that the individual is sustained by the background of a lifeworld that consists of ideas, thoughts and abstractions other than those culturally established certainties, those rational understandings of systemic influence. The lifeworld is composed of individuals and their socially customary practices, their skills, their intuitive knowledge of how to deal with a situation as well as the creative arts that advance society in an aesthetical manner. Individuals produce literary work, write poetry, dance, make music, read, paint, sculpture, make objects. Even though criticisms have been raised by some against Habermas’ theory of communicative action, his findings are hard to disagree with, in the sense that his analysis of society is based on thoroughly researched information. Importantly, Habermas emphasises that society, culture and personality operate not only as restrictions, they also serve as powerful resources for identity-forming practices (p. 121).

For Giddens (1991), the nature of tradition is such that it orders life according to set patterns. By contrast, modernity confronts the individual with a complexity of multiple choices and systemic influences (p. 81). Accordingly, a fundamental component of contemporary lifeworld activity is that of choice, yet modern circumstances offer little help as to which option to choose. Moreover, Giddens draws a clear distinct between choice and tradition, for him, choice is adopted rather than handed down. Choice also implies originality and constant innovation because new and original methods, ideas or products – from which to choose – are introduced into society all the time (p. 81). However, Hobsbawm (1998) theorises that innovation is not and cannot always be as original as assumed. He argues that the ubiquitous proliferation of

innovative products has become so every day that it is now the basic rule (p. 39). Hobsbawm postulates that given the finite number of things that can be done, the length of time people have been doing them, the number of people across the globe and their persistent interest in certain subjects, absolute novelty is no longer possible. Rather, from the late eighteenth century onwards, the prime characteristic influencing lifeworld activity is not novelty and choice but rapid, profound and continuous social transformation (p. 39). For this reason, and as Habermas (1987) has observed, the renewal of tradition is contingent upon an individual's willingness to critically analyse tradition's internal contradictions and to act accordingly (p. 146). Adorno (1977) concurs, he concedes that conserving and renewing tradition through the means of a critical relationship is paramount. The renewal of tradition does not affect past events only, it contributes to the qualities of the way life is lived in the current situation (p. 318). Adorno argues that as long as a tradition is authentic, it does not have to be re-invented. Authentic tradition does not begin anew 'freshly and happily' each day; there is no need to better one course of action after another; no need to engage in constant innovation. For Adorno, the aesthetic substance of tradition is what counts and the way in which something is made or created has everything to do with the content of traditional practice (p. 318).

In summary, Habermas (1987) shows that all three structural components of the lifeworld are tightly interwoven, providing interactive environments for one another. Essentially, he endeavours to illuminate that all human action is aimed socially towards a continuation of tradition, oscillating between the extremes of replication and rupture (p. 137). Society is a state in which legitimate orders are dependent upon formal procedures for positing and justifying norms, which in turn are a prerequisite for the continuation of tradition. A culture provides the conditions in which traditions undergo continuous revision. Culture is the state in which traditions have become reflective and then continued or set adrift. Finally, personality is the state in which a highly abstract, autonomous ego-identity is established through self-steering and independent autonomous thought (p. 146).

Habermas' (1987) concept of the self-steering individual and Giddens' (1991) ideas of "the reflexive project of the self" (p. 79) share common elements. Both are geared towards the achievement of personal autonomy. Similar to Habermas, for Giddens autonomy is accomplished through the act of self-determination, self-reflection and reflexive socialisation. These processes are required in order to empower the individual to assert identity in the manner of "acting authentically and responsibly" (p. 78). Thus, at the core of 'the reflexive project of the self' is the idea of authenticity and self-actualisation, not in the sense of Heidegger's existentialism, but "based on being true to oneself" (p. 78). For Giddens, 'to act authentically' means more than just acting in terms of a self-knowledge that is valid and as full as possible for

the individual. It involves “disentangling the true from the false self” and “to be true to oneself” means “finding oneself” (p. 79). This approach is “an active process of self-construction that has to be informed by overall goals” (p. 79). The process entails “becoming free from dependencies and achieving fulfillment” (p. 79). Essentially, Giddens argues that becoming free from dependencies and finding fulfillment raises self-worth: “a person might feel more integrity, honesty, compassion, energy and love” (p. 79). He calls the process of finding self-fulfillment a “reflexively mobilised trajectory of self-actualisation” (p. 79). Giddens concept of “personal integrity is an achievement of an authentic self, it comes from integrating life experiences within the narrative of self-development” (p. 80). Accordingly, Habermas’ ideas about the self-steering, responsible individual and Giddens’ self-determined ‘reflexively mobilised trajectory of self-actualisation’ open up new possibilities with which to defend handcraft production. Their arguments suggest that the practical activity of making has the potential to reflexively mobilise the trajectory of the self, providing an experience for the individual to find a form of personal autonomy that is true to the self. Autonomy in turn is significant to addressing issues that are concerned with living responsibly. To live responsibly means to make a constructive contribution to society, culture and personality. Attiwill (2000) puts forward the proposition that the physical act of making may contribute to living responsibly. According to this craft theorist, craft “exemplifies ways of thinking and inventing that could be useful in addressing issues that do with being in the world” (p. 35). In my mind, the aesthetic/poetic quality in the labour and in the object makes craft production contemporary and relevant. The techniques of a textile craft have been standard procedures for millennia; they do not need to be re-invented continually. One aim of my art praxis is to establish the identity-forming potential of handcraft production and in Chapter 3 I further the discussion, where I examine how the textiles crafts helped advance pre-industrial society aesthetically, socially and economically.

3. Social transition

The aim of this Chapter 3 is to explore processes of social transition. Social transition is a complex and continuous process of demythologisation, disenchantment, detraditionalisation and social differentiation, resulting in changes of social attitude. This chapter proceeds through five parts. The first part, *Made by craft*, draws on Risatti (2007), Greenhalgh (2002) and Ruskin (1907b) to explore the concept of hand production. Understandings of craft are complex, diverse and ambiguous, like tradition. Differing understandings about craft very often correspond to the differing stages of social transformation and the differing cultural circumstances that either support or reject traditional ways of doing things. For instance, in traditional societies practicing a craft was central to life. In those societies craft still has both a cultural and an economical value. Developing skill, understanding techniques and materials, paying attention to detail and so forth was essential to the craft because a poorly made object has no economic value. In contrast, in the conditions of mass-production, where everything can be bought, the craft object has become largely subordinate to life and the understanding of technique and skill becomes less important.

Second, *The significance of historicity* is a brief investigation into the historical evolution of textiles. First, however, the section uses Smith (1997) to discuss the contemporary context for the crafts. Smith's study demonstrates that the practices of early modernity undermined the craft understandings that had been central to human societies for millennia. McGarry (1976) and Hobsbawm (1998) are drawn on to explain the historical context for the evolution of the crafts. Evolution has entailed a shift from the hand production of cloth to that of mechanical production and reproduction. Barber (1991, 1994) evidences craft's longevity. Drawing on archaeological evidence, Barber suggests that the textile crafts may have been practiced more than 15,000 years ago, implying that the invention of handloom cloth most likely preceded all other developments.

The third section examines the gradual advancement of the European medieval craft guilds, touching on the emergence of the small cottage industries. In drawing on Epstein, Prak (1998; 2008) and McGarry (1976), *The rise and decline of the medieval craft guilds* discusses the emergence of the guilds, the reasons for their materialisation and the role the medieval craftspeople played in advancing technology and economics. In the period leading up to the Industrial Revolution, the medieval craftsmen were particularly influential in inventing labour saving devices. This section shows also that the established worldviews of the medieval craftsmen and their means of production were fundamentally different from the way things are thought about and done today. Their work was based on the understandings of tacit and

propositional knowledge, understandings which had evolved from the accumulated experience and understandings of societies over many generations. The guilds consisted mostly of small communal groups. They sustained systems for the training of apprentices, in order to pass on the collective knowledge of generations. The guilds set quality standards, contributing simultaneously to the economic and social aesthetics of their lifeworld. This section ends with a short discussion about the cottage industries of Montigny, in France. The cottage industries, emerging in the 15th century, but most prevalent in the 17th and 18th century are important to this research, because they too are indicative of social change. Merchants could bypass the stringent guild policies and contract the work directly to people working from home.

The fourth section is an investigation into the *Victorian Arts and Crafts movements*. With much to criticise about the Industrial Revolution, Ruskin (1964) and Morris (cited in Thompson, 1993) were key figures in establishing a craft revival movement. The advocates of the arts and crafts movement were inspired by the high quality work standards of the medieval craftsmen. Ruskin developed a theory of aestheticism based on his observations of medieval craftsmanship. The movement had a ripple effect across the world, with offshoots emerging in most European countries and in the US. Moreover, Ruskin's theories informed *der Deutsche Werkbund*, a German arts and crafts movement founded in 1907. The Werkbund sought to amalgamate the handcrafts with industrial incentives. Gropius carried its policies across to the Bauhaus movement. To this day, Ruskin's theories of aestheticism underpin to some extent art education in Britain and, due to the Bauhaus influence, in other European countries also.

The final section, *The process of demythologisation*, uses Habermas (1984, 1987), Giddens (1991, 1994) and Ruskin (2009a) to examine general processes of cultural transformation. Demythologisation entails a shift from the mythological way of thinking about the world to what we have today, a more rational outlook. As the theorists show, archaic societies processed all information about their socio-cultural environment and the physical world of nature in myth. Their socio-cultural environment and nature were still indistinguishable from one another and closely intertwined with one another. Ruskin illustrates that Greek mythological heroes and deities are poetic personifications of natural phenomena. Habermas and Giddens propose that traditional knowledge is identity-securing knowledge, which may limit the development of individuality, but collectively, it may help secure real human values. According to Habermas (1984), the difference between the 'traditional elements' of worldviews and the modern understanding of the world is marked by a shift in systems of basic concepts. Thus, social transformation has necessitated the conversion of what Habermas calls "the moral authority of the sacred" into "the validity claims of the institution" (pp. 43-74). In our modern society, Habermas posits, the complexity of our Occidental heritage is marked by two contradictory

states of affairs: “the mythological way of understanding the world” and “the difficult concept of a rationalised lifeworld” (p. 43). Giddens (1994) contends that both outlooks are accepted today to a degree, after all, traditions have never disappeared completely (p. 63). However, as examined in the previous chapters, the nature of tradition has changed and continues to change. Adorno and Horkheimer (1977; 1944) are also drawn on to discuss further courses of action, losses and consequences.

3.1 Made by craft

This first section, *Made by craft*, explores the diverse, ambiguous and complex definitions of craft. Like tradition, the concept of craft is open to many different interpretations, ranging from human skill, power, intellectual power, to magic, occult art, and even deceit. Interpretations differ as the context in which the craft object is set differs. The definition of craftsmanship is more precise, it is defined as ‘skilled workmanship’ and the craftsman is the artisan or ‘a worker in a skilled trade’ (“Oxford English Dictionary,” 2009). In his enquiry into *A theory of craft* Risatti (2007) redefines craft as a means of referencing “the development and expression of human values” (p. xiv). Risatti argues that there is much confusion about the understanding of a craft object, not because interpretations about craft are largely limited to practical themes such as materials or techniques but because theoretical, critical discourse has not provided the same support or ‘intellectualisation’ that it has done with the arts (pp. 2-3). For Risatti, to make or construct something with the hands, even skilfully, is much too inadequate a way to define craft (p. 14). Moreover, Risatti claims that it does not help advance our understanding of the handmade object to apply the term craft to a class of objects (such as baskets, handloom cloth or pottery) and to techniques of production. It is even less useful to use the term craft to distinguish between the skilled activities of journeyman work, craftsmanship and “genuinely creative work that springs from the artistic imagination” (p. 14). However, in Risatti’s view, using the term craftsmanship is a good way to emphasise the skilled activity with which the craft object is made and it helps reinforce the connection between the object and the hand inherent in the making. Importantly, as Risatti points out, in the current context of mass-productivity, the concept of craft has taken on a very different and a “less precise meaning than in the past”, mainly because objects are rarely made by “the skilled hand” (p. 14).

Essentially, craft finds its origins in the making with the hands and craft activities can be traced back to the earliest forms of human societies. The concept of craft is related to the man-made objects of everyday life. In the pre-modern context, craft refers to a skilled activity in which something is made with the hands. Risatti (2007) reminds readers that before the Industrial

Revolution, activities of the making were always carried out with the skilled hand. In the traditional sense, thus, craft was highly skilled labour that was essential to individual livelihood and the economic success of the nation state. In modernity mechanical techniques of production superseded the hand made and a distinction was made between the arts and the crafts (p. 14). Drawing on Adorno, I return to this issue in Chapter 5. For Greenhalgh (2002), modernity's lack of a theoretical and critical framework within which to conceptualise the craft object has caused the crafts to be considered separate from the arts:

The separation of craft from art and design is one of the phenomena of late-twentieth-century Western culture. The consequences of this split have been quite startling. It has led to the separation of 'having ideas' from 'making objects'. It has also led to the idea that there exists some sort of mental attribute known as 'creativity' that precedes or can be divorced from knowledge of how to make things. This had led to art without craft. (p. 3)

Greenhalgh (2002) infers that the differentiation between the "making of objects" and "the having of ideas" (p. 3) has resulted in the idea that the notion of creativity is not connected to knowing how to make something. An understanding of skill and technique is no longer a prerequisite for the making of art, as Greenhalgh notes: "Art without craft" means that we now have art separated from skill (p. 3). The distinction between craft and art has led to a dichotomous system of classification and it has resulted in craft being labelled aesthetically secondary, and sometimes even inferior. As Risatti (2007) posits, the inference that craft is of poor aesthetic quality and the fact that it has a low market value reflects its low social status (p. 4). Subsequently, the craft object has not been able to overturn "a fixed hierarchy of the arts", which is a means of ranking that continues to persist (p. 4). Furthermore, Risatti argues that to frame a craft object in terms of its materiality and technique or even to make a distinction between a work of art and a craft object is a questionable practice. (p. 8). For Risatti, craft is characterised not by its low status but by understanding technique and materials and recognising what to do with them. The tendency to make distinctions between art and craft ignores craft's inherent essence of knowing, re-knowing and recognising. This understanding of technique and materials has evolved from a tacit understanding of knowing and re-knowing. Knowing and re-knowing is synonymous with familiarity, it has evolved from the experience of working with materials and technique. According to Risatti, having the experience of working and developing understanding and recognition is essential for the development of identity, and is essential also for establishing life world activities that are culturally meaningful (pp. 5-8). Importantly, the knowing, re-knowing, understanding and recognition are attributes, which are acquired through processes of repetition. This repetition is a meaningful activity because it develops skill and is perhaps analogous to what Giddens (1991) terms the "acquired routines of tradition" (p. 42). Acquired routines, Giddens explains, are "constitutive of an emotional acceptance of the reality

of the ‘external world’ without which a secure human existence is impossible” (p. 42). So, for Giddens too, repetition is essential to the development of identity. For these reasons, according to Risatti (2007), it is imperative to go beyond the tendency to interpret the craft object solely from a functional or a material point of view. It is much more important to see and recognise the craft object in terms of understanding its underlying human essence. The human involvement with technique, material and process is much more important than the actual object. To understand the value of human participation is to understand craft “at a more profound and deeper level” (pp. 9-10).

Ruskin (1907b) also has much to contribute to the debate on craft. He places immense importance on the education of people in the arts and crafts. For him, ‘the making of anything by hands’, or manufacture as he calls it, should always be understood at a more profound and deeper level because it helps to establish a relationship between the human intellect, emotion or imagination and manual dexterity:

MANUFACTURE is, according to the etymology and right use of the word, “the making of anything by hands,” — directly or indirectly, with or without the help of instruments or machines.... ART is the operation of the hand and the intelligence of man together.... Then FINE ART is that in which the hand, the head, and the heart of man go together. [Capitals as in the original] (p. 56)

Ruskin (1907b) refers to the crafts of the Middle Ages as the arts of the Middle Ages (p. 56). For Ruskin (1907c), there are no clear distinctions between the arts and the crafts, the craft is the art. In *Unto this last* he contends that ‘the making of anything by hands’ is part of a much larger social process. Making or labour is related to his ideas about the value of true wealth and economy. He defines true economy as “the wise management of labour” (p. 154). For Ruskin, ‘the wise management of labour’ is a poetic, qualitative experience that finds its expression in the arts and the crafts. ‘Wise’ labour furthermore is essential to developing “the body, in fatigue or pain; of the temper or heart (as in perseverance of search for things, - patience in waiting for them – fortitude or degradation if suffering for them, and the like), or of the intellect” (p. 232). For Ruskin too, craft is essential for developing identity.

3.2 The significance of historicity

Jameson (1989) argues that the experience of “the perpetual present of post-modernity” often means that the notion of “deep time”, i.e. the notion of historicity appears irrelevant in the contemporary context (p. 6). This section argues that understanding craft’s historicity is highly relevant for understanding the value of craft in the contemporary context. Jameson’s assertion

implies that when the ramifications of perpetual change, which are the core influences of contemporary society, are not understood properly, traditional works of art are very likely also not understood properly. They are neither recognised nor acknowledged for their human qualities and their poetic aesthetic value. Ruskin (1907b) expresses similar concerns. He argues that if art from past eras is not valued for its intrinsic worth, people will fail to recognise and appreciate contemporary works of similar quality. The fact that the constant entertainment and instant gratification proffered by the commodity culture had largely replaced the joy of creating great works of art was of further concern to Ruskin:

The very fact that we despise the great art of the past, shows that we cannot produce great art now. If we could do it, we should love it when we saw it done – if we really cared for it, we should recognize it and keep it; but we don't care for it. It is not art that we want; it is amusement, gratification of pride, present gain – anything in the world but art: let it rot, we shall always have enough to talk about and hang over our sideboards. (p. 104)

As noted in the previous chapter, Smith (1997) argues that early modernity was not merely craft indifferent, it was anti-craft (p. 18). Smith identifies five core influences that caused the devaluation of craft: first, the making of objects by hand was defeated by machine manufacture. Smith contends that the mechanical nature of mass-production was aimed at overturning craft knowledge and skill. As a consequence, the pleasures of consumption took precedence over the pleasures of making something by hand (p. 19). Second, craft was downgraded by modernist art theorists and as a result was separated from the arts (p. 20). Third, craft was “*isolated, marginalised and devalued*” [italics as in the original] (p. 22) by the widespread forces of modernity because:

- Craftwork was relegated in a derogatory manner to women's work.
- The derogatory attitudes applied to professional weavers as well as to bourgeois women working at home.
- The influences of urbanisation positioned traditional rural art as folk art or peasant culture.
- The centralised powers of modernity channeled the “subcultures of the powerless” into popular culture, privileging the proliferation of entertainment and other activities of pleasure. (p. 22)

Fourth, via the influences of “centralised power”, the crafts were “*absorbed, aestheticised and rehistoricised*” [italics as in the original] (p. 22), as the following three points seek to illustrate:

- The Bauhaus exposition exemplifies examples of craft absorption. For Smith (1997), the stylised Bauhaus designs represent the changing nature of the crafts.
- The ‘aestheticised’ craft object refers to the tendency of some artists to incorporate into their work elements of a local craft. Magdalena Abakanowicz’s work *Abakans* (1964-69) and *Ropes* (1970s) are examples of craft ‘aestheticised’. According to Smith, Abakanowicz (n.d.) has drawn on past crafts to transform them into the precedents of modernism (p. 22). Abakanowicz is a successful artist of the seventies who uses woven and cast textiles to make three-dimensional textile sculptures. *Abakans* and *Ropes* are created from outsized sisal ropes, some of which are woven onto metal casts. *Abakans* was shown at the 1964 International Biennial of Tapestry in Lausanne and in 1967 Abakanowicz won the gold medal at the Sao Paulo Biennial, helping her to launch her international career (Abakanowicz, n.d.).
- Craft activities performed in places like Disneyworld, Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village Museum and perhaps Perth’s Whitman’s Park are instances of rehistoricisation. These kinds of crafts Smith (1997) terms “modernity’s instant museumisation of its past”. As he describes it, craft activities are “acted out before your eyes in a simulation of all that has been lost to modernisation” (p. 23).

Fifth, Smith (1997) argues that the contemporary crafts are often subject to mechanisation and consumption (p. 23). For him, tourist art sold at airports and in souvenir shops everywhere the world, is the most obvious example of mechanisation and consumption. He terms this phenomenon “*de-crafted*” [italics as in the original] (p. 23).

To understand the different contexts in which the crafts are set but also to understand the coeval nature of prehistory and present, it is essential to discuss the evolution of the crafts and pre-industrial craft production. The overview of craft evolution spans from antiquity, through the European medieval era and ends with the early Industrial Revolution. Unlike stone tools and pottery, textiles have not survived much beyond 5,000 years (Barber, 1994, p. 51). Textiles are highly perishable, therefore it is not known exactly when the history of cloth began or where or who first made cloth. Barber (1994) assumes that there exists a strong body of evidence that cloth making skills evolved just before or at approximately the same time as first human settlements, some 8,000 – 10,000 years ago (p. 51). Interestingly, the pre-historic period of human development is characterised not by its inventions of craft objects but by the materials from which the tools were made. In the Lower Paleolithic, which is thought to have lasted for millions of years, the tools were crafted from chipped stones. This period is known as the Old Stone Age. The first evidence of a textile craft is a fossilised fragment of twisted string, found

in the caves of Lascaux in Southern France (Barber, 1994, pp. 51-53). The string was carbon-dated to approximately 15,000 B.C. This is the period of the Upper Palaeolithic, the Late Stone Age of Cro-Magnon Man. The discovery of the first textile object coincides with the emergence of first recorded mythological worldviews. In his book *Primitive Mythology* Campbell (1969) traces the evidence of the first mythologies to the Lascaux caves, to “the underground temples of the Palaeolithic hunters” (p. 299). In these caves Cro-Magnon Man had painted hundreds of signs and images, among them a few drawings of mythic creatures. The so-called *Sorcerer of Les Trois Freres* (which Campbell named *The Lord of the Animals*) is a hybrid figure of half man and beast. Even in pre-historic times this being could not have existed. Campbell (1988) argues that the themes of those drawings are not known, because we cannot know how Cro-Magnon Man thought. The supernatural powers assigned to the sorcerer figure could only be presumed (p. 78). Significant to this research is that the mythological understanding of the world has evolved from a cycle of myth known to humanity for millennia. I draw on Habermas (1984) in the final section of this chapter to discuss the importance of this point in more detail.

During the transition of the Upper-Paleolithic into the Neolithic, the New Stone Age, different human civilisations developed in various parts of the world, however their emergence only partly coincided in time. Between circa 10,000 and 5,000 B.C. along the so-called Fertile Crescent early human settlements and agriculture began to develop. With the emergence of settlement, all kinds of crafts and trades manifested themselves: weaving, pottery, woodcarving, painting and jewellery making. Precious metals such as gold and silver were utilised in the making of jewellery (Barber, 1994, p. 24). According to Barber’s (1994) study into the emergence of cloth, excavations suggest that in Mesopotamian and in the Egyptian nation states in circa 4000 B.C., a deeper understanding of the hand spinning of woollen and flax fibre and handloom cloth had already been established. Barber’s study implies that cloth production long preceded the discovery of the smelting and casting of bronze tools and weapons, which marked the beginning of the Early Bronze Age in circa 3000 B.C. In circa 1300 B.C. the Iron Age emerged. The Iron Age was characterised by the discovery of iron smelting and smithing techniques, requiring even higher melting temperatures than those needed for bronze (pp. 24-27). In the period called Classical Greece, when Herodotus (fifth century A.D.) began to record human histories, the arts and crafts of those early civilisations were already highly advanced. Hobsbawm (1998) suggests that early civilisations were intellectually equal to modern day society: “We are almost certainly not more intelligent than the ancient Mesopotamians or Chinese, yet the way in which societies live has been utterly transformed” (p. 40). I return to this point at the end of this chapter.

This process of social transformation has changed the context for textile craft production. On Barber's (1994) account, in the period of early settlement, the Neolithic period, cloth and clothing became essential to life. In the Neolithic, textiles were already "locked into the fabric of society at every level – social, economic, and religious" (p. 257). Barber suggests that women were predominantly responsible for plying the yarns and making the cloth, soon finding "themselves on the proverbial squirrel wheel [of production], always running just to keep up with daily demand" (p. 257). The mythic-religious influence of various societies is manifested in the many mythic depictions embedded in most archaic cloth. A major shift in cloth production took place towards the end of the Bronze Age and at the beginning of the Iron Age. With the discovery of different spinning and weaving techniques and the invention of new equipment, new types of cloth were introduced and more cloth was made. Moreover, according to Barber's study, excavations of this period suggest increasing references to male weavers. In Ancient Egypt, for example, large numbers of weavers were male. Barber posits that men did not weave for their households, they wove for economic profit, for social prestige and, "and here the women join them, for a slave master's profit" (p. 258). In the ancient Egyptian society the division of labour and specialisation was utilised in order to produce more cloth than each family needed on a daily basis. As Barber highlights, that surplus indicated the practices of trade (p. 259).

In tenth century Europe, in the early Middle Ages, the hand production of objects was advancing steadily. Hobsbawm (1998) notes that for most of European recorded history, eighty to ninety percent of the population worked as peasants on the land for food production (p. 42), yet despite the high incidence of peasantry, individuals had become extraordinarily accomplished craftspeople in all areas of craftwork: metal, wood, glass work, sculpture, painting as well as tapestry weaving, plant-dyeing and intricate embroidering of cloth. In tenth century Europe, textiles had long become important items of craft and trade. There has been a tendency to romanticise the past because of such accomplishments. However, McGarry (1976) emphasises that the Middle Ages were full of hardships (p. 243). Much of the land was owned and managed by the Church; hence religious worldviews predetermined the lives of most people. The writings of an early medieval writer demonstrate that members of a community were born into their respective lines of work. The Church had allocated people's lives to three core social positions, "God hath shapen lives three: Boor and knight and priest they be" (cited in McGarry, 1976, p. 243). McGarry notes that the peasants or the boors, as they were called, vastly outnumbered the other two and had the least freedom (p. 243).

Peasants were possibly subject to the greater hardships. They made their own cloth for their clothes of coarse, homespun wool or flax fibre (McGarry, 1976, p. 248). By today's standards,

this cloth would be much too rough to wear next to the skin. According to McGarry (1976), the clothing was simple; it hung loose and was sometimes supplemented by a woollen cape or a leather jacket. The women wore long, loose-fitting dresses, which were occasionally embellished with stitching. The peasants seldom had more than two changes of clothing, often wearing the same outfit month in, month out and usually sleeping and working in the same clothes as well. Having no sanitation in their houses and also lacking in awareness of the importance of personal hygiene, a dip in the pond or the stream was all they thought was needed to stay clean (p. 248). As a consequence, peasants emitted apparently an odour worse than most people, as one author of the eleventh century notes: “the devil did not want the peasants in hell because they smelled so badly” (cited in McGarry, 1976, p. 248). Already in the early Middle Ages, peasants, knights and priests had been divided into a binary system of classification. The ‘smelly’ bodies of the peasants, their simple, coarse clothing and the physical work of food production were attributed with a low social status. In contrast, the concept of medieval knighthood implies chivalry and a position of honour and prestige, whereas the traditional roots of priesthood lies in the secrecy of academia. McGarry (1976) states that even if the peasant’s life by today’s estimate was destitute, it had its joys; although, the Church predetermined these too. Throughout the year there were recurring opportunities to celebrate the festivities of the holy days – days free from work, holidays. Peasants were not required to work on Sundays or at Christmas or Easter. On McGarry’s account, religious celebrations and festivals were shaped by the ritualistic, collective involvement of tradition (p. 250).

