



---

## **“There’s No Place Like Home”? : Beyond Fantasy And Returning To The Real; Working With Adoptees Searching For An Internal Sense Of Home**

### **Joy Gravestock**

‘Home’ is a complex notion for adoptees. Like Odysseus, we have experienced forced separation and long journeying. Adoptees lose their first families either through relinquishment by their first parents or removal by the state. A different home is created. Lacking cognitive recall of the first family, faint ‘feeling memories’ exist, imbued with joy, but mostly sadness and grief for what was lost: an ache for something that was never actually had.

This unconscious state may play out within adoptive families. Child adoptees build defences, fearing loss again and repetition of early experience. Commonly, children fantasising for their first family experience attachment difficulties. The first home, idealised in imaginings, is a place that never truly existed. Such painful struggles bring many adoptees to music therapy, when ‘real’ life in an adoptive family does not match anyone’s fantasies.

The Welsh word ‘hiraeth’ encapsulates this feeling state resulting from adoption. It means a place of no return, (because of conflict, or because place no longer exists, or never even did). Nostalgia and wistfulness for an internal home-state shapes adoptee experience. Inevitable desire to return is strong, with a craving for family and roots. But fantastical home is a place of no return.

I explore the complexities of working with unconscious felt desires in music therapy with adoptee children. Rhythm and repetition unsurprisingly feature largely. Additionally, I will describe working with adult adoptees in the process of ‘tracing’ their first families. Odysseus spent 20 years journeying and the search for the adoptees first family may be similarly lengthy. In absence, Odysseus lost his son, but on return renewed relationship allowed for new reality.



---

I will use video of session work, live music, and autoethnography, to engage in the complex story of the adoptee journey to establishing an internal rhythm and home and safe relating.

## **Biography**

**Joy Gravestock**, PhD music therapy and adoption reparation, MA Music therapy, specialises in psychoanalytic, attachment based, relational music therapy with adoptees. Her research and other publications explore relational repair from adoption trauma, occurring via micro-moments of attunement within an embodied musical therapeutic relationship. Joy is freelance, working in the East/West Midlands in the UK, within the adoption community, funded by the Adoption Support Fund. She passionately advocates for therapy for adoptees, ensuring arts therapists dictate adequate resources for client need. She has lived experience of adoption (as well as disability). She is a senior lecturer on the music therapy MA training, Bristol.

## **Recent Publications**

Gravestock, J. (2024). **“When I Ruled The World: Adopted Children’s Memories Of Early Life Trauma Recalled In A Process Of Meaning Making In Music Therapy”**. In *Memory: Shaping Connections In The Arts Therapies*. ECARTE 2024

Gravestock, J. (2023). PhD thesis: search ‘**Joy Gravestock: Micro Moments Of Attunement**’. Available to download at the *White Rose Repository, Sheffield University*. And *The British Library* <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk> published 2023

Gravestock, J. (2021). **Working psychoanalytically with clients with learning disability: the real giants we face. A long-term music therapy with an adopted girl with significant multiple disabilities**. *Imagining Windmills: Trust, Truth, And The Unknown In The Arts Therapies*” ECARTE 2021.