Practice as Research PhD by
Louise Ann Wilson

Supporting Material
The Gathering / Yr Helfa

12-14 September 2014
Hafod y Llan Farm, Snowdonia, Wales

Created, Directed and Designed by Louise Ann Wilson
Supporting Material – *The Gathering / Yr Helfa*

The supporting material for *The Gathering / Yr Helfa* (*The Gathering*) is designed to give the viewer a visual and textual insight into the primary research process and the walking-performance. It incorporates:

*The Gathering* – Credits

*The Gathering* – Overview


Primary/Site (Landscape) and Secondary/Subject (Animal Reproductive Cycles) Research

Gallery – The Performance
with: extracts of the ‘Landscape Poems’ and the ‘12-month poem cycle’ written by Gillian Clarke for *The Gathering*. Copyright Gillian Clarke;
Extracts from additional texts written by Louise Ann Wilson.
Production photographs by Lizzie Coombes (Copyright LAW Co) and Joe Fildes/NTW (Copyright NTW).

Participant Responses.

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See also: www.louiseannwilson.com/productions/thegathering
The Gathering – Credits

Created, Directed and Designed by Louise Ann Wilson.

Written by Gillian Clarke with additional text by Louise Ann Wilson.
Choreography by Nigel Stewart.
Music Consultation by John Hardy Music.
Sound & Film Design by Louise Ann Wilson.
Film Editing by Janan Yakula.

Performed by Actors Ffion Dafis, Emyr Gibson, Gwyn Vaughan Jones, Gwion Aled Williams and Meilir Rhys Williams; Aerial Artist Kate Lawrence; the Deiniolen Silver Band; and the children of Bedgellert School.

Shepherdising by Bryn Griffiths, Roger Hughes, Elgan Jones, Trefor Jones, Arwyn Owen, Tudur Parry, Andrew Roberts, Arthurs Williams and their dogs.

Production Team: Production Manager Jacob Gough, Project Manager Fiona Curtis; Costume Supervisor Angharad Matthews; Assistant Designer Dorrie Scott; Design Assistants: Ruby Spencer-Pugh, Phoebe Tonkin, David Honeybone, Stefan Gwyn; Sound Collaboration by Tic Ashfield.

Produced by National Theatre Wales (NTW) with Migrations and the Louise Ann Wilson Company Limited (LAW Co).

Supported by the team at Hafod y Llan farm, the National Trust and Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA), Lancaster University.
The Gathering / Yr Helfa was a site-specific walking-performance revealing the day-to-day and seasonal workings of Hafod y Llan, a sheep farm located on the foot-hills of Snowdon. The performance took 200 participants on a circular journey that traced a six-kilometre route through the landscape and into the farm. As they walked they experienced installations, performance, film, poetry, music and sound as well as farming activities.

The performance evolved over a four-year period through a process of observing the farm at work and responding to the life and reproductive cycles of the ewes, the flock, the farm and the landscape. Gillian Clarke, the National Poet for Wales, wrote a twelve-month sequence of poems for the performance, Nigel Stewart evolved bespoke choreography and John Hardy, and his team, worked as music consultants sourcing regional folk tunes to which extracts of some of the poems were sung.

The Gathering / Yr Helfa was supported by the team at Hafod y Llan farm and the National Trust and was performed by a company that included the shepherds, their dogs, two hundred sheep, a company of five professional performers (see names below), aerial artist Kate Lawrence, the Deiniolen Silver Band, and children from Bedgellert Primary School.

The Gathering, the solitary figure of The Woman Upper Amphitheatre – Cwm Llan Slate Quarry.
The Gathering – Gallery

Colwyn Melyn – Triangle Field: 200 participants gather for the walking-performance
Check that teeth sit squarely:
At birth – milk teeth – Dannedd sugno
12 months – 2 teeth – Dau Ddant
24 months – 4 teeth – Pedwar dant
36 months – 6 teeth – “Full Mouth” – Ceg llawn
Older – “Broken Mouth” – “Last Teeth”
View Over to Hafod Y Llan Farm buildings – gates and views marked with slate signs
The womb’s warm room
where the lamb grows in its cradle.

