

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Human Sciences

Department of Educational Studies

Country Tracking Voices: Dharug women's perspectives on presences, places and practices

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dated: 15th August, 2018

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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Ethics Committee Approval No 5201500053

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Anne Rey'.

Jo Anne Rey

15th, August, 2018.

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I wish to acknowledge and pay my respects to Dharug Nura, Dharug Country and its custodians, through which these knowledges arise and in which this thesis is connected and produced. I also pay my respects to all Ancestors and Elders, past, present and forthcoming, across the Countries connected to its examination, recognising that they always have been and always will be caring for their respective places of belonging.

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I dedicate this thesis to Daniel Rey (1958 – 2007)
Always in my heart and walking beside me



Abstract

Country Tracking Voices is a thesis that for the first time brings seven Dharug women's voices to the written scholarship and broader academy. It is centered in the Australian Aboriginal belief that we belong and are obligated to caring for Country as it is the source of all species' wellbeing and survival. The thesis engages with how seven Dharug custodians are continuing cultural practices, sharing Dharug knowledges and employing Dharug ways of caring, connecting and belonging. When Dharug Country covers the majority of Sydney, Australia, this thesis contributes knowledges for resilience and renewal to benefit all sentient beings.

The ways of practicing Dharug culture today are diverse, educational and positive. They include puppetry, the visual arts, singing, dancing, possum-skin work, weaving, story-telling and poetry, as well as through customary ceremonies and practices. Equally the ways of undertaking research are diverse. This thesis challenges customary thesis methodologies by including the influence of other-than-humans in the research process. By recognizing the agency of Country, this research is able to acknowledge participant voices of birds, possums, and sandstone. It also positions the research method as 'Goanna walking', de-composes human-centricity and repositions us to the more sustainable place of being only one within a profound web of interconnectivity.

What also makes this project unique is that for more than 200 years Dharug people, Country, practices and values have been talked about by others. In this thesis, we talk back. This project is not a representation of all Dharug people. It is instead a beginning. It offers Goanna's trailing tail in the sand: simply a tale to follow.



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TABLE 1: SYMBOLS REPRESENTING THE VOICES IN THIS THESIS

Forming the texture of the thesis: its 'third dimension' indicates 'the way the text is woven' (Benterrak et al., 2014, p. 29)

SYMBOL	VOICE
	Country
	Scholars, poets, various others
	Narrator
	Interviewer
	Writer

Complexities of voice are clarified with the use of symbols (see Table 1) –

predominantly in Chapters 4 - 11, though Country/Nura as  is found across the

thesis. Additionally, as I was participating-Bellbird, this role involved not only contributions to the narrative storytelling, but also through the poetics of place-time, the voices arising in the process of interpretations, as creative agency within the project. By this I mean certain events happened in 'real-writing-time', events that influenced my thinking through the process of writing. When this happens, the occasion is marked with the symbol . Additionally, this symbol also functions as a place of changing, or pausing, in the text, alerting the reader to pace, poetics and presences as Country, thereby adding a texture – and 'landscape' within the writing process (Benterrak et al., 2014). I suggest this encourages the reader to meet the thesis in a place of movement and colours, with irregular and not conventional rhythms; being beyond black-text-on-white-page. Doing so suggests the 'hinterlands' (Law, 2004) that social science research has sometimes resisted in the past.



WARNING

**THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS IMAGES OF OUR BELOVED AUNTY,
KOOKABURRA, WHO RETURNED TO OUR ANCESTORS DURING THE
COURSE OF THIS PROJECT. AUNTY CONTINUES TO BE A PRESENCE AND
WONDERFUL INFLUENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY AND ACCORDINGLY I
SPEAK OF HER IN THE PRESENT TENSE.**

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aboriginal: In the context of this paper, 'Aboriginal' refers to the First Peoples of the Australian continent, not their Canadian counterparts. In the Australian context, 'Aboriginal' can be a problematic term, as it misrepresents Australian First Peoples, implying they are one unified, homogenised group. Prior to colonisation there were 250 different languages spoken representing around 300 different peoples. The term is included to represent the broader First Peoples of the continent, and as distinct from the Torres Strait Islands peoples, who do not identify as 'Aboriginal'. 'Aboriginal' is also used in contrast to 'Indigenous' which involves the broader group of First Peoples, originating in various places around the world. The three terms therefore represent specific localities. While 'Dharug' are those of the broader Sydney basin and is therefore local, 'Aboriginal' refers to peoples of continental Australia with associated islands, such as off the coast of Northern Territory, and is national, while Indigenous represents First Peoples elsewhere internationally.

Bricolage: Following its artistic meaning, it is the making of something using a variety of means. In this thesis bricolage is the entwining of forms, including various texts, including academic quotes, references, poetry, narratives, yarning, photographs, drawings and newspaper clippings.

Co-becoming: The interweaving of influences that happen through time sharing across human-more-than-human realms.

Country: An English term for an Aboriginal concept of a place of spiritual, physical and metaphysical belonging. Capitalisation indicates its physical and metaphysical aspects as space of belonging inclusive of all sentient and other-than-sentient beings.

Culture: Refers to the interwoven practices, representations, symbols beliefs of a group of people who identify their place of belonging within that group. The conservation of biological diversity is important for cultural identity within broader Australian Aboriginal communities. See Chapter 1.5 for more details.

Dreamtime: When the world became as we know it by Ancestral, Creation Beings. See Chapter 1.5 for more details.

Dreaming: The continuing state of creation, imprinted from the original state. See Chapter 1.5 for more details.

Ecosophy: Term developed by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in the 1980s, as an exemplar for formulating an individualised ecological philosophy. It is also understood as ecological wisdom.

Goanna: Australian Monitor Lizard

Goanna walking: The practice and place of doing research between academic culture and Dharug culture. It is a methodology that brings other-than-humans into the research space. See Chapter 3 for more details.

Hauntology: The study of spookiness; ghostly matters. The term of Karen Barad to describe the place where physics attempts to explain matters that have traditionally been seen as existing outside science. See Chapter 1.5 for more details.

Humanism: The rationalist and human-centric system of thought pervasive in Western philosophy since the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans

Lifeworking(s): An adaptation of the term 'life work' used by Audra Mitchell and the Creatures Collective of Toronto, Canada. 'Life work' is an inversion of 'work life', a term that dis-integrates our sense of completeness in our lives by separating hours at 'work' (paid labour) and 'life' as the meaningful bits left over. In contrast, 'lifeworking' integrates individuals by bringing work, values, and meaning into working places and enables wellbeing and resilience. See Chapter 2 for more details.

Nura: Dharug language term for Country. See above.

Posthumanism: A western theoretical discourse that goes beyond Cartesian dualism and human-centricity, i.e. it is after-humanism. As such it sees limitations in promoting boundaries and separations between humans and other-than-humans. As discussed in this thesis, it is argued that Aboriginal epistemologies see humans as one within a web, or network of living agency. See further discussion in Chapter 1.

Presences: A generic term for any sentience influencing us in the present, though physically may be absent. These can include human Ancestors in other-than-human forms as well as other species.

Time: Within Aboriginal ontologies and epistemologies time is not lineal, but emergent and spiralling.

Timespacemattering: Karen Barad's term for explaining the non-existence of separate places of space and time for phenomena. Instead they are

interwoven and enfolded and become within the universe as timespacemattering. See Chapter 1.5 for more details.

Warrane: Dharug language term for Sydney Harbour

Wianga: Dharug language term for women's group.

Yarning: Aboriginal English term for telling and sharing stories. In the context of this thesis it is also a methodology for doing research.

CHAPTER 1: Openings as Disruptive Places and Pointers



Waradah, Waradah, Waradah,
Yenemah Waradah gumada,
Bulbuwul muru walanga,
Waradah, Waradah, Waradah.

(Extract from song, 'Waradah', Dharug Language, with permission, C. Norman, 2017. See Appendix K: Waradah song and dance)



Waratah, Waratah, Waratah
Walking with Waratah spirit,
Following a strong pathway
Waratah, Waratah, Waratah

('The waratah (flower) is the symbol of resistance, resilience and renewal.'
C. Norman, 2017).





1.1 Cultural Calls



1.1.1 Welcome into Our Place - Dharug Country and Acknowledgements



Fig. 1: Sketch of Dharug Nura as approximations of Country. Definitive boundaries remain contested spaces (shaded in mauve). Clan groups relevant to this thesis are included. Clan names are highlighted in brown. English place names are written in blue. Our neighbours' names are written in red (J. Rey).



Warami. As this work is a production arising from several Darug/Dharug clan areas, I wish to welcome you the reader into our *Dharug Nura* - the Country of the Dharug-speaking peoples which broadly covers most of the metropolitan area of Sydney, Australia. As a member of the Dharug community and therefore a traditional owner and custodian of this Country, I speak from the place of belonging and while I cannot speak for all Dharug people, I can speak for my Ancestors. To that extent, personal voice in the singular and the plural is interwoven, inclusive of a transgenerational identification. Additionally, I choose to capitalise the term 'Country' to differentiate it from the common anglophone and geographical meaning of material and political

place. Capitalisation indicates its physical and metaphysical aspects as space of belonging, inclusive of all sentient and other-than-sentient beings. Other terms are also capitalised, such as Ancestors, and relatives such as Grandfathers, Uncles, Aunties, etc. to show cultural and spiritual respect for metaphysical presences and absences. Additionally, 'community' is capitalised to indicate specifically Dharug and/or Aboriginal communities, to differentiate from the broader generalised sense of the word.



1.1.2 Our Place of Belonging

Our Nura is a place of pluralities, multiplicities: always has been, always will be. Diverse inhabitants – human and more-than-human – have always engaged here and continue so. Accordingly, it always has been and always will be a changing place, as interconnections and reflexive relationships engage and create change. It follows Nura is creative, engaging and a place of becomings and potentialities.

Fig. 1 (above) is a simple sketch that shows a minute configuration of Nura as it crosses the coastal-inland dialect differences that some early records noted (Troy, 1992). Both dialects represent aspects of the larger cohort of Dharug-speaking peoples of the Sydney area. Only some of the 29 clans that spiritually continue Dharug connections to place are shown. They represent the most relevant to the seven women's storying that underpins this thesis, and accordingly represent ongoing spiritual and physical connections to place, languages and knowledges. Seven Dharug women participated in the project that underlies this thesis. The women are Kookaburra, Wagtail, Crow, Ringtail Possum, Bushytail Possum, Bellbird and Sandstone. The women chose not to use their English names, but to participate using their 'significant identifiers', to show their continuing connections to other-than-human species. This term is used rather than 'totem' due to the connotations 'totem' carries in the colonisation stories of other nations outside Australia. One of the consequences of language as an instrument of colonisation is the homogenising and universalising effect it has by the

presumption that meanings can be simply translated from one group to the other. The term 'Australian Aboriginal' is such a universalisation of the 250 different languages and Countries of First Peoples that existed upon the arrival of the colonisers in 1788. In this thesis, several terms for First Peoples are used, to represent variance across places/spaces. The most specific is 'Dharug', referring to those people and communities who identify as belonging to language, places, sentience and Ancestors of Dharug Nura (see Fig. 1). 'Aboriginal' refers to those First Peoples of the continent now called Australia. 'Indigenous' is used in the Australian context to include Torres Strait Island peoples and more broadly to First Peoples internationally.

In relation to language, given the original orality of Dharug language, this thesis accepts that spellings can have multiple representations. Current linguistic work is trying to establish a consensus on written form for the future (Norman, C., July, 2017 Personal Conversation). The chosen spelling of our name, *Darug/Dharug*, is one example of the existing diversity in representations. I have chosen to privilege the phonetic spelling to mark respect for the orality that my Ancestors employed, though many in our community use *Darug* as their preference. Both mark the significance of the yams that were the staple source of starch, plantations of which used to be found along our Deerubbin River (now called the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system) before British settler-colonists stole the land, and forbade our people access to their crops.

Also included in this Dharug map are our neighbours (marked in red) adjoining Dharug Nura, showing Country as an interconnected place – not standing in isolation. The clan areas of Dharug Nura that are particularly represented in this thesis include (alphabetically) Aurungal (Blue Mountains - place of Bushytail Possum's and Crow's storying); Boorooberongal/Buruberongal (Richmond – clan and place near Wagtail's storying, with Ancestors Gomberrie and Yarramundi, from who many Dharug are descended); Cammeraigal/Gammeraigal (where Bellbird

currently works and lives; clan and place of Patyegorang, famous for her work with First Fleet Lieutenant William Dawes, whose notebooks are the source of much knowledge underpinning the restoration of Dharug language); Gai-marigal/Gayamarigal (Manly-Narrabeen areas – place of Sandstone’s storying); Garigal (Pittwater-Mona Vale – place of the clan of Bungaree, the first Aboriginal man to circumnavigate the continent of Australia on the ship HMS *Investigator* with cartographer, Matthew Flinders; the place where Bellbird’s Ancestor, Ann Randall, was born in 1816 to Fanny); Wallumattagal (Bellbird’s childhood connection place, location of Macquarie University, and place where famous Wanngal man, Bennelong, is buried); Wanngal/Wangal (inner western Sydney, place of Kookaburra’s storying and place of Bennelong’s people) and Warmuli (Prospect – place of Ringtail’s storying, Bushytail’s connection and location of the graves of Maria (also known today as Bolongaia, daughter of Yarramundi) and Robert Lock (the first recorded marriage of an Aboriginal woman taking a white convict as husband)).

Other places mentioned include Burramatta (Parramatta), where much colonial storying was enacted, and location of the first attempt to civilise (educate and Christianise) Dharug people at the Parramatta Native Institution in 1814. Maria/Bolongaia – Ancestor to many Dharug today – was among the first inmates, and which she left having won the major award at the anniversary examination in 1819 at age 14; Wawarrawarri (Eastern Creek, Plumpton area – where the second attempt at ‘civilising’ our people was made at the Black’s Town Native Institution (BNI) in 1825, and after which the current suburb (Blacktown) is named. This is also where Bellbird’s Ancestor, Ann Randall, was placed among the first seven children to be housed and ‘civilised’ there as a nine-year-old and is near the location of the Lock Ancestors’ land grants); Bidgigal/Bidgeegal (Pennant Hills area, place of black convicts from the First Fleet, Randall, Aiken and Martin who had land grants, and from there they were interwoven through marriages with the surviving Dharug community); and Gadigal/Cadigal (Sydney CBD –

place of first settlement in Port Jackson; place of Barangaroo, wife of Bennelong). It is from these places of connectivity that our seven Dharug sistas bring their stories.



1.1.3 My Place of Acknowledgements

While the formal written place of acknowledgements is located at the beginning of this thesis, I wish to reiterate my recognition of Ancestors and Elders, past, present and forthcoming, as guiding and contributing to this work, which I call a weaving of voices, stories and narratives into a ‘basket’ of knowledges. Indeed, contributions extend beyond the human and include other-than-human beings. As participant-Bellbird, there are various roles and ‘voices’, as mentioned above. However, as researcher-Goanna, my journey involves Goanna Walking and develops into a methodology (Chapter 3). Table 1 (above) provides the symbols used to display the various roles in the women’s chapters (Chapters 4 to 11). Accordingly, this place of acknowledgement alerts the reader to the expanded notions of subjectivity that are engaged throughout the thesis.



1.1.4 The Place of Outlook

The project was undertaken from an Indigenous standpoint theoretically and methodologically, following Martin’s (2003; 2008) call for privileging the voices, experiences, lives and knowledges that arise from and return to Indigenous communities and Countries. In addition, this thesis acknowledges the work of Karen Martin (2003) and others in articulating that such a standpoint goes beyond words-as-obligatory ‘nod’. Current and future generations now have a way of placing their voices within the literature. For me as an Indigenous researcher, placing our voices, perspectives and our experiences in a manner respected by, and respectful of, both Indigenous and academic protocols, creates an interconnection. All Indigenous researchers owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Karen Martin

and other Indigenous scholars for assisting us to not only ‘talk-the-walk’ but also ‘walk-the-talk’ along our journeys, both inside and outside academia.

Accordingly, the underlying premise for this project’s standpoint involves our rights and obligations to recognise, maintain, respect and grow our distinctive perspectives as Dharug. We also acknowledge our connections and interdependence within all Australian Aboriginal ontological and epistemological networks, and more broadly with international First Peoples. Additionally, given the distinctive nature of our Dharug Country as original place and story of colonisation on this continent, its transformation into the largest urbanised space on the continent, both geographically and by population, and its social, historical and political contexts, together produce underpinnings central to the distinctiveness of our experiences, lives, positions and futures. This project therefore calls on recognition and respect for our distinctive place across the broader Australian Aboriginal discourse, while disclosing and clarifying that distinctiveness.