From the eleventh to twelfth century onwards, commerce, trade and industry began to flourish on a much larger scale across Europe, despite being affected by invasions, warfare, plagues and other adversities (McGarry, 1976, p. 233). The sudden proliferation of trade and industry in the eleventh and twelfth century is known as the Commercial Revolution. It is marked by strong, well-organised states and the large-scale expansion of economic development. McGarry (1976) notes that the Commercial Revolution is distinct from the Industrial Revolution (p. 233). The Commercial Revolution was primarily concerned with the mass-distribution of handcrafted goods, whereas the Industrial Revolution is characterised by the mass-production and mass-distribution of mechanically produced goods. McGarry outlines how commerce expanded to include trade with all European nation states as well as with the Asian and African continents. Byzantine (Greek), Jewish and Syrian merchants were the prime agents of medieval long-distance trade. Due to the poor road conditions of the twelfth century, commodities were transported on pack animals rather than on carts. Commodities included flax fibres, dyes, cloths, silks and other fine textiles (p. 233). The practices of the Commercial Revolution made possible the Industrial Revolution, making in turn possible what we have today, the cosmopolitan global society. Beck argues (2002) that the human condition in our current era of the twenty-first

century can no longer be understood on a local or a national level but is understood globally (p. 2). Communications and trade practices have long moved into the international arena.

The Industrial Revolution had the most profound impact on the methods of cloth production. In England in the early 1800s, major change was marked by the discovery of steam power, making possible the invention of the mechanical loom. Fritz and Cant (1989) recount how with the aid of new energies and new technologies cloth could be produced mechanically at a much greater speed and in much larger quantities than a hand worker could (p. 594). With the inventions of the cotton gin, the electric spinning jenny and the new power looms, the textile mills of the nineteenth century flourished, removing a highly laborious and arduous source of employment. The change came at a great cost to the spinners and weavers of early industrialisation. New methods of production took away their livelihood and workers were no longer able to provide for themselves or their families. Many sought work in the new weaving mills under appalling working conditions: some were under-aged and many were of poor health. In addition, workers received low pay, worked long hours and endured seven working days. They had no job security, no protection from dangerous machines and no health insurance (Fritz & Cant, 1989, p. 367). According to Epstein (1998), it was the guildsmen in Lyon who invented the mechanical loom in the late eighteenth-century, reducing the need for female labour (p. 700). A few years later, in 1801 in England the Jacquard loom was invented. The first Jacquard loom was a steam-powered loom that used punch cards to weave complex patterns. It was the first machine to use punch cards and was considered an important conceptual precursor of computer programming. Today, computer-controlled Jacquard looms are used for weaving complex patterns (Fritz & Cant, 1989, pp. 367-368).

3.3 The rise and decline of the medieval craft guilds

In this section I use McGarry's (1976) and Epstein's and Prak's (2008) study of European pre-modern craft guilds in order to examine the social influences of the medieval craftsmen. Guild activities centred on the training of apprentices and on the passing on of accumulated cultural knowledge. The guilds played a significant role in advancing craft production and economic growth. The debate explores how the guilds acquired their consortium of skilled labour, contributing to technological innovation. Innovation in turn made possible the transition from pre-modern conditions into modernity. According to Epstein and Prak (2008), the guilds were industrial organisations that were primarily economically motivated. The enormity of their economic influences became apparent in the years leading up to the Industrial Revolution. During the seventeenth century more guilds than at any time before in history were established,

suggesting that craft guilds were the most significant political and cultural institutions impacting on early modern economy (pp. 1-25). Guilds had provided a fundamental social and economic context for the crafts for almost 800 years. This section ends with a short enquiry into the pre-modern cottage industry crafts. These rural industries too provided the social context for craft, supporting innovation and contributing to the expansion of economic growth.

3.3.1 The emergence of the medieval guilds

Guilds began as self-governed and politically independent associations of merchants and skilled craftsmen working together (McGarry, 1976, p. 347). Epstein and Prak (2008) suggest that the guild's focus was originally social and religious. Guilds consisted of family owned workshops, their emergence coinciding with the growing demand for trade and manufacture in the tenth century. Guilds played a role in the establishment of social/religious activities, moral rules, work ethics and training regulations. For Epstein (1998), the key characteristic of the guilds was the apprenticeship. Guilds provided a strong learning environment for young people, generating a skilled workforce and providing many social/economic benefits for their members (p. 690). However, according to McGarry's (1976) study, as the commercialisation practices of the early medieval age guilds increased, the relationship between the merchants and the craftsmen became complex and conflict-ridden (p. 347). The conflict led to a division in interest, causing the craftsmen to separate from the merchants and to form guilds of their own. The first recordings of craft guilds were weaver's guilds, which were thought to have been formed in Mainz, Germany in 1099 (p. 347). Two centuries later, specialised guilds emerged for other crafts: carpentry, blacksmithing, masonry, tannery, shoemaking, harness-making, baking, brewing and fulling and dyeing guilds (p. 347). Two centuries after the emergence of these other guilds, from circa 1400 onwards, the craft guilds began to impact collectively on the economy. According to Epstein (1998), from then on they survived "as a form of industrial organisation for more than five hundred years" (p. 705).

3.3.2 The apprenticeship

The guilds participated in technological innovation and economy in a variety of ways. Epstein (2008) relates the guild's single most important contribution to the economy to the provision of training programmes (pp. 56-60). Thus, in Epstein's (1998) view, the apprenticeship was the central element of the pre-modern craft guild. The function of the apprenticeship was twofold: apprenticeships served to socialise individuals into the social/religious circumstances of their guild, and they equipped artisans with a standard of expertise needed for the quality

manufacture of objects (p. 690). Accordingly, the apprenticeship was as much concerned with the inculcation of social/religious norms as it was with the transmission of skill. In order to reach that higher level of skill and be accepted into a craft guild as a professional journeyman, three to eight years of rigorous training under the guidance of a master were required. Thereafter, several more years of diligent work as a journeyman was needed to become a master. The apprenticeship, McGarry (1976) outlines, was the privilege of boys, who were about twelve years of age when they commenced. The trainee worked for eleven to twelve hours each day, receiving board and lodging free, yet often having to pay a fee for his training (p. 348).

The formal training of an apprenticeship was imperative to the development of competence, knowledge and attributes of personality; training was essential to “the cognitive foundation of human learning” (Epstein, 1998, p. 688). On Epstein’s (1998) analysis, in pre-modern societies where compulsory schooling was non-existent, the training enforced by craft guilds was key to transmitting cognitive/manual skills (p. 688). During the apprenticeship trainees were first expected to acquire the implicit and tacit knowledge of the craft. These were the master’s trade secrets, which could only be passed on through personal demonstration and repeated manual practice (Epstein & Prak, 2008, p. 6). This process is akin to Adorno’s (1977) understanding of *tradere*. *Tradere* entails the transition of skill: one hand receives something from the other and in the process there is a social experience of intimacy and immediacy. Adorno defines this quality of direct and immediate involvement with materials and with others as the naturalness of tradition (p. 310). The second important aspect of the traineeship is the experimental/propositional aspect of learning, i.e. the design process. In order to acquire skill, the student must first demonstrate his intellectual, rational ability to conceive in the mind a plan for a project or an object. The student needs to first develop an abstract idea or a concept and then apply certain rules to the ideas. The creation of many pre-industrial craft objects, including the design of complicated patterns in pre-modern textiles, called for these cognitive/manual skills. Epstein’s (1998) depiction of a medieval weaver illustrates this point, which simultaneously depict the manual/cognitive skills required in my art practice. Before the apprentice weaver could commence with the weaving of cloth, he had to learn a definite set of skills. First he had to conceive an idea of the kind of cloth he was going to weave. Second, he had to consider the length, width and weave structure of the cloth. Third, he had to think about the type of yarn he was going to use. Finally, he had to apply the manual skills to his project, which included the need to:

- (1) have a feel for the appropriate tensions to be applied to the threads and the rhythms required to weave efficiently and evenly;

- (2) be able to thread the warp ends through the right sequence of heddles to obtain the desired patterns;
 - (3) know how to make and repair the equipment involved;
 - (4) understand the different ways of handling the various fibers being woven;
 - (5) be able to coordinate one's hands to throw the shuttle while simultaneously depressing the appropriate foot treadle to lift the warp thread in sequence to create a flawless pattern;
 - (6) wind the warp spools and bobbins for the weft thread so that they unwound smoothly;
 - and (7) be able to make the necessary repairs on the threads when they broke because of bad spinning or inattention on the part of the weaver.
- (Medieval weaver's instructions cited in Epstein, 1998, p. 161)

According to Epstein and Prak (2008), it takes between 5,000 and 10,000 hours of focussed learning to develop advanced level craft skills. These are the reasons why the apprenticeships of pre-modern Europe were necessary and why they lasted as long as they did (p. 6). Epstein and Prak equate the kind of top-level expertise required to execute a high-level craft skill to academic research skills. The academic curriculum is an interesting analogy to the differing phases of guild training. A craftsman may graduate at a journeyman level then a master. Similarly, a student may graduate with a bachelor degree, an honours, masters or with a doctorate. At each point the craftsman or the student will have developed a certain level of expertise with the understanding that there are further levels of knowledge to be achieved (p. 6). Epstein and Prak refer to cognitive psychologists who apparently have determined that there is no real distinction between the acquisition of expert performance in the crafts or in the sciences – or in any other area of specialisation for that matter. To become a top-level expert in any branch of learning, the trainee or the student must practice the same skill over and over, usually under the supervision of their teachers. The teachers themselves are part of a collective of experts who operate within the framework of a specialised organisation, the craft guild or the university. Originally, within the university environment, students and teachers lived and worked together. Epstein and Prak suggest that the model for this kind of learning environment was derived from the craft guilds. Equally, the acquisition of the current master's degree, which is an academic degree, has originated from the medieval craft guild model (p. 6).

The discrepancies between the differing lengths of apprenticeships have been the cause of much confusion (Epstein & Prak, 2008, p. 8). For example, in England an apprentice tailor took seven years to complete his training, in the Netherlands in contrast it took two years to complete the training. Epstein and Prak (2008) contend that the English apprentice had reached a much higher level of expertise than his Dutch counterpart. Despite these discrepancies, a master who had qualified at the Dutch tailor's guilds was approximately thirty years of age – the same age as his English counterpart, suggesting that twelve to eighteen years was the minimum number

of years required in order to develop a high level of expertise (p. 8). The comparison with the university, therefore, is in many ways appropriate.

On Epstein's and Prak's (2008) account, the training is essentially a creative force that combines propositional knowledge with tacit understanding. Propositional knowledge is theoretical, factual, logical and explicit knowledge and therefore it can be learned from books. In contrast, tacit understanding is a kind of unspoken, implicit or implied knowledge that cannot necessarily be articulated or rationally understood. Instead, tacit knowledge is transferred from one person to another through the act of imitation, repetition and experience. The most effective way of learning tacit knowledge is when it is transferred in "communities of practice", such as in the learning environment of the craft guilds (p. 6). Tacit knowledge is the key element needed to create the poetry in the craft object. Tacit knowledge is the enigma or the mystery of a trade secret. The etymological origin of mystery is derived from the Latin word *mysterium* and refers among other things to the professional handicrafts, trades or skills. *Mysterium* is "an action or practice about which there is or is reputed to be some secrecy; *esp.* a highly skilful or technical operation in a trade or art" ("Oxford English Dictionary," 2009). Craft guilds themselves were often known as 'mysteries' or 'misteriumor', as Epstein and Prak (2008) clarify:

The most significant pre-modern incentive for invention was thus the capacity to capture the rents provided by a technical secret; and the most effective source of these rents was the craft guild – which significantly was known originally as *misteriumor*, as in England, craft 'mystery' as opposed to religious 'fraternity'. (p. 77)

Trade secrets thus, as Epstein and Prak (2008) outline, were essentially specific craft techniques which could be learned only through practice (p. 704). Tacit knowledge or technical secret is also the key element that is vulnerable to the disembedding mechanisms of detraditionalisation, a point that I return to throughout the thesis.

3.3.3 The economic performance

Motivated by an increase in medieval commercial activity, weaver's guilds played a central role in the production of woollen, linen and silk textiles (McGarry, 1976, p. 346). Epstein (1998) maintains that the majority of guild statutes were concerned with meeting the demands for a high standard of produce in the market place, in turn providing their members with income in highly unstable markets. The economically driven performance of a guild therefore assumes that guilds functioned as a cartel with diverse influences (p. 686). For example, the guilds determined who could fulfil their role as qualified masters, who could be hired as journeymen,

who was employed as an apprentice and who was employed as an unskilled worker – wool carders, who did not usually belong to any guild. Craft guild masters mediated between members and negotiated with the merchant guilds. The guilds acted as a buyer of raw materials and as a seller of its products, determining the prices and times for the sales of product (pp. 684-686). Furthermore, the guilds enforced quality standards by regulating the production process, which included regulating the hours of work, prohibiting night work (due to poor lighting conditions) and prohibiting the use of inferior materials. Guilds established all terms and conditions for training apprentices (p. 686). Epstein (2008) maintains that craftsmen tended to privilege the labour intensive work because of the emphasis placed on skill and expertise for quality production, rather than capital intensive innovations, which all too often resulted in low quality product (pp. 65-67).

According to Epstein and Prak (2008), guilds were the most important institution impacting on early modern industry (p. 5). It was their knowledge that contributed the most to the economic growth of pre-modern times, as Inkster indicates, “The production of ‘useful and reliable knowledge (URK) rather than science generated technological progress before the eighteenth century”, craftsmen hence were “vital to the promotion of technological innovation” (cited in Epstein & Prak, 2008, p. 5). Epstein and Prak suggest that the Industrial Revolution emerged as a result of a long process of technological guild innovation and invention, taking place in the 500 or more years leading up the revolution. It was the training of the skilled workforce together with the meticulous establishment of production processes that made possible the progress of technological innovation in pre-modern Europe (p. 5).

3.3.4 The social conditions

The craft guilds separated from the merchant guilds initially for two main reasons: to play a more influential role in controlling the trade but also to protect the interests of their members from the all-pervasive commercialising influences of the merchant guilds (Epstein, 1998, p. 685). McGarry (1976) also contends that the guilds should be regarded as relatively humane because they provided their members with a form of social security, even though an average day of work was eleven to twelve hours (p. 347). Guilds offered welfare support to widowed women, they acted as sponsors for religious, educational and recreational activities and they provided their apprentices with a form of protection (p. 348). Apprentices were particularly vulnerable to exploitation because they were regarded as cheap labour. Hence, guilds extended their guardianship to safeguard their apprentices “against the opportunism of their masters” (Epstein, 1998, p. 691).

3.3.5 The patriarchal, hierarchical organisations called craft guilds

According to McGarry (1976), craft guilds are patriarchal, hierarchical organisations in which everyone's status is clearly defined. The master occupies the highest position, followed by one or more journeymen and several apprentices. The master was a specialist craftsman of distinction and reputation who had many roles to play. He was simultaneously the expert and a guardian. He was the employer of journeymen, apprentices and unskilled workers. He was a foreman for all workers and a mentor for the apprentices. He was also responsible for buying raw materials, all intermediate goods and for selling the finished products (pp. 347-348). Epstein (1998) argues that each guild's high technical standards were often maintained within the enigma, mysteries, technical secrets or tacit knowledge of the master. Epstein contends that such technical secrets were closely guarded by the craftsman's family because the secrets were key to providing the members of a guild with income or rent as it was called then (p. 704).

The journeyman was a trained and experienced worker (McGarry, 1976, p. 348). The name journey is derived from the French word 'journée' (day), which does not indicate travel as is often assumed, but that the journeyman was paid each day for his work. However, the transfer of technical skill, and more so technical secrets, through travelling or migrating journeymen was a further consequence of craft guild activities (Epstein, 1998, p. 703). After qualifying, McGarry's (1976) research reveals that most journeymen continued to work for the same master or for a different one in the same town for several more years, after which they may have acquired sufficient skill to become a master. To qualify as a master, the journeyman had to submit a masterpiece to the guild, "a complete and adequate product of his craft" (p. 348). However, for many, master was financially unattainable and it was difficult to meet the standards required: the journeyman had to meet the technical criteria as master, acquire sufficient funds to pay the guild fees, purchase his own tools and equip a shop of his own. Only then was he accepted into the elite association of master and only a master was "a fully qualified artisan" (p. 348) who was permitted to establish a business, usually in his home or in the close vicinity of it. He could then practice the craft, train apprentices and hire journeymen himself (p. 348). The apprentice occupied the lowest rank. Apprentices were required to work below market wages until they had acquired an adequate level of skill (Epstein, 1998, p. 691).

3.3.6 The role of the women

The role of the women in the guilds differed from that of the men. Epstein and Prak (2008) show that early medieval guilds were highly gender-biased and most guilds excluded specifically women from membership. Women were subject to gender-discrimination (p. 9). Even though women practiced many kinds of skilled crafts, they were often involved in the production of goods and earned income from their work, they received little recognition from guilds. As non-guild members, women were employed as unskilled workers, such as carders and spinners. Furthermore, women were barred from the buying and selling of products (p. 9). Howell (1988) for example claims that female weavers were not only excluded from the buying and selling of silk, cotton or saffron, they were also denied the rights to produce export-quality cloth (p. 2). According to Epstein and Prak (2008), the reasons for exclusion was that guilds were merely reinforcing other significant social mechanisms: “pre-modern gender discrimination was not invented by – and certainly not restricted to – the guilds” (p. 167). In other words, it was a commonly socially accepted fact that women were not responsible for production processes. With the exemption of master’s widows, women were also banned from becoming masters (p. 162).

3.3.7 A chronological overview of the rise and fall of the medieval craft guilds

In the following section, I draw on McGarry (1976) to provide a chronological overview of the rise and fall of the medieval craft guilds. Thereafter, I use Epstein (1998) to examine the reasons for the guilds decline. As discussed previously, medieval craft guilds were built on the foundations of a highly skilled workforce, dominated by market influences and contributing themselves significantly to the pre-modern economic boom years. McGarry (1976) posits that by the High Middle Ages the crafts had reached their height of skill and proficiency. For example, all textile work was done with extraordinary competence, just as the painstaking technique of making richly coloured stained glass images had reached a level of perfection unequalled in human history (p. 347). In the twelfth century, utilising natural forces, windmills and watermills were invented, making possible the invention of mechanical methods for the spinning and fulling of fibre. Spinning wheels and mechanical carders removed an arduous form of female labour. However, craft production was still labour intense. In the thirteenth century, manifestly overworked, underpaid and plagued by the strict manufacturing procedures and the restraining rules of the guild, discontented journeymen staged their first recorded strike. Journeymen were “mutually pledging themselves not to work for so low a wage as before, and thus to force their wages to be increased” (p. 348).

In the fourteenth century, the capitalistic interests of the merchant guilds began to dominate the market further and the first large scale production industries came into being, with the textile industry pioneering the path again. As McGarry (1976) explains, entrepreneurs distributed raw materials, such as flax or wool fibres to spinners, combers, carders, weavers, fullers and dyers. The workers were paid on completion of each phase, “usually on a quantitative (‘piecework’) basis” (p. 347). These were early stages of large-scale factory systems. Systems were operating on the capitalistic basis of output and gain in which merchants purchased large-scale quantities cloth and then on-sold it, with the act of marketing taking precedence over the artistic appreciation of the work. The craftsmen began to experience the lack of creative and artistic skill as mindless; the work was onerous. The focal point of production was not related to the creative or aesthetic experience they valued; or even to the “practical experience of life” (p. 347). The craftsmen soon realised that the capitalistic interests of the merchant guilds differed significantly to theirs. As McGarry interprets it, the craft guilds responded by tightening their rules further (p. 347).

In the fifteenth century, the conflict between the craft guilds and the merchant guilds intensified. England was producing an abundance of raw wool, and large-scale marketing began to expand at an unprecedented rate. For instance, in just over 130 years, the exports of broadcloth, a dense woollen cloth, rose from about 3,000 pieces in 1353 to about 63,000 in 1489 (McGarry, 1976, p. 555). As McGarry’s (1976) study shows, in this period the older craft guilds continued to be governed by the masters who tended to pass on their knowledge and skills to selected persons only, usually to their sons, relatives or to other favoured people (p. 555). Additionally, under the austere regulations of the craft guilds most journeymen remained labourers, having little or no opportunities of advancing their skills or status. In response, and in an endeavour to represent the interests of the workers, journeyman guilds were established, causing further separation between the guilds. The journeyman guilds, called *Bruderschaften* in Germany, *Compagnonnages* in France and *Brotherhoods* or *Comradeships* in England were the predecessors of today’s labour unions (p. 556).

Moreover, in the fifteenth century national governments began to show a growing interest in the economy, playing a larger part in the promotion and regulation of the markets. Thus, “a new political economy was born” (McGarry, 1976, p. 560). According to McGarry (1976), the guilds closed rank, transforming into a kind of closed corporation, causing further divisions (p. 560). Habermas (1984) explains that closed worldviews cause problems because they exclude alternative ways of thinking and regulate all action (p. 63). Accordingly, in the fifteenth century the guilds were professed to be inflexible and hostile to technical innovation. They were thought

to pose a hindrance to industrial improvement and economic progress because they supposedly resisted all change (McGarry, 1976, p. 556). In this period, McGarry (1976) outlines, the guilds increased their fees and raised the standards for the acceptance of a masterpiece so that it became increasingly difficult for journeymen to reach the status of master. Journeymen perceived the guilds as narrow in outlook, conservative and selfish and their regulations were seen as too restrictive (p. 556). Guilds in this period, as Epstein and Prak (2008) interpret it, “were seen as part of an economic system that had prevented the European economy from realising its full economic potential” (p. 1). Subsequently, McGarry (1976) continues, in the sixteenth century, the commercialisation interests of the merchant guilds had surpassed the aesthetic, creative ones of the craft guilds (p. 556). The textile industry continued to play a major role in the growth of wealth since textile production was a lucrative form of output. English kings in particular supported the woollen textile industry, whereas French monarchs turned their interests to the silk textile industry (p. 560).

By the Later Middle Ages, approximately at the end of the fifteenth century, in the textile industry the division of labour and the factory style production methods of output and gain were being utilised increasingly. According to Epstein (1998), in this period more craft guilds were established than at any time before. Epstein argues that the proliferation of European craft guilds in the Late Middle Ages was a response to the growing manufacture and trade and the subsequent increase in demand for skilled workers (p. 701). The majority of Dutch guilds emerged precisely during the economic boom years of 1610 to 1670:

Dutch craft guilds were at the forefront of technological innovation, both through inventions within their ranks and in their adoption of novelties from abroad. Dutch economic success was in part a consequence of the country's high number of guilds, which ensured a correspondingly high level of investment in human capital (p. 701).

McGarry's (1976) study shows that the new economic consciousness of the High Middle Ages (circa sixteenth and seventeenth century) caused society to become more divided in outlook and circumstance. Opinions and attitudes differed, the context for craft production changed and overall consensus was hard to reach. Although, due to growing specialisation and differentiation, society as a whole became wealthier but it became also fragmented and separatist (p. 563). In addition, as Habermas (1984) argues, in the High Middle Ages the “meaning-giving unity of metaphysical worldviews” and their tacit/esoteric knowledge claims became subject to scrutiny, causing knowledge to “fall apart”. Individuals themselves became alienated and separatist (pp. 244-245). In this period, according to McGarry (1976), the middle class and the proletariat emerged, causing a further division between the capitalistic upper bourgeoisie and the ordinary bourgeoisie (p. 563). On the one side there was “the dynamic

enterprise and creative originality of numerous entrepreneurs” whilst on the other, “there were the narrow selfishness, merciless competition, crass worldliness, and disdain for tradition, religion and morality of many members of ‘the new society’” (p. 563). As McGarry interprets it, some people applauded and overrated fragmentation and the materialisation of individualism, whereas others declined completely to accept the new social conditions (p. 691). Despite the disparities, inconsistencies and inequalities caused by the emergence of the new social order, important gains were made. For example, education was promoted and the Church, even though it was “guided by highly developed systems of dogmatic and moral theory” (p. 691), played a major role in promoting education. The Catholic Church, a prime representative of a traditional institution, was simultaneously a key player in the process of secularisation. The Church was a sponsor of schools and a contributor of patronage to new institutions of higher learning. Church sponsored universities emerged to encourage the acquirement of higher levels of learning, playing a major part, not in the advancement of craft knowledge, but in the emancipation, improvement and standardisation of education (p. 691). The emphasis placed on the development of academia with the exclusion of manual skill suggests the establishment of many dichotomies: it suggests the mind/body, cognitive/manual and art/craft divide for instance.

By the eighteenth century, the craft guilds had received an exceedingly bad name and were abolished unceremoniously as being economically unviable. Epstein and Prak (2008) hold responsible the attitudes of thinkers such as Adam Smith for disseminating the negative views against the guilds (p. 1). In 1776 Smith, an eighteenth century Scottish political economist, in the *Wealth of Nations*, a work on economic growth, had insinuated that craft guilds were “‘a conspiracy against the public’, and the government should ‘do nothing to facilitate such assemblies, much less to render them necessary’” (cited in Epstein & Prak, 2008, p. 1). Being influential in questions about economics, Smith’s insinuations were first taken up by French revolutionaries who began to abolish their guilds in 1791, followed by the rest of continental Europe over the next thirty years. Epstein and Prak (2008) maintain that historians in the Victorian age continued with the insinuations, suggesting that “the simultaneity of ideas and policies as definitive proof that the guilds had outlived themselves as the gothic remnants of a bygone age and should make way for the modern world of the steam engine and laissez-faire” (p. 1). These are attitudes that Ruskin, Morris and other like-minded Victorians chose to contest. I address this point later in this chapter. Importantly, England was the first country to industrialise and the first country to abolish in their entirety their guilds. In the early eighteenth century with the rise of the mechanical mass-production of objects of commerce, craft-based production, including the textiles, was finally replaced by machine production processes (Epstein & Prak, 2008, p. 175).

Epstein (1998) argues that the negative assessment of the guilds persisted for another two hundred years (p. 693). He also opines that evidence concerning the decline of guilds due to ineffectiveness, inflexibility or rigid quality control was far from convincing (p. 693). As Epstein notes, “Modern research had already revealed the old, stark dichotomy between ‘guilded’ and ‘conservative’, and ‘non-guilded’ and ‘progressive’ industries as profoundly simplistic” (p. 169). Hence, he asks, did the guilds fail? He replies:

The short answer is that they did not. In every instance they were abolished by a forcible act of legislation (in 1791 in France, in 1835 in England, in 1869 in Germany), and their training functions were taken up by unions, workers’ and professional associations, and other public (municipal, regional or state) organizations. (p. 706)

Craft guilds had survived for close to 800 years. Epstein (2008) explains their longevity in terms of an economic organisation: the guilds had made a significant contribution to the skilled workforce and to innovative work practices, even though innovation was not always without problems (p. 163). New technologies were often obscure and expensive. For instance, the early fulling mills, often cited as evidence of guild hostility, in reality caused serious damage to high quality cloth. For these reasons new technologies could not be readily accepted. Equally, new dyes could not be utilised untested because they too often caused damage to cloth. Once the technologies had been improved, guild resistance towards innovation dissolved (p. 164).