In the blood-lit cave
life becomes lamb,
limbs budding in the warm dark,
multiplying and dividing cells
ova, zygote, embryo, foetus,
developing muscle, bone,
a force unstoppable
as the river
in the mountain’s womb.
Copper Works – Middle Amphitheatre – Plascwmllan
The mountain has secrets, 
tunnels into the seep and drip of the dark, 
into the stone womb, under roots of trees, 
past wheels, pulleys, chains, trucks locked 
in their pollens of rust.

Deep as the Ordovician, old workings, 
mine-shafts, mullock heaps, piles of slag, 
abandoned two centuries back, river-stones 
stained blue with copper, copper-iron’s gold, 
sulphates from the mountain’s heart.
Plas Cwm Llan – Archive photos placed into the landscape
Upper Amphitheatre - Cwm Llan

“saf yna” – stand
“Tyrd yma” – come here
“cerriffwrdd” – come by – clockwise
“de” – away – anti-clockwise
Upper Amphitheatre – Cwm Llan Slate Quarry – The Woman II (solitary figure)
Cwm Llan Slate Quarry – End of Tramway
Old Ram

There are bones on the mountain,
a ram’s quiet disintegration,
a weft of grass in the warp of his ribs,
ligaments unpicked by the slow rain.

Gutted by foxes, crows,
dismantled by birds for spring nests,
he spilled himself, his fluids
filled the mountain stream.

His eye is the Snowdon lily,
death gapes in his quarried face,
spiders home in the cavern of his skull.
crows cry down the cwm of his horns.

Not long since he could have come
over Crib Goch like a young moon,
the cast flower of his seed
whitening Eryri,

like an old farm gone to earth,
slipped stone by stone, lost
to the power of time to undo a wall,
unpick a roof slate by slate,
in hafod and hendre, ‘scubor and beudy.
Upper Amphitheatre and back to Lower Amphitheatre
Is this birth, or death?

How can I lick this corpse to life, 
love’s chemistry raging 
in my blood, her brain?

I will try, obsessed. 
I drink it, smells it. 
It is mine, this death in birth.

I thirst for my lamb, still-born, still warm, 
licks him clean with a growl of love.
Lower Amphitheatre to Hafod Y Llan Farm gate
Hafod y Llan Farm – Yard 2

Born – Dannedd oen/Dannedd sugno – lambs teeth/milk teeth
12 months – 2 teeth – Dau ddant
24 months – 4 teeth – Pedwar dant
48 months – 6 teeth – Ceg llawn – “full mouth” (yellow dot)
Older – Bylchu – “broken mouth” – “teeth last”
The one thousand five hundred and fifty Welsh Mountain ewes of Hafod y Llan are made up of four flocks:

600 here at Cwmllan,
280 at Bwlch,
320 at Gelli Iago and Cnicht,
350 at Pistyll.
The womb clenches like a heart against the void as they wait, weighted, for a journey.


She must leave the mountain, the end of her line, the last cord cut.
New Farm House – children from Bedgelert Primary School holding photographs from the farm archive
New Farm House
child from Beddgelert Primary School
holding photographs from the farm archive and taken on that spot in the 1960s
photograph of The William's family from their collection
Flowers of the mountain in Arctic scree, sandstone, granite, quartzite, parsley fern, lichens, woolly fringe moss, liverwort, wavy hair grass, sheeps' tooth, foxglove, heath bed straw, heather, bilberry, myrtle, parsley fern, fir clubmoss, twoolly fringe moss, liverwort, wavy hair grass, sheeps' tooth, foxglove, heath bed straw, heather, bilberry, myrtle,

crevices communities of ferns, mosses, lichens, arctic saxifrage, maidenhair, spleenwort, liverwort, and the brittle blade fern.

In rocky clefts too steep for nibbling sheep, under the floating shadow of peregrine of chough, ring ouzel, hen harrier, merlin, unique on earth, the Snowdon lily, nodding in the wind....

...and Chrysolina cerealis, the Snowdon Rainbow Beetle, trapped, like the Snowdon lily, when ice lost its grip as loosening glaciers began to slip, and mountains gave way with a slow, deep groan, scouring valleys from the tuffs and ash of old upheavals. This creature survived alone on Snowdon's western flanks, feeding on flowers of the wild thyme. Genetically distinct, a jewel. Its elytra striped with copper, gold, precious metals of the mountain, emerald, blue of the inky llyn, the colour of slate in rain.