Additionally, it is precisely because of our unique socio-historical-political context as Dharug Nura-Sydney that the project stands strongly against the continuing colonising domination that human-centric discourses and some research methodologies engage (Rigney, 1999). Accordingly, it demands a place for alternative approaches that arrive from localised relationships between presences (human and other-than-human), places (physically, metaphysically and discursively) and those practices that weave them together. In the process it clarifies the existential interrelatedness of humanity, through our custodial enacted values. Claiming a distinctive place within the local, for the sake of social justice and historic balance, does not deny, however, the pluralities of knowledge systems that engage all of us today. Finding approaches that embrace, rather than subjugate, those pluralities and diversities underpins the purpose of this thesis. Embracing the more-than-human is critical.

This work contributes to understandings of *some* Dharug ways of being, knowing and doing; of *some* Dharug ontologies and epistemologies, by hearing *some* Dharug women's voices. The thesis does *not* speak for the seven Dharug women beyond their own words and is *only one* interpretation of the knowledges represented. Its purpose is to have *some* voices heard and *some* interpretations given. It cannot and does not speak for all. However, as Yuin scholar Anthony McKnight (2015, p. 276) points out, 'My voice is just as important as any. Whether you listen or not is your priority not mine.' I hope it contributes positively for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Until now, there has been nothing in the literature heard from this generation of Dharug women in terms of their perspectives on Country and colonisation from a contemporary viewpoint. Very few sources in the literature exist that have *ever* included Dharug perspectives at all. Working with community Brook and Kohen (1991) and Kohen (1996, 2006; 2010) have been critical for localised historical and genealogical understandings. Johnson's (2006) research with the Blue Mountains community at 'The Gully' is another exception, as is the very recent paper on the philosophy of Dharug art practice in educational settings on Dharug Country (Harrison, Page, & Tobin, 2016). The mass of writing about Dharug has been by non-Indigenous researchers, and as such represented as objectified 'other'.

This project contests such objectifications and contributes to custodian centrality to Dharug Country. I include Goanna, as other-than-human, in my methodological approach, represented as 'Goanna Walking', and which, like Goanna, produces knowledges like a trailing tail/tale in the sand – not as a straight line, but one that weaves footsteps across the binaried world views situated on the right and the left. One example involved walking between Aboriginal cultural ways and academic cultural requirements. McKnight (2015, p. 277) uses the term 'tripartition' as a way between dualistic terms, and as a way of decreasing the influence of colonisation through action. Similarly, Goanna Walking marks a path as a balancing 'third way', walking between non-Indigenous and Indigenous knowledges and practices, decolonising the difference. It is a way that allows us to engage

with today's complexities while entwining customary cultural values and practices into work, community and family. I position this approach as a distinctive strength when applied as a strategy not only for survival, but for resilience and wellbeing. Mitchell's (2016b, 2017) term, 'lifework' also seeks such a path, where lives weave paid work into cultural practice, family and community relationships along with caring for Country. Such 'third way' resolutions, strategies, spaces and places follow Homi Bhabha's cultural hybridity theory (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). 'Goanna walking', however, localises and decomposes human-centric positioning and privilege and re-centres other-than-humans in the storying. The theoretical aspects of this are discussed further in Chapter 2.



1.1.5 My Place of Belonging

Accordingly, and respecting Australian Aboriginal protocols, it is important to tell my place of belonging. Many of the places of my connection are included in the sketch of Dharug Nura above (see Fig. 1). I am a proud Dharug woman, from 'Fanny', and also a descendant of six First Fleet convicts. I was raised on Dharug Country, and in my lifetime have grown up on Wallumattagal Country, the place and people of the Black Snapper fish. I currently live across the Lane Cove River, on Cammeraigal/Gai-marigal Country. It is my mother's heritage that is connected to Dharug Nura. My mother was raised on Wangal Country, my grandmother was raised on Wonnarua Country at Paterson until adulthood, then she spent her remaining years between Wangal, Gadigal, and Aurungal Countries. My great grandmother, Mabel, is an absent-presence in the lineage, though it is suspected she was connected through her marriage to Wallumattagal Country. Her mother, Sarah, is thought to have been born on Windsor-Cattai Country, though she lived most of her life at Paterson, and worked at least part of her life as a laundress. Sarah's mother, Ann Randall, was born circa 1816 on Garigal Country, to John Randall and 'Fanny' (Brook & Kohen,

1991; Kohen, 2010; Pybus, 2006), on the land now holding up Mona Vale shopping centre. More on this heritage is shared as the Pleiadean Presences that interweave the women's stories, across Chapters 4 to 11.

Additionally, to acknowledge my maternal grandfather's side, I have five white First Fleet convicts, including James Squires, on whose land grant at Kissing Point Bennelong is buried and perhaps his son Bidgee Bidgee (of Bidgeegal Country (see above)) (Smith, 2009). James Squires was the first brewer in the colony, was friends with Bennelong and adopted Nanbaree (Donohue, January 2018 Personal Conversation). I learnt of my maternal grandfather's connections only in 2009, after I uncovered my Dharug heritage in 2008, and I must acknowledge the work of my step-cousin, who has spent 25 years researching that paternal side of our family (Condliffe, 2012-2015 Personal Conversations). Entwined with all of that are connections through marriages to significant families of the Windsor-Wilberforce area, including the Smiths, Cobcrofts and Darkingjung Mary. It is amazing to me that with the marriage of my maternal grandmother and grandfather, two lineages of Dharug Nura have re-entwined, after seven generations. However, as is customary, our Ancestors are always looking after us and caring for Country.

My knowledge of my Dharug belonging came about only in 2008, 10 minutes after Kevin Rudd said 'Sorry' in the Australian Parliament to Aboriginal peoples for all the wrongs they have had to endure, particularly those wrongs involving the Stolen Generations. As this thesis will disclose, my personal belonging is as much a story of the 'silent' generations and uncovering hidden identities, as it is about the known histories of Ancestors' lives. All the other family connections mentioned above have arisen since then.

Many in and beyond Dharug community recognise the lost stories that those silences have destroyed. They also recognise that it is not through ostracism and judgementalism that people and communities can become

strong and regenerate, but through recognising the vulnerabilities that are characteristic of such new identities. My personal journey sought answers to some fundamental questions, such as what does it mean to be Aboriginal? What are the fundamental values that establish such an identity? How do those values sit with me and the 'I' that was chronologically aged 52 at the time, but then suddenly was thrown into babyhood, culturally speaking? The journey has been life-changing, not least because of the complexity of standing and walking between colonisers' 'historying', and these Dharug women's 'herstorying'.

Such a path I will later recognise as walking like Goanna. However, along the way, understanding belonging, connectivity and caring in Nura has taken on new meaning as a reflexive web of interrelated agencies (see Fig. 51). Recognising them within the journey of the thesis adds texture and topography to the landscape of this thesis-Country.

It is now time to return to Dharug Nura's story and place the broader colonial aspects within it.



1.2 The Place of the Coloniser's Past

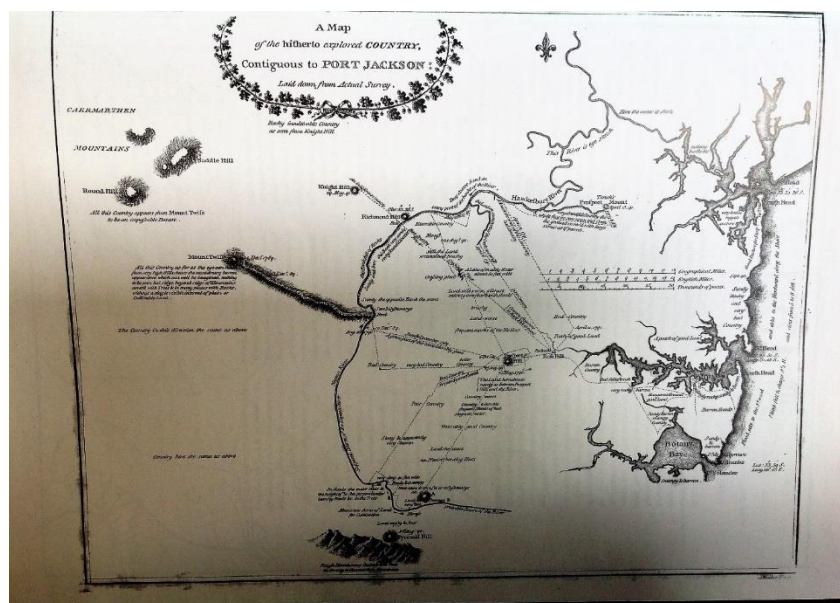


Fig. 2: 1791-2 Map of Dharug Nura – known areas mapped by British invaders. Also known as ‘A Map of the hitherto explored country, contiguous to Port Jackson, laid down from actual survey’ – quoted from J. Walker, Engraver, 1791 or 1792. (Ashton, 2000, p. 11)

Having introduced my Dharug belonging as a complex place of connections across the Dharug Nura sketch (Fig. 1), I turn now to a point of contrast, the map in Figure 2, which represents one of the earliest colonial interpretations of Dharug Nura. This shows surveyed areas mapped according to British cartographical standards from the period 1791-1792. Mapping and re-naming Country was one of the first acts of colonisation (Kerwin, 2010; Provest, 1996). It illustrates the colonisers’ intention to take over and recreate our place into the *imaginaire* of their British origins (Gammage, 2011; Karskens, 2010). What Dharug call the Deerubbin was re-named the Hawkesbury River in the north, and the Nepean River in the west and south. Richmond Hill is another example, taking rights, and smothering place-knowledges by the act of re-naming, away from our Buruberongal/Boorooberongal clan (family group), people of the Kangaroo, clan of Gomberrie, father of Yarramundi, grandfather of the woman who is known in the records as Maria Lock.

Near the top of the map in the centre is a place marked ‘Tench’s Prospect Mount’. Now known by a Dharug word, Maraylya, at the source of what we now know as Cattai Creek, it inspired the following informative words by Captain Watkin Tench: ‘Very dreadful Country, the whole that we saw upon this Creek the ground cover’d with large stones as if paved’ (Ashton, 2000, p. 11). Here is one of the earliest statements depicting the possibility of human engineering and the Cattai clan’s interaction with Country – the paving of the shores of the creek. This highlights a gap – the gap between what interactions between Dharug people and the landscape, *actually* took place, and what has been storied back to us. Such mis-information is at the heart of this thesis – the place of story and whose voice counts.

For example, as a product of the NSW school education system in the 1950s and 1960s, I, and many others, were led to believe that this was an empty land, and that by 1789 our First Peoples, one year after colonisers set foot on the place, had *all* died out, killed off at white settlement, and Aborigines lived only out in the desert. My generation and others were misled by governments in charge of educating the nation, to perpetuate the myth that this nation was built only by 'civilised' white heroes in determined forgetfulness of continued Aboriginal presence (Butler, 2000). This wilfulness can be attested to by the fact that no one from the government attempted to include Dharug or other Aboriginal peoples' voices in the creation of the curriculum of the day. In this place, only absence was present, a fact of interest to no one, apparently, except an occasional archaeologist or anthropologist, who put his (they were mostly men in those days) findings into museums of 'natural history', along with skulls, sharpened stones, spears and the like, to be preserved and storied as 'the primitive past' (Richard Howitt, 2012). While the work of Harrison and others (Harrison (2011); Harrison and Greenfield (2011); Harrison and Murray (2012); Harrison (2012); Harrison (2014); Harrison, Clarke, and Burke (2016)) has made great strides recently in closing the gap within educational discourse and practice between the mythmaking stories by others about Dharug community, it is only through hearing from Dharug community members themselves that appropriate custodial perspectives can be obtained.

This continuing gap, between what has been told by others about us, and what our people say, is one example of why this thesis is important. It acts as an opening into another place; one where our seven Dharug women's perspectives on relationships, identities and stories of continuing connection to our *Nura* - our Country - are heard. Such a place of knowing, as our seven Dharug women tell, is a first, both in the storied space of the invasion and colonisation of our Aboriginal peoples, and in the ways of surviving, through resistance, resilience and renewal.

What stories that did come down were mostly about our men, our warriors, diplomats and negotiators; Pemulwuy, Bennelong and Bungaree are the most famous. But Yarramundi and his father, Gomberrie, are also noted in the earliest records. Perhaps men's stories were perceived by the dominant readership as the most interesting, with women's stories perceived as just domestic mundanity.

Whatever the rationale, little has been heard about our women, though Patyegorang and Barangaroo have more recently come into the spotlight, given their relationships. Patyegorang was language informant to Lieutenant William Dawes, whose notebooks (Nathan, Rayner, & Brown, 2009) recount not only their relationship, but also her language. She was a Cammeraigal/Gameraigal woman. Barangaroo, who now is being remembered through the place-naming of the peninsula just west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge on the southern shore of our *warrane*, the harbour now known as Port Jackson, was the Gadigal wife of Bennelong. This renewed place-naming has come about because the headland has been returned as a reconstruction of an imagined original foreshore.

However, turning away from such scars, it is time to look to the path of this thesis, and what the reader may find along the way. Initially, I will provide an overall cartography of the document, as a time-space index. From there I will provide a topographical view, briefly pointing out the territories of consideration likely to be met.



1.3 Pointing out the Path: a time-space index

Chapter 1 provides the openings to this thesis-Country. It involves introductions to place – Dharug Nura/Sydney, Australia – as a time-space matter and narrative, involving a variety of perspectives, though predominately told from the custodial perspectives of seven Dharug women

today. The importance of seven will be clarified at various points, namely, Chapters 3 (Methodology), 4 (Women's Meta-Storying), and 13 (Discussion and Reflexivities), as it connects us to the meta-storying of the Seven Sisters and our cosmological links to the Pleiades constellation. The three key questions of this project (repeated at the conclusion to this chapter) are:

1. How do Dharug custodians continue cultural practices and obligations around caring for Country in Sydney?
2. What do the lives and practices of these seven Dharug women show us in terms of mitigating pressures from city life?
3. How do those ways enhance Dharug resilience and wellbeing?

Chapter 2 introduces the project as a woven basket of knowledges, woven in the process of answering those three key questions that arose from the women's stories (see above). The writing of the thesis is disruptive in four ways. First, the thesis disrupts the dominant storied landscape of *Dharug Nura*. Second, it disturbs the peace by also disrupting what I call the 'absent-presences' – the silences engineered across our storied landscape. Third, it recognises the need to challenge epistemologies and as such brings 'disruptive knowings' into play. Fourth, it challenges the practice of research as it is traditionally understood; it introduces 'disruptive doings' and the role and influence of Goanna as an agentic other-than-human presence in the journey. Each of these 'disruptions' is explored as places within the text, through the writings from other scholars who recognise them and their importance in other contexts. The intermingling therefore of text and contexts illustrates the weaving of knowing and doing and place into a 'be-ing'.

Chapter 3 describes how the project was undertaken, and how walking along the path between the academy and the women's storying brought Goanna to life – almost as companion-researcher. The significance of the other-than-human presences in the project cannot be underestimated. The

seven women took other-than-human identifications rather than Anglo-human names. Engaging with other-than-human identifications made my supervisors and me, as the researcher, conscious of walking on other-than-human territory. To do so was joyous for me, as it opened me to so many places of possibility – places previously locked away because such a practice steps outside orthodoxy. As such, Goanna Walking can be seen to involve reflexive agency – walking between the inner and outer contexts across time (Moffatt, Ryan, & Barton, 2016).

In human, intercultural terms, Homi Bhabha (1990) refers to this in-between space as a 'third space', a hybridity often formed in tension and ambivalence. Such a space/place is relational, reflexive and agentic, so acknowledging Dharug Nura as intensely interwoven, hybrid and with tensions arising because of colonisation, re-colonisation, and ongoing determination for Dharug cultural survival is important. This 'third space' I position as Goanna's walking journey creating the thesis, walking across various territories.

Entwined within this reflexive journey are the territories of the seven women's storyings, yarnings, and narratives and it is from these that the majority of this basket of knowledges is woven. I am reminded of when women sit to do weaving, of course yarning along the way (sharing stories, times, and spaces). These sharing times offer opportunities for reflexivity and healing while producing beautiful baskets. Such, also, is the place where this thesis resides. However, when these methods are contextualised within public domains, they can become disruptive discourses. This thesis, for example with these yarnings, narratives and storyings, when it reaches the public domain, could well become material within disruptive discourse, depending on the context and how it is framed.