Epstein and Prak (2008) concede that guilds had survived for hundreds of years because the guilds provided training for a highly skilled work force, they showed competitiveness in the market and were economically successful (p. 155). The long apprenticeship produced labour specialisation and highly sought after tacit knowledge. Skilled workers travelled to find work in other towns, helping to disseminate knowledge and contributing to the wider pool of human capital (p. 156). Epstein and Prak (2008) suggest that the abolition of the guilds in the eighteenth century was a political decision, “for which economic motivations were at best of secondary importance” (p. 3).

3.4 The textile cottage industries of Montigny

Guilds were not the sole organisations which participated in the entrepreneurial nature of free market capitalism. According to Vardi (1993), the rural textile industry flourished in the light of capitalistic expansion. Her book, *The land and the loom* is a study of the textile cottage industries of Montigny, Cambrésis in the North of France, spanning the period between 1650-1960. On Vardi’s account, during the economic boom years of the seventeenth century, “the

peasants had found alternative, viable forms of income in cottage industry” (p. 204). Due to the textile craft activities in the seventeenth century, Montigny increased rapidly in population and in wealth. The spinning of flax and the weaving of fine linen cloth were occupations of prosperity and weavers ranked among the local elite. Encouraged by the economic success of this exclusive linen trade, large groups of farmers turned to handloom production. At the same time, successful weavers began to invest in landownership, becoming farmers in turn (p. 14).

In Montigny in the 1850s, at the height of the Industrial Revolution, the social circumstances that had supported the linen production trade changed dramatically, impacting on the lives of the spinners and weavers. In order to continue with the production, Vardi (1993) outlines, weavers had to include in their manufacture cottons, woollens and silks. By the early 1900s, weavers had to use machine-spun cotton fibres, even though the wool and linen fibres were still being produced by hand. Fine linen fibre was brittle and difficult to spin with machines (p. 224). Despite their efforts to continue with producing handmade fabrics, with the specialisation that was inevitably to emerge with growing technical innovation, the textile artisans of Montigny lost their struggle with mechanisation and increasingly turned to using machine spun fibre (p. 11). However, machine spun fibre lowered the quality of the final product. Due to the poorer quality product and modernity’s lack of interest in the fine linens, the spinners and weavers of Montigny were no longer supported. In the early 1900s, the spinners and weavers represented the poorest members of their community (p. 232). They had lost their income as well as their independence, leading to large-scale pauperisation. They discouraged their children from learning the trade because weavers earned less than the minimum wage needed to keep a family. In 1925, the first mechanical looms made their appearance in the village of Montigny. Despite the hardship, the tradition of handloom linen weaving continued into the 1960s, when the “flickering reminder of tri-centenary activity” finally disappeared (p. 228).

3.5 The Victorian arts and crafts movements

This fourth section investigates the emergence of the Victorian arts and crafts movements and their ideological underpinnings and influences. The movement was important for criticising the practices of industrialisation, but also for disseminating Ruskin’s (1964) theory of aestheticism. This theory is relevant to this current research for two reasons. First, it informed the ideals of the Victorian craft guilds, the arts and crafts movement, der Deutsche Werkbund, the Bauhaus and numerous other craft movements as well as playing an important role in early modern art education across Europe and in the US. Second, Ruskin’s theory of aestheticism, which he outlines in a chapter titled ‘The Nature of the Gothic’ in *The Stones of Venice*, has elements that

are useful to my art praxis. His theory helps frame the significance of skilled craftsmanship, the importance of using the hands to make work and its connection to the poetry or to the aestheticism in life and work.

A close examination of the Victorian craft guilds reveals that their ideals differed quite dramatically from their pre-industrial counterparts. As discussed previously, medieval craft guilds were driven by economic success. Being at the forefront of pre-industrial innovation, they played a major role in instigating the economic boom years of the high and late middle ages. They were abolished only after the new technologies of the Industrial Revolution had surpassed the production methods of the guilds. Fifty years after the final disappearance of the craft guilds, at the height of the Industrial Revolution, in Victorian England a group of intellectuals emerged who began to criticise the practices of industrialisation. Among them, John Ruskin and William Morris, who remained unconvinced that technological progress had brought any real benefits to humanity. In their mind, industrialisation had caused the stultification of society and the degradation of nature, as Ruskin (1964) argues, “Wherever you see want, or misery, or degradation, in this world about you, there, be sure, either industry has been wanting, or industry has been in error” (p. 152). For Ruskin, the tendency to live in big cities was largely responsible for causing great unhappiness in the human condition, whereas industrialisation was the cause of “our loss of fellowship with Nature” (p. 151).

In sections that follow, first, I compare and contrast the ideals of the Victorian craft guilds with the intentions of the medieval guilds. The Victorian ideals provided the motivation for the emergence of hundreds of craft revival movements, which established themselves across the world. Second, I examine Ruskin’s vision of a pure lifeworld, a utopian vision based on his theory of aestheticism, which he tried to realise in the form of the *Guild of St George*. Third, the influences of Morris in helping establish the arts and crafts movement are investigated. Here it is revealed that a shift in attitude has occurred, contributing towards the commercialisation of craft. Fourth, I discuss der Deutsche Werkbund and the Bauhaus project. Both were ambiguous attempts to amalgamate the crafts with industry. The concept of der Deutsche Werkbund lives on, whereas due to Nazi intervention, the Bauhaus was forced to close. Fifth, I examine the reasons underlying the decline of the craft revival movements and mention the widespread influences of those movements on art education. Ruskin’s legacy in the contemporary context is examined briefly.

3.5.1 The intentions of the Victorian craft revival movements

The Victorian craft revival movements were influenced by the teachings of Ruskin, Morris, Pugin, Crane and others who sought to counteract the influences of industrialisation. These thinkers sought social reform, looking for an alternative to the destructive, obnoxious practices of the Industrial Revolution (Bennett, n.d.). Crane, a key figure in the development of the craft revival movement, described the movement as follows:

The movement represents in some sense a revolt against the hard mechanical conventional life and it's [*sic*] insensitivity to beauty. It is a protest against that so called industrial progress, which produces shoddy wares, the cheapness of which is paid for by the lives of their producers and the degradation of their users. It is a protest against the turning of men into machines against artificial distinctions in art, and against making the immediate market value or possibility of profit the chief test of artistic merit. It also advances the claim of all and each to the common possession of beauty in things common and familiar. (cited in Bennett, n.d.)

The craft guild revival advocates believed that there was an alternative to the ugliness of industrialisation; they sought it in the concept of aestheticism. For Ruskin (2009b) and Morris (c.f. Thompson, 1993) in particular, nature was the source and the inspiration for truth and beauty. Morris for example based much of his imagery on his interpretations of natural forms. Along with the other thinkers, Ruskin expressed the opinion that there was a distinctive beauty about the arts, crafts and the architecture of the medieval period. In their view, the practices of the medieval craft guilds best reflected their ideas concerning truth, beauty and aestheticism. In the two volumes of *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin analyses the crafts and architecture of the Gothic era and develops accordingly his ideas about the aesthetic nature of life and art. For Morris, the chapter, 'The Nature of the Gothic' in volume II was "one of the few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century" (cited in Thompson, 1993, pp. 243-244). In 'The Nature of the Gothic' Ruskin had depicted an image of the medieval era representing the golden age of creativity and freedom. For Ruskin, the medieval craftsmen showed honesty in the construction of objects and truth to the materials they used. The artist and the craftsmen were equals, and art was not separate or superior to craft (Bennett, n.d.). Moreover, both Ruskin and Morris assumed that the medieval craftsman practised a high standard of craftsmanship, that the social circumstances fostered the creative independence of individual craftspeople, that the craftsman had modelled his ideas on nature and that he took pleasure in 'work well done', which was in opposition to the drudgery of factory work (Bennett, n.d.).

The Stones of Venice was one of the first publications to be illustrated and published by Morris in his newly founded *Kelmscott Press* (MacTaggart, n.d.). The significance of Ruskin, which

makes him still relevant today, is in the way in which he called attention to the innate relationship between art and life. For Ruskin, “the spurious materials, senseless forms and crude, cheap execution of Victorian products” and the failure to appreciate true aestheticism are symptoms of a cultural crisis (Landow, 2006). Ruskin sought a reform that echoed the values and ideals of the medieval craft guilds. For him, medieval work represented a model of “solid, careful craftsmanship” (Landow, 2006) from which its “aesthetic vivacity [was] achieved through co-operative labour” (Crouch, 2002, p. 24). Both Ruskin and Morris utilised these kinds of ideals as a means of economic and social reform, although they each brought different interpretations to their visions and each put their ideas into practice in their own way. Ruskin established a trust called *The Guild of St George*, from which several holdings emerged, whereas Morris provided training and work opportunities for craftsmen, still excluding most women from working in the workshops. Ruskin and Morris shared the belief that the medieval guilds represented a model for a system of ideal unity for work, art/craft production and life (Landow, 2006). However, it seems that both failed to investigate the realities of the guilds. Neither Ruskin nor Morris paid sufficient attention to the economic influences of the medieval guilds or to the role the guilds played in technological innovation.

3.5.2 The Nature of the Gothic – Ruskin’s theory of aestheticism

Accordingly, Ruskin’s analysis of medieval Gothic art and architecture is more ideological than factual. It is an interpretation of pure aestheticism and is discussed here because it has value in understanding how the truth claims of tradition might be established. The concept of the Gothic, Ruskin (2009b) outlines, applies in general to the medieval architecture of Northern Europe. Gothic architecture is characterised by its external, material and its internal, non-material forms. Among other things, the external, material Gothic is comprised of an array of pointed arches, vaulted roofs and grotesque sculptures (p. 32). However, for Ruskin, the aesthetic value of the Gothic is sought in its internal, non-material forms. According to Ruskin, internal forms are “mental tendencies” or “mental expressions” of the workers, which have manifested themselves in “the fancifulness” of the work, “the love of variety and the love of richness” (p. 32). These ‘mental tendencies’ and expressions are informed by many ‘mingled ideas’, and it is this combination of ideas that underlie the nature of the Gothic. As Ruskin explains, ‘mingled ideas’ “can consist only in their union” (p. 33). It is the unity, the coming together of many ideas, that creates “the Gothic spirit within us” (p. 33). The following is a summarisation of Ruskin’s “pleasant and profitable” ideological inquiry into the six core ‘internal forms’ of the Gothic (p. 33). They are listed in the order Ruskin deems relevant:

On Ruskin's (2009b) account, the most important characteristic of the Gothic is the notion of imperfection. Gothic work exhibits a degree of imperfection, savageness and rudeness, which finds its expression in "a wildness of thought and a roughness of work" and in "this very character, it deserves our profoundest reverence" (p. 36). For Ruskin, imperfection is not only a noble characteristic but an essential one (p. 48), for the imperfect is "lovely in form" and, unlike the machine-made product, is never seen twice (p. 46). Under the circumstances of industrialisation, as Ruskin opines, the choice is between "the lovely form" and "the perfect finish", which is analogous to the choice between "a man or a grindstone" (p. 46). For Ruskin, the choice is between humanity's expression of life and submission to the drudgery of machinery, between freedom and slavery. Moreover, Ruskin privileges imperfections in the work because the 'perfect finish' of industrially manufactured objects is void of life and void of expression, as he notes:

It seems a fantastic paradox, but it is nevertheless a most important truth, that no architecture can be truly noble which is *not* imperfect. Imperfection is essential to all that we know about life. To abolish imperfection is to destroy expression. Not any kind of human work can be good unless it is imperfect. (p. 48)

The second most important characteristic is the 'love of change'. Ruskin (2009b) denotes change as diversity and variety. He argues that perfection and a lack of variety in design and work represses the worker: "Wherever the workman is utterly enslaved, the parts of the building must of course be absolutely like each other; for the perfection of his execution can only be reached by exercising him in doing one thing, and giving him nothing else to do" (p. 50). He questions, "What reward will we retain for the perpetual variety of every building"? and replies, "If there is perpetual change in design and execution, the workman must have been set free" (p. 50). Variety then, underlies the notion of creativity and freedom of thought, which were central to the development of the craft revival movements. Ruskin emphasises the importance of variety as follows:

Let us then understand at once that change or variety is as much a necessity to the human heart and brain in buildings as in books; that there is no merit, though there is some occasional use, in monotony; and that we must no more expect to derive either pleasure or profit from an architecture whose ornaments are of one pattern, and whose pillars are of one proportion, than we should out of a universe in which the clouds were all of one shape, and the trees all of one size. (p. 52)

For Ruskin (2009b), "The Gothic spirit was capable of perpetual novelty" and 'perpetual novelty' is an expression of the intellect: "intellect is shown in the new arrangement or invention of the pointed arch" (p. 54). However, he cautions, if novelty is repeated all too often,

it ceases to “be delightful”, because then novelty becomes an everyday occurrence. When it becomes everyday, novelty has a monotonous effect and “we are driven to seek delight in extreme and fantastic degrees of it”. Ruskin diagnoses the phenomenon of perpetual novelty as the “diseased love of change” (p. 54).

The third characteristic concerns the ‘love of nature’. The love of nature is an interpretation of naturalism and reveals most clearly Ruskin’s (1964) ideological underpinnings. The love of nature means “the love of natural objects for their own sake” and Gothic work, “when referred to the arrangement of all art, as purist, naturalist, or sensualist, is naturalist” (p. 102):

This character [naturalism] follows necessarily on its extreme love of truth, prevailing over the sense of beauty, and causing it to take delight in portraiture of every kind, and to express the various characters of the human countenance and form, as it did the varieties of leaves and the ruggedness of branches (Ruskin, 1964, pp. 102-103).

For Ruskin (1964), “the fourth essential element of the Gothic mind” was “the sense of the Grotesque” (p. 104). He ascribes this element ‘grotesque’ to a ‘disturbed imagination’, which, however, has positive underpinnings. The ‘disturbed imagination’ of the medieval craftsman expresses itself in “the tendency to delight in fantastic and ludicrous, as well as in sublime images” (p. 104). Ruskin perceived these tendencies as “a universal instinct of the Gothic imagination” (p. 104).

Ruskin (1964) names the fifth element obstinacy or rigidity. He emphasizes that obstinacy as a characteristic is “not merely stable, but active rigidity” (p. 104). Rigidity is referred to as the energy that “gives tension to movement, and stiffness to resistance... [that] makes the fiercest lightning forked rather than curved, and the stoutest oak-branch angular rather than bending, and is as much seen in the quivering of the lance as in the glittering of the icicle” (p. 104). Once again, Ruskin likens the rigid structures of Gothic architecture to natural phenomenon.

The final element is generosity. Ruskin (1964) assumes generosity to be the least essential element because its removal will not destroy the Gothic character of a building (p. 106). He defines generosity as “the uncalculating bestowal of the wealth of its labour”. This least important element, which is central to Morris’ teachings about ‘the joy in labour’ and ‘the splendor in design’, is elusive in definition. Generosity, the wealth of labour, “depends for its effect almost exclusively on loveliness of simple design and grace of uninvolved proportion”. ‘The loveliness of simple design’ does not necessarily imply simplicity or minimalism, because much of Gothic architecture is rich in ornamental design: “in the most characteristic buildings, a

certain portion of their effect depends upon accumulation of ornament; and many of those which have most influence on the minds of men, have attained it by means of this attribute alone” (p. 106). As Ruskin explains, “The richness of the work is, paradoxical as the statement may appear, a part of its humility” (p. 106). Ruskin contends that ‘the Gothic heart’, whose “rude love of decorative accumulation”, is characterised by the following three elements:

A magnificent enthusiasm, which feels as if it never could do enough to reach the fulness of its ideal; an unselfishness of sacrifice, which would rather cast fruitless labour before the altar than stand idle in the market; and, finally, a profound sympathy with the fulness and wealth of the material universe, rising out of that Naturalism whose operation we have already endeavoured to define. (p. 107)

Ruskin (1964) explains that the removal of any one or two of the six core principles discussed above will not destroy the Gothic characteristic, but the removal of a majority of them will (p. 107). Ruskin’s inquiry was not a critical investigation of medieval craftsmanship but a development of a theory of aestheticism, comprising of a number of ‘internal forms’: “We have now...obtained a view approaching to completeness of the various moral or imaginative elements which composed the inner spirit of Gothic architecture” (p. 107). His conclusion, “We cannot say, therefore, that a building is either Gothic or not Gothic in form, any more than we can in spirit. We can only say that it is more or less Gothic, in proportion to the number of Gothic forms which it unites” (p. 107) reinforces Ruskin’s ideological points of view.

3.5.3 The Guild of St George

Ruskin’s most utopian project, *The Guild of St George* was founded in 1871. For Ruskin, *The Guild of St George* was an antidote to industrialisation and a means with which to implement his ideological, moral-aesthetic evaluation of life and art (Landow, 2006). *The Guild of St. George* was initially established as a trust. From the trust several guilds or holdings emerged, with names such as *Atholgarth*, *Ruskinland*, *St Johns Cottage*, *St George's Farm*, *Uncllys Farm* and *Beaucastle Farm* (Britannica, 2010). The members were called companions and Ruskin was the master: “The Guild was to be a band of men of good will, giving a tithe of their income, and the best of their energies, to acquiring land, and developing it, in accordance with Ruskin's ideas and ideals” (Britannica, 2010). What was “chiefly needed in England at the present day”, as Ruskin articulates his ideas, “is to show the quantity of pleasure that may be obtained by a consistent, well administered competence, modest, confessed, and laborious” (cited in Mather, 1902, p. 80). Ruskin envisioned a lifeworld, where human happiness could be found in a commitment to hard manual work and in the absence of systemic influence:

We will try to take some small piece of English ground beautiful, peaceful and fruitful. We will have no steam-engines upon it, and no railroads; we will have no untended or unthought-of creatures on it; none wretched, but the sick; none idle, but the dead. (Ruskin cited in Landow, 2006)

According to Mather (1902), *The Guild of St. George* proved disastrous because the creeds with which Ruskin endeavoured to enforce his ideas were ideological and archaic. They were derived from fourteenth century Florence with some adaptations made due to the lapse of time (p. 97). Although his ideas were largely concerned with communal issues such as health and education, supply and demand and with the accumulation and distribution of wealth, this ideal way of life could be achieved only by ‘healthy and ennobling’ labour or hard physical work. It was a life supposedly marked by ‘intellectual and moral soundness’, which

can be met only by a right understanding, on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labour are good for men, raising them, and making them happy.... and by equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labour. (Ruskin cited in Mather, 1902, p. 91)

On Ruskin’s account, it was the master’s responsibility to ensure the conditions for the worker’s quality of life. He placed greater emphasis on the kind of work performed and less on the importance of monetary gains (Mather, 1902, p. 87). Activities on the St George’s farms were educational and work was performed to very high standards. Work entailed traditional craftsmanship and manual agricultural practice, what Habermas (1987) might call “pure action theory” (p. 116). For Ruskin, manual work “intended to show the dignity of labour, the necessity of community, and the possibility of non-competitive social organisation” (Landow, 2006). Landow (2006) proposes that these kinds of activities “were bound to appear unrealistic because they forced upon the attention of his contemporaries Ruskin’s outmoded, subversive political economy”. Landow describes Ruskin’s experiment as “reactionary in aim, limited in scope so that it might be controlled by one erratic and sometimes confused person”. St George’s farm was not a long-term success, yet Ruskin’s theory of aestheticism had widespread influence.

Ruskin’s utopia may have failed, not necessarily because it was inherently idealistic, but because it sits outside the lifeworld/system dialectic. As Habermas (1987) has established, society consists of both lifeworld and system. These two influences, cultural and systemic, simultaneously inform human ways of life. The lifeworld is the key reference point for cultural influences, such as Ruskin’s theory of aestheticism and his understanding of the arts, crafts and education, whereas systemic influences frequently stem from outside influences such as the

market. Within the realm of everyday activities, cultural influences are reproduced and it is these that improve the quality of the lifeworld (p. 137). However, Habermas emphasises, modernity must be understood also on an institutional level. Institutions, in all their complexity, intersect continuously with everyday activities of the lifeworld, and therefore with individuals and with the self. Accordingly, Habermas argues, pure lifeworld or pure action theory does not exist. As he notes, social life, just as life in general, cannot coordinate action solely on the basis of “an unconscious, spontaneous adaptation under the immediate pressure of needs” (p. 116). Similarly, pure system theory cannot exist either: higher societies cannot organise themselves wholly on the basis of pure systemic functionality, not “according to a rational plan of reflective intelligence” or be built on a “rigidly drawn program” (p. 115). In this case, society would consist of a “spontaneous accord of individual interests” whose welfare would depend on an exchange of a gigantic system of contracts (p. 115). Thus, society needs to find a balance between these ‘unconscious, spontaneous adaptations’ and ‘rational plans of reflective intelligence’ (p. 115). Ruskin’s aim was to improve the quality of the lifeworld in the absence of systemic influence. He founded *The Guild of St. George* as an antidote to ‘pure systemic functionality’, failing to find that balance between lifeworld and system, between ‘unconscious, spontaneous adaptations’ and ‘rational plans of reflective intelligence’. Morris, in contrast, did find to some extent that balance.

3.5.4 Morris and the arts and crafts movement

The next section proceeds through a threefold discussion of the various outside mechanisms, infiltrating the lifeworld, and causing eventually a craft tradition to dissolve. It begins with an analysis of Morris’ involvement with the arts and crafts movement, followed by a discussion about the emergence of der Deutscher Werkbund and the Bauhaus project. This section ends with a brief evaluation of contemporary circumstances.

Morris’ name has become synonymous with the arts and crafts movement of the Victorian period. The movement flourished between 1880-1910, forming into a number of craft organisations called the *Century Guild*, the *Art Workers Guild* (of which Morris was Master in 1892), the *Guild of Handicraft* and the *Cotswold School* (Thompson, 1993, p. 88). Like Ruskin, Morris strived to improve the quality of the human lifeworld by reviving traditional craftsmanship. He sought “to recreate the dignified working environment that existed in the medieval crafts guilds” (MacTaggart, n.d.). Morris’ ideas differed somewhat from Ruskin’s because he introduced a working environment for craftsmen that participated in commerce and trade. Morris paid a salary to his craftsmen, yet many of Morris’ ideals were derived from

Ruskin. In 1853 Morris (1988) writes how as a young man he fell “under the influence of the High Church or Puseyite School” (p. 15). It had been his intention to dedicate his life to the Church: “this ... phase however did not last me long, as it was corrected by the books of John Ruskin, which were...a sort of revelation to me” (p. 15). The following points, compiled by MacTaggart (n.d.), illustrates some of Morris’ adaptations of Ruskin’s theories:

Morris felt that the ‘*diligent study of Nature*’ was important, as nature was the perfect example of God’s design. He saw this as the spiritual antidote to the decline in social, moral and artistic standards during the Industrial Revolution.

Morris’ solution was for a return to the values of the Gothic art of the middle Ages, where artists and craftsmen had worked together with a common purpose: to glorify God through the practice of their skills.

Morris felt that this would enhance the quality of life for all, and that artistic activity itself would be seen as a force for good in society.

Morris’ (1988) various business enterprises and his ideas informing the Arts and Crafts movements were communal and based on traditional ways of doing things, focusing on raising the standards of craftsmanship. Importantly, Morris sought to make the work economically viable. The inclusion of the economic factor marked the major difference between Ruskin and Morris. The inclusion of the economic factor incorporated the employment of machinery, as Morris writes:

I have spoken of machinery being used freely for releasing people from the more mechanical and repulsive part of necessary labour; ... to some ... people of the artistic turn of mind, machinery is particularly distasteful... I don’t quite admit that; it is the allowing machines to be our masters and not our servants that so injures the beauty of life nowadays. (p. 222)

Morris was against the mass-production of substandard products, produced for the sole purpose of material gain but he used machines in his business to ease heavy, arduous work. According to Thompson (1993), Morris’ tapestries were woven on both hand-operated and steam-powered Jacquard looms. Interestingly, though, apparently, Morris never used a hand-drawn loom (p. 117).

The Gothic work was the culminating point in medieval art and craft and a model for Ruskin’s and Morris’ paradigms of aestheticism. Even though it appears that Ruskin and Morris idealised what they called the ‘dignified’ circumstances of that period, they identified destructive aspects too. Ruskin (1964), for example, maintained that the cathedral of Milan was “of entirely bad and barbarous Gothic” (p. 227). The barbarian Gothic tribes had caused Rome to fall, had

conquered Europe and infiltrated Western civilisation with their violent practices, yet in this cathedral of Milan was Niccola Pisano's⁶ pulpit, which, according to Ruskin, signified the pinnacle of skill in Gothic architecture (pp. 227-228). Morris also described life in the medieval age as "rough and evil enough, beset by violence, superstition, ignorance, slavery" (cited in Thompson, 1993, p. 239). The medieval people, as Morris interpreted those circumstances, needed to find solace from all the hardships "and that solace was pleasure in their work" (cited in Thompson, 1993, p. 239). Accordingly, both Ruskin and Morris developed the conviction that if people are to find meaning and fulfilment in life, they have to find it in the work they do. Both promoted the act of creativity or "art [as] an expression of man's pleasure in the labour" (cited in Thompson, 1993, p. 244) as an antidote to the more destructive practices of modernity.

3.5.5 The end of the arts and crafts movements

The arts and crafts movement of the Victorian period essentially ended with the First World War (Cumming & Kaplan, 1991, p. 206). There were many reasons that the movement did not continue in its original constitution. One reason, as Crouch (2002) argues, Victorian guilds did not initiate the kind of social reform they envisioned. They were instrumental in maintaining forms of communication between like-minded practitioners and as such, they were successful and were able to disseminate their ideas on a widespread level. However, their significance in instigating change in the wider field of social activity, "must be assumed to be minimal, and if considerable, the result of strong personality rather than organisational strength", Crouch notes (p. 72). A second reason, the movement had not been able to resolve the dichotomy between what the lifeworld stands for and what the system promotes: their artistic ideals did not match the commercial realities. It had not been possible to reconcile the lifeworld with the system. Ruskin's ideals were based on 'pure' lifeworld relationships, whereas Morris' designs were the product of outstanding craftsmanship but their production was financially unviable. Morris' work could only be afforded by the "swinish rich' who had the least need for them" (Morris cited in Whitford, 2006, p. 16). The Victorian craft guilds were equally inoperable financially because production costs involved in high quality craftsmanship were too high to allow a profit.

Nevertheless, the ideas and ideals derived from the Victorian guilds gave rise to many forms of craft organisations and communities. The Victorian influence spread across continental Europe. In the US various associations emerged such as the *American Craftsman Style*, the *American Arts and Crafts Movement*, the *Arts and Crafts Society* and *Mission Style*, all promoting a return to high-level craftsmanship with the aim to re-assert the creative independence of craftspeople.