What's beauty for but to disguise a beetle as a water drop to hold Snowdonia in a carapace of gold?
In September, 200 “broken mouthed” “draft” ewes that would struggle in upland conditions are sold at Dolgellau Market to lowland farms where they continue to breed; when they can’t, they are slaughtered for meat.

Hafod y Llan Farm – Yard 1: 200 hundred sheep and 200 farm objects
Hafod y Llan Farm – Hydro Room
Triptych of ‘Scanning Films’
Hafod y Llan Farm – Hydro Room
Triptych of ‘Scanning Films’
Old Stable
Old Man ‘gathering’ the mountain with field name poem

Bird stone slope - the Red Drain
Birch behind Plas Cwm Llan
Bright Road-Lamb’s Limb
Tallyn Meadow- Hounds Hollow
Bulls Hollow- Boggy Meadow
Bridge by the Grove- Boggy Hill
Little Pasture-Lower Pasture
Under the Chalet-Corner Meadow
Meadow below the Holly
Meadow below the House
Red River Bank- Black Field
Hay for the Scythe -Iron Field
Field in the Gap -Crow Field
Head Stone Meadow
Bright Ford -Black Cliff
Hay Shed-Crow Cliff

Allt Main Aderyn Newydd - Gwter Goch
Fedw ti ôl i Plas Cwm Llan
Ystydlw - Braich Oen
Ddôl Tallyn – Pant Cwn
Pant Teirw Isaf –Ddôl Gorsan
Gelli Bont – Bryn Corsan
Gwnwdwn Bach-Gwaelod Gwnwdwn
Dan Chalet - Ddôl Goif
Ddôl dan Celyn-
Ddôl dan Ty
Dorlan Goch - Cae Duon
Gwallt Bladur - Cae Heter
Parc Bwlch – Frân Bwlch
Weirgledd Pen Maen
Rhiliwll - Ddiffwys Du
Beudy Bwrm - Ddiffwys Frân
Lambing Barn/Hospital
Altar piece triptych of films showing skinning of dead lamb and adoption process
skinning of and adoption process
Yard 3
Empty trucks ghosted with sounds of 200 sheep being sold at Dolgellau Market
Lambing Field Gate
‘The Boy’ holding a photo of Prys Williams,
the family member on whom his ‘character’ was based
Lambing Field Gate
The walking-performance ends in the place where a photo of The William’s family was taken at harvest time 1941
Hafod y Llan farm – Lambing Field
The Deiniolen Brass band, scatter across the field, play ‘sheep’ notes that gather into a tune.

Colgwyn Melyn – Triangle Field: 200 participants return to the place they gathered for the walking-performance
I want to sincerely thank and congratulate everyone involved in making Saturday one of the most lovely, amazing, emotive days of my life.

It was a wonderful experience and I’ve spent 48 hours trying to find the right words of appreciation. I can’t, I keep welling up as all the amazing images come to mind and my vocabulary doesn't match them. So my sincere but inadequate thanks will have to do. Thank you.

As it crosses my mind, various little scenes are connecting up and making a bigger and bigger picture. I absolutely love it, great value too, been round the route 4 times in my head. Felt that the whole area was laid out like it was long ago so that you could come along now and put on this piece of work. Inch perfect. Praise for the set designer. The music, the band, the school kids, connections with the past, connections with the future, all on a working farm... Thanks.

...an extraordinarily beautiful and moving show.

Wonderful event.
Amazing.
Stunning.
Challenging.

What a great experience it was to be part of The Gathering. The creative team, cast and production crew had put together a truly unique experience that to my layman’s view was promenade theatre at its best. As well as being educational, I certainly learned a lot about sheep farming, it was an all-round provocative, immersive and sensory experience; the powerful and passionate acting performances; the shepherds working the dogs and the dogs working the sheep; the melancholy music from the band reverberating around the mountains; the many visual installations on the way up and down; the red scar on the tramway; the surrogate sheep video; the sheep shearing; I could go on….and of course the weather was perfect.
As a farm girl myself, I thought The Gathering by NTW was amazing today. Our ordinary lives being shown as a piece of art. Very special indeed.

I thoroughly enjoyed the whole day and left to go back to my world with very positive and lasting impressions.