Prior to recognising Goanna, I saw my place in the project as somewhat complicated: researcher, writer, narrator and participant-as-Bellbird. To address these multiplicities, symbols represented in Table 1 were assigned

to clarify roles, voices, pace, poetics and perspectives. Why Goanna? It felt intuitive to adopt Goanna. When I saw the trailing tail/tale in the sand with footsteps on either side, she spoke to me, and it symbolised the journey I was undertaking. Later when she arrived during Bushytail's interview I felt my intuition was confirmed. It was only much later in the thesis writing phase that Bushytail informed me that Goanna was some Dharug people's skin identification. So, perhaps it's a lost skin knowledge., and in this project reflects Ancestors reviving the lost skin-knowledges from our ancestral past. Another absence-presenting. I only know that once recognised, Goanna-consciousness has accompanied me in every walk of life since.

However, with Goanna's arrival, the researcher role became further clarified by having an alternative, an 'other-than-Bellbird', identification It helped clarify the 'who' was doing the 'what' and when, while still recognising the fluidities of 'self'.

Accordingly, the thesis raises questions around notions of self across time, space and place, and the benefits of thinking relatedly. I draw on the work of Bawaka Country, as expressed through Yolngu participants of the Northern Territory, Australia (Bawaka Country et al., 2015) to apply the term 'co-becomings'. This term involves the interweaving of influences that happen through time sharing across human-more-than-human realms (see Section 1.5.5 for more discussion on this in relation to 'being'). Recognising these 'co-becomings' of self, assisted in the evolution of understanding not only the role of other-species relations in human life, but also how connections to Country, belonging to Country, caring for Country and as Country, are processes of engagement that open us to transformative pathways across a lifetime, which in turn open us to greater avenues for understanding agency and creativity.

Additionally, it is important to recognise the epistemological 'third place' in which the thesis resides (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). While *Country Tracking Voices* privileges Dharug Aboriginal epistemologies and ontologies, I argue

that recognising the intercultural agency that is Dharug Nura, requires acknowledging the multiplicities of knowing and doing that an urbanised, city-Country involves.

To privilege one is not to deny the other. Bringing the two lenses of Indigenous and other-than-Indigenous scholarship together is ethically important, because it is intended to bring together the intellectual and knowledge traditions of multiple cultures. To frame knowledges only within a single lens is to deny the impact of mutual understandings and creates a false dichotomy that cannot prevail in the context of modernity. Applying an inclusive frame positions Dharug Nura as a web of agentic interconnections within an Always-(K)-now-ing cosmos. Using ongoing research by other-than-Indigenous scholars is critical in contesting the domination of narratives by western scholarship, such as new physics, when it confirms ancient Aboriginal knowings. Dharug people are motivated to develop and maintain links that bring these understandings into the Nura web. Fueling such contestation through archaeological and other forms of research strengthens Dharug and other communities' arguments demanding due respect be given to Australia's First Peoples and their knowledges.

Dharug are a tiny minority working in the face of growing national and international extremism. Urbanised Country does not live in isolation from the practices and procedures continuously threatening Nura. Adapting to the circumstances we find ourselves in is one of the core methods of resistance, resilience, and renewal, that all generations of Dharug have undertaken to survive, particularly across 230 odd years of colonization and re-colonization. Adaptation for survival requires bringing other-than-Indigenous knowledges *into* our Dharug Nura agency.

It is with this in mind and with the hope of opening opportunities for other-than-Indigenous scholars to better understand Dharug and other Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing and being, that discussions involving time, space

and matter and the work of physicist Karen Barad (2010), environmental humanist scholar Donna Houston and others (2016) is included.

Additionally, the works of Bastian (2009), Bignall, Hemming, and Rigney (2016), Rose (1999); (Rose, 2000, 2002), Rose (2011b) and Bawaka Country (2015; 2014; 2015) have been critical for finding connections between posthumanism, quantum physics and time-agency with our previously existing and continuing Australian Aboriginal ontologies and epistemologies. Bawaka Country, particularly, teaches us through the literature what 'co-becoming' means as one example of caring as Country, a practice of critical importance for Dharug Nura and other urbanised Countries.

Chapter 4 Introduces the second phase of the thesis, being the women's storytelling and clarifies the textual landscape that will be met, an entwining place, between the seven women's storytelling, and Bellbird's Ancestral spaces and places of belonging. This structural landscape is visually represented in the thesis possum skin map (see Fig. 50) as the Pleiadean stars, positioned between the sandstone pinnacles. Entwining Bellbird's ancestral journeying with the women's chapters strengthens the sense of timespacemattering, and the weaving storytelling that Goanna walking invites.

Chapters 5 to 11 contain the seven women's storytelling and 'yarning' experiences (Aboriginal English for sharing stories and time informally). They sit beside the Seven Sisters' meta-narrative of connection to the Pleiades constellation (see Chapter 4). It is the place of multiple voices, multiple ways of understanding and multiple ways of responding. It is from their stories that we get a deep sense of Dharug connectedness to places, Ancestors, Country and other-than-humans through Creation stories, transgenerational storytelling and stories of practice. From these voices we can recognise alternative ways of being and knowing and doing, from which we can find responses to the questions of custodial cultural continuity in the city and strengthen resilience and wellbeing amid the pressures of urban

modernity. A place for reflexivity. As mentioned above interspersed between each of the women's chapters, are Bellbirds Ancestral Pleidean Presences.

Chapter 12 brings us (the reader and author-as-multiple be-ing) to a place of reflection and synthesis of this woven basket-of-knowledges. We consider and draw together the threads formed from the women's stories: their places of connection, their practices that keep custodial obligations alive and that determine if, where, when and how it may assist others for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Chapter 13, commonly considered as Conclusion-place, in this basket resides in Becoming-place. It lands as a place of suggestion, an opening for future weavings and a place of possibilities. As such the strands of the weaving basket remain unfinished.



1.4 A Topographical view of the Outlooks

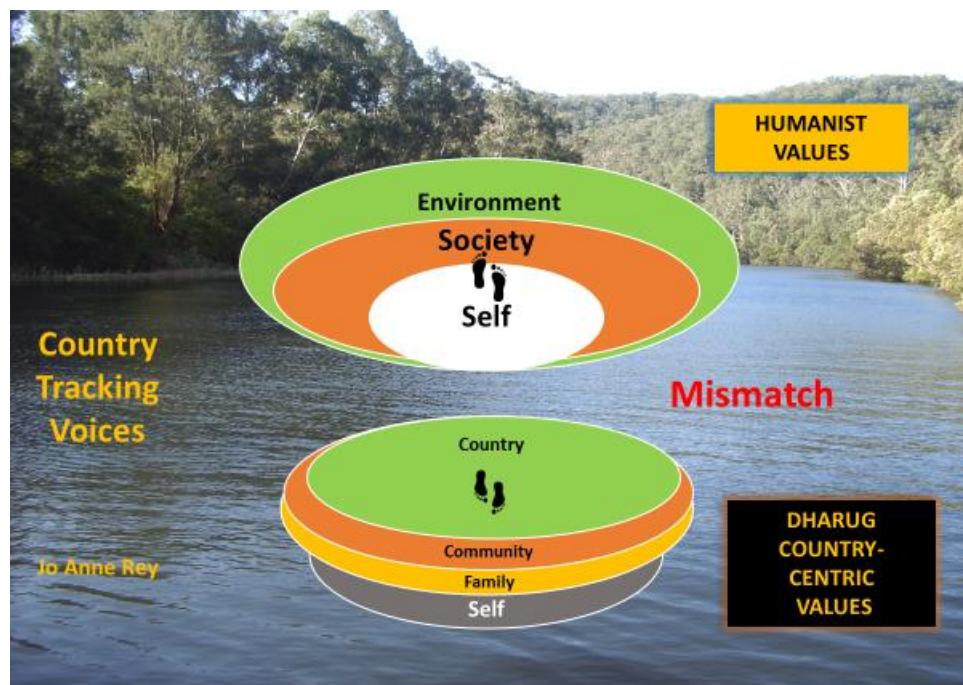


Fig. 3 Dharug Map of Diverging Values: Between Human-centric and Country-centric foci.

Having situated the placement of this thesis against two contrasting, though interwoven, mappings of our Dharug Nura across storied-time, and as a spacetime index, another map to signpost the journey topographically is provided. It is important to recognise we are crossing a variety of territories, and as such the trail weaves between two synchronous yet divergent ways of knowing and doing, underpinned by a major difference in values (Fig. 3 above). As *Country Tracking Voices* undertakes a journey engaging relational presences, places and practices, so the pathway that the thesis travels visits places of perspectives, or lookouts, on Dharug women's relational Country.



1.4.1 Lookout 1: Walking Between Humanism and Posthumanism: an Ecosophy of Dharug women's ways

The thesis follows a path that crosses between the value territories of humanist-individualism and Dharug collectivism and shows us the divergence in approaches (Fig. 3 above). As Figure 3 shows, the values of individualism and the human-centric journey start with self, then proceed to caring about society and eventually to caring about the environment (as physical and material world). In contrast, Aboriginal values walk a journey that starts with belonging to Country (as physical and metaphysical space) and involves the practice of caring for Country. The process of caring for Country creates connections to presences, places and people. From these connections, community and a sense of belonging is grown, while values of collectivism are fostered. Strong communities support families, and strong families raise individual selves that are strong in belonging, strong in caring and strong in connections to presences, places and people. As such, selves are not positioned as fixed entities or rationales for existence. They are

recognised as processes of co-belonging, co-becoming (Bawaka Country et al., 2015) and co-producing within localised networks of presences, places and people. The journey is a weaving of existential interconnections for at least 65,000 years cross the continent of Australia; what could be described in Deleuze and Guattarian terms as *rhizomic* (Stewart, 2014).

Bignall et al. (2016) note that Australian Aboriginal peoples had been working in their localised place of 'ecosophies', or ecological wisdoms, for millennia before humanism or posthumanism became talking points. Ecosophy as a term was developed by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in the 1980s, as an exemplar for formulating an individualised ecological philosophy. According to Glasser (2011, p. 52):

The core of Naess's approach is that sustainability hinges on developing more thoroughly reasoned and consistent views, policies, and actions, which are tied back to wide-identifying ultimate norms and a rich, well-informed understanding of the state of the planet.

Further, caring for nonhumans did not have to be at the expense of caring for humans, but rather worked towards the potential of understanding a deeper sense of connected self, a 'deep ecology', enabling full realisation of the human sense of being. From these early steps towards a sense of concern for environmental ethics, and through the work of scholars such as Plumwood (1991, 1993, 2001) and Rose (2002, 2004; 2005; 2007), pathways for weaving a place for Indigenous perspectives have opened.

It is in this woven place that this thesis winds between humanism and posthumanism as a third way, through the perspectives of seven Dharug women's understandings, steeped in Australian Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing but localised and adaptive to changes that have created Country into an urbanised, globalised city today. Walking with Goanna, Chapter 3, illustrates such a path.



1.4.2 Lookout 2: Walking between Places: Engaging with 'Brick Walls' (as sites of Construction) and Trailing Spaces (as Sites of Connection).

Researching Dharug Country involved visiting sites of knowledge construction, such as the NSW State Archives, Macquarie University, its library and offices, local council historical and local studies collections and many online sites. This involved visiting physical buildings made of bricks and mortar, and the culture of academia, which is a construction from and constructor of western traditions of knowledge collection, knowledge holding and bureaucratic systems of knowledge dissemination and practice (M. Nakata, 2007). Blair's (2015, p. 30 Fig. 3.2) use of the term 'Brick Wall' as a succinct representation and summation for the cultural and physical realities of academic constructions has been particularly helpful, both imaginatively and linguistically. As she illustrates, both graphically and orthographically, each brick in the 'Qualitative: Quantitative Methods & Practices: Paradigms and Philosophies' wall represents knowledge categorisations and separations. While they are not hierarchically placed as is the case, for example, in the Dewey decimal classification system used in many libraries following its publication in 1876 by John Dewey, this constructivist approach is emblematic of how knowledge has been envisioned throughout the western world and is reflective of structuralist logics that have dominated western knowledge systems from at least the time of Aristotle (Olson, 2007).

On the other hand, the project also engages in places of connection, rather than construction. These include sites of significance for the seven women of the project, such as river valley, beach, women's sacred birthing sites, and sites of memorialisation. Such a contrast between the two places of engagement (construction and connection) has also meant I have been traversing my own intellectual and emotional/spiritual reference places, a Country of its own unique shape and character, creating a particular third territory sourced from personal heritage and experiences.



1.4.3 Lookout 3: Walking between Practices: Writing and Other-than-Writing (Academic 'doing' and Dharug women's 'doing')

Crossing this territory also involves the realms of privilege, competition, co-operation, communication and interpretation. Within the space of a doctorate, a candidate walks under the pressure of written obligations at a level that automatically privileges those who can do it well, according to 'doctoral-level' requirements, as well as the pressure to publish according to the censorship/regulation of editors. As such, the academy is a place of regulation, competition, and cultural regeneration underpinned by colonial practices across all levels (Kaomea, 2005; Ritchie, 2014; L. T. Smith, 2012). Indigenous scholarship shows that the educational context as research and practice involves

repressive structures of colonialism [that] operate through an invisible network of filiative connections, psychological internalisations and unconsciously complicit associations (Kaomea, 2005, p. 22).

The privileging of one form of knowledge transmission, orthography and further distinctions such as professional and academic styles according to standardised purposes, creates a hierarchy and elitism often reflected societally, across workplaces, earning capacities and habitations. In contrast, Dharug women's ways of communication are far more diverse and therefore centred not competitively, but inclusively, and oral transmission, with an established knowledge-holder transmitting information to the apprentice underpins respectful relationships.

Both arenas involve interpretation. While sometimes including writing, the women privilege orality, (yarning, as shared storytelling), visual arts, bricolage, song, music, puppetry-as-performance and theatre. As a result, they engage more outside of office spaces, working in group situations in other-than-human spaces that do not necessarily involve the individual predominantly working long hours indoors at a computer. While expertise is valued across all arenas, whether it be possum-skin work, weaving or dancing (and competition certainly has its place in communal settings), the domination of writing as the preferred form of knowledge transmission by the western academy reinforces exclusivity, rather than inclusivity. Again,

the landscape covered between these two territories requires me to interpret between the modes of practice and recognise the elite place of privilege that the academy nurtures, maintains and propagates, in contrast to the social and more collective place of activities that non-written forms of communication entail (See Bellbird's possum-skin learning in Chapter 11 for a detailed account of an alternative transmission of knowledge).



1.4.4 Lookout 4: Walking between Modalities: Individualisation and Collectives.

Finally, walking between the modes of behaviour represented by individualism and collectivism is a territory encountered in this thesis journey. The place of the individual in the collective is realised through participating in communal activities. During the research, it became apparent that the women identify beyond being Dharug as a 'label', incorporating their understandings of Aboriginality through collective activities, in the workplace, through their own sets of skills, through gatherings at significant sites, participating in ceremonies and educating the broader population about what constitutes Dharug Aboriginal values and beliefs. During this process it became clear that the weaving of the various aspects of life, such as family, community and cultural obligations around caring for Country, influences conceptions of self. When work is disconnected from cultural ways of engagement, then the ability to engage collectively is minimised, and time is devoured in the search for money to survive. Such a requirement emphasises time-as-agency for the individual rather than time-as-agency for the collective (Bastian, 2009). bell hooks argues that this reflects a difference between urbanised (individualised) and non-urbanised (collective) cultures in place (Antonsich, 2010).

Accordingly, crossing this territory enabled me to consider the systemic values that privilege the individual and the consequences that imposes on the agency of modalities involving collective outcomes. Caring for Country becomes undermined if the workplace is an office, for example, while,

Wagtail's segment (Chapter 6) illustrates how Country continues, despite the bones of Dharug being absorbed into the sands that form the mortar and cement underpinning suburban house constructions. Nevertheless, the impact of enclosures on individual time, space and psychological wellbeing influences our sense of self, as one within or separated from a connected place of being. As Mitchell (2017) asserts, hyper-separation from other-than-humans-as-Country becomes prioritised by the centrality of the individual, the self, over and above the sense of interconnectedness upon which we all depend.

There are four main territories of difference crossed in this thesis journey. They include the place of humans in ecological philosophies, the place of knowledge construction in contrast to knowledge connection, the place of knowledge transmission preferences and hierarchies and the place of operational modalities: individualism and collectives. Making such crossings resonates with what Homi Bhabha refers to as 'third space' (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). Following such a winding path, much as our Ancestors have done for millennia, involves meeting presences, places and people and recognising Bhabha's understanding that 'third spaces' involve strategic planning. Therefore, some important conceptual tools will make the journey more comfortable.



terms

1.5 Requisites to carry in the Dillybag: Definitions and explanations of



1.5.1 Culture and Cultural Meanings

In this thesis, I use the following UNESCO definition from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) website:

Culture should be regarded as "a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group and that it encompasses in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, tradition and beliefs" (UNESCO, 2002). In addition, "Cultural systems of meaning shape the way that

people interpret climate change and provide an historical and sociocultural context within which impacts are experienced and responses are generated.” (Nature), 2018 Accessed 11.02.2018)



1.5.2 Country, Dreaming and the Dreamtime

Dharug Nura, the Country of Dharug-speaking people, involves physical, metaphysical agency and relationships that enrich people, place and circumstance. As Jay Arthur (Nicholls, 2014 par. 17) explains,

The words that Aboriginal people use about country express a living relationship. The country may be mother or grandfather, which grows them up and is grown up by them. These kinship terms impose mutual responsibilities of caring and keeping upon the land and people ... For many Indigenous Australians, person and place or 'country are virtually interchangeable.