⁶ Italian Sculptor, ca.1220-1284

In 1907 in Germany an association of architects, designers and industrialists founded *Der Deutscher Werkbund*. Walter Gropius, one of the architects, key member and policy-maker of *der Deutscher Werkbund*, and influenced by Ruskin's writings, may have been the first to actively promote a direct collaboration between craft and industry (Whitford, 2006, p. 22). In seeking "the ennoblement of craftwork in the collaboration of art, industry, and crafts by means of education, propaganda and a common attitude to relevant questions" the *Werkbund* policy marked a major shift in outlook (Friedewald, 2009, p. 7). *Der Deutscher Werkbund* (2010) was dissolved during World War II but in the mid 1950s it re-established itself. In 2007 it celebrated its one hundred year anniversary, and to this day it continues. The *Werkbund* advocates interdisciplinary discourses, incorporating disciplines such as architecture, design, graphic design, photography and the handicrafts. Within the framework of industrial, technological, economical, social and ecological developments it aims to define and re-define the concept of aestheticism, which, according to the *Werkbund's* policies, form the context for quality (2010). In its current form, *der Deutscher Werkbund* may be an example of a more successful collaboration between real human needs and industry.

3.6 The rise and decline of the Bauhaus

Following World War I, other artistic developments emerged, among them *das Bauhaus*. *Das Bauhaus* was a school of art, architecture and industrial design and was first established in Weimar, Germany in 1919. Gropius, a key founder and appointed director of the Bauhaus, introduced his avant-garde *Deutscher Werkbund* policies to the project. Ruskin was opposed to integrating craft with industry; Gropius sought social change by amalgamating craft with industry. In his early essay, *The Concept and Development of the State Bauhaus*, Gropius (cited in Whitford, 2006), acknowledges the influences of Ruskin and Morris. He praised them particularly for 'consciously' seeking ways to unify "the world of work with the creative artists" (p. 23). Gropius, however, sought to unify the context for architecture and modernism with the handicrafts. The Bauhaus project commenced with four craft workshops: weaving, metal work, bookbinding, and printing (Friedewald, 2009, p. 35). In his *Manifesto of the Bauhaus*, published in April 1919, Gropius (cited in Whitford, 2006) articulated in more detail his Bauhaus ideals:

Architects, painters, sculptors, we must all return to crafts! For there is no such thing as 'professional art' there is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. By the grace of Heaven and in rare moments of inspiration which transcend the will, art may unconsciously blossom from the labour of his hand, but a foundation of handicraft is essential for every artist. It is there that the primary source of creativity lies. [Italics as in the original] (p. 202)

Much like Ruskin and Morris, Gropius (cited in Whitford, 2006) was inspired by the high competency arts and crafts of past epochs: “All the great artistic achievements of the past, the Indian, the Gothic miracles, arose out of a total mastery of craft” (p. 203). The Bauhaus was an organisation that sought craft survival within the economic context of its times (Whitford, 2006, p. 12). It aimed for quality craft production at a price affordable to all. Again, the basic idea was modelled on the workshop settings of the medieval guilds. There were no “pupils or teachers at the Bauhaus” but “masters, journeymen and apprentices”, living and working together (Whitford, 2006, p. 12). The Bauhaus was not an antidote to industrialisation, the opposite was the case, because Gropius aimed to establish a connection with the industries of the country and had no concerns about exploiting the latest technologies. Despite their avant-garde aspirations, the Bauhaus philosophies were riddled with conflict and ambiguities. Meyer (cited in Whitford, 2006), an architect and later successor to Gropius, described the Bauhaus as ‘aesthetic’ and ‘sectarian’ (p. 106). From his view, the Bauhaus was “a Cathedral of Socialism in which a medieval cult was pursued by the revolutionaries of pre-war art, assisted by a youth which squinted towards the left while simultaneously hoping to be sanctified, some time in the future, in the same temple” (p. 180). From the time of its inception, the Bauhaus ideals came under continuous attack until in 1933 it was closed down by the Nazi regime.

3.7 The influences in art education

The philosophies of the craft revival movements were instrumental in promoting art education throughout the world. Ultimately, it was Ruskin, Morris and their contemporaries who encouraged the development of high-level craftsmanship. However their task was not easy, as Cumming and Kaplan (1991) note, “Morris had to fight hard to make the crafts respectable” (p. 206). Ruskin (1907c) had to fight equally hard to make his criticisms heard. His four lectures on the political economy of art in *Unto This Last* were in particular “reprobated in a violent manner” (p. 5). In these lectures, Ruskin examines the corrosive effects of a society dominated by productivity and profits. Essentially, Ruskin had tried to determine the intrinsic value of life itself and for him art and nature informed that kind of value, not industrialisation. For Ruskin (2009b), art and nature were united by the powers of the human imagination and the myths associated with imagination. The defilement of nature and the denigration of myth, religion and tradition was not simply a loss of beauty, it was a loss of meaning and a loss to humanity at large. The laws of nature, Ruskin argues, were of no restraint to the artist, because they were the laws of his own nature (p. 14). Ruskin may have been one of the first social critics to identify

the corrosive connection between the denaturalisation of society and the desocialisation of nature. Hauser⁷ (cited in Landow, 2006) summarises Ruskin's influence as follows:

[Ruskin] was indubitably the first to interpret the decline of art and taste as the sign of a general cultural crisis, and to express the basic, and even today not sufficiently appreciated, principle that conditions under which men live must first be changed, if their sense of beauty and their comprehension of art are to be awakened.

In Victorian England, art was not an academically acknowledged subject of study. Ruskin therefore may also have been one of the first to promote the idea that art and craft is a public concern. He pushed for an educational system that was to become integral to the arts and crafts. In Ruskin's view, art education was a social obligation and "no nation can neglect [art education] without endangering its intellectual existence" (Hauser cited in Landow, 2006). Furthermore, art was "not the privilege of artists, connoisseurs and the educated classes, but ... part of every man's inheritance and estate" (Hauser cited in Landow, 2006). Hauser (cited in Landow, 2006) describes Ruskin's influence as "extraordinary, almost beyond description", maintaining that "the purposefulness and solidity of modern architecture and industrial art" were "very largely the result of Ruskin's endeavours and doctrines".

For Ruskin (1964), art was invested with human significance. Accordingly, his evaluation of true wealth was the extent to which art sustained that qualitative human experience. If that quality of life was not sustained, Ruskin predicted, there would be no beauty of any sort, there would be nothing but destruction, disorganisation and ruin. The obliteration of humanity in turn would result in the destruction and ruin of nature (p. 31). In bringing his lectures on the political economy of art to a close, Ruskin (1907c) declares:

I desire ... to leave this one great fact clearly stated. THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others. [Capitals as in the original] (p. 48)

In Ruskin's (1968) view, since the concept of political economy is a science of wealth, it must be a science that values the human capacities of making art and that respects nature (p. 166). Ultimately, Ruskin (1907b) envisioned a human element in the concept of economy and wealth, which would enable the individual to live in a society where imaginative and creative craft- and artwork was valued (p. 128). The medieval guilds, as Ruskin perceived it, provided such an

⁷ *The Social History of Art*, 2 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1952), II, 820-22.

environment. For Ruskin (1907b), the future survival of humanity and by extension nature depends upon maintaining ‘useful, truthful and substantial forms of art’:

For our own England, she will not, I believe be blasted throughout with furnaces; nor will she be encumbered with palaces. I trust she will keep her green fields, her cottages, and her homes of middle life; but these ought to be, and I trust will be, enriched with a useful, truthful, substantial form of art. (pp. 127-128)

Ruskin’s overall visions were undoubtedly utopian, nonetheless, his philosophies live on. For example, craft guilds and other craft organisations still exist. Today, however, they operate largely within a social, recreational context rather than economic. People continue to see value in collecting and transmitting knowledge about artisan’s skills and activities, but the key defining characteristics of a guild have disappeared. Guilds no longer consist of master, journeymen or apprentices. Also, many educational institutions across the world have incorporated into their curriculum an art programme. An example of this can be seen in Perth. Of Perth’s five major universities, three offer a degree in the visual arts: The University of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University and Curtin University. In 2010 at Edith Cowan University, four of twenty art graduates submitted textiles for their final piece. Given the wide range of disciplines in painting, printmaking, sculpture, drawing, installation, digital art and so forth, this is a testament to the significance of textiles.

3.8 The source of cultural poetry

This next section draws on Ruskin (2009a) to discuss the importance of myth. As noted in previous chapters, mythologies have been a central source of cultural traditions throughout every human epoch. This point needs extrapolating because it is the one important factor explaining the close connections between the aesthetic-expressive capacity of tradition, cultural poetry and the tacit knowledge of craft. As Giddens (1994) argues, what gives tradition its authenticity is not that it has been established since time immemorial, or its connection to the past (as Giddens says, in oral societies ‘the real past’ is unknown) but that it “is the very *medium* of the ‘reality’ of the past” (p. 94). Traditions are informed by the rituals of formulaic truth (p. 94). These fulfill the human need for guidance and that guidance is also often found in the stories of myth. Myths are frequently obscure and difficult to understand, therefore they need guardians, “agents, or the essential mediators, of [tradition’s] causal powers” to interpret the story (p. 94).

According to Ruskin (2009a), myth is a story with meaning attached to it. The circumstances informing the story are unnatural or extraordinary (p. 175). They are beyond belief. Unless the listener understands the symbolism in the story, it means nothing. In Greek mythology, for instance, all stories revolve around extraordinary beings: heroes, monsters and divine beings. These are mystical beings that have supernatural powers and that have the ability to perform extraordinary or unnatural tasks. In the minds of the people, whose lives are informed by stories like these, the symbolism appears real, the heroes, monsters and Gods really existed. Ruskin professes that nobody knows much about the way in which the stories of myth emerged, all that is known is that the stories are infused with moral symbolical meaning (p. 178). The story of Hercules, for instance, is concerned with the perpetuation of human trial and pain. Hercules was a hero who is remembered “as a victor over monsters of the past” (p. 178). According to Ruskin, the stories of myth are derived from one of two sources: from actual historical events, which are represented in an exaggerated form by the “masters of history” (p. 178); or from nature. In this event, the myths are representations of “natural phenomena, endowed with life by the imaginative power [of a wise person], usually more or less under the influence of terror” (p. 178). Ruskin suggests that the interpretations of historical myths should be left to the historians. He places little emphasis on historical obscurities, because they now are past and gone (p. 209). In contrast, for Ruskin, the myths that have evolved from the interpretations of natural phenomena are worth preserving, because natural phenomena like “the stars, and hills, and storms” are still with us now, “as they were with others of old” (p. 179). In these natural occurrences, “in all the most beautiful and enduring myths, we shall find, not only a literal story of a real person, but an underlying worship of natural phenomena” (p. 179). Ruskin’s interpretation of myth is worth quoting in its entirety, because it explains the poetry:

Thus, from the real sun, rising and setting; – from the real atmosphere, calm in its dominion of unfading blue, and fierce in its descent of tempest, – the Greek forms, first, the idea of two entirely personal and corporeal gods, whose limbs are clothed in divine flesh, and whose brows are crowned with divine beauty; yet so real that the quiver rattles at their shoulder, and the chariot bends beneath their weight. And on the other hand, collaterally with these corporeal images, and never for one instant separated from them, he conceives also two omnipresent spiritual influences of which one illuminates, as the sun, with a constant fire, whatever in humanity is skilful and wise; and the other, like the living air, breathes the calm of heavenly fortitude, and strength of righteous anger, into every human breast that is pure and brave. (Ruskin, 2009a, p. 178)

As Ruskin (2009a) shows, for the ancient Greeks the myth was an explanation, a reverence and an anthropomorphism of natural incidences. The sun and the sky are reincarnated into the two principle deities of the heavens, Apollo and Athena. On Ruskin’s account, great myths are

invented by great people, who made-up great stories because they had observed closely the phenomena of nature (p. 179). The significance of myth, Ruskin ascertains, is not what the wild hunter dreamed or what the first civilisation feared but “what wise man first perfectly told, and what strong people first perfectly lived” (p. 179). Campbell (1969) holds a similar view. In his understanding, the mythological traditions of the world were developed and maintained by “shamans, sages, prophets, and priests, many of whom have had an actual experience of this ineffable mystery and all of whom have revered it” (p. 54). The irony of the subject of myth and the cause of rejection, Campbell outlines, lies in the fact that much of the research conducted in this field was done “either by scientists whose minds are sterilised to this experience and for whom the word ‘mystic’ is a term of abuse, or else by missionaries for whom the only valid approach to it is in their own tradition of spiritual metaphor” (p. 54). On Ruskin’s (2009a) account, the reading of myth depends on the tradition people have inherited. If the symbolism emerged from a people who lived under “stainless skies” and “measured their journeys by ascending and declining stars”, then others, who have had similar experiences and who live with the same traditions, can read the symbolism. The symbolism cannot be understood if people are disconnected from the tradition and have known nothing “above [them] in the day but smoke; nor anything around [them] in the night but candles” (p. 179). Ruskin reasons that it may well be possible to understand that Apollo and his burning chariot represents the rising sun but, he asserts, the burning chariot does not mean anything to us if the rising sun does not mean anything to us (p. 180). Ruskin opines that if the rising sun signifies “languid amusement” or “fruitless labour” then it will not be possible to derive real meaning from the burning chariot. However, if the rising sun means

daily restoration to the sense of passionate gladness, and of perfect life
– if it means the thrilling of new strength through every nerve....; if
the sun itself is an influence, to us also, of spiritual good – and
becomes thus in reality, not in imagination, to us also, a spiritual
power.... (Ruskin, 2009a, p. 180)

then the myth of Apollo and his chariot can be understood more accurately. Ruskin (2009a) clearly regrets that such “veracity of vision” has been omitted from the invention of historical myths. For him, the power of ‘true’ myth is something that no “historical investigator can understand, or even believe” (p. 181). For Ruskin, this “veracity of vision” is synonymous with the world of poetry, art, true wealth and life.

3.9 The process of demythologisation – the process of social transformation

This section first draws on Habermas (1984, 1987) and then on Giddens (1994) to explain the phenomenon of social transformation. The process of transformation is explored in three stages: first, I use Habermas' (1984) to identify the characteristics of mythological worldviews, second, Giddens (1994) to examine the early interconnections between tradition and modernity. Third, I discuss tradition briefly in our current period of late modernity, the period of "reflexive modernisation" (Beck, cited in Giddens, 1994, p. 91). Habermas (1984) ascertains that mythological understandings of the world are derived from the external influences of nature and the internal influences of society. In archaic societies, people did not differentiate between the two influences or dissociate from nature. This "peculiar confusion between nature and culture" (p. 48) once shaped people's understanding of the world. Social transformation then begins with processes of differentiation and dissociation. Habermas interprets differentiation and dissociation as evolutionary mechanisms (p. 283). In early modernity, this interdependence between the external influences of nature and the internal influences of society still persisted to a degree. As Giddens notes, in the early phases of modernity, where the activities of the lifeworld were still measured in accordance with the external influences of nature, there was a collaboration between the metaphysical understanding of the world and the more rational outlook of science (p. 87). In our current circumstances of late modernity critical thinking, scientific education and evidence-based understandings of the world have largely replaced metaphysical understandings.

3.9.1 The mythical understanding of the world

Habermas (1984) understands social transition as a gradual process of change. Social transformation entails a shift from one system of belief to another, moving from a mythological understanding of the world to a more rational outlook. It involves learning new ways of thinking and progressing slowly into new levels of understanding (p. 68). In early modernity, the mythological understanding of the world was still not clearly distinct from the scientific outlook. Habermas defines social transformation as a process of demythologisation, which is determined by a change in basic attitudes towards the world (p. 68). Four thousand year-old magic myths have transformed into critical thinking, science-based education and evidence-based understandings. What happens in the process of social transformation, is that this "moral authority of the sacred" is converted progressively into "the validity claims of institutions" (p. 68). The complexity of our Occidental heritage, Habermas asserts, has emerged from these two

contradictory states of affairs: “the mythological way of understanding the world”, which beliefs are still accepted to a degree and “the difficult concept of a rationalised lifeworld” (p. 43). Habermas maintains that most world religions sought to study theology or ethical cosmology, the very conditions in which the divinities of myth exist. Greek thought, in contrast, was more concerned with the study of ontology, the nature of existence (p. 1). Hence, the process of demythologisation may have originated from Greek thought. The Greek objective was to think about “the unity of the world by way of explicating reason’s experience of itself” (p. 1). Consequently, Habermas argues, “only the Occidental path of development” has led “to a completely decentered understanding of the world” (p. 196). Worldviews, whether mythological or rational, Habermas explicates, are essential for the socialisation of individuals and essential for processes of reaching collective understanding (p. 64). Worldviews are attitudes of collectives, “they supply the core ideas for basic concepts and assumptions. They cannot be amended or changed without affecting the identity of individuals as well as the identity of entire groups of people” (p. 64).

As noted, the mythical understanding of the world emerged from the two core forces that once influenced human experience: the external “experience of being delivered up unprotected to the contingencies of an unmastered environment” and the internal experiences of kinship relations (Habermas, 1984, pp. 45-47). Habermas (1984) explains that the surge of natural disasters, which occurs everywhere from time to time, was a phenomenon that in the early ages was neither understood nor capable of being controlled. Instead, natural contingencies were subject to interpretation. Based on experiences of intimacy within internal kinship relations, nature was endowed with a consciousness that signified will, authority and power (p. 47). By way of analogy, the inexplicable powers of nature assumed the attributes of man, manifesting themselves “as beings analogous to men, but different in that they know what man does not know, they do what man cannot do, they control what he cannot control; they are different from man and are superior to him” (Malinowski cited in Habermas, 1984, p. 47). So, early societies processed the abundance of information about the natural and the social world in a reciprocal mythological imagery of undifferentiated nature-culture narratives, in which “the world is reflected ad infinitum, perpetually decomposing and recomposing in the prism of nature-culture relations” (Godelier cited in Habermas, 1984, p. 46).

In the mythological, reciprocal way of understanding, nature assumed “anthropomorphic features” and was “drawn into a network of communicative social subjects”, whereas culture was naturalised, reified and absorbed into nature relations. In what Habermas (1984) calls “the nexus of operations and anonymous powers” (p. 47), heroes, monsters, deities and other supreme beings evolved, lived, died and eternally re-incarnated into imaginary organisations.

Each supreme being faced endless trials, tribulations, triumphs and resurrections. The hybrid Egyptian deities are instantly recognisable representations of this “assimilation of nature to culture and culture to nature” (p. 47). Interestingly, Habermas asserts, these relationships of “blood and alliance” could be found neither in the social nor in the natural world. They were not located “in the ‘pure principles’ of thought [or] in any models found in nature” (p. 46). Thus, from the understanding of Enlightened thought, the practice of interpreting and controlling the world in a magical way gave rise to double illusions: to “an illusion about the world and an illusion about itself” (Godelier cited in Habermas, 1984, p. 47). On the one hand, the world was inhabited with “imaginary beings, similar to man, capable of understanding his needs” and responding to man either in a compassionate manner or in a hostile way. On the other hand, the mind created an illusion about the self because it bestowed “idealities with an existence outside of man and independent of man” (Godelier cited in Habermas, 1984, p. 47). Habermas (1984) contends that a magical practice presents a problem to our modern understanding, primarily because it does not provide a clear conceptual differentiation between things, persons, objects and agents. More importantly, a magical practice does not differentiate between physical nature and the socio-cultural environment. The assimilation and confusion of nature/culture relations “irritates us members of a modern lifeworld” (p. 48), because “we cannot, or cannot with sufficient precision, make certain differentiations that are fundamental to our understanding of the world” (p. 48). There is an additional and perhaps more pressing predicament to our modern understanding: traditional power is authority unquestioned. Traditional power is total; its worldviews are closed to anybody who stands outside the tradition and its beliefs incomprehensible to anybody who stands outside the understanding of the myth (p. 45). Habermas suggests that “the deeper one penetrates into the network of a mythical interpretation of the world, the more strongly the totalising power of the ‘savage mind’ stands out” (p. 45). It is this totalising power, together with the assimilation of physical nature and social/cultural relations that presents “the sharpest contrast to the understanding dominant in modern societies” (p. 44).

3.9.2 Understanding social evolution

Social evolution is a progression of learning, leading into new levels of learning and new levels of understanding (Habermas, 1984, p. 68). Habermas (1984) argues that social evolution emerged with humanity’s capacity to differentiate between the natural, physical environment and the socio-cultural environment. As society’s capacity to differentiate increases, the social reasoning informing a stage is no longer convincing and individuals and groups of people progress to new levels of understanding. However, there are consequences, Habermas contends,

because “the interpretations of the superseded stage are, no matter what their content, *categorically devalued*” [italics as in the original] (p. 68). The mythological worldview does not allow for “rational orientations of action”, and rationalisation is so influential to the modern scientific outlook (p. 68). Habermas cautions that uncritical devaluation is a one-sided view. It was the view of the modern Enlightenment thinker (p. 62). Habermas suggests that the Enlightenment thinker may have committed a categorical mistake by devaluing mythological-narrative. As a consequence of depreciation, the traditions of entire civilisations fell into dissolution (pp. 62-68). Devaluation changed entire outlooks on life with the result that ‘moral-practical insights’, ‘objectivating thought’ and the ‘aesthetic-expressive capacity’ of everyday life have taken on completely different meanings (p. 68). This is an important point, since it follows that devaluation might have had a ripple effect on the crafts. In early modernity, according to Attiwill (2000), the textile crafts moved into the realm of ‘craft activities’, where, “in the face of modernist ideals and processes of industrialisation”, craft was considered “nostalgic and reactionary” (p. 34).

The transformation of mythological-narrative into ‘rational orientations of action’ caused tensions between tradition and modernity. Habermas (1984) uses Horton (cited in Habermas, 1984) to explain the distinction between a traditional and a modern thought system. Horton’s work illuminates also the significance of tradition’s poetry. Horton explains that a traditional society has closed thought systems and is characterised by an absence of awareness that alternatives to established beliefs may exist. It is this absence of alternatives that makes possible the absolute acceptance of established convictions and eliminates any likelihood of questioning. Moreover, closed societies have rituals informed by the phenomenon of ‘truth’, customs and habits, which regulate all social action. The rituals and the truth is identity-securing knowledge, linking back to the concept of wisdom. Ritual truth is referred to as ‘the sacred’; belief systems hence are sacred, they must not be questioned. This sacredness has an all-pervasive influence. When sacred belief systems are exposed to threats, opened to question or exposed to ridicule, for example, it provokes anxiety (pp. 64-65). In contrast, Horton notes, a modern society has open thought systems. It is characterised by an “awareness of alternatives, diminished sacredness of beliefs and diminished anxiety about threats to them” (p. 61). Open societies are called ‘open’ because they are open to constant debate, revision and criticism (p. 64). Horton defines the distinctions between traditional and modern attitudes as “protective vs. destructive attitudes” (p. 65). A traditional society has sacred attitudes; therefore it is an institution that is protective of its worldviews. In contrast, a modern society has validity claims that question constantly – and thus destroy – established attitudes. Habermas (1984) opines that there is no need to romanticise the concept of the sacred, but neither should it be devalued uncritically. For

Habermas, the sacred truth has a certain aesthetic-expressive capacity from which we might learn:

Can't we who belong to modern societies learn something from understanding alternative, particularly pre-modern forms of life? Shouldn't we, beyond all romanticising of superseded stages of development, beyond exotic stimulation from the contents of alien cultures, recall the losses required by our own path to the modern world? (p. 65)

Horton (cited in Habermas, 1984) was a scientist living in traditional Africa. Horton recalls the 'poetic losses' that occurred on the path to modernity:

As a scientist it is perhaps inevitable that I should at certain points give the impression that traditional African thought is a poor shackled thing when compared with the thought of the sciences. Yet as a man, here I am living by choice in a still heavily traditional Africa rather than in the scientifically oriented Western subculture I was brought up in. Why? Well, there may be lots of queer, sinister, unacknowledged reasons. But one certain reason is the discovery of *things lost* at home. An intensely poetic quality in everyday life and thought, and a vivid enjoyment of the passing moment – both driven out of sophisticated Western life by the quest for purity of motive and the faith in progress. (p. 65)

As noted previously, first theologies were forms of nature worship (Habermas, 1984, p. 47). Gradually, over a very long period of time, these magical nature/culture relations, ideas and attitudes developed into religious worldviews. Weber (cited in Habermas, 1984) suggests that all paths of religious rationalisation have originated from the same line of thought, that of theodicy (p. 192). For Weber, all great religious worldviews found their origins in certain "founding figures who were masters of the prophetic word and who lent force to their ideas by an exemplary conduct of life" (p. 192). Thus, the priests of religion were the intellectual interpreters of poetical-mystical narratives. The priests represented the authority of the sacred, bringing their interpretations into new levels of understanding and turning them into a tradition. Weber puts it this way: the interpretations of "priests, monks and teachers of wisdom was needed to shape these new ideas and modes of life into a dogma and to 'rationalise' them into a doctrine capable of being passed on as tradition" (p. 192). Habermas (1984) states that the central concern of the tradition was to find social unity. By way of the authority of the sacred, the rites of tradition served to inculcate consensus-forming belief systems, but tradition's aesthetic-expressive capacities were equally important. It is due to both: the rite and the myth of a traditional society becomes identity-securing, socially unifying knowledge because of its totalising power and its cultural poetry (p. 47). Habermas suggests that without the poetry of tradition, a society is culturally impoverished. Although worldviews ultimately reflect the

background knowledge of communities – the invention of supernatural beings accentuated the shortcomings of people’s knowledge and the limits of their powers (p. 47), for example – Weber, according to Habermas, “judges the rationalisation of worldviews by the extent to which magical thinking is overcome” (p. 212).

Essentially, social transformation is marked by changes in systems of basic concepts and understandings. Through the various eras of human development, societies have moved from mythological-narrative ways of thinking to the theological views of the creation, through the Greek contemplation of the metaphysical, ‘the whole of what exists’, to our modern more ‘rational’ understanding of the world (Habermas, 1984, p. 214). It is an evolutionary process in which the insights and knowledge of ancient wisdoms are supplanted with the rational, evidence-based knowledge of modern science. Weber (cited in Habermas, 1984) describes the process as follows: with each transition to a new level of understanding a new idea is born. The first idea emerged when members of a society no longer considered “the forces that mysteriously confronted them in the unmastered environment as powers immanent in the thing themselves, but represented them as beings lying behind the things” (p. 196). The next idea was born when men began to personify natural phenomena and the idea of heroes, monsters and deities crystallised. Then, the monotheistic concept of a transcendent God emerged. In the West, this was a key idea and once accepted, it gave rise to another new idea: that of a rewarding and a punishing God. This in turn gave rise to the idea that the destiny of men depended – more or less – on adhering to ethical commitments. With the rise of Judaism, another idea developed; men began to understand themselves as “God’s instruments working in the world” (p. 196). Another worldview was born when Protestantism was added to the concept of ‘predestination’ (p. 196). For Weber, the transition towards rationalisation is a process of disenchantment and was initiated by the following sequential developments:

- Radical repudiation of magical measures and all sacraments as means in the quest for salvation – the definitive disenchantment of religion.
- Relentless isolation of the individual believer in a world where the dangers of creature idolatry threaten, and in the midst of a soteriological⁸ community that denies any visible identification of the elect.
- The idea of a calling or vocation, based to begin with on the teachings of Luther, according to which the believer proves himself to be an obedient instrument of God in the world through the worldly fulfilment of the duties of his vocation.
- The transformation of the Judaeo-Christian rejection of the world into an innerworldly asceticism of restless labour in one’s calling;

⁸ Pertaining to salvation ("Oxford English Dictionary," 2009)

outward success does not, it is true, represent the real basis of the individual redemptory fate, but it does represent a basis for knowing it.

