The Glossary is a fictocritical work which accompanies the novel, New Moon Through Glass, written for my doctorate that encorporates fiction, poetry, analytic and critical text, and which ‘writes back’ to the novel without the interpretive gesture and in doing so interrogates the art of fiction via a fictocritical critique. The generic glossary (a collection of glosses) encapsulates the ‘interpretive gesture’ par excellence — the hermeneutical exercise that criticism’s role has widely been thought to be. Its earliest, medieval form as a commentary (or series of commentaries), translation or exegesis in the margins of or between the lines of a text, reiterates the glossary’s ostensible purpose to explicate rather than create ‘meaning’. As a fictocritical work, The Glossary therefore both interrupts the monolithic architecture of the text through the techniques of the cut and the stitch, and also, by ‘reading between the lines’ of the novel, provides alternative readings; a space for other voices, other texts. In the process the project repositions the glossary before the novel (a reversal of the usual order) inciting a series of readings and re-readings which establish a practice of critical fictionalising and the fictionalising of the critical and an incitement to read in this manner. In the performance, The Glossary ventures to open this Pandora’s Box and in the process reflects on what, as a practitioner, writing is, what reading is, and what is critical practice and what creative. The Glossary is a performance of a distinction put by Bathes as a ‘thinking through’ rather than ‘a residue of critical thought’ (1985: 284) and therefore demands to be read as a fictocritical The Glossary was arrived at after much research and experimentation in my fiction writing practice with footnotes, asides and summarizing (‘the story so far’ style) prefaces or segues and above all definitions, a fascination which might be summarised by the distinction that Charlotte Brontë drew between writing that was ‘real’ and writing that was ‘true’. Fiction often requires realism in order to ring true, and yet the elements of language that give it force owe nothing to realism — its power lies in its imagery, its symmetry, its poetry all of which foreground textuality and intertextuality in a manner congruent with the fictocritical project. The Glossary, ostensibly there to confirm and stabilise knowledge, language and reading practices, shows, by fictionalising the critical, the dependent ordering and silences through the art of character in this knowledge architecture. Far from keeping an ‘objective’ distance, The Glossary...
generates a parallel text to the novel in which the voice of the author 'speaks', and in doing so has much to say, by its multi-vocal
presence, about authorial intentions (and anxieties), slippages, ruptures and textual transparencies, opacities and excess; about
the ways in which writing is both knowledge and being, and knowing and making. The Glossary grew (rhizomically though not
randomly) from textual asides, after thoughts and back stories, parallel and divergent interests, arguments, lyricisms, associations,
allusions and theories. Eventually The Glossary became a piece of writing performing what could not ‘make it’ into the work of
fiction. That a glossary is made up of entries proved an enlivening form, which generated a different kind of writing practice and a different kind of writing, perhaps not dissimilar to a web log. In making this comparison I am referencing Kerryn Goldsworthy’s comments that ‘blogging’, as ‘dynamic thinking-in-action’, sets its form apart from traditional writing and
‘creates a shift away from the consumer-producer model’ by destabilising the notion of a one-way transaction, ‘active writer
producer to passive reader-consumer’. Each entry in The Glossary is a jumping off point for text to grow either from the point-of-
view of the writer or reader, and each item simultaneously encourages a non-linear reading with regard to itself out of which
possibilities are generated — as a body of text; the ‘self’ to which it constantly refers — and the novel it appends. The Glossary
allows space for ‘undisciplined’ writing which does not conform to the teleological narrative of the thriller genre and in doing so,
offers a radically democratic opportunity for the reader (who along with the writer also composes the story) to join in the process
and the practice and understand how in ‘working through’ any text we are subconsciously glossing and deducing as we go. Some
entries in The Glossary relate to specifics in the novel. Others to novels which haunt the text or other texts dreamed of, wished for
or forgotten. Many of the subjects of The Glossary are familiar terms in literary and critical discourse examined in the process
of writing. Still others relate to identity and to doubling, as a fictional device, but also as textual possibility. The counterpoint between
the two texts — glossary and novel — holds other dialogues and polylogues: the intimate linkage between love and murder or
desire and violence; disappearances — both textual and familial; childhood, memory and, motherhood; voice, reading, writing- (as
well as reading-)blocks; the flâneur; psychoanalysis and dreams; collage; and the house as a metaphor for the body or the text.
Certainly The Glossary presents an occasion for writing, an exercise, an exegesis and, where necessary, an excuse: ‘Only paper
offers the tactile complexities of the origami life, the papier mache existence. (The Glossary p. 84)