According to Aboriginal artist, Djon Mundine, writing in the catalogue of the 2015 exhibition he curated at the Mosman Art Gallery, ("Bungaree: The first Australian," 2015, p. 10), Country is:

A cyclical temporal space of being where the 'human' is embodied within, and the space experienced in all senses, not just in the direct visual. You do not think but feel.

As Harrison, Bodkin, Bodkin-Andrews, and Mackinlay (2017, p. 509) state

Country is like a language, it includes both displacements and repetitions. Features are repeated from one year to the next such as the seasons and the reproduction of animals and plants. While knowledge of Country is indelible and exists with or without humans, it becomes meaningful through the interplay (and displacements) of flora and fauna, a flower attended to, for example, can mean that food is available to eat.

Country is also Ancestral. Quoting senior Bundjalung (northern coastal NSW) man, Clarence, Harrison et al. (2017, pp. 507-508) speak to the relationship with Country as transgenerational belonging:

That connection that we have as Aboriginal people is that we know our ancestors and the ancestors of other Aboriginal people. Even if we're on somebody else's country, we know that our ancestors and their ancestors have walked that land, have cared for that land so we have that sense of belonging and that sense of not being the first, not being the last and just having that real tangible sense of what it is to be Aboriginal.

Additionally, the relationship between Country and narratives is a cartography of Ancestral creation sourced in the 'Dreamtime' but always 'now' as the 'Dreaming'.

Stanner's term for the Dreaming, 'the Everywhen' (Stanner, 1979, p. 24), is considered by non-Indigenous scholars as coming closest to the notion. 'One cannot fix The Dreaming in time: it was, and is, everywhen.' (Stanner, 2009, p. 58).

However, the clarification of Larrakia (Darwin area) Elder, Bilawara Lee (2013, p. 12), is most useful:

The 'Dreamtime' was the time before time – when the world was new, and the ancestral spirits travelled across the earth, helping to create the land in all its forms, the plants and the animals the 'Dreaming' describes the continuation of the Dreamtime in today's world...

Aboriginal peoples through Law/Lore maintain the Dreamtime 'seed ... seen as memory that infused the earth after the event, just as a flower leaves behind a cloned copy of itself in the form of a discarded seed' (Lee, 2013, p. 12). This 'memory' is alive through song, dance, music, in the landscape, waterways, underground and the cosmos. At the same time, the stories from this creation time carry ways of being, knowing and doing for all human and other-than-human engagements. Humans caring for and caring as Country has also been termed 'co-becoming' (Bawaka Country, Lloyd, Suchet-Pearson, Wright, & Burarrwanga, 2013).

I suggest that the English language hinders deeper engagement with these ontologies and epistemologies and consideration of the limitations of language will be shared later in this chapter. As Nicholls (2014 par.19) explains,

While the narratives connecting the travels of these Dreaming Ancestors to specific sites may be sung or spoken, they collectively represent a significant body of oral literature, comparable with other great world literatures, such as the Bible, the Torah, the Ramayana,

and the Greek tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, to name but a few.

Indeed, 'Country', 'Dreaming' and 'the Dreamtime' remain deeply interwoven epistemologies and ontologies based in spacetime and matter. This interweaving of being and knowing is underpinned by Aboriginal customary 'Law', which is deeply divergent from the legalistic notion of the Australian Westminster system of law that has been imposed across the continent. However, the interrelated knowledges that enabled Songlines and trading routes to be woven across the continent indicate that while each Country had its own system of regulation, the role of the creation stories, as guides for practice and behaviour, customary relationships with other-than-humans, and localised knowledges together formed (and continue to form) a praxis within which the web of belonging through spirituality can be rewoven.

As Yolngu Elder, Galarwuy Yunupingu, AM, explains it:

I see a crocodile as an animal that is part of me and I belong to him, he belongs to me. It's a commonness of land ownership. Everything that I have comes from the crocodile. Crocodile, he's the creator and the land-giver to the Gumatj people... we have always treated crocodile in a way that it is part of a family. We consider ourselves, even name ourselves as crocodile and we come back as crocodile. When our body's dead, gone, our spirit becomes crocodile (Kelly, 2014, p. 56).

Through the women's stories and practices, the thesis shows that these relationships with other-than-humans continue here on Dharug Nura and that Aboriginal systems of authority continue. The interweaving of cultural spaces of being, knowing and doing as agency also weaves time, space and matter. Such a weaving is seen in the work of Barad (2010). Using the language of 'hauntologies' and continuing 'dis/continuities', I argue that Barad's (2010) understandings bring into resonance and relationship post-humanist discourse and Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing.



1.5.3 Timespacemattering and Hauntological Dis/continuities - Breaking Boundaries with and walking towards First Peoples' knowings and doings by co-becoming time/s.

Bignall et al. (2016) note there is no exact fit between Aboriginal understandings and European theories of posthumanism. However, the Dharug women's storying in this project shows there are resonances between Aboriginal existential interconnections across and within time, space and matter and those of recent theoretical discourses.

In the context of this thesis, there are several scholars whose work most usefully applies. Firstly, Bastian's (2009) exploration into time-as-agency. By entwining Plumwood's (2001) expressions of nature-as-agency and Derrida's (1989) treatise into the invention of Other, Bastian unpicks the role of Enlightenment and humanist mentalities in undermining nature's (Country) agency, arguing against the notion of agency requiring 'intent'. Further, by employing Dastur's (2000) understandings about events as dis/junctures, we find a pathway that prepares us and leads us towards Barad's (2010, p. 261) perspectives for 'ontological entanglements' that cross physics, history, philosophy and theatre, a place of 'hauntologies'. As she states:

There is no inherently determinate relationship between past and future. Phenomena are not located in space and time; rather, phenomena are material entanglements enfolded and threaded through the spacetime-mattering of the universe. Even the return of a diffraction pattern does not signal a going back, an erasure of memory, a restoration of a present past. Memory – the pattern of sedimented enfoldings of iterative intra-activity – is written into the fabric of the world. The world 'holds' the memory of all traces; or rather, the world is its memory (enfolded materialisation).

This prepares people for an understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing and spirituality, particularly according to Lee's (2013) perspectives. The variation between these territories rests with intent as spiritual agency

in a manner that contests humanist privileging and allows us to arrive prepared to meet our seven Dharug women through their stories about presences, places and people as Ancestors.

For Barad (2010), the entwining of time, space and matter, as physics shows, creates opportunities, the co-becomings for exploring alternative ways of understanding realities through multiple lenses. Widening our perspectives brings opportunities to engage also with Aboriginal philosophies (Bawaka Country including Suchet-Pearson, 2015).

Within this Australian Aboriginal context, the work of Yolngu women (Northern Territory) and academics from southern Australia, co-becoming together with/in/as Bawaka Country has been particularly relevant, as they search to decolonise time, its telling/telling it/s, and co-becoming within (Bawaka et al., 2016, p. 82). As Bawaka explains:

... recontextualising history through: 1) attending to absent-presences, and 2) attending to what is present now and their relationalities (especially temporal relationships) can challenge colonial and two-dimensional versions of 'the past' with enriched and empowering approaches.

As Bastian (2009, p. 108) shows, human agency and the privileging of 'rationally guided inventive processes' over nature's agency, expressed as 'accident' or 'serendipity', since the Enlightenment

... links invention tightly, both to ideals of linear progress and to its character as a peculiarly human capacity... [which] have come to represent another step in the unfolding of rational progress.

Derrida's (1989) exposé of the foundational notion of 'invention' as arriving from the 'impossible' – an event rendered beyond prior experience, and requiring therefore an alternative, non-linear understanding of the future and time, is explained further by Bastian (2009, p. 110):

...to be an event, an invention must disrupt the tendrils of anticipation that presume to know in advance what the invention would be. Reinventing invention thus requires developing a different relation to the future ... breaking with western conceptions of linear

time. This is, in part, because the transformation that produces an impossible invention is just as much a transformation of linear time.

Dastur (2000, p. 182) states a Derridean 'event':

... introduces a split between past and future and so allows the appearance of different parts of time as dis-located ... irremediably excessive in comparison to the usual representation of time as flow. It appears as something that dislocates time and gives a new form to it, something that puts the flow of time out of joint and changes its direction.

While evolution provides infinite examples of such events, relevant dislocations, in the context of this thesis, can be seen in the following three examples. First, the impact of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 rendered those arrivals inexplicable and obliged a search for some way to fit this new phenomenon into existing Dharug and Dharawal-speakers' knowledge frameworks. Stanner (1977, p. 4) rationalises, 'The older Aborigines of Botany Bay in 1788 would have remembered Cook's visit in 1770 and the main events of the week that he spent there.' However, the words of Lieutenant Phillip Gidley King, at the time, interpret the events he watched.

The Aborigines were not sure for several days that the strange beings who came onshore were truly human. They were particularly astonished by the hats, clothes and weapons, probably thinking them, as in the case of other Aborigines in many parts of the continent, incredible extensions of the body (Stanner, 1977, pp. 5-6).

Second, psychologically, the impact of the news of a previously unknown Aboriginal heritage, as several of our Dharug women have experienced, I suggest is also an 'event'. For Bellbird, there was a complete sense of confoundedness: 'What am I going to do with this information?' and the associated need to see how to make it fit within the context of self as it was, as it might be, and as it wouldn't be any more – a contextualisation requiring a space (in time) in order to 'sit with it'. For others, there is a sense of finding the missing piece in a puzzle (See Sandstone's storying in Chapter 10).

For the third example, I argue that an occasion of epiphany through dream (Kookaburra's storying, Chapter 5) or death (Bellbird's storying, Chapter 11) can also be seen to dislodge time from matter and space/place. In each case, agency is taken out of the control of the human being impacted, and the meeting with Other becomes a matter of translation and contextualisation. We are reminded of our place *within* nature/Country, not as a *controller* of nature/Country. As such, self can be seen as a co-production, a co-becoming through an interaction, a mutuality and an intervention of an 'other'. As Bawaka et al. (2016) argue, this becomes a method for decolonisation through the recontextualisation of history.

Further, as Bastian (2009, p. 114) notes,

... while being passive in regard to these changes, it is the species that are most able to welcome them, that are the most adaptable and resilient, that will be most able to thrive.

As such, Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing enabled survival for Dharug. How some of these adaptations and changes were made are expressed through the women's storying, as strategic responses, encompassing both passivities and activities (see Chapters 5 to 11). The acceptance of human place within the fabric of change that Country represents allows for both these conditions, and I suggest enables resilience and strengthens wellbeing. As Bastian (2009, p. 114) observes, '... it is the intertwining of activity and passivity which characterises the processes of evolution, as a form of agency.' While Bastian (2009) exposes the pitfalls in delineating time, Barad (2010) uses her physicist lens to show how nature enacts agency by dissolving the separations of humanism.

As the women's stories (Chapters 5 to 11) will show, both Bastian and Barad's theories resonate with Aboriginal ways and knowledges that have been enacted and storied through intimate co-becomings (Bawaka Country et al., 2015) with landscapes, seasons and the cosmos for millennia. I suggest it is through reflexivity both human and cosmological that these two knowledge systems meet (Young, 1976). More will be discussed in

Chapters 12 and 13. While the women's stories are not so pretentious as to suggest 'mastery' over anything, once we are opened to other ways of knowing-in-doing, through the entwining of presences, places and people, Country intervenes as entwining contexts/texts/times – a contextualisation within us and a reflexivity across both. I suggest that to the extent we seven women have been entwined through the project, together we have created new places within ourselves and have co-become time/tellings (Bawaka et al., 2016), engaging reflexively with Country in the process.



1.5.4 Arriving at the Place of Be-ing and Being as Place

As mentioned above, recent understandings challenge notions of separations and recognise interrelatedness as a key conceptual change from binaried approaches of hyper-separated mentalities (Plumwood, 2001). One of the insights from this understanding is the problem of language, particularly English, and the foundational conceptualisation of 'things' as nouns. I suggest in this thesis that, in fact, seeing nouns as gerunds, that is seeing forms as 'doing things' or 'verbal nouns' helps us to recognise agency as fundamental to all forms. For example, Campbell (2017) investigates the gerund across places such as the fiction of Borges, Tibetan Buddhism, Australian Aboriginal and Navaho Indian language contexts and its role and effect in counselling and psychology scenarios. In the process, she highlights how Aboriginal and other Indigenous people's world views as agentic, rather than static, is reflected in the centrality of verbs, adverbs and gerunds in their languages and knowledge practices. By exploring the role of process philosophy, she recognises how this undermines the humanist approaches reflected in psychology. Campbell (2017, pp. 24-25) argues that:

Buddhist philosophical literature, psychological literature, artistic sources, and western philosophical sources all circumambulate the central notion that the truest language to describe reality and people is that which describes an ever-changing stream of

consciousness, rather than a solid entity. ... The notion of solid, unchanging, material existence is called into question by all of these philosophical approaches, which in turn calls into question the language people use to describe each other, their qualities, and their existence itself.

Accordingly, while it is clear much work is happening in the scholarship questioning humanist approaches, linking these understandings with Indigenous knowledges and ways of being and doing is relatively recent.



In summary, these openings have introduced the context of the project, and the key questions that have arisen from the seven Dharug women's storying:

- 1) How do Dharug custodians continue cultural practices and obligations around caring for Country in Sydney?
- 2) What do the lives and practices of these seven Dharug women demonstrate in terms of mitigating pressures from city life?
- 3) How do these ways enhance Dharug resilience and wellbeing?

Understanding these matters weaves a path into western scholarship and draws it into the web of Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing and being that have preceded western understandings for millennia.



CHAPTER 2: Yarning back to Written Places on Dharug Nura



2.1 Weaving a Basket of Knowledges across Disruptive Spaces



Fig. 4: Country Tracking Voices Project - A Basket of Woven Ways of Doing and Knowing. Illustration and Image: J. Rey, 2016.

*This work, she be this basket,
And for this basket to be a good one, you got to look at the core.
The core got to be real tight and strong, because she be the heart of the
matter.
If the core be tight, then the weaving be strong, the new threads will stay
in their place -
The red ones, the yellow ones, the brown ones, they all have their place.
But when they be woven together well, then they be strongest.
You can always tell who wove the basket, because the weaver, she weaves
her own way.
Her own story be told in that basket.
She chooses her materials from what Country provides,
So, you can hear her Country story in there,
Woven tight with strong fingers and remembered from her core.
Her basket carries Country, knowledge, skill, strength and her heart,
And that be the story - that be her Dreaming.
Bellbird.*



This doctoral project *Country Tracking Voices* involves seven Dharug women who tell stories as a positive legacy for the community, to contest negative narratives as played out across Dharug Country in various forms, to strengthen cultural connection to place and to renew cultural knowledges. Each of the seven women is, in her own way, dealing with the legacy of colonisation and, in the process, working for the healing of Country, community, family and self. For me, as researcher-participant undertaking this work, I consider this project to be my obligation to my Ancestors, family and as caring for Country practice.

Together, and not by our intent but more by a process of shared time, effort and storying, we have woven a way which others may find useful for their own communities and for the benefit of all sentient beings. It is an integrated approach for living; the way of 'lifeworking' – a term originating in the literature from the *Creatures Collective*, Mitchell et al. (2016b, 2017) of Toronto, Canada, but one which I have contextualised within the understandings produced from this thesis. This understanding of 'weaving as lifeworking' recurs in various ways throughout the thesis, as theory, method, examples, discussion points or becomings (rather than conclusions, which only the reader can deliver).

The broad needle used to weave this basket are the stories woven from voices themselves arising on Dharug Nura. From their voices we can ask the broader questions about cultural continuity when Country is a city; how do these women's lives illustrate 'lifeworkings' (Mitchell, 2017), rather than dis-Integrations, and how do those ways enhance resilience and wellbeing?

The research has involved walking like Goanna. There are no conclusions, only becomings and opportunities for better understanding how Dharug Nura, its people, places, creatures and stories, become existential interconnectedness (Bignall et al., 2016) – a Dreaming (see Chapter 1.5) path and lifeworking that continues across city and suburbia. How such

‘becoming’ and ‘lifeworking’ evolves will be clarified at various points throughout the thesis.