- Finally, the methodical rigor of a principled, self, controlled autonomous conduct of life, which penetrates every domain of life because it stands under the idea of assuring oneself of salvation. (p. 165)

Habermas (1984) notes that no matter how different the ideas, they all point to the same line of development: “that of a disenchanting understanding of the world, purified of magical ideas” (p. 196). However, the attainment of these new levels of understanding has not resulted in the desired outcome. The ultimate aim of the project of Enlightenment, Lash (cited in Beck, 1994) writes, was to free people from the social constraints of tradition, to open up a world founded on ideas such as the freedom of choice, individualism, liberal democracy and rational thought. However, post-modern studies have shown that modernity has introduced new constraints in the form of ecological threats, social uncertainty and personal insecurities (p. 2). Habermas (1984) concurs; for him, demythologisation has resulted in decentered and sometimes utopian forms of interpretation: “A complementary error of modernity is the utopianism which thinks it possible to derive the ‘ideal of a completely rational form of life’ directly from the concepts of a decentered world understanding” (p. 73). Habermas (1987) posits that the utopian content of Enlightenment thought gave rise not to an ideal but to a deception. Importantly, as he interprets it, the uncontrolled dynamic of economic growth is associated with this deceptive perspective (p. 329). Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) are of the same mind. For them, differentiation and demythologisation was a relapse into magical thinking, making possible the rise of capitalistic enterprises: “the dissolution of the last remnants of pre-capitalism, together with technological and social differentiation or specialisation” has led to the emergence of the culture industry and the subsequent “deception of the masses” (1944). These points and their relationship to the crafts will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Essentially, Habermas argues that capitalist modernisation has destroyed traditional life-forms or re-interpreted them as something that had never existed, overlooking in the process the need to replace certain qualities with something more meaningful (p. 329). Against the backdrop of capitalism, traditional forms of life – including the life of craftsmen and cottage industry workers – “retained the melancholy charm of irretrievable pasts and the radiance of nostalgic remembrance of what once had been sacrificed to modernisation” (p. 329).

Differentiation is the key evolutionary mechanism that has largely resulted in specialisation, expertism in all areas of life, the dissolution of tradition, the increasing dissociation from nature and humanity’s subsequent mastery of nature (Habermas, 1987, p. 283). Habermas (1984) ascertains that understandings of the world no longer ascribe to the world as a whole, especially

not “in the sense of a totalising knowledge” (p. 1). What society has in its place is an increasing division of proficiency and knowledge. Understandings about history, science, nature, society, art and even craft have all become separate fields of enquiry. Moreover, within each of these fields further divisions of expertism and knowledge occur. Ultimately, Habermas (1987) understands social evolution as a process in which lifeworld action and systemic influences become increasingly complex and evermore separate from one another. He argues that as the complexity of systemic differentiation increases, the rationality of the lifeworld grows (p. 153). Thus, remaining traditional concepts are at further risk, suggesting perhaps that understandings of traditional textile hand production are at risk too.

3.10 The interconnections between tradition and early modernity

Giddens’ (1994) analysis of social evolution shows that at the beginning of Enlightenment thought there was still a close relationship between tradition and early modernity. He suggests therefore that modernity’s separation from tradition is a fairly recent phenomenon (p. 87). Giddens claims that as long as traditional customs and habits are maintained, the difference between experts and guardians are still ambiguous. Also, science in the early stages of modernity was similar to tradition because like tradition, science was a monolithic source of authority (p. 87). Giddens summarises the interconnections between tradition and early modernity in the following five points:

- Traditions, both old and new, remained central to the early development of modernity.
- Understandings of science perpetuated the notion of ‘truth’, retaining strong ties with the formulaic notion of truth. The struggles between ‘science and religion’ in fact concealed the contradictions in regards to claims of ‘unquestioned authority’. Many experts were effectively guardians; they continued to elicit certain forms of reverence.
- The compulsive nature of modernity – which Weber had defined as ‘the capitalistic spirit’ – was not something that remained hidden or resisted.
- From the beginning modernity was gender-divided. It was primarily that of a male public domain. Hence, the invention of

new traditions included the invention of the ethos of a female domesticity.

- Alienation was a fundamental problem of early modernity and the problem was “‘resolved’ by invoking the authority of tradition”. Tradition’s authority, the authority of the sacred, was still needed for the “generation and regeneration” of collective and individual identity. (p. 95)

Giddens postulates that tradition is contextual in the sense that it is informed by a combination of ritual and formulaic truth (myth) (p. 80). When these dissolve, tradition transforms into custom and habit. As discussed previously, the esoteric quality of tradition is not communicable to others. Traditions therefore need guardians; guardians are “the mouthpiece of the Gods” (p. 80). It is their access to “the realm of the sacred”, that separates them from the rest of the community and that endows them with authority (p. 91). The truth that guardians elicit is made manifest in a society’s lifeworld actions: a ritual is an enactment of truth. Ritualised actions define what the tradition actually is (p. 80). In Habermas’s (1987) words, ritual action is the “sacred expression of a normative consensus made real” (p. 52). Ritual, the act of repetition, helps to uphold and re-affirm collective sentiments, ideas, values and norms. Ritual renews and sustains consensus, creates social unity, shapes identity and helps integrate the individual into the group of which they are a member (p. 53). These are important points because when these identity-securing collective ritual actions dissolve, they have profound ramifications on a society’s course of development, some of which are examined in the following Chapter 4.

In conclusion, Habermas’ (1984) importance is in understanding that “what binds sociated individuals to one another and secures the integration of society is a web of communicative actions that thrives only in the light of cultural traditions, and not systemic mechanisms that are out of the reach of a member’s intuitive knowledge” (p. 149). Ultimately, Habermas’ argument is that a society’s poetic-aesthetic survival depends on its cultural traditions. Tradition’s renewal in turn is determined by society’s willingness to criticise reflexively and on its ability to be creative and innovative (p. 146). His assertion opens the potential for a creative, reflexive textile art praxis. Within such a praxis, the practising of a traditional textile craft is a means with which to defend reflexively the poetic quality of a tradition rather than to seek nostalgia or suggest a return to the past. As established, the prime influence of tradition is aesthetic social renewal. That and tradition’s potential to contribute towards creativity, innovation and originality are important factors explaining the significance of textile hand production.

4. The social circumstances of a post-traditional society

In this fourth chapter I examine the contemporary circumstances of a society living after the end of tradition and its influence on the crafts. According to Giddens (1994), the world we live in today is post-traditional. It is characterised not by the certainty and stability of traditional ways of life, but by its dissolution. This so-called post-traditional society is the first global society and is influenced primarily by capitalistic enterprises, and these are growing at a seemingly uncontrollable rate (p. 96). Giddens (1991) concedes that world markets operate without regard to pre-established forms of action, constantly introducing standardised consumption patterns by way of advertising and other means. With their “imperatives of continuous expansion” they replace traditional context, causing radical change to the way people live their lives, changing also the way people think and act. Paradoxically, this trend towards continuous expansion creates simultaneously new opportunities and new dilemmas (p. 197). There have been much needed emancipatory actions, and science and technology have progressed into new levels of understanding, but there also have been serious consequences. The trend towards detraditionalisation has resulted in social domination, in the distortions of reason, in the rise of social compulsion and addictive behaviours, whereas in the sphere of ecology, it has had potentially disastrous effects (p. 197). Since progress has resulted in many positive outcomes, Habermas (1984) prefers to draw on a dialectic of modernity rather than engage in total criticism, as Adorno (1993) seemingly does. Nevertheless, like Giddens (1994) and Adorno (1993), Habermas expresses concern about the prevalence of economic influences: “the Enlightenment’s promise of a life informed by reason cannot be redeemed so long as the rationality that finds expression in society is deformed by capitalist modernisation” (p. xxxvii). For Adorno, capitalist modernisation has the most invasive influence on people’s lives. Market ideologies determine the way people live their lives, shaping the way in which individuals are “formed and deformed” (p. 171). It is against this ‘post-traditional’ backdrop that the changing nature of the textile crafts is understood and discussed in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into three *sections*. The first section, *The extensional and intensional dimensions of modernity*, uses Giddens (1991, 1994; 1998) to examine the general social circumstances that determine a post-traditional society. Similar to Habermas’ (1984, 1987) lifeworld and system theory, Giddens distinguishes between intensional (personal, internal or local, which are traits analogous to the lifeworld) and extensional (global, akin to systemic or outside) influences. Of interest to this discussion is Giddens’ emphasis on the notion of repetition. Giddens proposes a theory that juxtaposes tradition’s ‘truth’ of repetition with compulsion. I use Giddens and Adorno (1993) to illuminate how capitalist modernisation and

expertise has the most pervasive influence on social life, suggesting a theory of craft and creativity as a constructive counteraction. The final part of this first section discusses repetition in terms of its connection to creativity. Giddens' importance is in understanding that repetition provides the conditions for addiction and for compulsive-obsessive behaviours but also for psychological health and creative production. As Giddens (1991) notes, the enactment of routine and repetition "is a basic prop to a sense of personal worth and therefore to psychological health" (p. 41). Giddens illuminates that repetition needs to be accorded more relevance to our thinking because repetition presumes ontological health and creativity (p. 41). It is important to note that infinite repetition also presumes the development of a high-level craft. Giddens' importance furthermore is in the understanding that extensional and intensional influences act upon one another in a reflexive, mutually reciprocal manner, whereas the notion of creativity, as Giddens, Habermas, Adorno (1993), Ruskin (1907c) and other thinkers seek to show, is crucial to the development of autonomous thought and action. The capacity to think and act autonomously in turn helps develop personal freedom and responsible behaviour within the localised sphere of the lifeworld, influencing reflexively actions and decisions made on a wider, extensional level. I draw on Risatti (2007) to highlight the importance of the handmade in circumstances of post-tradition.

In the second part of this chapter, *Commodification – affecting the crafts*, the focus is on understanding how the tourist market, the commodifying practices of the craft industry and understandings about hobbyism and the amateur craftsperson affect the crafts. Adorno (1993), Herzfeld (2004), Adamson (2007) and others are used to help identify how market influences have affected the nature of the crafts, eroded skills and changed the way in which the crafts are understood. The final part of this chapter, *Fabric and Form – a criticism of new textile art*, builds on Fuller (1985) to examine how the changing social circumstances of post-tradition have impacted on attitudes towards the textile arts, contributing further to the ways in which a textile craft is conceived.

4.1 Modernity's extensional and intensional dimensions

According to Giddens (1994), the first phase of globalisation was governed by the economic expansion of capitalistic institutions that originated in the West: "No other civilisation made anything like as pervasive an impact upon the world, or shaped it so much in its own image" (p. 96). Globalisation, he contends, continues to be dominated by the West but its actions now entail more reciprocal processes between nations across the world. At present, hence, there is "no direction to globalisation at all" (p. 96). Furthermore, Giddens (1991) notes, global

influences are not gradual, they are immediate and as such they produce radical change, affecting on a local level worldwide the social life of individuals. Giddens calls these global or outside influences ‘extensional’ influences, whereas local, personal or internal experiences are ‘intensional’ (p. 192).

For Giddens (1998) there is no “single factor theory of change” (p. 89). Rather, social life is “continually contingently reproduced by knowledgeable human agents” (p. 90). As Giddens seeks to show, modernity is inherently reflexive. Even tradition has become reflexive; its generic modes of repetitive action have become reflexively motivated. As noted previously, in pre-modern societies routinisation gave meaning and structure to everyday life, the routinisation of tradition hence has identity-forming properties. Giddens (1994) explains how in post-traditional societies, day-to-day routines lose their connection to “the truth of tradition” unless the routine becomes part of the conscious process of social reflexivity (p. 71). Giddens argues that when repetition loses its connection to ritual truth or to social reflexivity, it all too easily becomes pathological; it becomes obsessive-compulsive or turns into addiction. He claims that in our contemporary post-traditional order compulsive-obsessive traits have become a defining characteristic, yet these traits are concealed. The following discussion demonstrates how addiction and compulsive-obsessive behaviours might be a result of society’s thoroughgoing commodification (pp. 66-74).

4.1.1 Extensional influences and consequences

According to Giddens (1994), the two key extensional influences impacting on the social life of individuals are industry and expertise. Economic influence is particularly invasive because it has globalising influences, as Giddens notes “capitalistic enterprise...is a disembedding mechanism *par excellence*, and is powering its way through previously resistant parts of the world just as thoroughly as it ever did” [italics as in the original] (p. 96). Already in the early 1900s Weber (cited in Giddens, 1994) had associated the rise of capitalism with the increase of rationalisation and subsequent human alienation. His concern was for the growing prevalence of ‘the capitalistic spirit’:

The outlook of the capitalist seems to the non-modern observer so incomprehensible and mysterious, so unworthy and contemptible. That anyone should be able to make it the sole purpose of his life-work, to sink down into the grave weighed down with a great material load of money and goods, seem to him explicable only as the product of a perverse instinct, the *auri sacra fames*. (p. 69)

In the 1940s Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) conducted a study of the culture of the masses and concluded that the economic spirit definitely prevailed: society in the West was thoroughly commodified. They coined the term 'culture industry' to exemplify how most things cultural had been absorbed into industry, with the market determining much of society's behaviour and activities. Adorno (1993) disputes suggestions that market intentions are motivated by serious attempts to fulfill human needs. On his account, the ideologies of the culture industry are shaped by business and their motives of financial expansion, whereas market standards are ossified standards of what once was considered cheap entertainment and low art (p. 83). Business turns its profit-making strivings into culturally acceptable forms (p. 85). It is on this basis that the craft industry operates a successful enterprise. It has turned its ideas of easy crafts into a culturally acceptable form. According to an online 2004 report, scrapbooking has become a particularly profitable undertaking, generating in the US alone US\$ 2.5 billion annually (A. Campbell, 2004). Adorno opines that the culture industry has ultimately become a hegemonic means of domination and integration. In his essays on mass culture, Adorno illustrates this process: The market customises its products according to the needs of individuals, then manufactures its products specifically for consumption by the masses (p. 85). Thereafter, via the means of continuous advertising, market ideologies infiltrate, dominate and control the conscious and unconscious minds of those people towards whom it directs its marketing endeavours, selling its products and integrating with ease vulnerable people into its system (p. 171). In this way, people inadvertently find themselves in heavily commodified circumstances and such circumstances hamper individuals in their spontaneity, undermine their creativity and prevent people from developing the confidence needed for autonomous thought and action (p. 173).

Like Adorno (1993), Giddens (1991) also argues that "capitalism is one of the main institutional dimensions of modernity" (p. 197). Giddens states that "markets promote individualism in the sense that they stress individual rights and responsibilities" (p. 197), shaping understandings and affecting individual behaviour to the extent that "individualism becomes extended to the sphere of consumption" (p. 197). Giddens (1994) claims that today people live in a society beset by compulsiveness, but modernity's compulsive nature is hidden. Compulsion is manifested in modernity's obsessional pursuit of economic growth, affecting individuals and society at large. Individuals struggle each day with an impulse to purchase, behaviour that is matched by "the striving of the entrepreneur" to provide product (p. 70). It is this activity that Giddens terms 'obsessional'. He theorises that this drive to compulsion is connected to the force of repetition. However, modernity's compulsion is distinct from the repetition of tradition. As noted previously, tradition's repetition is related to 'ritual truth', which builds a sense of personal belonging and help establishes social stability within a community. Giddens alleges that in the

conditions of late modernity, there still exists this emotional drive to repetition. The past still lives on, not in the reconstructive manner as of traditional rite, but as a way of dominating social action. However, modernity's compulsive nature leads to a host of problems: a lack of emotional and social stability, social alienation and a decline in moral values and social responsibility (p. 70). When repetition is stripped of its traditional content, Giddens posits furthermore, it turns into compulsive-obsessive behaviour or addiction, hindering the development of autonomous thought and action: "Compulsiveness, when socially generalized, is in effect *tradition without traditionalism*: repetition which stands in the way of autonomy rather than fostering it" [italics as in the original] (p. 70). For Giddens, this kind of repetition is a compulsive action that becomes a means of domination and integration:

The core of the capitalistic spirit is a *motivational urgency*, shorn of the traditional frameworks which had connected striving with morality. The capitalist, so to speak, was primed to repetition without – once the traditional religious ethic had been discarded – having much sense of why he, or others, had to run this endless treadmill. (p. 70)

The second key factor that has determined social change is expertise. Expert knowledge, Giddens (1994) explains, is disembedding, because, in the light of changing knowledge systems and new understandings, social relations are lifted from an established social context and re-embedded into a new context. In this way, expertise organises and reorganises constantly social life (p. 85). The expert has replaced the guardian, yet the nature of expertise is distinct to tradition's guardian. Unlike the guardian, expertise is impersonal, decentred, abstract and often institutionalised (Giddens, 1991, p. 23). In addition, expertise impacts on all spheres of life: science, technology, education, health, counselling services and so on. Even in the arts expertise plays a role: art's aura – or 'flair' in Giddens' (1994) words – is dealt with in an expert manner (p. 85). Furthermore, the deskilling of "many aspects of daily activities" are also the result of expertise (Giddens, 1991, p. 23). The competence of the expert, Giddens (1994) explains, is more important than the status of the guardian. Accordingly, it is the superior nature of competence that informs people's lives, undermining the accumulated knowledge, experience and skills of tradition (p. 89). Giddens mentions daily abstraction as a further point impacting on human activity: the disembedded mechanisms of decentered, impersonal and abstract systems, which are inherent to most people's lives. Abstraction means that people interact frequently with absent others (p. 89). Internet communications, SMS text messages, electronic transactions, television and video games are examples of abstract present-day communication systems. Giddens (1991) opines that individuals who vest absolute trust and time in such decentred systems lack the power to question or change them. This would be someone who has relinquished all autonomy over their life's circumstances (p. 193). Since the nature of making is

personal or intimate, often communal, centred and – in contrast to abstract – based on real tactile experiences, it suggests that making might play a more constructive role towards counteracting some of the more pervasive influences of commodification and re-gaining autonomy over one's lifeworld.

4.1.2 Intensional influences and consequences

As Giddens (1994) has argued, both extensional and intensional influences very often impact on individual decision-making capacities, particularly when these influences are informed by compulsive-obsessive actions or addiction. For Giddens, addiction is another core characteristic of a post-traditional order. Hence, he juxtaposes tradition with addiction (p. 71). Addiction, Giddens explains, although psychological and affecting individuals, is a social phenomenon; addiction is the prime intensional influence affecting individuals, standing in the way of creativity and autonomy (p. 71). Giddens explains the reasons for juxtaposing tradition with addiction as follows: everyday life is based on natural repetition; people repeat the same actions several times every day. Repetition then becomes either a habit, which is more closely related to personal characteristics or a custom, which is derived from wider social influences. Significantly, whether the repetition is more closely related to personal habit or to social custom, in circumstances of post-tradition, it has lost all ties to “the formulaic truth of tradition” (p. 101). When the natural repetition of tradition turns into neurosis, which it frequently does because its identity-securing properties are lost, it becomes a potential personal catastrophe that manifests itself in the form of addiction. Giddens defines addiction as “the obverse of the integrity which tradition once supplied” (p. 91). Addiction then becomes “a commitment which has no objective but one that is self-perpetuating” (p. 91). Giddens (1991) attributes the increase in need for therapy and counselling in Western countries to the loss of identity. In the circumstances of late-modernity, he contends, personal meaninglessness and the feeling that life has nothing worthwhile to offer has become a fundamental psychological problem (p. 9).

Essentially, Giddens (1994) understands addiction as “the other side of the retreat of tradition”. Addiction is “repetition that has lost its connection to the ‘truth’ of tradition” (p. 71). Similar to tradition, addiction is about the influence of the past upon the present. In the case of addiction, however, the past is due to individual rather than collective issues and its repetition is driven by anxiety rather than by choice. Addiction emerges when choice, which should be determined by autonomy, is subverted by anxiety (Giddens, 2000, p. 47). Paradoxically, Giddens (1994) argues that addiction is a choice too. For him, addiction is a way of coping with the multiplicity of possibilities and opportunities that almost every aspect of life presents today. It is a means of

avoiding the multiplicity of possibilities, alien values or ways of life. Moreover, addiction keeps people out of touch with themselves, with their feelings, their morality and their awareness of life (p. 71). In short, the compulsive action of addiction prevents people from living a creative, self-determined life, as Giddens notes: “Compulsiveness is one of the prime enemies of the good life” (p. 134). Giddens infers that people can become addicted to anything, not only alcohol, gambling and drugs, but to shopping, online communications, video gaming, fast food and so forth (p. 71). Giddens claims that the very fact that addictions are a substantial part of the late modern world indicates the extent of the dissolving traditions. Addiction, he argues is “a negative index of the dissolution of tradition”, affecting the entire social universe of belief and action (p. 71).

Essentially, Giddens (1994) argues that when traditional activity and its connection to its emotionally and morally stabilising frameworks is lost, the threat of compulsion and addiction arises. For him, routine and repetition become empty in the absence of tradition, unless the routines are informed by institutional reflexivity (p. 71). In that case, routine has a purpose. Nevertheless, a post-traditional order offers the possibility of far greater autonomy and freedom of choice (p. 204). In the post-traditional context, the focus has shifted to the reflexive development of the self as a process of personal growth. For these reasons, Giddens (1991) defines “the reflexivity of the self” as a core phenomenon of late modernity, where “opportunity and potential catastrophe [are balanced] in equal measure” (p. 34). For Giddens, ‘the reflexive self’ has become a potential source for social change.

Key to the theories of Giddens (1991, 1994), Habermas (1984, 1987), Adorno (1977, 1984, 1993) and Ruskin (2009b), is their conjecture that the creative involvement with people and the immediate environment helps develop personal autonomy, therefore the individual has the potential to instigate change. As Giddens (1991) argues, where an individual can live creatively and develop autonomous thought and action, chronic psychological problems are less likely to occur (p. 41). As Giddens furthermore explains, if enough individuals adopt new lifestyle patterns, these patterns could become collective, changing behaviour and attitudes on an extensional level (p. 221). Collective decisions also may have the power to protect and preserve traditions and craft traditions are particularly vulnerable to the influences of detraditionalisation. However, in the light of new insights, the making might be seen as a way to engage creatively with people and environment. Thus, an important factor to social growth is the ethos of self-growth.

4.2 Repetition – the core of creativity

The notion of repetition is ambiguous in meaning: it can be at the root of addiction or the prerequisite for creativity and autonomous action. The real struggle today, Giddens (cited in Giddens & Pierson, 1998) argues, is between addiction and autonomy. When those identity-securing influences of tradition dissolve, self-identity has to be created on a much more active basis (p. 134). Furthermore, in the conditions of late modernity, many personal habits become collective and collective behaviour is shaped either as a result of compulsive action or due to the influences of institutional reflexivity (Giddens, 2000, p. 47). Giddens (1991, 1994) therefore emphasises the importance of institutional reflexivity. Giddens (1994) also associates the actions underlying most versions of emancipatory politics with autonomous action (p. 101). For Giddens (1991), collective autonomous action is the real force that instigates change and once again draws attention to the relevance of routine and repetition. It is easy to see the incompatibility of the two different versions of repetition: one is compulsive-obsessive (mechanical repetition) whereas the other is reflexively motivated (conscious repetition). Reflexively motivated repetition is not counterproductive to creativity and autonomous thought and action but presumes it. Giddens defines creativity as “the capacity to act or think innovatively in relation to pre-established modes of activity” (p. 41). For Giddens, thus, “routine is a central element of the autonomy of the developing individual” (p. 40). In summary, reflexively motivated repetition has wide-ranging implications: it is a core characteristic of everyday ways of life; it is key to the development of creativity and autonomy and it is necessary for the development of a craft. Accordingly, making in conditions of technological progress is a conscious, emancipatory action that is not the result of nostalgia or other wistful motives but the result of cultural awareness. It is for these reasons that Risatti (2007) argues that the “handmade object of craftsmanship needs to be accorded a more prominent place in our thinking” (p. 202). For him, making objects by hand offer “a needed counterpart to that anonymousness and ‘unlimited-ness’ that industrial production encourages” (p. 202). Essentially, Risatti interprets the act of making as a way of expressing one’s self and as a more authentic experience of being in the world. He sees this deeper experience of labour, work and skill reflected in the craft object (pp. 204-205).

4.3 Commodification – affecting the crafts

The prevalence of economic expansion suggests that commodification has filtered down to the crafts. In the three sections that follow, Adorno (1993), Barthes (1993), Herzfeld (2004), Adamson (2007), Fuller (1985) and others are used to discuss issues of tourism, the influences of the craft industry and notion of hobbyism and amateurism. This debate seeks to show how

the markets have absorbed the crafts into their commodification practices. Importantly, it seeks to show further, how market ideologies together with social prejudice are shaping the way craft is perceived and understood. According to Adorno (1993), since antiquity the distinctions between ‘high and low art’ have always been well-defined and well-accepted. Now, due to the influences of commodification, the two cultural spheres are forced together with the result that boundaries are blurred and no particular distinction between one or the other can be discerned (p. 86). Boundaries become blurred, Adorno explains, because the masses succumb to the manipulative practices of the culture industry, and when this happens, “*true works of art dissipate together with any potential form of rebellious resistance*, only to be replaced with the products of the culture industry” [italics as in the original] (p. 86). It is easy to see that this process relates to the crafts too. The distinctions between the highly skilled handmade object of craftsmanship and the easy crafts of the craft industry have become equally blurred. As is established in the debate that follows, the ideologies of the craft industry and social misconception have undermined the real characteristics of craft, enabling ‘true works’ of craftsmanship to be replaced by the products of the craft industry.

In the section *The tourist industry*, I return to the discussion about the craftspeople of Rethemnos to illuminate that influences of commodification have resulted in the erosion of skills and the distortion of people’s perceptions about the crafts. As noted previously, the commodifying influences of tourism are increasingly infiltrating the lifeworld of the artisans in Rethemnos, contributing to the destruction of traditional ways of life and undermining the true meaning of craft (Herzfeld, 2004). In *The craft industry* I examine how Adorno’s presumptions apply to the crafts of the craft industry. I use the theories of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) and to a lesser extent those of Barthes (1993) to understand the methods the markets use, causing the crafts to become absorbed into the market. An attempt is made to analyse how the craft industry applies its marketing practices to commercialised craft magazines. Finally, in *Hobbyism and amateurism* the interpretations of Adorno (1993) and Adamson (2007) are compared and contrasted to illustrate the ambiguous meanings of craft. Negative connotations associated with hobbyism and amateurism are discussed and subsequent issues of social prejudice towards the crafts are raised.