I really want to say is how amazed I was at the performance, it was absolutely brilliant and an unforgettable experience. The red carpet, the wool in the old farmstead, the bed in the middle of mining barracks, and the impressive nature of what must be the best natural amphitheatre at such a grand scale (in the context of the brass band in a circle when we started our descent). [...] Congratulations. It was a wonderful event that was enjoyed by so many. The weather was a huge contributory factor, and I am thankful for that as it made the experience so much richer.

Where to start…? I knew it would be good. I was looking forward to it for ages. I thought I knew what to expect. Thank you for blowing all of that apart - along with my preconceptions. The Gathering continues to invade my everyday with constant flashbacks to our time on that mountain … I think it will be doing that for a long while. Such depth of thought on so many levels must surely take time to comprehend? The walk alone was worth the ticket fee, the opportunity to be in that place, surrounded by others also searching/looking/feeling was so very emotional in many many ways. [...] I just wanted to congratulate and applaud all involved in the entire experience. The efforts must have been extreme at times but they produced a piece so rich and rewarding I hope they are all as pleased as I was entranced.

Things come into my head all of the time … the barn. The triptych. The straw. Was it the lamb of God we were witnessing in that footage? (Whatever that is... ?). Not sure. Thanks for giving so much.

I cannot thank National Theatre Wales enough for my day on the mountain. And for many months of recollection.
When John McGrath asked me to develop a performance work for National Theatre Wales, I was creating *Fissure*, a three-day long walking-performance in the Yorkshire Dales, and had become fascinated with sheep farming and its processes. Since my work is driven by a desire to explore key life events, I became particularly interested in ways in which sheep farming could explore issues of fertility and infertility, motherhood and non-motherhood. This is what I set out to do when creating *The Gathering / Yr Helfa*.

The production evolved from a three-year long period of studying the life and reproductive cycles of the ewes at Hafod y Llan, 'a true' Snowdonian upland sheep farm.

It was an immense privilege to work with National Theatre Wales, Arwyn Owen the National Trust Farm Manager at Hafod y Llan, the shepherds, Bleddyn Williams, the Deiniolen Band, and many other individuals and groups. My aim was that the experience of *The Gathering Yr Helfa* would give participants a deep sense of the uniqueness of the place, its people, the animals and the landscape in which it was created and performed, and in so doing revealed something that they did not know before hand.
Annual Cycle of the Ewes
‘The Boys’ text by Louise Ann Wilson developed with Arwyn Owen of Hafod y Llan Farm

Medi. September
In September all sheep are gathered off the mountain.
“Gather everything off the hill!”
200 Cwmllan “broken mouthed” “draft” ewes that would struggle in upland conditions are sold at Dolgellau Market to lowland farms where they continue to breed; when they can’t, they are slaughtered for meat.

Mis-Hydref. October.
Wean the lambs.
Split them into groups.
Spray the winter “pitch mark”: red, orange, green.
Winter 400 ewe lambs in Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Bryncir.

Tachwedd. November.
Sheep are seasonal breeders.
Ewes ovulate with fading light.
On 1st November: Ewes “have” rams.
Ewes “take” rams, Rams “serve” ewes.
Rams “run” with ewes, Rams “tup” ewes.

Rhagyr. December
Gestation takes 5 months:
Day 1 to 3: Fertilization.
Day 10 to 16: Blastocyst elongates from sphere to tubular form.
Day 20 to 24: Embryo implants in uterine wall.
Day 35-100: Wool follicles form.
Day 100: 70% of fetal growth has occurred.
Day 152: Birth.

Ionawr. January
“Kempy” coarse fleeces protect ewes from driving rain.
100 inches of rain in the valley.
150 inches of rain on the summits.
Chwefror. February
In the second week in February ewes are scanned and marked:
   No mark: single.
   Blue mark: twins.
   Separate mark: triplets.
   Black mark: empty.

Mawrth. March
Shepherding.

Ebrill. April
This year 680 lambs were born to 640 Hafod y Llan ewes.
   80 twins and 600 singles.
If a lamb is still-born, taken by a fox or dies, the ewe is given a surrogate.
   15 Cwmllan lambs were thus adopted.

Mai. May
Ewes and lambs are sent to the mountain.
Before they are “turned up” all lambs are marked with ear cuts to show they belong to the farm and a particular flock.
   The ewes of Cwmllan have:
   Right ear – cut the front and cut a split – Torri blaen a hollti.
   Left ear – V-notch at the tip of the ear – Cnwyad.