2.1.1 Placing the Basket in Dharug Nura's Storied Landscape: an act of disruption

As it is part of human nature to tell stories, rendering characters, of whatever form, as ‘other’ has occurred since storytelling began. As Gottschall (2012, p. xiv) explains, we are the storytelling animal, ‘... story is for a human as water is for a fish – all encompassing, and not quite palpable.’ Australian First Peoples have been rendered as ‘other’ since Europeans first stepped onto our shores and mostly continue to be on the sidelines of local, state and national discourses – often placed as ‘the problem’.

While early accounts show obvious interest in our Ancestors, they were clearly framed within generally paternalistic, Eurocentric, 18th century Christianised and sometimes militaristic mindsets. One exception to this patriarchal storying of the other was Second Lieutenant, William Dawes. It is of particular importance because more than 200 years later it is the Dawes’ Notebooks (Nathan et al., 2009), as they have come to be known, that have significantly assisted Dharug people reclaim and revitalise our language. Additionally, it was Dawes’ relationship with Patyegarang, a local Gadigal girl, that enabled him to accumulate sufficiently informed knowledge of our Dharug language, beyond ‘simple wordlists’, during his time in the settlement until his departure in 1791.

The notebooks record Patyegarang's frequent visits to Dawes' hut and their increasingly complex and intimate conversations ... as they spent time in each other's company and shared emotion, humour, intellectual depth and mutual respect (Nathan et al., 2009, p. vii).

However, in the broader cross-cultural stories of earliest days, the quality of mutual respect was not so evident, and very quickly misunderstandings, suspicion of and downright distaste for each other's culture and values, developed (Karskens, 2010). Storying and yarning, therefore, as narrative

retrieval, transmission and personal reconciliation of self with the past, are integral and, to those affected, more important, to the process of healing, than the actual historical evidence. Additionally, the practice of transgenerational memorial as a way of healing intergenerational trauma through storying is one of the key recurring places of yarning through the thesis (See Chapters 5-11).

In more recent times we are storied as problematic and something to be negotiated with, as 'Reconciliation' and 'Recognition' efforts are underway, following reports such as *Bringing Them Home: The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*. Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997 and claims under High Court Rulings made under the *Commonwealth Native Title Act* such as the Mabo vs. Queensland matter and many others (Cullen, 1996). More recently, such a compilation has seen the 'Apology' by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, in Parliament House, Canberra, on 13th February, 2008, added to the list and, more recently, the 2017 National Constitutional Convention concerning recognition in the Constitution. The latter eventually became another 'brick in the wall' of failure when Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull torched the hopes of Aboriginal people longing for a voice in matters concerning their wellbeing.

These are some of the public stories that continue to accrue and be embedded into Dharug and other Australian Aboriginal peoples' narratives as cultural-placements. Attwood (1996a, p. 101) views Australian history as a 'narrative accrual' formed through community discourses woven throughout the late 18th, then 19th and 20th and now early 21st centuries. That 'narrative accrual' involved storying-up (in Aboriginal English this means bringing to life through narratives) an objectified unitary Aboriginal Other.

Recognising Dharug Nura – Dharug Country – as storied, as well as physical and metaphysical space, allows openings into other ways of knowing and

being. One such example where this is already happening, as Bignall et al. (2016) illustrate, is that of the Ngarrindjeri (southern Australia) peoples' philosophy of *Yannarumi*, or 'Speaking as Country'. Recognising that Indigenous epistemologies are embedded existential interconnectivities, within ecologies of place, reflects ontologies of being as 'more-than-human vital matter' and as such involves practices preceding western posthumanism by millennia (Bignall et al., 2016, p. 470).

Openings that disrupt western humanistic storied legacies and recognising custodial obligations of caring for Country as a practice of 'Speaking as Country' lie at the heart of this thesis. Highlighting the multiplicities in knowing, doing and being as Country is its *raison d'être*, because it is only through the fractures, the cracks in the 'bricks walls' (Blair, 2015) of settler-colonialist and other colonising narratives that new openings can be made, 'new spaces of liberty and community ... as part of an ecological process of decolonization' (Bignall et al., 2016, pp. 473-474). Within these 'frayed edges' of colonisation 'others' can be heard, including our other-than-human co-beings (Bawaka Country et al., 2013; Bawaka Country et al., 2015; Bawaka Country including Suchet-Pearson, 2015).

In this thesis, Country is given such a voice, and recognised as a participant in the production of knowledge through the laws of interdependence that underpin 'ecosophies' (Bignall et al., 2016). Allowing broader interpretations of knowing/being opens pathways to other ways of doing, so that we can better hear the silenced places. While Barad's (2010) work speaks to these fissures as 'hauntological' places, it is Bignall et al. (2016, p. 471) who address them as resonances between recent western perspectives and Indigenous epistemologies. Those resonances involve 'complex kinds of non-linear causation involved in the force dynamics of interconnected systems, emerging from the sciences of quantum mechanics, wave-particle oscillation and dark matter'. Linking the science, the philosophy and Indigenous ontologies of existential interconnectedness decolonises the humanist separations in our thinking that is the legacy that

living and working in urbanised Dharug Nura entails. Making such connections become sites of radical contextualisation (R. Howitt, 2018). Bignall et al. (2016, p. 461), following Guattarian thought, establish broad conceptualisations of ecology including relational ecologies

that comprise the existential territory of the self [which] is at the same time part of a wider social ecology of mobile forces. And, because the self is constituted through shifting relationships forged in a dynamic social environment, active processes of subject-formation necessarily involve an effort to manage this social ecology by creating, encouraging and seeking out positive connections that increase the capacities of the self and do not diminish its existential powers.

The extent that new perceptions are creating new connections in the search for new understandings, Karskens (2010, p. 5) recognises Sydney as ‘a city of stories, of words, ideas, and imagination’ and requires a new way of doing history in her account of the early settlement years of the Sydney colony, 1788 – 1820; a way of going beyond the standard historical sources ... [for] ... deep contextualisation or ‘ground truthing’. For example, taking over the Country and building a place for a white future ‘Australia’ has underpinned the nation-making narrative. As Karskens (2014, pp. 204-205) notes, while writing on the *mythos* of crossing the Blue Mountains in 1813 as a foundational national narrative:

Over the past twenty-five years there has been an outpouring of detailed research on the broader stories of the peoples, environments and creatures of the Blue Mountains and the Nepean River, by historians, especially local and family historians, archaeologists, geographers, geologists and ecologists.

However, a gap remains between the mass of writing *about* Dharug people and events on Dharug Country, while only ‘snippets’ in comparison have come from Dharug perspectives. Dharug remain, at best, positioned almost as bystanders, somewhat like the Aboriginal man portrayed by Emile Ulm in the 1880 *The Sydney Mail* Christmas Day Supplement picture, included in Karskens’ (2014, p. 198) work, who is assisting the intrepid heroes (see Fig.

5 below), as he holds their horses, patiently standing back so they can enjoy the view.

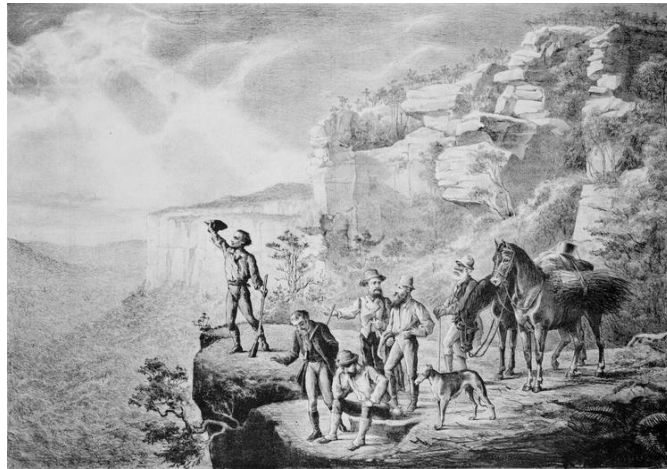


Fig. 5: Emile Ulm, 1880. *The Sydney Mail, Christmas Supplement*, Newspaper image: *Crossing Blue Mountains*. (Ulm, 1880). Accessed: 14.02.2018.

Whereas Karskens (2010, p. 6) may be ‘trying to get between the dichotomies’ for a sense of ‘thereness’ in writing history, while waiting for an Aboriginal history of Sydney to be written by custodians, she recognises that ‘the mechanics of authority frayed at the edge of empire’ (p.6). However, I argue that it is exactly within these frayed edges, these rock-like fissures, that Dharug and other Aboriginal communities have persisted and resisted those machinations of colonising authority. Rather than on the edge of empire, on Dharug Nura those underground places of resistance were indoors, where Dharug and other Aboriginal communities found strategies to keep their space, places, knowledges and cultures alive (Johnson, 2006). It was outdoors where narratives of silence were maintained. As several of the Dharug women tell, Ancestor were highly selective as to who knew what, as a protective and survival measure.

However, the path of this thesis will not be woven by directly attending to ‘histories’, but rather to the contemporary ‘herstories’ from the Dharug women’s yarnings. These reflect our *women’s business* - a continuing cultural place of being equal but separate from that involving *men’s business*. Colonisation and modernity may have in many circumstances

fractured the respectful relationships that underpin the notion of 'equal but separate', through patriarchal domination that underpins western knowledge constructions (Atkinson & Woods, 2008; Olson, 2007). However, supporting the re-establishment of respectful relationships as a continuation of our Ancestors' values that were practiced for more than 65,000 years, underpins this work. So Dharug women's voices, silenced in others' renditions of this place, are privileged and awarded due respect. As Ink (2004, p. 788) expresses it:

When histories are related from the perspectives of women, the process of historical rehabilitation further entails a redefinition of the parameters that determine national identity because of the traditional exclusion of women from these collectivities. In addressing this exclusion, writers often attend to the ways in which gender has been deployed in formations of the nation. Within the last several years, feminist analyses of gender and national identity have demonstrated that, in constructions of the nation, women are often left out of the national collectivity in that they are denied any national agency. That is, in the gendered divide between public and private that characterises national structures, women are confined within the private space, and their contributions to public formations of the nation are often ignored or erased from history.

To the extent that listening to women's voices fits a feminist frame of contestation against the patriarchy, the project may be seen in that light, though not dominated by it. It is important to acknowledge the role of feminism and feminist discourse in contesting, across broader society, women's voices and rights 'to define themselves through relationships with others, through a web of relationships of intimacy and care rather than through a hierarchy based on separation and self-fulfilment' (Kerber et al., 1986, p. 306).

However, such relational and connected ways of knowing as articulated through Australian Aboriginal epistemologies indicate matriarchal underpinnings. Both philosophically equal but different, gendered roles were in practice for millennia prior to feminism. Their loss is indicative of another destructive consequence of the patriarchal mentalities that drove

colonisation and now drive other physical violence, as often seen in domestic situations (Webb, J., 04.10.2017 Personal Conversation). It is therefore equally important, I suggest, to recognise the practice of balanced, respectful relationship through caring and connection that is the basic thread that must be woven to secure and strengthen not only equity between genders, but also equity across ecosophical understandings; ones that also weave Indigenous knowledges with post-humanist paradigms (Bignall et al., 2016).



2.1.2 Disturbing the Peace: Disrupting the absent-presences

‘The past is not a foreign country.’
(Tatz, 2017, p. 158)

At the beginning of this process I did not want to get into the past. I did not want to bathe in the blood of deep, dark history, and be accused of ‘black armband’ storying. So, when at the end, at the point of writing up, I found myself in this meeting-the-past place, it became clear: you cannot talk existential interconnectedness, Aboriginal storying, particularly in this case, Dharug storying, without addressing the dark heart, the attempt by colonising settlers to wipe out the First Peoples at every frontier physically, spiritually, psychologically and narratively. Colonisation and the associated murders of Dharug, Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples was like the start of a wildfire taking off across a continent, resulting in the attempted genocide and attempted burning away of over 65,000 years of existential interconnection between humans and other-than-humans in storied landscapes, waterways, skies and subterranean places.

It is against this scorched hinterland that Dharug community, like all other Aboriginal communities, are working and living. Today we can follow, through our seven Dharug women’s perspectives, some trails that assist in finding a way of living with and living through the past and its miserable consequences. Acknowledging the interwoven realities that all of us with

multi-generational connections receive from this storied-place assists living for the future.

I suggest that recognising ourselves within Aboriginal perspectives of Indigenous ecosophies assists in the decolonisation of mentalities that drove and continue to drive selves, communities and humanist dis-Integrating practices. I refer to these approaches, where lives are working to entwine modernity into customary ways, underpinned by belonging, caring and connecting, as 'lifeworkings', and the discussion of this as one of the findings from the women's chapters, will be central to later discussions.

While the overall human population in Dharug Nura has increased dramatically since colonisation, currently involving around 5 million people, of which 52,000 are Indigenous (Biddle & Wilson, 2013), and while of these, several hundred claim Dharug belonging through membership of Dharug Aboriginal Corporations, for custodians of this place, it is still Dharug, and still involves narratively mapped significant sites. For an archaeological interpretation of our Dharug Nura, Attenbrow's (2002, 2010) rendition is important and praiseworthy. For historical accounts of Dharug perspectives, the works of Kohen (1996, 2006; 2010) and Brook and Kohen (1991) have been vital, while Goodall and Cadzow (2009), Shaw (2013), Somerville (2013) and G. K. Cowlshaw (2009) have brought local other-than-Dharug perspectives based in place.

However, we need our own Dharug voices to complete the story, otherwise it becomes an act of one-handed clapping. As every author knows, every story also involves silences, some short, others filled with noisy looks, deafening tension or thunderous intent, and when the aim is colonisation, rendering the other silent is a major strategy for success. In the case of our Dharug-speaking people, rendering us as wiped out, no longer relevant, a footnote in the past and too white to be black, or as a fabrication, through ethnogenesis (K. L. Everett, 2011) has, in combination, acted until now (whether by intent or otherwise) as a hurtful series of plays, eventuating in

the domination of Dharug Country discursively by both non-Aboriginal and non-Dharug Aboriginal peoples.

One continuing strategy involves not including us at all in scholarly renditions of 'Aboriginal Western Sydney', e.g. Cowlishaw (2009). In 300 pages, the word 'Darug/Dharug' is mentioned twice – pages 25 and 58-59. Another approach involves the utilisation of the revisionist (since 1943) name for the people: the 'Eora' as first people of Sydney (Attenbrow, 2002, 2010, p. 35). Karskens, (2010), for example, omits Attenbrow's (2002, 2010, p. 35) perspectives on the problematic nature of translating Dharug language which is at the heart of the revisionist re-naming that creates tensions with custodians, although Karskens cites her work to support other points. Others want to dispute storied-identities rendered by earlier historical versions of boundaries, behaviours and beneficiaries (Ford, 2010). When these acts are perpetrated by other Aboriginal mobs on Country, we see re-traumatisation that plays out as a form of lateral violence (Foley, 2000, 2007) that then ripples within community and impacts individuals. Most recently, at the Uluru 2017 National Constitutional Convention to which 200 communities were invited, Dharug were left out.

So, while the majority of those who now call Sydney home (much of which we call *Dharug Nura* – see Fig. 1), are non-Indigenous, the reality is that it is the communities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (from other parts of the continent) living and working on Dharug Country who have become the voices mostly listened to by government instrumentalities, when it comes to Aboriginal matters on Dharug Country. However, only Dharug community, the First People of *Dharug Nura*, hold the rights and obligations of custodianship, and can engage in maintaining cultural continuity, including welcoming others into our Dharug Nura, holding custodial smoking ceremonies and singing-up Country. As such they are the keepers of knowledges attached to places.

It is hoped therefore, as an act of disruption to the renditions and events played out on Dharug Country, that this thesis, as a basket of woven yarnings, will address such storying and non-storying, with what I consider to be the most relevant (to this thesis) recent event that disrupts the 'old history', namely, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's *Apology*. This was made in the Australian Parliament to Aboriginal peoples across Australia on 13th February, 2008, for wrongful and inhumane practices enacted in the name of the Australian Government especially for and to the 'Stolen Generations'.

It is particularly relevant to this thesis because it was ten minutes after this event that I discovered I had an Aboriginal heritage – one that was kept hidden for at least three generations. It is the drive to break the silence that built up because the 'old history' did a shame-job on those who challenged the white supremacy of the settler-colonial identity that also underpins this work. As such, this thesis aims to disrupt, in order to weave a narrative of resistance, resilience, and renewal for Dharug community and more broadly all First Peoples.



2.1.3 Disruptive Knowings

To weave this narrative, certain epistemologies need challenging. Perspectives from scholars such as Rigney (1999), Attwood (1996b), Plumwood (1993), Rose (1999, 2012), Law (2004), Barad (2010), Bastian (2009) and Rautio (2013) are interwoven to challenge continuing human-centric, historical and societal norms that maintain colonising mentalities, racism and patriarchal hierarchies.