4.3.1 The tourist industry

Herzfeld’s (2004) study of the craftspeople in Rethemnos in part is also a study of the commodification of the craft object. Herzfeld illustrates how tourism has catastrophic consequences for artisans and craft objects, as he notes, the aspiration to keep the traditional

crafts alive on the Greek island is plagued with dismal failures, which, “seem to confirm [craft’s] marginality to the march of economic progress” (p. 59). The tourist market has created a situation in which artisans are competing for a share of the market. In Rethemnos, the crafts are still taught via an apprenticeship. Craft is “taught in a manner that was certifiably traditional in its attention to detail and methods of production” (p. 32). However, meticulous methods of production are labour intense, placing the handcrafted objects beyond the economic means of most tourists, denying the artisan an income and intensifying his “already catastrophic marginalisation in the economic sphere” (p. 32). Artisans, who engage in market competition, are forced repeatedly to lower their prices for their handcrafted objects, in turn forcing them to sell mass-produced craft products. As a result of market invasion, the standards of hand production decline and meaningful differentiation, attention to detail and skill become less important (p. 32).

Herzfeld concludes that the degradation of the craft object is related to the changing expectations of the tourists. When tourists descend upon Rethemnos “in their indifferent or condescending hordes, [they leave] a short while later clutching a few factory-made souvenirs of neoclassical design” (p. 203). The tourists’ demand for choice, quantity and low prices play a large role in overriding quality production, contributing to the erosion of skills necessary to produce quality craft. When this happens, mass-produced merchandise quickly assumes the place of the crafts, and quality is no longer an issue: “the difference in price overcomes most concerns with quality” (p. 56)

Worse yet, Herzfeld writes, the commodification of the craft object depreciates that “personal quality that is only recognisable in the skill of the craft” (p. 57). Thus, what Herzfeld terms this “creeping professionalism” has forced many craftspeople “to sell cheap and shoddy versions of the goods in which they once invested their personal creative pride” (p. 57). The tendency to sell cheap replications “is fuelled by the higher status and easier life associated with commercial success” (p. 57). It also is fuelled by the need for survival because commodification forces the artisan out of business. Herzfeld concludes that the paucity of the true artisans and the peripheral nature of their crafts “has become part of the palimpsest of social change” (p. 203). Furthermore, he alleges that the Greek islanders are subject to market influences at an international or a global level. Herzfeld urges that under the current influences of globalisation, the artisan’s status remains of paramount importance, because artisans, despite their low economic status, “remain a dwindling but irrepressible presence, to remind the observer-consumer that Greece is, after all, a land of tradition” (p. 203).

4.3.2 The craft industry

This section uses the criticisms of Adorno, Horkheimer (1993; 1944) and Barthes (1993) to examine how the influences of the craft industry shape our understandings of craft. After examining Adorno's general critique of the culture industry I attempt to draw on Barthes and analyse the content of craft magazines. To understand how the craft industry impacts on the nature of the textile crafts, I purchased a number of textile craft magazines from the local news agency. The magazines had high-gloss covers with names such as *Creative Embroidery and Cross Stitch*, *Patchwork Favourites*, *Beautiful Stumpwork Embroidery*, *Marvellous Machine-Made Quilts*, *Quick and Easy Crafts* and *Cracker Christmas Special Handmade*. I wish to show that at some level, the magazines are useful in introducing people to a textile craft, in helping them understand how to apply simple techniques to the textile crafts. However, on another level, as Adorno and Barthes help argue, this is craft degraded by business. When craft becomes absorbed into the commodified practices of industry, it loses its connection to creativity, uniqueness and independence. The prime focus of the magazines appears not on the development of skill or imagination but on the generation of sales. Much of the content is concerned with advertising matter for craft products and projects.

Adorno's (1993) evaluation of the culture industry is an important factor explaining the close connections between market influence and the degradation of the craft object. His critique of the culture industry owes much to its all-pervading influences. On Adorno's account, the culture industry has created its own ontology, one that promotes the "perpetual new" as a way of life. He explains it this way: every day the perpetual new is presented persuasively, relentlessly and continuously to the masses. The perpetual new 'parades' as progress, yet it is merely a disguise for an eternal sameness. Progress conceals the practices of an organisation, which, like the profit motive, have not changed since they first gained influence over society. However, what sets the culture industry apart from earlier forms of marketing are its strategic profit making methods, which are targeted solely at the obsessive generation of sales. These profit-making interests have become so widely objectified and assimilated into the general ideologies of society that people are largely accepting uncritically (p. 87). The uncritical acceptance of market practice has consequences. One is the systematic destruction of the autonomy of a work of art, which, Adorno alleges, in its pure form never existed in any case (p. 86). Another consequence is that traditional ways of creating art become increasingly uncertain, making hand production progressively more vulnerable to being replaced by the practices of the culture industry. This "alone makes the culture industry possible as an omnipresent phenomenon" (p. 86). The magazines I purchased from the news agency exemplify Adorno's assertions. The content and

context are in many points identical, supporting Adorno's claim that the incessantly new is a disguise for eternal sameness. I extrapolate on these points shortly.

As Giddens (1991) has mentioned, since rite and repetition provide a fixed framework for human action, a traditional context offers few opportunities for individuality and self-expression (p. 12). Similarly, Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) allege that the modern context does not offer opportunities for individuality and self-expression either. The development or sustaining of creativity is not possible because under the conditions of the culture industry, "everything down to the last detail is [purpose] designed" (p. 5), leaving nothing to the imagination. In addition, Adorno (1993) argues, whenever things are easily accessible, available immediately and within easy reach, they are regressive (p. 92). Adorno's allegations suggest that easy and immediate crafts proffered by the craft industry are regressive. Tapestry kits, which are often copies of an original design, might represent examples of a regressive craft. These are pre-conceived projects that leave no room for the development of imagination or creativity. Detailed designs together with a set of instructions guide the maker through every step. Additionally, no particular skills or previous knowledge are required. The practices of the culture industry, in Adorno's words, "force the victim to equate it with the 'real' thing" (p. 92), deceiving the maker into believing that he/she is creating a unique piece of work.

Adorno (1993) contends that the culture industry plays such a powerful role in society that it should be taken more seriously. It would be naïve to ignore its influence and "for what it stuffs into people" (p. 88). In Adorno's account, the culture industry has a deceptive glitter. It is this, together with its power, that disconcerting questions about quality production, truths or untruths and questions about its aesthetic paradigms are repressed frequently or even excluded from social inquiry. Hence, "To take the culture industry as seriously as its unquestioned role demands, means to take it seriously critically, and not to cower in the face of its monopolistic character" (p. 88). Adorno furthermore proposes that the kind of information gained from the culture industry is meagre or indifferent; its advice is "inane, trite or worse"; its course of action is "shamelessly conformist" and its practices are "imposed regression" (p. 89). Adorno expresses particular concern about the uncertainty of meaning and society's inability to distinguish between art of high value and art of low value. The inability to distinguish "slowly worms" its way into society and all differences between various aesthetic paradigms go unnoticed (p. 89). Even if the culture industry does touch the lives of countless people, he continues, the function or usefulness of its products still do not guarantee its aesthetic quality (p. 89). In relation to the textiles, Adorno's assertions suggest that the craft industry does provide some people with an experience of pleasure, because easy crafts are fun to make. However, the

uncritical acceptance of the commodified crafts might mean that distinctions between the crafts of high level craftsmanship and the popular crafts of the craft industry go unnoticed.

In the following, I turn to the analysis of the textile craft magazines. It might seem that the notion of craft is unambiguous, that crafts proffered by the craft industry have the same value as any craft. However, as Adorno (1993) notes, the practices of the culture industry are deceptive (p. 88). In many ways, there is a connection between Barthes' (1993) mythologies and the content and context of the publications. Myths, Barthes contends, are totally ambiguous. On the one hand they are meaningful, insightful and significant but on the other hand, they are empty, insignificant and totally meaning-less. For Barthes, myth is a discipline that deals with values. Myth is not concerned with facts or rational substance but is endowed with ideological significance. When the substance of a myth loses its cultural value, Barthes argues, it becomes shallow, impoverished and its history evaporates (pp. 111-117). Similarly, in analysing the content of craft magazines, I hope to show that when craft becomes assimilated by the craft industry, it loses its deeper cultural value; its poetic substance; it becomes shallow, impoverished and its connection to history evaporates; yet for people, the act of making still has meaning. In the following, I apply Barthes' (2002) analysis of signifiers to the context of the craft magazines. In his *Rhetoric of the image* Barthes exemplifies the subtle but powerful influences of connotation within the framework of advertising, as he notes, "in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional" (p. 135).

The covers of the magazines have an all-pervasive presence. They are colourful, glossy and embedded with various visual and linguistic signifiers, conveying several messages. The visuals dazzle with their brilliant colours, perhaps aiming to improve the appearance of the product, concealing its superficiality. Both the visual imagery and the semantics imply euphoric values. In exploring the visuals, it is easy to see the splendour of the project, to which the headings correspond. The headings are weighted with passion, they read: *festive creations; make gorgeous flowers; create amazing project or stunning projects; make a delightful butterfly lady; beautiful embroidery* and so forth. In these magazines, the crafts have been made clean and innocent because they are 'gorgeous, stunning or delightful'. Making the commodified crafts of industry does not further the knowledge of a genuine textile craft. Rather, meaning in the visuals and semantics signifies not much other than pleasure: it would be great fun to create something from these publications. For Barthes (2002), connotative procedures, used to evoke desire, are often communicated through imagery and language, of which I discuss four:

First, there is the illusion of creativity. The semantics inform that each magazine is 'packed with creative projects'. The projects come with numerous 'expert tips and techniques'. Hence, for

each 'creative' project there are detailed instructions inside and every step of making is considered in detail. In the event that the maker does not have the skills, understand the techniques or lacks the ability to make or create a project, reassuring 'expert knowledge' is available. In reality, neither knowledge nor skill is required to make the projects, because an expectation of knowledge and skill could deter a potential crafter from purchasing the magazines.

Second, the magazines endorse a culture of instant gratification, as is indicated by the subtitles: "gorgeous projects with easy to follow instructions"; "quick and easy" crafts; "learn the easy way". Evidently, the semantics are linked to the notions of desire and immediate satisfaction. Adorno (1993) articulates the relation between human needs and market response. According to him, the culture industry generates the illusion of well-being. The market responds instantaneously to people's desires, proffering ready-made solutions, yet "the substitute gratification which it prepares for human beings, cheats them out of the same happiness which it deceitfully projects" (p. 92). For Adorno, the market provides no real solutions to human needs. Accordingly, the commodified crafts concentrate on the pleasure motive and do not take into account the patience, long hours, skill, understanding of technique and the innate relationship with the work. "Quick and easy crafts" are more related to the quick attainability of a superficial kind of happiness. Again, there are consequences. Skills erode, understandings of crafts' complexity in relation to human evolution transform, potential critical dialogue does not occur and all associations with craft's historicity are erased.

Third, the content of the magazines implies 'beautiful' handcrafted objects, yet large sections of the content are taken up with advertising. In the context of the craft industry, the magazines are means for the advertising and selling of craft supplies and kits. Materials and instructions for larger projects, such as quilts, may be purchased for a substantial amount of money. Again, the designs are pre-conceived, the materials supplied and step-by-step instructions given. The maker is not involved in the creative development of the project. However, there is the illusion that the projects are equivalent in value to those crafts that have long disappeared from society's consciousness.

Finally, the magazine content implies good value for money. Inside each magazine I purchased, there is a "free lift out pattern sheet". Everybody likes a bargain and 'free' pattern sheets give the illusion that the magazines are a good buy. The pattern sheets are no less than a set of instructions to be followed. Adorno (1993) is of the opinion that the culture industry does not deliver art at all, it destroys it: "What its defenders imagine is preserved by the culture industry is actually all the more thoroughly destroyed by it" (p. 90). Adorno's assertions suggest that if

society imagines that the craft industry helps preserve the crafts, if society imagines that easy crafts are better than no crafts, if easy crafts become a culturally accepted art form, then understandings of craft are more thoroughly destroyed.

In conclusion, the commodified craft project responds to a demand, albeit, Adorno (1993) contends, to one that has been constructed (p. 89). He posits that “the spirit of the culture industry might safely be called ideology” (p. 90). For Adorno, the power of the ideology is such that conformity has replaced awareness. When people conform to the interests of the culture industry they are not aware of the obvious: the generation of sales. Hence, interests of economic gain have little in common with “the real interests of human beings” (p. 90). Adorno articulates it this way:

The order from which the culture industry has emerged, despite its claims, has nothing to do with the real interests of human beings. Order in itself is not good. The fact that the culture industry is oblivious to this, bears witness to the impotence and the untruth of the messages it conveys. (p. 90)

Adorno (1993) argues that in this static yet chaotic world of modernity, the culture industry provides people with “something like standards for orientation that alone seem worthy of approval” (p. 90). For Adorno, the culture industry is the “obstruction method” of the epoch (p. 92). Their profit-orientated standards obstruct the productive, creative forces of individuals, preventing the emancipation of human beings (p. 92). In Adorno’s view, the culture industry has turned the ideals of Enlightenment, freedom from mysterious powers, into a form of mass deception. Mass deception has become the means by which to prevent the development of awareness or consciousness. The lack of consciousness in turn hinders individuals from developing autonomous thought and action, and a lack of autonomy prevents people from judging situations and making informed decisions for themselves. However, the capacity for independent thought and action, Adorno claims, is the precondition for a democratic society. To be an informed and autonomous thinking individual therefore is essential to sustaining and advancing the future (p. 92). It follows from this that autonomous thought and action is what is needed to protect, preserve and defend cultural craft traditions, whereas the creative involvement with craft or with any other project is needed to develop autonomous thought and action.

4.3.3 Hobbyism and amateurism

A diversity of debates continues regarding the status of the crafts. One pervading late modern perspective is that craft is the work of the amateur. Since the beginnings of the modern era, Koplos (2002) notes, craft has been undervalued frequently and “considered second rate art” (p. 86). Koplos explains that under the changed conditions of modernity, the crafts are no longer central to everyday lifeworld activities. Few individuals are able to generate an income from the making, whereas on a wider extensional level, the crafts do not sustain society economically. Thus, the crafts have become less important. Although it is argued throughout this research that prejudice against craft would cease if the cognitive character of the processes and the aesthetic understanding of the experience were more widely acknowledged, the following examines how assumptions of devaluation might have emerged. Using the theories from Adorno (1993) and investigations into the notions of amateurism from Adamson (2007), the following is a discussion about how crafts are viewed today. Adorno holds the view that the concept of hobbyism is the product of the culture industry, whereas Adamson’s discussion about amateurism helps explain to some extent the emergence of present day social prejudice against the crafts.

In his book *Thinking through craft*, Adamson (2007) argues that there is no reason to consider the crafts second-rate (p. 6). According to him, the notion of amateur work forms part of an ideological framework within which craft is situated and it is this that gives craft a bad name (p. 6). Amateur work is frequently contrasted with expert work, pushing the concept of amateurism into a reductive dichotomy, evidently an inadequate classification for understanding the complexities of amateur work. Amateurs receive little or no remuneration for their work. Their activities are largely pastime activities. Their work therefore has connotations of pleasure-seeking and self-gratification. The same connotations are associated with the notion of hobbyism. For Adorno (1993), however, hobbyism is synonymous with the practices of the culture industry. As a result, the idea of hobbyism is an abhorrence to him (p. 163). Adorno is adamant that he had no hobbies, even though he had taken part in activities for pleasure outside of work. He had nurtured a lifetime interest with music. He had trained to play the piano, he wrote music and listened to music, yet he notes:

As far as my activities beyond the bounds of my recognised profession are concerned, I take them all, without exception, very seriously. So much so, that I should be horrified by the very idea that they had anything to do with hobbies.... Making music, listening to music, reading with all my attention, these activities are part and parcel of my life. To call them hobbies would make a mockery of them. (p. 163)

For Adorno (1993), there was no contradiction or particular distinction between his work and what he did in his free time. He believed that he had had the good fortune to follow the path of his choice. Thus, he structured his work and pastime activities accordingly (p. 163). However, Adorno proposes that under the conditions of the culture industry, there exists a “razor sharp” distinction between work and free time (p. 163). In general, people have higher incomes and more free time, at least compared to income and hours worked in early industrialisation. Leisure industries emerged, providing products and services in the fields of entertainment, recreation and tourism. For Adorno, again, the leisure industry finds its origin in the culture industry. He puts it this way, an entire industry arose to “cater conveniently for the spending of free time” (p. 163). The hobby crafts fit into the field of recreation and entertainment, ‘conveniently’ catered for by the craft industry. However, Adorno opines that a hobby is the embodiment of a false creativity. For him, a hobby is a preoccupation with something with which to counteract boredom, with which to become “mindlessly infatuated merely in order to kill time” (p. 163). On Adorno’s account, a hobby is the continuation of the forms of profit-oriented social life and hobby products are in accordance with what the leisure industry provides. He explains that the need make or create is already there, but this need is harnessed, institutionalised and reproduced by business, “What people want is forced on them.... Hence the ease with which free time is integrated” (p. 165).

Like Adorno (1993), Adamson (2007) argues that, in their contemporary forms, hobby activities are the result of economic surplus: “Sewing in the living room or woodworking in the garage are activities that reflect a culture of prosperous excess” (p. 140). Adamson also believes that the craft industry has benefited immensely from the greater availability of leisure time: “The successful displacement of unused time into harmless leisure activities has been vital to the project of capitalism” (p. 140). Accordingly, the craft industry makes a substantial profit from selling materials, tools, kits, magazines and books to hobbyists and amateur craftspeople. The Marxist perspective argues, Adamson notes, that a “hobby craft is the embodiment of a false consciousness” (p. 140). Hobbyists believe they are being creative when following detailed instructions. They also believe that making something from a book is more authentic than purchasing it from a shop. In reality, everything supplied by the craft industry is predetermined. From this point of view, the hobby crafts are neither creative nor original (p. 140). In addition, Adamson remarks, the work of the hobbyist causes little concern to the art world because it does not participate in social discourse (p. 140).

In general, contemporaneous makers of craft objects have had a difficult time participating in social discourse (Adamson, 2007, p. 140). According to Nordness (cited in Adamson, 2007), craft even acts as an affront to critical discourse, especially when it is in its most corrupted state,

when it manifests itself as an expression of love or as a passion. As Nordness notes, “the term crafts confusedly connotes in many people’s minds something done as an avocation, something done as a therapy, something done by the aged” (p. 141). Hence, the work of the hobbyist or the amateur is interpreted frequently as forms of activity that are means of self-gratification rather than critique and the work becomes separated from the narratives of modern art. In theory, Adamson (2007) explicates, the work of the amateur is beneath the consideration of the expert, and that of the hobbyist more so (p. 141). Adamson, however, disputes attitudes that reject uncritically the work of the amateur or the hobbyist. He posits that there are no real grounds for social prejudice against the crafts, whether it is the work of the amateur or other. For him, craft is “a necessary ‘other’, a useful disturbance that plays a necessarily unacknowledged role in modern art’s critical programme” (p. 139). Adamson posits that the attitudes put forward by dominant social discourse imply a rigid set of assumptions about the work of craft. In reality, Adamson contends, there are no clear distinctions between the amateur, the hobbyist and the expert. If there are, they need to be challenged, “through the discourse of the institution, the maintenance of skill and the conceptual understandings of the artist” (p. 141). Interestingly, Adamson emphasises here the significance of maintaining skill. Worthy of note, also, is his emphasis on the importance of challenging the concepts of craft, hobbyism and amateurism. These are relevant points, since it follows that one aim of my work is to challenge precisely through critical discourse, conceptual understandings and the maintenance of skill, uncritical assumptions about the work of craft. My conceptual perspective focuses on the cultural importance of maintaining the aesthetic content in the work of craft. I was given the opportunity to participate in institutional discourse when my handloom cloth and tablet-woven band was shown alongside other non-textile, contemporary works of art in the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA). My endeavour to challenge society’s assumptions about craft finally played an acknowledged role in AGWA’s critical art programme.

Fuller (1983c) shares similar views. Fuller is an advocate of maintaining traditional craft skills and institutional involvement. In *The necessity of art education*, he argues that art schools should engage with the crafts in much greater depth, both on a practical and a theoretical level (p. 34). From a simplified point of view, Fuller contends that mechanisation has replaced the need for handmade objects, yet mechanisation should not replace the need for the handmade. He draws on Gabor (cited in Fuller, 1983c) to emphasise that new technologies should not take the place of craft:

Modern technology has taken away from the common man the joy in the work of his skillful hands; we must give it back to him. Machines can make anything, even *objects d’art* with the small individual imperfections, which suggest a slip of the hand, but they must not be

allowed to make everything. Let them make the articles of primary necessity, and let the rest be made by hand. We must revive the artistic crafts, to produce things such as hand-cut glass, hand-painted china, Brussels lace, inlaid furniture, individual book-binding. (p. 34)

As Ruskin (1907c), Morris (cited in Thompson, 1993) and other craft advocates reiterate, at the base of art creation is the “joy in the work of the skillful hands”. Thus, the pleasure motive and the ethos of self-gratification inherent in contemporary craft is much more important than assumed. The process of self-actualisation is central to what Giddens (1991) calls “the reflexive project of the self” (pp. 53-55). As Giddens has argued, disparities in the social and natural worlds cannot be solved through further globalisation, rather, radical lifestyle change needs to take place and the process of self-actualisation is part of that change (p. 230). Self-actualisation is a prerequisite for creative development, which in turn paves the way for the development of personal autonomy (p. 231). Personal autonomy is a central value in the theories of Giddens, Habermas and Adorno, because autonomy is considered part of the responsibly-acting, authentic self. Those are the reasons why Ruskin and Fuller (1983c) have argued that art schools should play a more influential role in reviving the crafts. Fuller contends that art schools should focus not just on teaching students to develop contextual/conceptual thinking, but equally, should encourage students to pursue those aesthetic values inherent in craft. To then take those “aesthetic values out into that “anaesthetic” culture: otherwise, the most significant of all human potentialities is at risk of being lost altogether” (p. 34): the act of creativity and the development of autonomy.

Adorno’s (1977) analysis of tradition helps explain further depreciative attitudes towards the crafts. He contends that when experiences bound up with tradition are dissolved, then the awareness of the chronological continuity of time is nonexistent as well (p. 311). His assertion implies that when people no longer have the experience of textile hand production, they become unaware of textile craft’s historicity, and an awareness of its poetic, aesthetic relation to human life is absent too. Adorno brings his argument back to market influences. He contends that in the absence of tradition, market opinions tend to predominate. If the market considers a thing, an object or an entity, useless or unprofitable, it is viewed insignificant. As a consequence, society might show complete disregard for any qualities this object might have. It is as if it had never existed and like all things functional, it is replaced effortlessly (p. 311). In many ways, Adorno’s interpretations could be applied to the crafts. Generally, the crafts are not regarded particularly useful or profitable, and so their innate qualities are frequently overlooked. It is as if their historical significance had never existed. Subsequently, the products and services of the craft industry have replaced the tools and materials of the traditional crafts. However, Adorno warns that something with no discernible function is irreplaceable (p. 311), implying that a

textile craft that has no discernible function other than to sustain the aesthetic dimension of society, is irreplaceable. For Pye (cited in Adamson, 2007), the most important concept about a craft is free workmanship and its aestheticism, “there is no substitute for the aesthetic quality of [free] workmanship” (p. 75). For Pye furthermore, “the world would be poorer without it, particularly the countryside” (p. 75). Like Giddens (1994), Ruskin (1907c) and the other theorists discussed, Pye sees an inherent link between the social and natural worlds, as Pye continues: “the diversity of imports into our man-made environment [is] something which is akin to the natural environment we have abandoned” (p. 75). Pye opines that importing manufactured objects into society, in lieu of making objects in the traditional way is a form of environmental pollution.

4.4 Fabric and Form – a criticism of new textile art

The final section of this chapter discusses briefly Fuller’s (1985) critique of a textile art exhibition. *Fabric and Form: New Textile Art from Britain* (1982) was an exhibition shown in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Zimbabwe. *Fabric and Form* was a controversial show that Brennand-Wood, a British textile artist, had curated and Fuller had scathingly attacked. Much like Ruskin (1907c), Fuller argues for greater importance to be attached to the aesthetic dimension in art and life, emphasising the role of institutional responsibilities. According to Fuller, the work in *Fabric and Form* had failed to meet certain standards; it lacked aesthetics, integrity and skill (p. 256).

Brennand-Wood had intended for the work to take risks and provoke. For him, the notion of imagination and originality was more important than a refinement of technique and skill. Fuller (1985) remained unimpressed, he put it this way: “most of the works exhibited were appalling”, the art “tasteless, unskilled, tacky and silly” (p. 256). Brennand-Wood’s art, for example, were “play-school wooden meshes, splattered with paint, and threaded with silk fragments, cotton, and wire” (p. 257). Fuller was equally scathing in his evaluation of the other works of art and questioned the creative validity of showing such ‘bad’ art. He argued for *Fabric and Form* to be re-called and dismantled (p. 258). However, there were two exceptions to the work shown: some delicately coloured, ikat silk hangings, “made with extraordinary skill, sensitivity and imagination” and a few machine-knitted shawls that “show an understanding of [the artist’s] chosen material, a good colour sense and an intelligent approach to the problems of improvisation within geometric patterns” (p. 257). These, in Fuller’s view, merely highlighted the problems with the rest of the work (p. 257).

It is important to point out that Brennan-Wood (2007) does acknowledge the material, technical and cultural-historical background of textiles. For him, modernity has merely changed the frame of reference for the textiles, opening up opportunities for new techniques and for the integration of other media, allowing for greater freedom and making possible new, more innovative forms of work. Brennan-Wood (cited in Fuller, 1985) proclaims, that “the past constraints of use, durability and application have begun to break down” (p. 257). New textile arts therefore are “free to involve and embrace any media or discipline necessary to further the concept” (p. 257). Fuller (1985) remains unconvinced, contending that modernity gave too much prominence to minimalism, new expressionism, new sculpture and pop art. Moreover, Fuller purports, modernity’s new outlooks have led to “a mindlessly destructive elevation of ‘innovation’ as the sole criterion of worth” (p. 259). For Fuller, the innovative work shown in *Fabric and Form* lacks aesthetic content, adding to modernity’s ‘anaesthetic’ culture and outlook (p. 259). Fuller maintains that society’s “official, anti-aesthetic dogma” has had widespread consequences: it has caused painting and sculpture “to dissolve into anything that is neither painting or sculpture” (p. 259), causing “the erosion of basic skills and knowledges” (p. 259). Consequently, textiles have dissolved into “rubbish” (p. 260), and now there is a general “indifference to tradition, material quality or realised value” (p. 259). Fuller opines that innovative textile art is neither progressive nor radical, it is “a received wisdom which has failed” (p. 259). The works of art in *Fabric and Form* had failed because Brennan-Wood had “confused the parameters of the arts and denigrated aesthetic judgement” (p. 259). They also had failed because they were removed from “the ‘traditional field’ of ‘fibre and textile crafts’” (p. 259).