Mehefin. June
Cynefin: the inter-generational memory of a place passed from mother to lamb.
   They are “taught” the boundaries. The sheep “know” their place.

Gorffenaf. July.
1,000 sheep sheared in a day.
   Wool used for carpets not jumpers.
   “It is torture next to the skin!”

Awst. August
Quiet Time.
The Gathering – Design

Production Design – Storyboards, Maps and Costumes

Storyboard: Colgwyn Melyn – Triangle Field (Start and End)

Storyboard: Lambing Field – Soloi trumpeter and brass band

Storyboard: Castell – Tramway Walker
Flag Designs based on historic Hafod Y Llan ear markings

Right ear – Torri blaen a hollti – cut the front and cut a split
Left ear – Cnwyad – v notch at the tip of the ear
ear markings book and knives
The Gathering / Yr Helfa
Locations on hill

Drawn by Louise Ann Wilson 26 July 2014

AMPHITHEATRES
A1: LOWER AMPHITHEATRE (CLOGWYN – SHEEP)
A2: MIDDLE AMPHITHEATRE (GLADSTONE ROCK – BAND)
A3: UPPER AMPHITHEATRE (CWM LLAN QUARRY)

TRAMWAY INCLINES
T1: CASTELL (SHEEP FACE)
T2: CLOGWYN
T3: CWM LLAN QUARRIES

AUDIENCE START & END POINT:
△ TRAPEZE FIELD

KEY LOCATIONS (ON MOUNTAIN)
A: PARC HAFOD Y LLAN – 2 BRIDGES (IN WOODS)
B: HAFOD Y LUCHAF – DERELICT HOUSE
C: ROCK + STREAM/TRACK TO TRAMWAY
D: PLAS CWM LLAN SLATE QUARRY BUILDING
E: FISSURED ROCK
F: 2 BOULDERS IN WATER → AFON Y LLAN FALLS
M: FIELD F4
Storyboards: Colgwyn, Lower Amphitheatre: Rocky Area to Waterfalls
Storyboards: Colgwyn, Lower Amphitheatre: Hafod Y Uchaf derelict house
Storyboards: Colgwyn, Lower Amphitheatre: Rocky Area to Waterfalls
Storyboard: Lower Amphitheatre – Afon y Llan
Storyboard: Middle Amphitheatre – Path Divide: Trumpeter and Tramway walker
Storyboard: Middle Amphitheatre – Gladstone Rock: Deiniolen Brass Band
The Farm – Map

The Gathering / Yr Helfa – Locations on Farm
Drawn By: Louise Ann Wilson 26 July 2014

BUILDINGS
G. TEMPORARY GATHERING PEN IN YARD (Y2)
H. SHEERING SHED + WOOL STORE
I. LAMBING BARN [KITCHEN]
J. OLD STABLE
K. HYDRO-ROOM
L. OLD FARM HOUSE
M. LAMBING FIELD (F4)

FIELDS
F3: SORTING RELATED
F4: LAMBING FIELD - BAND & FINAL GATHERING

YARDS
Y1: TRAILERS & DOGS IN LANDROVER
Y2: TEMPORARY SORTING PEN
Y3: SHEARING SHED AREA
Storyboard: Le Ty Hafod Y Llan – Old Farm House
Storyboard: Hafod y Llan Farm – Hydro Room: Triptych of ‘Scanning Films.’
Chwefror. February

In the second week in February ewes are scanned and marked:
No mark: single.
Blue mark: twins.
Separate mark: triplets.
Black mark: empty.
Story board: Hafod y Llan – Gateway into Farm
Storyboard: Old Stable – Old Man ‘gathering’ the mountain on his death bed:
Triptych of sheep, water and mountain films projected onto sheep skins
Storyboard: Lambing Barn/Hospital – skinning and adopting
Altar piece triptych of films showing skinning of dead lamb and adoption process
Costume Designs

Two Shepherds and The Woman
Costume Designs

The Boy, The Woman, The Old Man
Produced by National Theatre Wales with Migration and the Louise Ann Wilson Company Ltd
with support from the National Trust and Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA), Lancaster University.

www.louiseannwilson.com/projects/thegathering