As Deborah Bird Rose argues, 1788 becomes the identity date, 'an inauguration of 'western' time that resets an imagined local calendar to a 'year zero' before which history loses consequence' (Potter, 2012, p. 132). In turn, as Attwood (1996b) clarifies, this epistemology of lineal time is employed by the legal system to justify historical narratives as evidence of 'truth', where documentary is privileged over oral evidence. 'Truth' is then

pinned in ‘unchanging’ reality that is often removed from context, so that interpretations of the written texts are at best fragmented ‘removals’, hiding hinterlands (Law, 2004). These removals can impact perspectives and limit voices. Stanner’s (2009) statement that Australia governments perpetrated a ‘cult of forgetfulness’ resonates here. Like Karskens (2010) in the context of history-making, Attwood (1996b) notes that it is between the polarised interpretations by relativists and objectivists that a pathway must be followed, one that allows for the pluralities which he claims are at the heart of democratic societies. What does such a path look like?



Fig. 6: Goanna tracks in red sand – a trailing tale/tail. Image ©Australian Museum by Stuart_014_big 05.01.17



2.1.4 Disruptive Doings: Following in the path of Goanna

This thesis argues that such a path looks like a Goanna walking (see Fig. 6 above), with the testing and tasting of the options available (using Goanna ‘tongue’), and the process of engaging views as footsteps so that conclusions or, as I will argue ‘becomings’, are the trailing tails/tales left in the landscape, weaving between the polarities like a serpent in the sand. (See Ch. 3 for a detailed account of Goanna’s role in the project.)

Seeing and listening to Dharug Nura as storied space, and following Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, allows a much larger pool of

knowledges from which we can draw. Recognising existential interconnections across species and within timeless relationships broadens our options and deepens our responsiveness, allowing other species to be influential, rather than binding us to a human-centric frame of reference as the only source from which we can understand the storied nature of Country. Such recognition decolonises Dharug Nura as storied space and opens up possibilities for those humans with complicit histories to recognise ways of acknowledging, which in turn allows room for healing.

While Rautio (2013, p. 445) calls for 'interspecies articulation', which positions our connectivity with other-than-humans as 'joints comprising meaningful connections between us and the not us', I suggest better understanding of Indigenous relationships and ways of knowing and doing facilitates the act of de-centring humanist proscriptions that have demanded we position ourselves as superior to and therefore separate from other-than-humans, and equally, other humans.

Accordingly, the methodological research landscape of the project winds, like Goanna's walking, between versions of storied landscapes. On one side, the left, the yarning with seven Dharug Aboriginal women's voices became the Country of enquiry expressing Country-as-Dharug Aboriginal-storied-landscape. This place is characterised predominantly by other-than-written forms. On the other side, the right, are the narratives on Dharug Country from other humans' voices: the historians, the theorists, archaeologists, archivists, media and museums, as some examples. This latter landscape is principally found in the written form.

However, perhaps it is the trails from the Ancestors, the whispers of the she-oaks, the thump of the surf, the cracks in the sandstone bluffs, or the silences between the events, that will have the most memorable voices of all and are the bindings, like Goanna's stripe and circle markings on her skin, and that are most present. As Attwood (1996b) reminds us, quoting W.E.H Stanner's 1968 expression, 'the great Australian silence', such a silence has

created a cacophony of debate around the role of historians and anthropologists in the 'cult of forgetfulness' (Stanner, 1969), so silence-as-presence also becomes voiced.

Like any goanna, the direction of the journey is determined by the smells, the tastes, the sounds, the heat and the cold. This thesis, therefore, as Goanna walking, weaves through these voiced and voiceless places, creating a narrative of its own, a basket of interwoven knowledges, one reflecting a multi-species consciousness which, I propose, opens our thinking to cross-disciplinary approaches within the academy. It allows for existential interconnectedness through Bellbird's ancestral poetics, and her presences-in-place, which themselves weave between the women's stories. By so doing, materiality is re-positioned, not as a singularity but as *one within* multiplicities and as another strand in the knowledge weavings that humans have available. Such repositioning makes us more accessible to being *only one of a multitude* of interconnected species within an interconnected world. This is critical for responding to the destruction of the places and entities on which we ultimately rely, exemplified particularly by climate change. Human place as *only one within* reflects a First Peoples way of knowing that has been formulated and practiced over more than 65,000 years before today's Anthropocene era. As is suggested by the IUCN, recognition of this

... is vitally important as humans now dominate the planet and consume or degrade a disproportionate proportion of ecosystem services from both the land and oceans. This explosion of the human population and use of the planet's natural resources have led many to describe the current period as the Anthropocene. In particular, specific human actions and choices in industrial and industrializing societies have promoted a "culture of consumerism", favouring land use practices that undermine ecological resilience and are driving both global climate change and dramatic ecosystem changes (Nature), 2018. Accessed: 11.02.2018).

As such, this project aims to contest colonising and recolonising discourses and epistemologies impacting Dharug Country and community and in so doing put out a call for local social justice. It also recognises Country as an

active multi-species participant, interconnected across vast distances of time and space, functioning as a call for environmental justices.

Mitchell et al. (2016a, 2017) call for us to invert and disrupt the agendas of the dominant voices enacting hierarchies of power that are dis-Integrating people, places and multi-species across the planet, through her term 'lifework'. Our Dharug Country and our Dharug women are also teaching us that by weaving the strands of working for Country, community and family, through values of belonging, caring and connecting, we become 'lifeworkings' in a way that benefits all sentient beings sustainably. Further, it is the practice of such values through the relationships with presences, both human and other-than-human on Country, that creates the cycle of sustainable wellbeing that underpins a 'lifeworking'. Accordingly, we must move from disruptions and disturbances across Country to places of re-viewing and re-visions to further understand these relational spaces of Dharug women on Dharug Country. Such a pathway moves from places of dis-Integration to places of becoming lifeworkings.



2.1.5 Walking towards Lifeworkings rather than Dis-Integrations – the Why, What, How?

While Mitchell et al. (2016a, 2017) propose the concept 'lifework' in response to the quest for a work-life balance in the human sphere, the call in this thesis both recognises relationships with all human and non-human beings and situates the term as a quest for regenerative practices that prevent ecological extinctions. It is a term that is also applicable for resolving issues around the sustainability of First Nation's peoples, their cultures and ways of being, doing and knowing. By 'lifeworking', we can bring First Nation's understandings not only into the adult work place, but into spaces involving our children – in our homes and their classrooms.

The term 'lifework' is an integration and inversion of the more usually expressed concept 'work life'. It is defined here as the recognition that our life journeys are weavings – there are no straight lines – and they involve

working not only for the human level, that is, for self, family and community, but must include lifeworking for Country as caring for the benefit of all sentient beings. As such it moves us away from the fragmented human-centric ways in which we view 'work' and 'life' as separated concepts, where work is often negatively positioned as forced labour (in some shape or other), and life as, generally speaking, everything else in all its various 'bits'. As Mitchell et al. (September 2016a) explain, 'life work' involves an attitude that is values-based and includes being 'respectful, reflective, creative, communicative, and working care-fully in a collaborative manner with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and creatures'.

From an Indigenous standpoint, so-called 'inanimate' and spiritual entities such as Country and Ancestors also have agency, and so need to be included in any theory wishing to disrupt dominating human-centric knowledge hierarchies. By focusing on lifework as a weaving, where our lives and work interconnect and shape each other, I suggest we can disrupt and obstruct fragmenting processes that have been set in play through western epistemological hegemonies and colonisation mechanisms. I call these 'dis-Integration' processes.

By dis-Integrate, I mean they un-weave, strand, separate or fragment across all levels: social, community, family and even within the individual self.

Mitchell's (September 2016a) account of her own experiences of work-life pressures illustrate well this place of dis-Integration, where:

... staying afloat meant producing large numbers of quantifiable, ranked outputs and generating constant flows of grant money (or at least applications). Achievements were not experienced so much as measured, assessed and compiled, calculated into averages and translated into floating numerical indicators of 'excellence'... The grating anxiety of quantification formed a thick callous, separating me from my work. I entered a kind of dissociative state in which the work I was doing passed through me without making much of an impression.... the culture of constant anxiety, strain, workaholism and wildly inflating expectations is the norm in neo-liberal universities.

She analyses this experience as producing what she calls ‘a kind of dissociative state’, which I would call a place along the journey towards dis-Integration and recognises that the acclaimed ‘work/life balance’ resolution, spun by workplaces as solution to the dilemma is, in reality, an ideological fabrication.

... ‘work/life balance’ is a tool of neoliberal resilience – it encourages small periods of rest in order to sustain high levels of productivity. More than this, it installs a dichotomy between work and life that is harmful to both. It is not simply that ‘work/life’ balance frames ‘life’ as fragments of excess or waste – what is left over after work (if that ‘after’ ever arrives). Just as alarming is the fact that work is opposed to life – it becomes lifeless.

It is this recognition of modernity as a continuous knowledges system of interrelated productions and processes sourced in rationalistic fragmentations that separate life into spaces of ‘work’ and ‘left-overs’. For the sake of mass production underpinned by consumerism, we are stuck at this societal place of dis-Integration and a sense of disjuncture: an ‘Un-Arrivals Lounge’. Our cultural re-producers in the form of media and education systems fertilise the spread of values of disconnection, consumerism and competition, rather than collectivism.

It could be argued, for the sake of sustaining the planet in the era of the Anthropocene, that these goals are critical in a much broader context as well. Additionally, recognising lifeworking as ‘weaving’ can achieve the goals of resilience, renewal and revitalisation for Indigenous peoples. ‘Weaving’ is specifically meant within the context of attitudes that enable lives to be lived as values-based daily practices that enhance our consciousness of working for the benefit of all sentient beings. Through the process of undertaking this doctoral thesis, I have come to recognise that our seven Dharug women are living their lives as ‘lifeworkings’; lives that weave paid work into cultural practice, family and community relationships along with caring for Country. By so doing, they are subverting the dis-Integrations of modernity, by fostering values that strengthen the collective as the underpinning for strengthening the individual. Those values involve respect

for belonging, caring and connecting, through places, presences and practices (See Fig. 51 – Dharug Nura Web).

Nakata (2007, pp. 191-192) notes that academia has enacted processes disembodiment, disparaging and dislocating knowledges from their 'knowers', causing

disintegrations and transformations [to] occur when it is redistributed across Western categories of classification, when it is managed in databases via technologies that have been developed in ways that suit the hierarchies, linearity, abstraction and objectification of Western knowledge – all of which are the antithesis of Indigenous Knowledge traditions and technologies'.

Such an antithesis I argue leads to dis-Integrated natures.

2.1.5.1 Dis-Integrating Natures

Overpopulation has dis-Integrated systems intricately woven and revolving around localised natural life rhythms in balance across millennia. As Dharug Nura becomes ever more (sub)urbanised, Dharug practices and storytelling, revolving around seasons, bush flowerings, marine and animal behaviours and ceremonial activities, have been particularly damaged through land ownership restrictions, practices and values, rather than collective belonging and caring for Country. Such belonging and caring involves collective ecologies of human-other-than-human interrelationships. They involve roles and responsibilities, across all levels of family, clans and communities and include passing on knowledges related to place, seasons and relevant species.

Instead, dis-Integrating behaviours have become entrenched, and systematic, mirroring and reinforcing separations and fragmentations have been fostered through modernity, for example, by land title rights (signalled through fencing), contemporary housing and punitive institutions (jail cells).

From a psychological perspective, according to Vandenberghe (2014),

... beneath the confident, manic façade of modern cultures lurks fear of death masquerading as death denial. Ecological narcissism co-arises with this fear as the offspring of human belief in separation from nature... [and] ... that ecological narcissism and death denial support us in perceiving non-human created environments as a collection of objects devoid of the sentience and subjectivity credited to humans. Such a perceptual orientation is interested in the answer to only one question: Do these objects (which might include elephants, oaks, and oceans) help further human life? If so, we feel free to use them, and if not, we feel free to destroy them.

Dis-Integrating human-other-than-human connectivity undermines human wellbeing, as places of significance are annihilated. According to Rose (2005, p. 295) human beings need to be situated within Indigenous philosophical ecology and 'that within this ecology, concepts of the place and task of humans undermine the singularities of mainstream western paradigms'. Later discussions around the role of death within Nura as continuity rather than misapprehended endings and separations address this in more detail (Ch. 13).

2.1.5.2 Reviewing the Australian Places of Dis-Integration

Current statistics show that Aboriginal people live against a backdrop of increasing incarceration rates of our young people, both men and women (Weatherburn & Holmes, 2017). As well, we live with the reality that more children are being removed from their communities and families than occurred during the 'Stolen Generations'. According to Aboriginal activist group *Grandmothers against Removal*:

On June 30, 1997, there were 2,785 Aboriginal kids in "out of home care". Now there are more than 15,000. The majority of these kids have not been placed with their Aboriginal families; and relatives are routinely denied 'kinship carer' status without justification.
("Grandmothers Against Removal," 2016)

It is critical, therefore, that we seek means to reweave the holes in lives that are caused by a loss of connection to values that have underpinned our Aboriginal peoples for 65,000 years and more. Getting lifeworkings demands that attention be paid to approaches that have not been

recognised before. Top-down approaches by governments have not worked. So, we must find ways that do work and are grounded in community, its ways of knowing, doing and being. I suggest understanding our lives as woven, as 'lifeworkings', and living within these values-based approaches strengthens Country, community, family and self.

Having outlined how we reached this place of dis-Integration, the question arises: how can we overcome these processes and find ways for reweaving our sense of connectedness? How can we re-vision, re-cognise, a way forward?

I propose that bringing other-than-humans into academia, to draw research into Dharug Nura ways, can weave the strands of connection. For this project such a weaving involves recognising Goanna as researcher-companion and contributes a significant part to expanding understandings of research methodology.



As we now explore the landscape that Goanna walks, between the practicalities and housekeeping places of invitations, questionnaires, timetables and ethics and the more exotic places of knowings, storying and 'butterflies', we can be inspired and refreshed by the Waradah/Waratah (Figs. 7, 28 and 63), standing strong and magnificent against the backdrop of past bushfires. She stands as our Dharug women's symbol of resistance, resilience and renewal. As such she is an example of lifeworking.



Fig. 7: Waradah – Women’s symbol of Resistance, Resilience and Renewal – set against the burnt-out bushland, she is renewed from the destruction.

Image: J. Rey



They speak of the Phoenix
Rising from the ashes of life,
but you, oh Waradah,
Shine, more beautiful and alive.

Your colours stand sentinel,
Luminous against the death and dismay,
Of Country, broken and burdened,
Struck mute and silent in the day.

All life rendered asunder,
Flaming furnace of the wildfire consumed,
Into the ashes for grounding the future,
New cycles of growth resumed.

They speak of the Phoenix
Rising from the ashes of life,
but you, oh Waradah,
Shine, way more beautifully and alive

Bellbird



CHAPTER 3: Ways of Doing: Practicalities, Goanna Walking and Mapping the Landscape.



Fig. 8: Rosenberg Goanna, Durramattagal Country, January 2017. Image: J. Rey.



3.0 Wandering with Goanna

Having acknowledged the place of this thesis-basket within Dharug Nura's storied-scape, acknowledged its standpoint, introduced the outlooks, determined the tools for the journey and recognised the landscape as potholed with disruptions, dis-junctures and dis-Integrations, yet yearning for some lifeworkings, it is now necessary to look at what materials were pertinent to our weaving and why they were used.

First, this chapter gives the earliest thinking in relation to the project then covers the practicalities of undertaking the project – the methods. Second, it interprets the process of that undertaking. The process involves finding the women, discussing the broad parameters of the project's shape, describing how the project evolved and listing the insights from that experience. This process involves recognising 'Goanna walking' as the methodological trail covered in the research journey. Doing so centres

other-than-humans within the research process and opens research methodologies to Country. As a side-effect, it decomposes western ecological narcissism and death denials (Vandenberghe, 2014), instead embracing relational entanglements across the species, Ancestors and spaces that weave ecological existences.



3.1 Openings

The earliest conceptions for this doctoral candidature arose with the discovery of a Dharug heritage in 2008 and the completion of a Masters' degree in international education, during which some candidates were teaching and living in remote Aboriginal communities. Bringing these two aspects of my life together was a radical contextualisation that was intriguing. It led to working on a literacy and numeracy program in Groote Eylandt, Northern Territory and Palm Island, Queensland. When that participation ended, I determined to link with Dharug community, and over the course of a year or more I got to know several community members. During one community meeting I met Neil Harrison and spoke to him about undertaking a doctorate.