The two contradictory statements raise questions about whether, in the multifarious conditions of late modernity, there is a context for both innovative new textile art and traditional art practice. There is and there has to be. After all, current social circumstances have created conditions conducive to the creation and production of diversified forms of art. I work in the context of post-tradition, a context in which traditional knowledges and skills are at threat of dissolving. To illuminate what might be lost, I therefore choose to create a body of work based on traditional textile practice. Fuller’s (1990) relevance is not in his criticism of new textile art but in showing that the aesthetic potential of traditional craft production can survive only if the overall socio-cultural circumstances are supportive of it. Fuller (1985) holds that cultural institutions, such as art galleries, museums and art schools should show support for the traditional field of textiles, but they also play a role in disseminating ‘anaesthetic’ content (p. 258). They too are responsible for dissolving traditional practice (p. 258). In the 1960s, for example, the Arts Council and “the bureaucratic philistines in the modern art museums”, Fuller writes, revised their “wisdom of the arts” (p. 258). Painting and sculpture, they declared, could

be anything. Now, Fuller asserts, under the auspices of the British Arts and Crafts Councils, textiles are destined to follow the same path (p. 258). For Fuller, there is no longer any need for what a painter or a sculptor did – to reflect on our ‘anaesthetic’ culture (p. 259). Worse yet, Fuller opines, art galleries and museums began to acquire “these reductive innovations” (p. 259). Fuller’s allegations raise questions as to whether an understanding of technique and skill is a prerequisite for the making of art. According to Fuller, art schools assume it is not. He alleges that art schools have shifted their focus from learning the craft of painting, sculpture or the craft of any other discipline to the development of conceptual points of view (p. 259).

Other art critics have described Fuller’s (1985) attitudes as parochial in outlook (c.f. Timms, 2004). Fuller’s critique of *Fabric and Form* is a particularly contemptuous piece of writing. Adorno (1984) posits that it is impossible to determine what constitutes good or bad art from “the faculty of judgment with its concern for quality” (p. 236). He furthermore argues that “the very idea of a bad work of art is an oxymoron. Whenever a work fails to meet the standards of its inner constitution, it also fails to meet the *a priori* presupposition of what art as such is” (p. 236). In art, Adorno contends, all value judgments, whether they refer to questions of aestheticism, humanity or other, are inappropriate (p. 236). From this aspect, Fuller’s criticisms of *Fabric and Form*, based on value judgments, are unacceptable. They undermine any other meaning the art may have had. Nevertheless, Fuller makes one good point: traditional art forms need greater acknowledgement. He suggests that if the reasons for emancipation in the textile arts were better understood, our cultural institutions also would be more concerned “with the continuing health of a creative tradition” (p. 258). However, if “the Crafts Council... and the various educational courses offering instruction in textile work” continue to privilege innovative art forms, Fuller cautions, “the traditions of creative work in textiles will be in danger of being eroded, if not destroyed, by those whose duty it is to protect them” (p. 259). Essentially, Fuller argues that it is the responsibility of the Crafts Council and the educational institutions “to keep the traditions and skills of textile production alive”; to offer support to those who “confine their innovations within the limitations of the traditions”; to help sustain and offer encouragement to craftsmen and women who are involved in the “stock categories of weaving, tapestry, embroidery, knitting” (p. 260). Fuller suggests furthermore that “craft and tradition are vital and necessary antidotes to the soulless, destructive and debilitating effects of modernity” (cited in Cohen, 1991). He (1985) also argues that classical music, dance and performance continue to persist as well-acknowledged cultural art forms, therefore something similar needs to be achieved for the traditional arts and crafts (p. 260). However, the central importance of traditional skills, techniques and material qualities is in their historical, contemporary and future connection to the aesthetic dimension of human work. Traditional crafts are based on the accumulated knowledge of humanity at large, which is derived from direct or hands-on

experience, of close and creative interaction with others, and handed on since antiquity. To hand on these knowledges to future generations, these must be preserved, developed and taught at a professional level.

The focal point of my art praxis and as discussed earlier, is to understand within the context of post-tradition what tradition means and how the shifting nature of society has changed the context for the crafts, affecting and changing the nature of the textile arts. The factors that ultimately will determine intentional and extentional socio-environmental issues, including the status of the crafts, are addressed through questions of reflexive action at a personal and local level. At the core of traditional art practice is the experience of making, involving skill, technique, an adherence to material quality and cognitive thought. Brennan-Wood's *Fabric and Form*, was not based on traditional art practice, it sought to develop new, innovative art forms. This art too, is an important form of reflexive action. It merely has a different focus. The importance of my praxis, in contrast, is related to the processes of traditional textile hand production. My art practice, based on traditional textile processes, is one way of addressing the global issue of detraditionalisation at a personal, local level. In the following Chapter 5, I use Adorno (1984) to explain how the 'truth content' in a work of art reflects 'real' human values. This implies that the 'truth content' of a handmade textile object is a manifestation of 'real human' values. Adorno's deliberations are of paramount importance because ultimately, they are directed towards understanding growth in human consciousness and intellectual independence.

5. The reflexive art practice

In this final Chapter five I discuss the role of my art praxis. The aim of this thesis has been to examine the significance of the craft object, particularly in relation to questions about how to live responsibly after ‘the end of tradition’ and ‘after the end of nature’. I aim to demonstrate the significance of Adorno’s, Habermas’ and Giddens’ ideas developed thus far, therefore this final chapter concludes the thesis by examining how my art praxis, based on the methods of reflexive action, can be made relevant to the questions raised throughout the research. I provide an account of my art practice, which culminated in an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), but I also participated in further exhibitions, conferences, group activities and other actions. These are listed in the appendix. Essentially, the investigation has revealed that the crafts have the potential to contribute to the advancement of all three structural components of the human lifeworld: society, culture and person. The study has shown that real traditions are authentic forms of human life. It has also shown that throughout every epoch of human development, craft has been an intrinsic part of an authentic cultural tradition, helping human society advance on many levels. As Habermas (1984) has established, there is poetry in tradition, a poetry that manifests itself in its aesthetic-expressive capacity, entailing rituals, values, ways of life, and the manifestation of the arts and crafts. Adorno (1984) posits that the truth content in works of art echo humanity’s intellectual, aesthetic levels, and I discuss this point in further detail in a later section of this chapter. Importantly, according to Adorno, art embodies a kind of “in-itself that has yet to be brought into being” (p. 356), meaning that “art belongs to the realm of freedom”, therefore it must escape from “the stale clichés of bourgeois ideology” (p. 356). In other words, art must attempt to free itself from institutional influences of dominance and become autonomous. Adorno also argues that the less works of art correspond with fixed stages of development, the more significant they are (p. 356). Historically, the textile crafts have played an important role in social evolution throughout every stage of human development.

In the sections that follow, I first summarise the core issues underpinning my art praxis. Giddens (1991) is used to explain briefly the concept of reflexivity and its relevance to the art praxis. Second, I provide a detailed analysis of my art practice, showing images that relate to my discussion. I also discuss Ann Hamilton (2004; 2002) as an artist who works reflexively and who shares certain components with my praxis. Hamilton is relevant to this research because she articulates concepts that relate to my discussion. For example, for Hamilton, part of the process and important to her installation or performance work are notions of reading or researching, time, materials, the experience of touch and making. Hamilton aims for a poetic-aesthetic quality in her art. Third, to further contextualise my art praxis and define the link

between technique and the poetic content of a work of art, I use Adorno (1984). I conclude my investigation into the position of the textile object by relating the creative process to what Adorno calls the process of ‘aesthetic sublimation’ (p. 339). As he seeks to determine, aesthetic sublimation is closely connected to the intensional notion of intra-artistic progress as well as to the progress of humanity on an extensional level.

5.1 The core issues informing my art praxis

I present in the following a short summary of the core issues informing my praxis. The ideas have evolved from my study of contemporary discourse, philosophy and craft theory as well as from the experience of working with the textile crafts: from dyeing fibre and cloth, from creating yarns and cloth, stitching, felting and so forth. Throughout the research period I thought about the position of traditional textile hand production, set in the contexts of a world that Giddens (1994) calls post-traditional, a world in which traditions have ended and nature has become subject to global threats. The proposition that tradition has ended suggests that the traditional crafts have ended too, yet the crafts have been an influential creative force in the advancement of civilisations since antiquity. The handloom production of cloth represents one of the oldest and most complex forms of craft. In the Late Middle Ages, tapestry weavers had brought their craft to the highest level of creative genius, yet after the eighteenth century, training ceased and knowledge declined. Adorno (1984) claims that our cultural practices help develop our sense of what life is and art represents what matters in life, “Life – mere life as well as the prospect of the good life – has been perpetuated by culture. And authentic art is an echo of this” (p. 357). Accordingly, it could be argued that textile hand production is a cultural activity that helps develop our sense of life, whereas the objects created represent what matters in life. Weaving in particular is a constructive form of art, of which the basic principles of creation have remained the same for millennia. To weave means to master technique, understand materials and to aim for excellence. Skills therefore must be learned. However, in conditions of post-tradition, it is difficult to earn a serious income from the work. Hence, for the craft object to be fully understood, questions about society, culture and the individual as well as craft’s historicity must be considered. Then, traditional textile hand production might be thought about in terms of a valuable cultural activity and a social responsibility rather than just a personal fulfilment. The point at issue is not merely the loss of traditional textile craft knowledge and skill, the point is that much wider humanitarian and environmental issues are at stake. Society is at further risk of losing their living traditions and dissociating from nature, causing further threats to humanity and ecology. Davis (2003) summarises consequences of detraditionalisation as follows:

The ultimate tragedy is not that archaic societies are disappearing but rather that vibrant, dynamic, living cultures and languages are being forced out of existence. At risk is a vast archive of knowledge and expertise, a catalogue of the imagination, an oral and written literature composed of the memories of countless elders and healers, warriors, farmers, fishermen, midwives, poets and saints. In short, the artistic, intellectual, and spiritual expression of the full complexity and diversity of the human experience. Every view of the world that fades away, every culture that disappears, diminishes a possibility of life and reduces the human repertoire of adaptive responses to the common problems that confront us all. Knowledge is lost, not only of the natural world but of realms of the spirit, intuitions about the meaning of the cosmos, insights into the very nature of existence.

Davis' (2003) propositions suggest that the making could be a connecting link between an individual and "the spiritual expression of the full complexity and diversity of the human experience". Understanding how the artistic, intellectual and tacit knowledge claims of the crafts are integral to the wider human experience is key to understanding the value of the textile crafts. Moreover, understanding that corrosive relation between the ending of tradition, the ending of the crafts and the disconnection from self and nature is an important step towards a change in outlook. My aim, thus, is to help raise awareness about these relations.

5.2 Reflexivity and its relevance for the creative art praxis

I hope to help raise awareness through the method of reflexivity. Reflexivity is a means with which to gain new insights and knowledge and the means with which to re-direct ways of thinking. Thinking about the textile crafts in terms of a cultural activity and a social responsibility is a reflexive act. Thinking about the textile crafts in these terms also influences what I make and how I make it. According to Giddens (1991), institutional reflexivity is a constitutive element of a post-traditional society and is the core influence that instigates social change (p. 20). The conditions of late modernity are largely ephemeral, threatening to transform or dissolve everything we have. Moreover, "no one can 'opt out' of the transformations brought about by modernity", Giddens declares (p. 22). Giddens (1994) defines institutional reflexivity as a form of social activity, entailing a continual appropriation and re-appropriation of knowledge. Understandings of the world are subject to constant examination and revision. This "prevalence of institutional reflexivity means that there is a continuous filter back of expert theories, concepts and findings to the lay population" (p. 91). In the light of new knowledge, large groups of individuals may potentially change the way they think and act, and when sufficient numbers of individuals change their thinking, then "new forms of organisational solidarity tend to replace the old" (p. 187). This is an important point, since it follows that this

filter-back and re-appropriation of information can become “deeply subversive of core abstract systems” (p. 90). Moreover, Giddens implies, if there is a chance of addressing global issues, it is not through further economic growth, it is through a change in ways life is lived. Reflexive action thus has the potential to become ‘deeply subversive’ of current capitalistic trends, and this “general move away from consumerism in modern economies would have massive implications for contemporary economic institutions” (p. 90). In summary, institutional reflexivity is a kind of collective appropriation and re-appropriation of knowledge and information, which in the light of new understandings has the potential to cause widespread changes in attitudes and behaviour. For myself as an artist, reflexivity essentially entails a constant negotiation between the theoretical, contextual content of my work and the lived experience perspective as a maker. Also, researching new knowledge helps my practical work to evolve. Since informed reflexive action has the potential to re-evaluate and redefine the way we think about the crafts, it is a central method used in my art praxis.

5.3 The creative art praxis, an analysis of my work

The following section is a detailed analysis of works I created throughout my candidature. Since traditional craft production is not part of our Australian culture, I decided to largely weave cloth, especially because the handloom production of cloth seemed to have the best potential with which to express and communicate my ideas about the interconnectedness between the craft object, tradition and the ecology. The time it takes to make cloth and to stitch into it, attention to material sensitivity and the perfection of technique and skill are all part of the process and central to my practice. As is discussed in the final section of this chapter, making is part of the aesthetic experience and technique is needed for making the object. Before I embarked on the larger projects for the exhibition, I made several small cloths using different weave techniques, such as plain, twill and double-weave pick-up. Into the cloths I wove or stitched figures, motifs, decorative patterns and text. Playing with ideas and making small samples is an important part of the process, because from play more complex ideas evolve. Figures 1 to 7 show images of smaller works, whereas figures 8 to 18 show the work for the final project. The materials used for all objects are cotton and flax fibres and plant dyes. The objects were shown in various contexts, such as at group exhibitions, at ECU research week, and in the state gallery context, enabling me to think about different aspects of the work (c.f. appendix 1).



Figure 1 *saumplarie*, indigo and plant dye, cotton and linen fibre, 44 x 55 cm



Figure 2 *saumplarie* , detail

The object shown in figures 1 and 2 is a plain weave, indigo dyed cloth. I named the work *saumplarie*, a medieval word for sampler, alluding to a textile craft's historicity. Before I made this object, I had little understanding of stitch techniques. Therefore, in the non-traditional context in which we live, I learned from books about the variations of stitch, and then practiced the variations of stitch on this piece. With this work, I aim to demonstrate that techniques are needed and skills are learned and that the time invested in learning, playing and making is integral to my practice. This work was exhibited at the community art centre in Dwellingup, Western Australia in August 2011.



Figure 3 double weave pick-up and stitch, indigo and plant dye, linen fibre, 15 x 68 cm

Figure 3 depicts a double weave pick-up cloth, meaning that two separate layers of cloth are woven at the same time, allowing for imagery and pattern to be incorporated into the cloth during the weave process. This work is particularly slow to develop because during the weave process, threads are picked-up or lowered individually according to the intricacies of the design. Time and technique thus are inherent elements of this process. Into this piece, I wove traditional imagery taken from my European background: the mythical tree of knowledge, the bird of Athene and stars or snowdrops, symbolising notions of transcendence and infinity. Once the weaving was complete, I over-dyed the cloth with indigo, blurring and almost cancelling the images. Then, I stitched back into the cloth, highlighting yet at the same time distorting the imagery. Beyond questioning the value of human labour, I aim to communicate that tradition has its origin in poetic-mythological understandings of the world and that stories of myth are part of Western society's heritage too. Stories of myth are integral to all human societies. The cosmic world tree of knowledge for example finds itself in many mythical and religious stories of creation in societies across the world. This work was shown at ECU research week in August 2011.



Figure 4 Made by craft (2009), work in progress



Figure 5 double weave pick-up, plant dye, cotton fibre, 29 x 128 cm



Figure 6 Made by craft, detail

The object shown in figures 4, 5 and 6 is also a double weave pick-up cloth. This piece is incomplete because again I intend to over-dye the cloth with plant dye and then stitch into it. I named the work *made by craft* and first showed it at *Ummm...the ARTiculate Practitioner* as work in progress. By showing the object as work on the loom, the aim was to communicate that weaving detailed imagery into cloth is a labour-intense process, of which significance is in the experience of making and in the attention to material quality and detail. This work depicts images of a human and two animal skeletons, a horse and a lizard, and is intended as an index of socio-biological evolution, alluding to humanity's connection to nature and to slow change over time, also alluding to a weaving craft's primeval origins. The human skeleton makes a reference to Lucy, the oldest hominid fossil found.



Figure 7 Weave and stitch sample, indigo and plant dye, cotton and silk fibre, 54 x 68 cm

The work depicted in figure 7 is hand-loomed cotton cloth, dyed with indigo and stitched with plant-dyed silk and cotton threads. This work also is incomplete for I intend to stitch text into the cloth. Reading and researching the text is essential to the process and waiting for the text to evolve is part of the process. It seeks to communicate that the completion of a work is not always the aim. In this piece, I reproduced another version of the mythical tree of knowledge, again referencing the poetic-mythological origins of tradition, the variations of myth and the importance of tradition's historicity. This piece was shown on ECU's open day in 2010.

After experimenting with the sample pieces, I thought about making a few larger objects for an exhibition. Figures 8 to 18 show the three objects made: a tablet woven band and two works of hand-loomed cloths.



Figure 8 Continually I (2010), work in progress with weaving tablets attached

Figures 8 to 10 show images of my tablet-woven work. Tablet weaving is a technique for weaving patterned bands. The process is particularly labour intense and most likely originated in the Iron Age. The earliest known tablet weave was discovered in the Oseberg burial, a Norwegian Viking ship found in a burial mound, dating 834 AD (Ingstad, n.d.). Tablet weaving requires a fairly high level of abstract thinking and mathematical abilities. A tablet is a 7 cm (approx.) square piece of wood or cardboard with holes punched into each corner. The number of tablets needed depends on the pattern and the width of the band. I designed an alphabet, imagery of myth and a patterned border that required 55 tablets, which I cut from cardboard. The pattern or imagery is achieved by using two contrasting coloured yarns threaded in alternate order through the four holes of each tablet. Then the warp is tensioned so that the tablets are arranged side by side. The technique requires groups of tablets to be turned forwards or backwards, causing dark and light threads to lift or lower, depending on the design. Even though the technique appears difficult, once mastered, weaving is relatively uncomplicated but time consuming.



Figure 9 Continually I (2010), cotton fibres, plant dyes, 384 x 4.5cm



Figure 10 Continually I (2010), detail

As stated throughout my research, my concerns are with the status of the traditional textiles, with the socio-ecological problems of post-tradition, and with the understanding that economics or politics will not solve the problems. Ruskin (1907c) had lectured continually about the damaging influences of industrialisation. In *Unto this last*, he expressed his dismay at the hostile responses he received when suggesting to replace economic wealth with ‘real’ wealth, with real human values. For Ruskin, as for Adorno (1984), real human values help society advance towards higher levels of aesthetic, intellectual consciousness. Ruskin’s core theory is that if a

greater focus was given to the arts and crafts, if every individual was given the opportunity to make and create art, people would develop higher levels of consciousness (p. ix). I wish to communicate that Ruskin's concerns and suggestions have relevance today, I therefore appropriated Ruskin's sentiments into my work because they bring to light the problems with the present condition. To show that tradition has evolved from mythological understandings of the world, I designed figures of myth and juxtaposed these with the Ruskin text, which reads:

The loneliness is very great, and the peace in which I am at present is only as if I had buried myself in a tuft of grass on a battlefield wet with blood – for the cry of the earth about me is in my ears continually, if I do not lay me head to the very ground. (p. viii)

Adorno (1984) posits that “If art works have any social influence at all”, it is “by changing consciousness in ways that are ever so difficult to pin down” (p. 344). I believe that the relevance of my research is hard to pin down, however the naming of the work might provide a pointer to help viewers interpret any implied meanings. Ruskin (1907c) provided the title for the body of work: *continually*. With the naming of the work, the concept and the ideas became clearer. *Continually* implies two core meanings. The first pertains to the continual influences of industrialisation. The threat to the ecology was already a concern in Victorian times and that threat has now become a continual global problem. The second reason for choosing the name is related to the themes of tradition, the traditional handcrafts, poetry and aestheticism. As discussed in Chapter 1, tradition infers continuity; tradere includes the passing on of craft knowledge from one generation to another. Also, one of my objectives was to transcend the techniques of a textile craft and situate the work in the context of poetry or art. Although Adorno (1984) shows that it is difficult to transcend technique, as he argues, “technical forces of production have no value by themselves. They are significant only in relation to the truth content of what is being written, composed or painted” (p. 310), he argues that technique is essential to creating art.⁹ Adorno (1977) also contends that tradition today presents an irresolvable paradox. Traditions often are not viewed as contemporary and conjure up little desire to continue. However, he cautions against obliterating traditions because eradication affects the whole of humanity (p. 315). My work therefore suggests not a return to tradition, but tradere, a continuation of tradition. It suggests that the craft skills and knowledges of previous generations must be passed on and advanced *continually*. Hence, I aim to communicate that the making moves beyond the restorative potential of tradition and definitely beyond personal fulfilment. Traditional handcrafts are more related to the aesthetic social relevance of work made by hand.

⁹ The relation between technique and the ‘truth content’ of a work of art is an important point that I examine in the final section of this chapter and that further contextualises my practice.

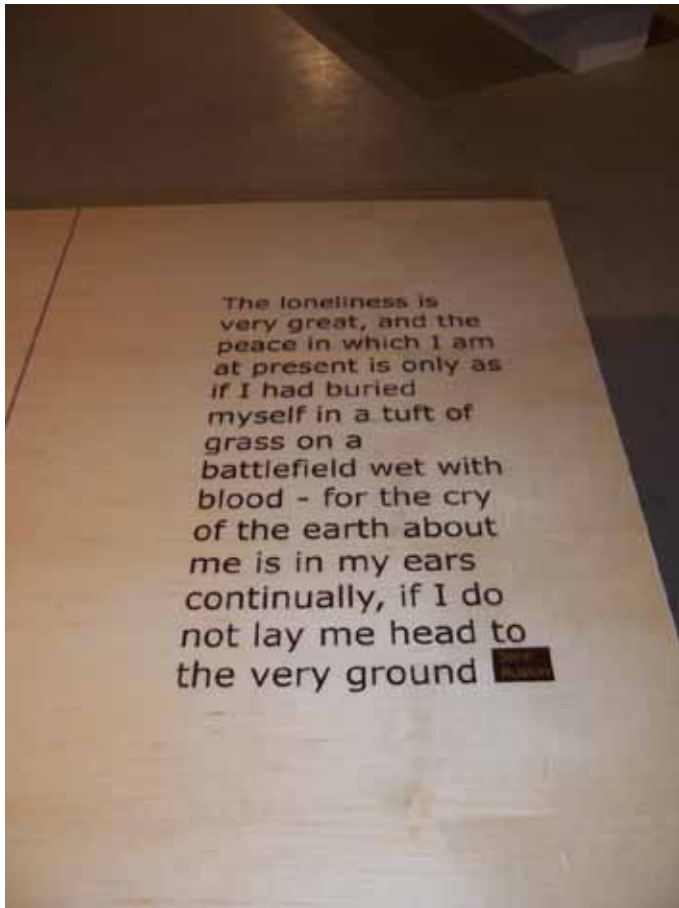


Figure 11 display case for *continually I*, maple wood



Figure 12 display case for *continually 1*, maple wood

Figures 11 and 12 show the custom-built display case for the band. The case is handcrafted from maple wood, in keeping with my ideas regarding material quality and skill. I intend to exhibit the band under a lid, under glass to communicate and stress the poetic-aesthetic value of traditional handwork. The idea emerging from the case is that when viewers lift the lid they will contemplate the work inside in greater detail. The band is to be shown concertinaed, making the text illegible. Therefore, the Ruskin text is wood-veneered into the lid for viewers to read before lifting the lid.

Continually II & III are two hand-loomed cloths.



Figure 13 *continually II* (2011), hand-spun hand-woven, cotton, flax, wool, Eucalyptus Cinerea, 382 x 83cm



Figure 14 *Continually II* (2011), detail



Figure 15 *Continually II* (2010), work in progress

Figures 13 to 15 show my work *Continually II*. *Continually II* is a large cloth made with 16/2 linen/cotton, of which some warp and weft threads are dyed with indigo. The pattern weft is wool, which I had handspun from a raw fleece and dyed with Eucalyptus Cinerea leaves. Like the other works, this object requires labour-intense processes, an innate understanding of materials, technique and skill. To illustrate how labour-intense the work is, I give a brief outline of the process. The process begins with thinking about the weave structure and designing the pattern. It also begins with walking in nature and collecting Eucalyptus Cinerea leaves for the dyeing of the fleece. I use wool for the pattern weft because the proteins in the wool are more likely to absorb the red dye from the leaves. To extract the dye, the leaves are simmered for approximately 40 minutes. During the process the water turns from a yellowish-brown to a deep red. The fleece is immersed in the water for the simmer process, allowing it to absorb the varying colour hues. Then the fleece is left to soak in the water for a further 24 hours to allow it to absorb the maximum amount of red dye. Thereafter, the thus unevenly dyed fleece is left to dry for several days. I then spin the wool into a yarn, varying the colours as I spin. Different weave techniques, patterns and structures have specific names. The technique in this piece of work is called overshot and the pattern monksbelt. Monksbelt patterns produce small blocks of weave and when woven on a multi-shaft loom, the blocks can be applied in an asymmetrical manner. Also, when no break is introduced between the blocks, the block can be woven as lines. Hence, in this piece, woven on an eight-shaft loom, the asymmetrical blocks take on the appearance of irregular lines. It takes approximately two to three days to design a pattern, calculate the threads, prepare the loom, wind the warp and thread the loom. Thereafter it takes approximately three to four hours to spin enough fibre and to weave one metre of cloth. Like the other work, this object alludes to the poetic expressive capacity of tradition, historicity, process, time, technique and skill.



Figure 16 Continually III (2010), unbleached and bleached flax fibres, 500 x 28cm



Figure 17 Continually III (2010), detail



Figure 18 Continually III, detail

Figures 16 to 18 are images of the work *Continually III*. *Continually III* is the least complicated piece of work I created in terms of process and technique, yet skill and knowledge is still a requirement for the making, as is time. *Continually III* is a long narrow cloth worked in plain weave and interspersed at irregular intervals with small bands of twill weaves. The materials are an assortment of 20/2 unbleached and bleached linen fibres and plant-dyed embroidery threads. It is particularly time consuming to weave cloth with fine 20/2 threads. Using the subtle colours of nature, I stitched a fragment of a lizard-like creature into the cloth. The creature cannot be easily seen or identified; its enigma pertaining to the incomprehensibility of mythical and natural phenomena, also alluding to nature's fragility and its vulnerability to the human impact. The simplicity of this work alludes to my ideas of aestheticism, its length to notions of time: the time it takes to make the work and the inestimable period of time that has existed since time immemorial.