3.1.1 Proposing interesting pathways

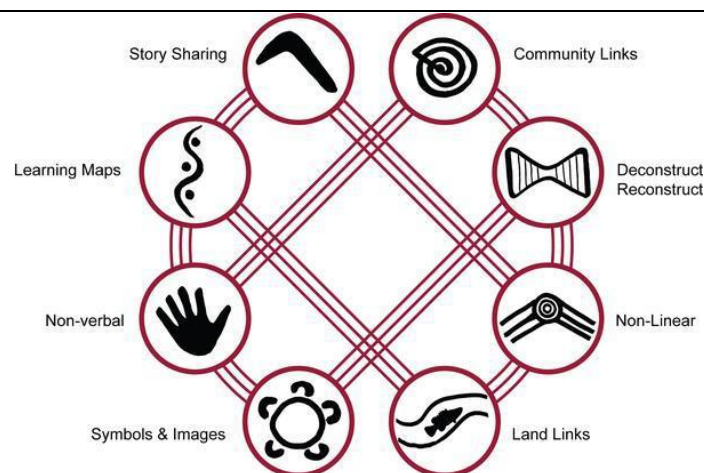


Fig. 9: Yunkaporta & Tyson (2011). 8 ways framework. Accessed from: <http://8ways.wikispaces.com/home>
Retrieved: 08.09.14.

My earliest investigations into the education literature led to the '8Ways framework' (Fig. 9 above) that Yunkaporta and Tyson (2011) developed for working in Aboriginal educational settings. While recognising it was not actually connected to Dharug Nura, being a resource developed in rural western NSW, as a visual learning tool I found it useful as a starting point for developing a conceptual direction for the project. First, understandings of story, belonging, cultural ontology and the relationships between the women, their stories and Country, including community, seemed a good fit with my own ontological understandings centred in story. Second, storying includes colonial His-stories, cultural survival and regeneration, and therefore seemed applicable not just for deconstruction (to use Yunkaporta & Tyson's term), but also for *de-composing* the power of past narratives. Third, it involves human identities, identification and genealogical impacts. Rather than consider understanding these matters as 'reconstruction', I propose these aspects involve regenerative methods for resilience. Fourth, centring the project in Country involves place-based geographies and other-than human participants, including Ancestors and other species. As such, it aligns with Aboriginal ontological understandings, which go further than the physical notions of place. Additionally, post-modernist and post-structuralist discourses aligns with what Yunkaporta and Tyson describe as 'non-linear discursive interpretations'. Fifth and finally, recognising the variety of story-transmission options, such as art, weaving, song, and dance, resonates with the 8-ways aspects of signs, symbols and non-verbal processes. Each of these aspects has, in hindsight, become evident from the storying of the women. However, beyond its visual and conceptual messaging, the influence of the framework in the project was minimal.



3.2 Stepping Out

From the proposal for candidature some fundamental practicalities and technicalities can be traced: the pencils, paper and sound equipment, video camera, the signed permission forms, a pre-storying and post-storying

questionnaire, word-of-mouth advertising across Dharug women's networks and invitations to attend an information session.



3.2.1 Inviting the Storytellers

As a preliminary opportunity to engage community thinking about the project, an early informative gathering occurred with five women. Storytellers were invited according to relationships - those women with whom I was already connected via my Dharug experiences, particularly Kookaburra and Wagtail. These women suggested others whom they thought would be important to the project due to their position as Elder and/or knowledge-holder. The preliminary gathering alerted them to the nature of the project as a community process, involving their input into the design and what was significant for them to tell and receive. As well, the benefits of an association with Macquarie University under the umbrella of a PhD was also discussed. Outcomes were positive and future meetings planned.

Kookaburra and Wagtail had their own concerns and interests in developing opportunities for Dharug women's gatherings to take place on various significant sites on Country. The gatherings were seen as opportunities to strengthen customary practices involving 'women's business' and as an approach to reconnect with Country as a forerunner to caring for Country and sharing knowledges (see Chapter 4 for more details).

These earliest considerations and a pre-existing relationship with Blacktown Arts Centre (BAC), which was geographically central for most of the women, resulted in my introducing the project to a small gathering of Dharug women at that venue. A slide presentation outlining the aims, objectives, and benefits of individual participation underpinned the event (see Appendix H).



3.2.2 Shaping the Stories

While my early hopes that the stories' content may conform to Yunkaporta and Tyson's (2011) framework (see Fig. 9 above), there was no certainty as to what they may involve until the sessions took place. I was not aware whether any of the women were, or are, familiar with these academics' work or the *8 Ways* framework.

However, having the stories told on Dharug Country, about Dharug Country and its significance, centred the project *in* Country. I hoped some stories from previous Dharug Ancestors would be included for cultural continuity. Also, I anticipated some storying involving community might be included, and certainly considered the possibility that colonising history may become a topic. Finally, I hoped some statements of how the women may identify as Dharug would be told, and I felt that, given what I knew of the women's practices, some references to their methods, through for example, art, song, and dance would be made. However, it was left to the women to determine what, where, when these storying sessions would evolve.



3.2.3 The Women and Stars Align

Altogether seven women chose to participate, including Bellbird as researcher-participant. Importantly, there was no foretelling such a number would be attained, it 'just did'. By reaching seven 'sistas', the 'stars aligned' and our project suddenly aligned with important creation storying (see Chapter 4 for relevant details of the significance of the meta-story of the Seven Sisters and Pleiades constellations). From my perspective, this alliance could be interpreted as the project being watched over and supported by our women's Ancestors.



3.2.4 Dealing with the Details

Once the participants were known, I took the approach that my role involved giving as much voice and decision-making to participants as possible, and that included Country. I chose this because, following the Indigenous standpoint, Country is agentic, so humanist constructivist methods hinder Country's agency. As it was possible to work within a fairly broad time frame (a part-time candidature supported this), such flexibility was possible.

Early discussions and the practicalities of city life guided the decision-making. All the women had busy lives, involving either full or part-time employment, and some were single mothers. Their place of abode spread across Dharug Nura – from the east coast (Sandstone), west to the Blue Mountains (Crow, Wagtail and Bushytail Possum), south to the inner city (Kookaburra), across the suburban centre (Ringtail Possum) and the north (Bellbird). Accordingly, it meant diversity in places of connection, places of storying and places of socio-economic realities. While socio-economics were not a significant factor in the project, understanding the people-in-places and the realities of what such a large urban-scape as Sydney entailed helped to recognise that Dharug-speaking Country prior to colonisation was a significantly large territory for a relatively small number of people to manage and care for. Yet so well was it maintained that several voices from the earliest days spoke of its park-like beauty (Gammage, 2011).

From these early discussions, only two caveats were put in place by Bellbird as researcher-participant (Goanna had not yet arrived) that would influence outcomes. First, all knowledges gathered within the project would be returned to the individuals and community for the sake of benefiting the Dharug community. This meant that the women were conscious of an eventual communal audience. Thus, storying to benefit community was implied but not overtly discussed, nor did I want to control the outcomes. However, having said that, I felt that centring the sessions in-situ was important for being in accord with cultural values. This was the second caveat. It meant the storying had to be associated with place on Country and undertaken in place (weather permitting) in order to centre Country in the project.

While all researchers in Indigenous spaces must privilege Indigenous standpoints, knowings and doings, my being a community member, previously known to all the women, was critical to this research. It therefore conformed to Indigenous research requirements (K. Martin, 2003)) (see Acknowledgements in Chapter 1 for more on this approach. For ethics clearance forms, see Appendix C).

Within that loose design, topics, timetable, locations and storying/narrative/yarning approaches were determined by the women. Kookaburra provided a specific recount. Yarning (as informal discussion and sharing of stories) was the method favoured by the two possums (Ringtail and Bushytail), Sandstone, Wagtail and Crow. Various written formats were used by Bellbird, including poetry, memoir and narrative. Hybrid biographical methods were also employed. Only one storying was not told in-situ, and that was Crow's yarning, because she had a sick daughter, and the weather was very cold and raining. This was resolved by having a second session on another day. In all cases, I had only a shell of a framework to guide my questioning, as the content of what the women were going to discuss was unknown in advance (see an example of Wagtail's preliminary notes in Appendix J). This framework was mostly abandoned in favour of 'going with the flow' of what the women were talking about. This is the 'yarning' approach to sharing stories, the Aboriginal way, that has been employed for millennia, often while some creative practice is simultaneously undertaken (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010).

The stories were audio-taped, and I chose to do the transcriptions manually. I did so because the time taken to listen, type, re-listen and re-type meant the stories became deeply embedded in my memory. This iterative approach deepened the reflexivity of my engagement with these stories. Once all the stories were transcribed, I returned to the transcriptions and began the process of data analysis looking for a landscape of patterns.

It was at this point that my previous life experience came into play. As a teacher-librarian, I was totally infused with the cataloguing and classification methods of dealing with information. In library cataloguing, one begins with the format, for example, a book, a journal or a dissertation. Then the overall subject is determined, and then the particular aspects/topics, for example, the relevant time-period and/or place. It is the

18th-century, Dewey system of categorising information, in order to get it under control, so it can be accessed again.

However, in this situation, an inverse process was adopted. It involved commencing with the text, not the form; finding the topics, listing them and assigning codes for the sake of brevity. From the topics, a search for broader themes followed and that was followed by a search for the broader realm of narratives. As I proceeded, I understood I was crossing boundaries – seeking streams, rather than specificities. Along the way I realised that while I commenced the journey using boxes, classifications and categories, by inverting the process I was metaphorically removing the separations and seeking the relationships, commonalities and interconnections. Concurrently, I was moving out from qualitative theory in my reading into post-qualitative realms.

The data analysis charts in Appendix I show some of the details of this process. From the audio-taping and transcribing stage (Level 1), a further eight stages/levels of engagement with the stories took place. This process resulted in uncovering 10 main themes and three significant narratives across the seven women's stories. The narratives were of *Identity* (involving beliefs, actions/practices, feelings and values), *Connections* (involving knowledges and relationships) and *Continuity* (time-present, time-past, time-future and time-crossings). From these three narratives, the meta-narrative of *interconnectedness* evolved.

It was exactly by the process of engaging both of these two systems of knowledges and information management, that is, moving away from the humanist (18th-century Dewey model) to the post-humanist (and Indigenous) model of interconnection, that I recognised Goanna, and her 'Goanna-walking' methods became apparent as my other-than-human co-researcher and my methodological practice.

With my recognition of interconnectedness as the contextual space in which we (the participants, researcher and Goanna) were engaging, a

direction for further theoretical reflections was opened. It was from this journey that the significance of reflexivity became apparent. I recognise reflexivity as the mediations and adaptations between internal and external circumstances involving responsive action within context (Moffatt et al., 2016). Certainly, the engagement with the storying involved such a process, and the differing stages and levels of understanding were charted along the way (see Appendix I: Data Analysis Charts).

Significantly, the process of reflexivity was deeply engaged in the 'Learning Journal' that I kept. I was conscious from very early in the doctoral candidature that it could prove helpful to me if I kept track of the development of my understandings. Accordingly, the journal was commenced in December 2013, the same month as my candidature commenced. As a *learning* journal, it tracked my academic enculturation process (it is 228 pages long) until May 2017, when the thesis writing process commenced. It also tracked my responses to readings, reflections on discussions and the progress of the changes in my thinking. Given its length, I have not included it in the thesis. The last entry says:

MAY: 03.05.2017

At 4.30 in the morning it came to me: the resolution for the thesis. The 'Becomings'/Conclusion. Also, it is the message for Toronto WIPCE conference.

Further, the process of reflexivity was grounded in the listening and yarning – the practice of sharing stories together that has been undertaken for millennia – the getting down in the dirt; getting to know each other in trusted space. Hearing and sharing the contemporary and ancestral perspectives of our seven Dharug women allowed this Goanna-researcher to see the project as an opportunity for healing, strengthening and revitalisation of Country, community and individually; a practice for resilience and renewal (listening as an important practice is discussed in various locations further along the thesis journey).

Seeing our research practice through a non-human lens is, I suggest, critical to implementing the decolonising practice of ‘lifeworking’ (see Chapter 2). In this research project, it was Goanna, our monitor lizard, who became my other-than-human researcher-consciousness.

When Bushytail and I were yarning, Goanna physically joined us (see Fig. 8 above). By identifying with other-than-humans, we decompose human-centric priorities and reposition them within Country, alongside and equally respectful of others’ places, just as some of our human Ancestors, working within Aboriginal way, walked respectfully alongside the co-habitants of Country within an understanding of being as belonging and kinship across species. Working through ‘significant identifiers’ rather than English names, both in discussions with supervisors and also for me as I undertook the research, the analysis, the synthesis and the writing, always kept me conscious of living and working *within* Country, Country being a relational network of belonging and, as discussed above, co-becoming.



3.3 What is Goanna’s Way?

Goannas, known also as monitor lizards elsewhere, live across most of the Australian continent. There are 28 Australian species, some of which also live in waterways. They are carnivorous and cross large areas searching for their food sources. According to the Australian Museum:

They are aided in their search for food by their long, forked tongues which they flick in and out, picking up chemicals in the air and on the ground. Goannas then “read” these chemicals with a special organ in the roof of the mouth. (Greer, 2009 Accessed 11.02.2018)

In a research context, ‘goannas’ (as researchers) search widely across many places, using many resources, digging for their answers in all sorts of locales, and ‘reading’ their landscapes (information) for deep sensing (understanding). In the process, they are gaining an intimate knowledge, a deep understanding, of localised Country.

As I proceeded along my doctoral candidacy, I sensed the journey as one of Goanna. I have only ever had two close encounters with Goanna - once when camping up on Lake Macquarie (Central Coast, NSW) several years ago, and recently, at an Aboriginal women's workshop, when one arrived to welcome us onto her Country – Durramatta (Turramurra) (see Fig. 8). .

Goanna-researching within the project involved moving between the literatures already told in writing, the histories and descriptions of Dharug Nura, then going back to the words of the women heard and engaged, as they told their stories. These could be yarning about their connections to place, whether that be a particular rock shelter, a churchyard with unmarked graves, a beach or a river valley or something else entirely. Then reflecting on and recognising the connections to places and people through the women's visual, sung, danced or woven portrayals and then going back to the oral stories and written theories of storying, of narratives in academic journals. Then came my own contributions through what I call the poetics of place, followed by connecting the stories passed down the generations, the transgenerational testimonies of loss of language, loss of land, loss of knowledges, till we meet the silences and our other-than-human cousins call, our grandmothers and grandfathers, and we listen, and we contemplate our Dharug Nura. This is the method of Goanna walking that was undertaken in this project. There were no straight lines in this Country, it was all weaving and existential interconnecting, existential in that my life was transformed in the process of the doing, my being opened to the influences of the stories and the places on Country and my path changed direction forever. As we shared our perspectives, stories and times, we co-became through the experience.

I am suggesting that seeing this research method through the non-human lens of Goanna within Country refocuses our efforts to see our place as belonging and becoming within the process and within Country. Translating both knowledge process and production through more-than-human recognition fosters co-becoming with the participants, including our other-

than-human partners (2015; Bawaka Country including Burarrwanga et al., 2014).

It is a method that understands the process of collecting, researching and analysing – walking between academia and Indigenous knowledges. I am suggesting that there is a third way, which de-centres humanist, human-centric myopia, so that we can live with a deeper sense of belonging. It is a weaving that entails walking like Goanna, a method of approaching questions, life and Country in a sustainable way. It is a way that positions Country as a participant in the meta-story in which we all participate.

I begin by recognising how Goanna engages with the world. Firstly, goannas sense and read their context using eyes, ears and forked tongue; they ‘read’ and interpret their landscape, the chemicals translated for their understanding by the gland in their mouths. For me, I was ‘reading’ (hearing, questioning, yarning, and transcribing) our seven Dharug women’s perspectives and stories, their landscape on Country.



3.3.1 Testing and Tasting with Tongue while Listening with the Ears

In terms of the *Country Tracking Voices* project, the story collection involved yarning (sharing stories), listening and observing in an interwoven process. Listening is critical and under employed in many learning situations. In today’s pedagogy, we rely much more on visual communication, and teachers want children to be questioning. However, following Indigenous community ways, teaching knowledge and Law (spiritual and cultural training based on Ancestral Beings’ rules for sustainable living) is done in the natural environment. Waiting and listening are critical. For example, when we are walking through long grass: waiting patiently, listening for the animals and insects in the grass combined with sharp attention to details, seeing where the birds are gathering or landing and using already existing knowledge to contextualise the information, such as knowledge of the seasons, knowing that when the wattle is blooming

that the mullet (fish) along the coast are running. These are all representative of intimate, localised deep understanding.

In the city, you could very loosely liken it to knowing when peak hour traffic in your area *really* starts, as opposed to 'official' start times, and which roads are the quickest way to your destination, and which are full of traffic lights. It is this intimate local knowledge that keeps us functioning in the city traffic, and it is intimate local knowledges and caring for Country that continue to sustain people and other-than-humans in the pockets of non-urbanised spaces remaining.