In the following, I refer to Hamilton (2004) as an artist who works reflexively and who shares similar concepts to mine, such as reading and using text, questioning, making, experiencing, time, process and historicity, relating the concepts to the aesthetic potentiality of humanity. Hamilton's work includes installations, photographs, videos, performances and the making of objects. Everything she does, is related to process. For example, Hamilton often incorporates prose and words into her art, reading and words then become the material for her making and the questioning and thinking about the work become part of the process. For Hamilton, language and process are entirely interrelated and interchangeable. Language is important to her because it is part of what it is to be human: "We are born into language as surely as we are born into our bodily selves" (p. 179), whereas process is important because it is part of the creative

experience. Like other theorists who studied the corrosive effects of globalisation, Hamilton (cited in Cooke, 1994) links the scarcity “of unmediated experiences with the natural...[to]...many contemporary ills, psychological and social, ecological and environmental”. Hamilton holds responsible the lack of involvement with creative processes for the many psychological and social problems society faces today and for the threats to the ecology. In her mind, touch and manual labour has curative potential:

There's a kind of conversation and a kind of community that develops out of that [touch and manual labour], a satisfaction in touching things. Through such manual labor a bonding takes place, a feeling of collectivity that derives from the ‘mass’ production of a material artifact but which continues to resonate at the level of shared memories of mutual endeavor. Like nurturing, tending requires an engaged attentiveness that is both physical as well as mental in character. By means of such tending the viewer is brought back into contact with raw material, and, more particularly, with organic matter. (cited online)

Essentially, Hamilton (2004) argues that creating work through involving oneself with process and manual labour and using raw materials and organic matter has restorative potential. To work manually and to use materials from nature means to re-connect. For Hamilton, the process of creation is synonymous with the notion of experience, meaning that everything she experiences, whilst she is creating, is part of the process. Reading, waiting for time to pass and for ideas to happen, making, all these belong to the experience of creating, hence to process. Hamilton states that these are concepts that are difficult to convey to an audience, for these reasons she has been a live presence in much of her work (p. 185). *Mantle* is an example of a performance work that represents the artist’s experience of time and labour (c.f. Simon, 2002, pp. 203-206). Hamilton performed *Mantle* in 1998 in the gallery of the Miami Art Museum in Florida. The performance was set against a background of sixty thousand cut flowers, piled on a table. The flowers wilted at different rates, and so new flowers were added at regular intervals. Buried below the flowers were speakers, from which could be heard voices and static noise. During the performance, Hamilton sat silently with her back to the table, facing the window. She could be seen sewing sleeves onto woollen coats, seemingly oblivious to the wilting flowers (conveying the notion of time) and the noise generated by the speakers (representing the clamour of our contemporary times). Many hours of labour went into the sewing of sleeves on the coats. Hamilton (n.d.) frequently approaches the value of making as a question, and for her, making involves the reading of texts. Reading, Hamilton explicates, is an invisible, silent and mostly solitary activity, as she notes:

Over time, my question: “What is making?” has enlarged to consider how the act and experience of reading might form the tactile material of my makings. Though we may sometimes find ourselves reading in public, say on a crowded subway, for the most part when we read we read alone and silently. We are absorbed between the covers of a book. And although we might return from reading’s singular immersiveness forever changed, we remain physically unmarked.

In *Mantle* too, Hamilton (cited in Simon, 2002) questions the value of making, in particular the value of labour, the value of sixty thousand flowers, or that of a woollen coat in tropical South Florida (pp. 203-206). For Hamilton (2004), the process of making is often “steeped in words” (p. 179) and so, the process begins with waiting and reading is one of the ways she waits. The books that she chooses to read influence her work, because reading is about “forming a landscape that allows work to happen” (p. 179). From her readings she develops questions, such as:

What does it mean to be a reader?
How does reading – which has a profound effect on one’s thinking and experience but which leaves no material trace – form the material of my making?
Can a work evoke the act of making?
What is making?
What does it mean to make?
What are the multiple forms it can take at a time when the ability to extend our presence is so amplified beyond the reach of our hand?
How is making a way of being in the world?
What is the place of making by hand?
What forms does it take now?
How is it relevant?
Or has making by hand become a nostalgic activity?
How is it necessary?
How does making animate the world?
How does it become reciprocal?
How is reading making?
(p. 179)

For Hamilton (2004), the questions relate the work back to the concept of relationships, language and history: “Words carry histories that reveal and make explicit intuited relationships” (p. 179). Her questions, her use of language and text also help with the naming of her work. Hamilton claims that her work is partly complete, in that moment of recognition, when it is named. She then translates her questions into a performance, installation or other works of art. Repeated acts of making, as in *Mantle*, is one of the ways she converts her questions into performance (p. 179). Thus, Hamilton shows how the theory and the practice become reflexively reciprocal and creative at every level. The key points that Hamilton raises with her work and her questions, are the same key points that I wish to raise with my work: emphasising the experience of creating, entailing researching, thinking, making and a way of

being in the world, belongs to process. *Mantle* in particular illustrates that the making by hand is a painstakingly slow and repetitive process that requires a commitment unobserved by today's society. Hamilton seeks to demonstrate that the human aspect of making gives a more profound meaning to the work, highlighting that the making is an activity that supports a philosophy of human values, ecological consciousness and ultimately, responsible human action and sustainability.

5.4 Aestheticism and its relevance to art practice

I conclude this enquiry into the position of the traditional textile crafts by discussing aspects of Adorno's (1984) theory of aestheticism and the significance this has for the development of my art praxis. In *Aesthetic theory*, Adorno analyses the truth content in a work of art and relates this concept to real human values. This is a significant point because the 'the truth content' of a work of art is akin to the aesthetic content or the poetry. On Adorno's account, aestheticism is geared towards the evolution of human consciousness, however, for consciousness to evolve, the awareness of 'real human needs' must be understood, acknowledged, cultivated and developed. For Adorno, creating works of art represents a real human need, as he states, "Art is the consciousness of needs" (p. 296). Importantly, Adorno's enquiry into the theory of aestheticism is inherently linked to questions about how to live responsibly, or rather, how to progress on aesthetic-intellectual levels in a world that is living in the destructive contexts of industrial progress. He tends to juxtapose economic growth with intellectual growth and surmises that art is vital to aesthetic-intellectual growth, and autonomous thought and action. What I perceived as a lack of poetry in post-traditional urbanised metropolitan Perth when I first arrived in Australia, Adorno may have perceived as a loss of lifeworld qualities. In *Minima Moralia: reflections from damaged life* Adorno (1985) suggests that if we wish to learn the truth about life, we must first examine the powers that determine individual existence, even in their "most estranged forms" and "hidden recesses" (p. 15). He concedes that under the conditions of commerce and industrialisation, life is damaged. In fact, life is so damaged that "Life does not live" (Kürnberger cited in Adorno, 1985, p. 19). Essentially, Adorno argues that in the conditions of high consumption, life worthy of human beings is no longer possible, because under these conditions, life is without true substance, true aesthetic content or true autonomy. Worse yet, the prevalence of dominant market ideologies cloud our views about the true substance in life and we become unaware of qualities that matter, as he notes, "Our perspective of life has passed into an ideology which conceals the fact that there is life no longer" (p. 15).

5.4.1 The lived experience perspective

Adorno (1984) stresses the importance of the lived experience perspective yet at the same time suggests that the concept of the lived experience is inadequately defined. He argues that an experience of life is central to the development of real progress and real progress entails creative action, aesthetic, intellectual growth and the development of human consciousness (p. 296). According to Adorno, the culture industry has cultivated a form of “anti-intellectualism” (p. 296) because it stifles creativity and stunts real progress. On his account, our understandings of concepts such as the sublime, the aesthetic, the beautiful, the spiritual, but also the abject, ugly and the vulgar are all due to circumstances that have made it possible for people to experience real psychological or natural phenomena. The need to experience real phenomena is an aesthetic need and aesthetic needs are synonymous with real human needs. However, Adorno declares, our understandings about real human needs are vague and poorly articulated and the culture industry has done much to keep it that way (p. 345). Adorno posits that the culture industry organises the way life is lived. In a world governed by mechanisms of supply and distribution, trade and business shape, define and control the human world by promoting ever-the-same products, lifestyles and activities, failing to determine real human needs and true aesthetic substance and ultimately denying individuals the experience of real phenomena.

Adorno’s (1984) discussion prompts the question, if the making of objects is a human need, how can that be determined. He suggests: “Any theory of needs, whether aesthetic or sociological, [points] back to what is called ‘lived experience’” (p. 346). For him, any theory of human needs concerns an experience of living (p. 348) and this experience of real events, marvels and wonder, is “an authentic mode of experience” (p. 311). For instance, making music, watching a performance, reading, painting, sculpturing, printing, stitching or weaving, or experiencing the real phenomena of nature are all authentic modes of experience. It is a way of being in the world and a way of living life more consciously. This is the quality of life, the poetry, the aestheticism that Adorno seeks and art ‘echoes’ this quality (p. 357). For Adorno, art is a crucial element to the development of humanity: “The truth content in art is inseparable from the concept of mankind” (p. 342). Ultimately, his theory of aestheticism is geared towards an unfolding of consciousness and for consciousness to develop, true human needs must be met. Important to Adorno’s theories is that the truth content in art does not encompass the concept of beauty only; it encompasses the entire spectrum of the human experience.

5.4.2 The relevance of technical mastery

According to Adorno (1984), technique is at the basis of making. He argues that a mastery of technique is central to realising ‘the truth content’ or the aesthetic properties of the art object. For Adorno, aesthetic artistic processes belong to technique and therefore “The aesthetic term for mastery over materials is technique” (p. 303). Even though technique often appears trivial and mundane, “Technique underscores the prosaic provenance of art from everyday praxis”, Adorno notes, it “ensures that the art work is more than a collection of facticities. This ‘plus’ is art’s substance” (p. 308). Adorno thus establishes that techniques, skills, process and the experience of making are central components to the making of art. It is this that moves the art into the context of poetry and life, as he notes, “lived experience is the nexus between substance and technique” (p. 308). The labour invested in the making is an experience of aestheticism. This activity is distinct and independent from those activities proffered by the culture industry because it is geared towards aesthetic growth.

Hence, as Adorno (1984) argues, a conscious awareness of real human needs is a prerequisite for the development of personal autonomy, which in turn is a prerequisite for the advancement towards a “consciousness of freedom” (p. 297). Adorno points out that historically, the mastery of technique already played a significant role in furthering consciousness. In antiquity, where no distinctions were yet made between the crafts and the arts, their experience of life was reflected in the objects that people made and the objects reflected the level of consciousness people were at (p. 303). To become more skilled at making objects meant to progress towards greater aesthetic awareness and conscious growth, requiring increasing artistic technical mastery over materials. However, and also since antiquity, with the rise of artistic technique, the crafts developed in two distinct directions: towards industrial growth and towards aesthetic, intellectual growth. The technological forces of industrial production involved a “strict quantification of procedures” and the introduction of machines (p. 303). These technologies were not free and according to Adorno, stifled creativity and the development of autonomy and consciousness. On the other hand, the technical mastery of materials evolved into art. The progression of technology into the arts did not need strict outlines of procedures or machines, “if it did”, Adorno declares, “it would constitute a violation of the qualitative *telos* of art” (p. 303). Instead, artistic progression entailed a growing understanding of human values and needs. This is the kind of understanding that Adorno terms aesthetic growth and the art object thus created reflects this understanding. Hence he defines art as “the consciousness of needs” (p. 297) because art is the manifestation of a real human need. Adorno furthermore contends that

art has never completely severed its relationship with the medieval crafts: both reflect experiences of life lived and both protest against technological forces of production (p. 303).

In summary, artistic technical processes are essential for making objects that bring to light an awareness of needs. As Adorno notes, technique highlights the fact that art is the outcome of the human making, and with the refinement of artistic technique there is “a growth of freedom and of conscious discretionary power over means” (p. 303). Although technique is a constitutive element for making art, technique by itself is not enough, as Adorno (1984) states, “art is inadequately understood if one looks only at how it is made” (p. 304). The work needs a content of truth. This content of truth is synonymous with the substance of a work of art, the poetry, the enigma or the realities, the concept and the ideas that the art tries to communicate. For Adorno, content has everything to do with the way the art is made: “A work remains unintelligible unless its technique is understood, but similarly, technique remains unintelligible unless there is some understanding of the work in non-technical terms” (p. 304). Adorno puts it this way, “technique is the definable figure of the enigma of works of art” (p. 304). Adorno’s interpretations are central to how I try to communicate the core content of my work. It lies in the understanding of what traditional textile hand production can do for society in poetic-aesthetic terms.

5.4.3 The process of creation – a process of aesthetic sublimation

On Adorno’s (1984) account, the process of creation has much wider implications, it is a process of aesthetic sublimation (p. 303). As he outlines, aesthetic progress implies material mastery and “Material mastery implies spiritualisation, tenuous though it may be (because it is forever threatened by spirit’s tendency to make itself autonomous *vis-à-vis* its other)” (p. 302). In Adorno’s understanding, aesthetic sublimation, via the means of growing technical and material mastery, entails “an increasing awareness by spirit of freedom” (p. 303). For him, the principal goal of aesthetic progress is an unfolding of truth, entailing an unfolding of consciousness towards the freedom of consciousness. For Adorno, the decisive factor affecting the unfolding of truth is the paradoxical “emancipation of the subject from myth and the reconciliation of both” (p. 303). The reflexive process makes it possible to engage in such paradox. In my art praxis, emancipation from and reconciliation with tradition takes place in the form of the techniques I use, the process and the skills and the lived experience of making. Most importantly, the understanding that emancipation from and reconciliation with tradition needs to happen has evolved from my study of tradition and from the understanding that craft traditions are constitutive to the process of aesthetic sublimation. Craft traditions attest to a form of cultural heritage, and they need to continue. Adorno maintains that life and art have illusionary,

illusory qualities: “Poetic lies are part and parcel of the illusory quality of art” (p. 338), but “Aesthetic sublimation has something to do with intra-artistic progress, indeed with the progress of civilisation in general” (p. 339).

However, like life, art is not as free as Adorno (1984) would like it to be, because “Sublimation has an ideological content too, which is that it deprives art of dignity by being content with a surrogate of true satisfaction” (p. 339). Adorno argues that both life and art are mediated by dominant social structures (p. 300). Due to that dominance, there is no real progress in the world, “There is no more and no less progress in art than there is in society” (p. 296). Accordingly, on Adorno’s account, art cannot achieve complete sublimation and the noble in life has never existed in reality either (p. 341). Hence, it is unlikely that my artwork is understood in its complexity, I am unconvinced that it reaches sublimation and it is doubtful that my art praxis will have an impact politically. Instead, and importantly, its influence will be in its participation in life lived and in its participation in raising awareness of real human needs. Adorno (1977) suggests that with our currently achieved level of consciousness there is no need to devalue tradition, but there is no need to subordinate oneself to its creeds either. He argues that the phenomenon of modernity can be defended or dismissed only by a critique of modernity. Equally, tradition can be defended or dismissed only by a critique of tradition (p. 315). Adorno asserts that the defence of tradition does not concern the past only; authentic traditions have relevance to the quality of life lived now. Furthermore, authentic traditions do not need to be reinvented continually, nor do they need to better other social activities. Rather, as discussed, authentic traditions are closely linked to the aesthetic growth of civilisation in general (p. 318). On the same subject, both Giddens (1994) and Beck (1992) argue that the poetic, aesthetic content of tradition must persist. Giddens maintains that “beyond compulsiveness lies the chance of developing authentic forms of human life that owe little to the formulaic truths of tradition, but where the defence of tradition also has an important role” (p. 107), whereas Beck suggests, “We must retain good relations with the treasures of tradition, without a misconceived and sorrowful turn to the new, which always remains old anyway” (p. 9).

As Adorno (1984) maintains, if art has an impact, it is by “forming and changing consciousness” (p. 344). To communicate the complexity, the significance and the value of tradition and its crafts, my work needed to be exhibited in an art gallery. To be selected to show the work in *remix* at AGWA marked a significant point in my candidature, it signified that the theme of traditional textile hand production needed to be reflected upon. It provided the opportunity to communicate to a wider audience the corrosive connection between the ending of tradition and nature, to also communicate the value of the traditional textile crafts, perhaps

instigating at some level a change in consciousness. According to Giddens (1991), a change in consciousness has to do with how people go about living their lives (pp. 209-231). If my work helps understand the value of a craft tradition, because making, perhaps, is one way of going about living life more consciously, it might help instigate change on a wider level. In conclusion, the study has shown that traditional textile hand production has creative-aesthetic potential, of which knowledge and skills must be handed on, continually.

Appendix 1 – the research time-line

In appendix, I list the exhibitions, conferences and other activities I participated in over the three-year research period. By taking part in a range of exhibitions and events, I was able to show my work and communicate my findings in a number of different contexts. All images depicted on these pages pertain to work shown in exhibitions.

Exhibitions

I showed my work in several shows that culminated in an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA). I was selected to show two artworks, *continually I* and *II* at *remix*, a version of *mixtape*, shown in 2003 and 2005, entailing a non-thematic selection of 20 contemporary Western Australian artists. The work was on display from 16 April - 14 August 2011. My work, addressing issues of tradition, detraditionalisation and the position of the textile crafts, was exhibited alongside a range of contemporary works, incorporating various forms of mixed media, including painting, sculpture, design, photography and film.

The figures 19 to 24 show images how the work was installed at *remix* 2011.



Figure 19 *remix*, photographer Bo Wong



Figure 20 *remix*, photographer Bo Wong



Figure 21 *continually I* at *remix*, photographer Bo Wong



Figure 22 *remix, continually II*, photographer Bo Wong



Figure 23 *continually I* to the left and *continually II* to the right, at *remix*, photographer Bo Wong



Figure 24 *continually II* at *remix*, photographer Bo Wong

In 2012 I am scheduled to show the full body of work *continually I, II* and *III* as a solo show and as planned at Spectrum Project Space, ECU.

Figures 25 to 28 show images of work shown at the exhibitions *naturally* and *ummm – the ARTiculate practitioner*. *naturally* was an exhibition by the *Western Australian Fibre and Textile Association* (WAFTA) held at the Moores Building, Fremantle, in August 2009. I showed two works, *cross-contamination*, a printed cloth and *iakette*, a hand-felted seamless jacket. Both works had evolved from the work developed for my master's degree, for which I had examined the concept of 'the end of nature' (c.f. Giddens, 1994). I had printed onto the cloth the names of the most common toxic pollutants that are released daily into the atmosphere. The jacket was plant-dyed with *Eucalyptus Cinerea* leaves, hand-carded and hand-felted from a raw fleece. Against the background of ecological threats, the work aimed to communicate the value of the handmade object, alluding to the slow process and labour-intense work of craft.



Figure 25 Work shown at *naturally* in the Moores gallery, Fremantle. The work on the left is *cross-contamination* (2008), calico, 50 x 250 cm



Figure 26 *iakette* (2007), hand-carded, hand felted, plant dyed, dimensions 86 x 120, approximately

ummm – the ARTiculate practitioner was shown at the Moores Building, a contemporary art gallery in Fremantle, from 14 to 22 February, 2009. *ummm* was a group exhibition, for which I presented two works of art, *contamination* (2008) and *made by craft* (2009). *Contamination* is a translucently hand-loomed cloth made with flax fibres. The cloth is dyed with red gum bark and rust. I had found both the bark and the rust on one of my nature walks. During the weave-process, I stitched into the cloth outlines of eucalypt leaves. The rust is an index of environmental contamination, referencing the erosion of tradition and nature. *made by craft* is loom work in progress, again questioning the value of the handicrafts, alluding to the significance of work, material sensitivity, technique and skill. *made by craft* is the first practical project I embarked on for the PhD candidature.



Figure 27 *Contamination* (2008), detail, linen fibre, plant dye, 75 x 880 cm, photographer Heather Shaw



Figure 28 Works shown at *ummm* in the Moores gallery, Fremantle. Art works: *contamination* (2008) and *made by craft* (2009)

Conferences and public talks

Part of AGWA's educational programme for *remix* was to offer artist's floor talks to the public, giving the public the chance to learn more about the work and to interact with the participating artists. On 1 May, 2011, I gave an artist's floor talk at AGWA, addressing questions concerning the current position of the traditional crafts and drawing on Ruskin and Habermas to help explain the contemporary context of post-tradition, the connection between detraditionalisation and the threat to nature and to outline the process of social transformation. The talk was well attended and generated a great discussion at the end. It appeared that the general consensus was that too little attention is given to the textile crafts, therefore this was an important topic to address.

At ECU research week, 20 August, 2010 I presented a talk at Createc titled *Can John Ruskin (1819-1900) make a difference to the way we think about art and nature today?* This talk made reference to Ruskin's role in Victorian England, his concerns about the impact of industrialisation on the human condition and nature and his emphasis on the importance of the arts and crafts.

On 6 November 2009, I presented a paper titled *Craft in the post-traditional period of late modernity* at *creative margins, a humanities graduate research conference staged at Curtin University*. The paper was a short summary of my findings at that point in time of my research.

In July 2009, I presented the paper *why craft matters* to the members of the Western Australian fibre and textile artists (WAFTA). *Why craft matters* was a paper I wrote for the *subjectivity, creativity and the institution* conference a few months earlier. Drawing on Adorno and Ruskin, the paper aims to illustrate that work made by hand still has cultural-social value.

At the *subjectivity, creativity and the institution* conference, held at Curtin University on 9 and 10 February, 2009, I presented the paper titled *why craft matters – the possibilities and limitations of craft in a critical creative practice*. The paper was published in *Subjectivity, creativity and the institution* at the end of 2009 (c.f. Donlin, 2009).



Figure 29 *saumplarie*, cotton and flax fibre, indigo, plant dye, 54 x 42 cm, photographer Ruth Halbert

Publications

Painting culture. In Wang, X. (2010), *Realist Painting in China*. Saarbrücken: Verlag Dr. Muller.

Painting culture is a review of Wang's work. Wang is a painter whose themes are concerned with the nature of human work and life. Like my work, the notions of aestheticism and traditional skill are essential to translating his ideas into a work of art. Aestheticism and painting with traditional paint and brush might just be one aspect of art but it is one that was important historically and one that is important to Wang.

Why craft matters – the possibilities and limitations of craft in a critical creative practice. In Crouch, C. (Ed.), (2009), *Subjectivity, creativity and the institution* Florida: Brown Walker Press.

Other activities

Throughout the candidature I participated in a weekly maker's group at Edith Cowan University. In this group, ideas, concepts and other thoughts are discussed and exchanged. Participants share the experience of making and learn new techniques and skills. In the Western Australian context, there are many small communities of textile makers, who keep the textile crafts alive, such as the members of WAFTA, Fibres West, Feltwest or the Spinners and Weaver's Guild.

In August 2011, I participated in a short artist's residency in the community art centre of Dwellingup, Western Australia, where I showed the work *saumplarie* (c.f. figure 29).

In summary, central to my reflexive art praxis is the question how to confront the global problem of living responsibly in a world that is living after the end of tradition and nature, that is faced with continual social and environmental problems and threats. I communicate my ideas about the relevance of textile hand production through participating in exhibitions, conferences and other activities. On a personal level, I respond to such issues by participating in workshops, group activities or by making work that I take into my hands everyday. Furthermore, I participate less in activities proffered by market interests and become more involved with a creative commitment to person and environment. As Giddens (1991) argues, “A clear part of increased ecological concern is the recognition that reversing the degradation of the environment depends upon adopting new lifestyle patterns” (p. 221), because, as Giddens has shown, small changes on an intensional level, collectively can lead to large changes on an extensional level.

Appendix 2 – Images from the remix catalogue

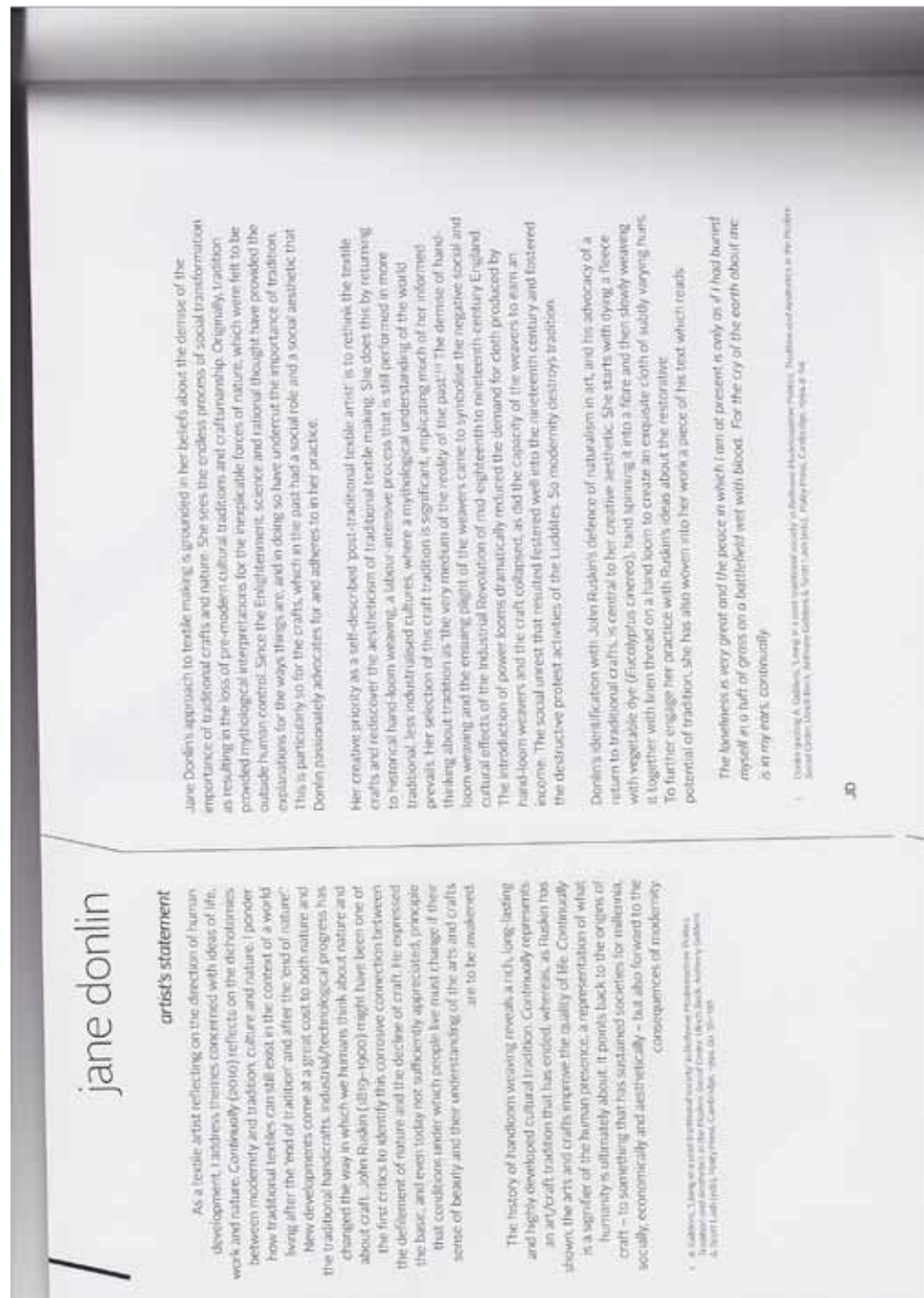


Figure 30 artist's statement and curator's commentary



Figure 31 *continually I & II* (2011)

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