Bringing listening, reflecting and contextualisation together across time (as experiences) creates a reflexivity that can be healing (Davis, 2015, n.p.). In Dharug Country listening as part of the yarning experience continues as an imperative for transmission of knowledges.



3.3.2 Telling as Yarning to the Listener

When two-way communication is happening, people use the term 'yarning' when they want to talk with someone, especially for telling and sharing stories. In *Country Tracking Voices* yarning was the most commonly used method for the women to tell their stories, and they were recorded as they yarned. First, yarning is wonderful for assisting the women to feel comfortable. It is not formal and gives opportunity for the storying to have a freedom that controlled environments prohibit. Yarning removes the 'fences' from the storying landscape. This then is the predominate way in which the women were happy to work.

Bessarab & Ng'Andu (2010) highlight the benefits of yarning not only within their own community contexts but also more broadly as an important communication strategy. Others, such as Connelly and Clandinin (1990), focus on the significance of narrative (storying) as a method for deeper understanding. In remote northern Australia, Bawaka Country et al. (2010; 2014; 2015; 2013) employ and illustrate the effectiveness of yarning for

inclusivity. *Country Tracking Voices* demonstrates its transferability and effectiveness within the urbanised Dharug Nura context.



3.3.3 Right-Way Stepping: Constructivist ways of Knowing

In order to understand and explain the difference in approaches to knowledges and knowledge transmission, I relied significantly on the work of Plumwood (1993) who succinctly articulates the intellectual legacy from at least the time of the Greeks and therefore presents the process and production of knowledges that the western academy represents. The Dewey cataloguing system is a major example. This legacy I have positioned as Right-way Goanna steps, as it is the dominant constructions that still play out today. Right-way is not to suggest that this type of thinking is ‘correct’, though many would suggest it is the *only* way to approach knowledge, for gaining ‘certainty’, through the scientific, evidence-based, rationalist and constructivist lens. Nakata (2007, p. 30) speaks to this when analysing scientists’ depictions of Islanders and the limitations and consequences of such constructivist approaches, when the ‘object’ is a human ‘other’.

Scientific research is embedded in mental abstractions, hypothetical constructs and illusions concerning the natural world. It is both imbued with personal bias and riddled with unacknowledged and unrecognised subjectivities. What scientists ‘know’ or ‘investigate’, and what they consequently ‘understand’ about the objects of their study, is built up using the ideas, images and shapes they have recorded within their emerging disciplines. What they have learned and validated provides a limit to their personal perceptions and the questions they pose for themselves, which in turn restricts their ability to develop abstractions and construct hypotheses about their objects of study which remain alien to their comprehension.

Law (2004) addresses this point in his exposure of the ‘hinterlands’ that reside behind scientific methods. It is in the dominating ‘right-way’ constructions that so much anguish for other-than-white communities has taken place. Rather, positioning it as ‘right-way’ also recognises the irony underpinning the domination through colonisation processes and the

consequential impacts on Indigenous spaces, as expressed particularly through the 'brick walls' (Blair, 2015) of the academy.



3.3.4 Left-Way Stepping: Weaving ways of Knowing

Many researchers are working within and through Indigenous realms, approaches and perspectives. Additionally, post-qualitative scholars have significantly impacted my understandings within the project, enabling me to translate in some ways between the non-Indigenous and Indigenous perspectives. Barad (2010) has been particularly helpful in that she has crossed the world of physics with theatre, history and philosophy, and in the process articulated what she talks about as our 'hauntological connections'. Young (1976, p. 46) uses the term 'monads' as the 'ghosts' that carry the 'spark of life' behind the physics. In the process, both lay waste to the certainties around lineal time and bring an opening into understanding other-than-lineal time conceptions.

To this extent, Young's (1976) early work anticipates later physics, post-qualitative and particularly post-humanist scholars. At the same time, their radical contextualisation (Barad's across diverse disciplines and Young's across science and ancient stories (mythologies)) acts like Goanna's lines and circles across her skin. They bring the left and right together. They bring a texture and visual, almost visceral, quality that forms a fabric of weavings into the possibilities for creating knowledges and contextual understandings (see Fig. 8). In terms of the project, as Goanna-researcher, those lines and circles represent my own place within the research, my individual signature and interpretation, based on my own lenses and stories from the past, my own understandings through experiences in my own life journey. Just as an individual has a unique fingerprint, goannas have unique markings.

From these points and places of difference, as well as Goanna's markings and weavings of connection, we come to Goanna's trailing tail/tale in the

sand, her lifeworkings and mapping for others to read (see Fig. 6). It is only when we bring all these ways together that Goanna's movement can be possible, and through it, growth as understanding and new knowledge-creation can take place. As can be seen, learning Goanna way is an integrated, holistic approach. Below is one depiction of the trailing tail/tale in the sand for this Goanna-walking research.



3.3.5 Country Tracking Voices: A trailing tail-tale in Dharug Nura

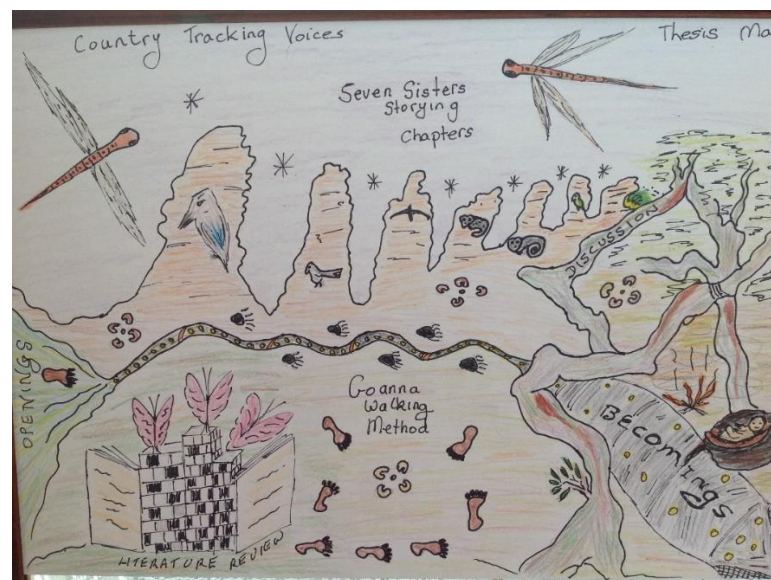


Fig. 10: *Country Tracking Voices* Thesis Map: J. Rey

Following Blair's (2015) mind-mapping approach, when it came time to write the thesis for *Country Tracking Voices*, it felt appropriate to map it in a way that illustrated the methodological underpinnings: as a journey of 'Goanna walking', an interplay between right-way steps through the 'brick walls' (Blair, 2015) of the academy, and left-way steps of the women's knowledges; from the openings to the becomings (see Figure 10 above).

From hearing our Dharug women telling their stories, together yarning about their connections to place, then moving to discussions with supervisors, hearing their perspectives and reading in journals (gathering

the ‘butterflies’ of inspiration), a crossing-boundaries process was undertaken.

Additionally, like humans have a unique fingerprint, goannas have unique stripes and circles on their skin. It could be said, that the reflexivity engaged throughout the candidature, created this Goanna’s unique knowledge patterns, as the processes of hearing, talking, reading, remembering and drawing on Bellbird’s own life experiences, created the individual ‘stripes and circles’ for her. This enabled the production of knowledges even as the place of reflexive writing became entwined.

Later, more yarning and gathering the women’s supporting thoughts, and practices wove the fabric of learning more closely – photos, music, songs, and poetry; touching the possum skin fur lining the coolamon (carrier); holding the baby; dancing the steps in our female Ancestors’ Gadigal Country, Barangaroo; feeling the rhythm of the clap sticks vibrating along my arms; smelling the eucalyptus smoke from the ceremonies, and feeling it enter my nostrils, throat and lungs. This was not a recursive cycle, but a helical spiral of dynamic reflexivity driven by caring (as empathy) and belonging.

From the fires under the Mother Trees, the new ‘babies’ become – the new understandings from the experiences in-situ, the thinking through the different ways of storying, the questions about whose voice counts, and where should the openings be, in what place do this thesis, this trailing tail-tale and this researcher sit? In fact, how is the writing impacting the thinking, the placement, and who is the baby under the Mother Tree, and who, and how, is she becoming? This is what ‘Goanna walking’ does; it brings us to a deep sense that place and Country are agentic influences enabling lifeworkings, and all the multi-species are co-becomings (Bawaka Country et al., 2015). This is Country’s teaching through Goanna, and the telling and writing of this doctoral project and its story. All the time, our

Ancestors, depicted once again as Dragonflies, watch over us and this project-Country.

Later, back at my own place, writing through what I call the poetics of place-ings – those living continuities within us, drawn from being poetically entwined places, creativity through reflexivity springs to life. Poetry sits as an entwining place, because it allows room for the atmospherics or emotions raised in response to the wind in the she-oaks – our Casuarinas – and hugging the womanly forms of the Angophoras ... learning the storying behind the sarsaparilla leaves – the smilax glysaphillia – how it is still used for tea-making and drinking its acrid flavour, just as it was by first settlers, who learnt from our Ancestors ... and connecting the stories passed down the generations – the transgenerational testimonies of loss of language, when Ringtail's grandfather was arrested for speaking language; loss of land and access to food sources, desecration of places for sand mining, loss of knowledges: where thousands of archaeological sites remain, but the stories behind them, of our female Dharug Ancestors, birthing at designated sites, washing the baby in her own rock pool, engaging in ceremony, while looking across the timeless scapes of ocean and land, under the stars, besides the fires - these have largely been wiped out. And what, in contrast, when I think of my colonised Ancestor Ann, born on Garigal Country (today's Mona Vale – see Fig. 40), when only convict runaways and a few isolated settlers, were present as signposts to a changing future for our Garigal community. Sometimes the silences speak more loudly, and the listening to the other-than-humans can be used for healing, and contemplation of and within Dharug Nura. It is the weaving in the sands of time, the footsteps of people who have always walked across Country knowing it intimately. This is deep encountering and deep learning, which in turn transforms us to hear and feel beyond the call of modernity – the calls of globalisation, capitalism, the media-scapes and fashions. Such deep encountering resonates with Plumwood's (1993) call for 'attentive presence' for ecological sustainability. It is not that one can do without the

other. It is a consciousness and a sense of priorities and a sense of balance, working for all beings' sustainability. A sense of belonging and caring, a place of time/telling. I suggest this time/telling place as Dharug Nura in this thesis has arrived.



'Loss becomes condition and necessity for a certain sense of community, where community does not overcome the loss, where community cannot overcome the loss without losing the very sense of itself as community. And if we say this ... truth about the place where belonging is possible, then pathos is not negated, but it turns out to be oddly fecund, paradoxically productive' (See Afterword by Judith Butler in Eng & Kazanjian, 2003, p. 468).

'Vulnerability is the basis of sociality, the basis of community. If we were immortal and capable of being entirely sustainable individuals, there would be no need for society or culture. It is our very ability to be wounded, our very dependency, that brings us together.' (Stanescu, 2012, pp. 577-578).



CHAPTER 4: An Interlude, Introducing Seven Sista's Yarnings - Seven Lifeworkings

A meta-story:

The Dreaming story of the Seven Sisters, as formed in the star cluster known as the Pleiades, is distributed across the continent of Australia as a songline. Each community has its own variation to the story. Together they make a line of storying that crosses the continent – a woven lineage of connection, that extends beyond the continent. Outside Australia, stories of the Pleiades are found across Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, Africa, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and Europe. As such, all peoples are woven together in a storied-fabric of connection through the stars, a cosmological connection beyond lineal and temporal perceptions.

On Dharug Nura, Pleiades can be difficult to see because of the city lights. In the warmer months, they are low in the northern sky of an evening, if somewhat faint. In cooler times, it is possible to see them in the very early morning.

Most of the storying in Australia involves seven sisters being chased by a man (Orion, Venus or the Moon) who is either unwanted or unlawfully (wrong skin group) approaching them. For more information see:

www.hass-sa.asn.au/files/4414/.../Astronomy_and_Australian_Indigenous_peoples.do ...

We will hear more within this Dharug basket of knowledges as our Seven Sisters storying is found in the Earth of our Dharug Nura.



'At the beginning of a journey, when you are about to cover strange territory, you are always ignorant, and you have to rely on the local guides. They are the ones who know the safe tracks as well as the places of danger. ... Paddy Roe has an expression for the production of this culture: "We must make these things *move*." ... Singular authority and overarching general theory will be abandoned in favour of local and strategic movements, where one person's story ends the other one takes off.' (Benterrak, Muecke, Roe, & Keogh, 2014, pp. 30-31)

We have arrived at a place in this thesis-Goanna journey where some guidance is required. It is the place where we hear the seven Dharug women's views and perspectives which tell us about their ways of resilience and renewal. I suggest they use these for healing, strengthening and resistance to the dis-Integrating practices of modernity and continuing re-colonisation. Where earlier statements about the seven sistas has been brief, through these next chapters we gain a much deeper insight into their ways of knowing, doing and being. Each chapter commences with biographical outlines provided by the women according to their perceived priorities. This brings their ownership into the thesis production and conforms to ethical requirements.



4.1 Introducing Our Seven Sistas

To refresh, we have Kookaburra, Wagtail, Crow, Ringtail Possum, Bushytail Possum, Sandstone and Bellbird (as researcher-participant) and we all belong to Dharug-speaking Country. In terms of lifework, all the women are educators in some form or another, both within and outside of community. It is through educating others and themselves that they are simultaneously caring for Country, community and their families. Sandstone is a local Aboriginal Heritage Officer; Wagtail is a visual artist and school teacher; Ringtail possum is a cultural consultant; Bushytail possum is a primary school teacher and bricolage worker; Kookaburra works in child welfare and puppetry; Bellbird teaches, writes and researches; Crow is a singer/songwriter and produces educational materials in Dharug language.

All seven women work for community, family and for themselves, and as such are 'lifeworkers'. They integrate home, work and community into a web of Dharug connections. They weave psychological, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical aspects to direct their energies into caring for Country, family and community. As a result, they enhance their relationships and own lives in a weaving that strengthens their sense of

belonging to Country, community and family. Individually, they become, through belonging, more resilient; community is strengthened; culture is continued and Country is sustained. It is an interwoven web of be-ing and be-coming. Together it is a 'co-becoming' (Bawaka Country et al., 2015).

As Kookaburra says in relation to a dream she had that helped her resolve a work problem:

Whenever I feel uncertain or whatever, I always come back to this grounding: I belong to this place, I am of this place, and I also believe very strongly, and I've used this when being challenged about Dharug and stuff: I am on the Country of my Ancestors and I have obligation to my Ancestors, and it always goes back to that dream, the Ancestors' spirits were with me, they showed me, they affirmed me and strengthened me, so that's, you know, that's out of that dream...

... Actually, now I think about it and storytelling...now I think back and only now I make this connection, that has become my life's work: that was the beginning of my life's work 30 years ago.



4.2 Some guidelines for crossing our Seven Sistas' Country

Words of belonging, caring and connection are reflected across all the women's stories through their individual interpretations and lived experiences. In terms of themes, each woman has her own priorities. However, how the women talk to the importance of belonging, caring and connections can be seen through each woman's personalised practices of engagement with presences, places and people.

For the written thesis, privileging these aspects in each woman's storying was necessary. However, the writing is still

... nomadic ... as an intellectual space made through the essentially nomadic practice of moving from one set of ideas or images towards another set progressively picked up on the way...one word after the other like footsteps: lively spoken words (Benterrak et al., 2014, p. 31).

Such ‘nomadism’ I call Goanna walking. As part of this ‘nomadism’, I have chosen to bring a ‘third dimension’ as a sense of texture (Benterrak et al., 2014) to this storied section, by using symbols as shown at the beginning of each woman’s segment (See Table 1). I have done this to emphasise the complexity and variety of voices interwoven through these chapters of the thesis, to draw attention to the weaving of this knowledge-basket, including the voice of Country when she participates. These include recognising the various roles undertaken within this process: writer, narrator and interviewer, as well as Bellbird-as-participant. Unlike the other women’s stories, Bellbird’s contributions are interwoven as seven ‘Pleiadean Presences’ after each women’s chapter. Together these presences create a hybrid narrative, a ‘third space’ - one that Goanna-walks between the other six women’s stories (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). They represent places of significance retracing aspects of the lives of the seven generations of women from Bellbird’s childhood place out to Fanny in the 18th century – storied places of belonging. A short final segment from Bellbird, exploring the place of learning through possum-skin work, maintains the ‘thematic sculpture.’ It might be useful to refer to the thesis map (Fig. 10 in Chapter 3) to help us recognise the sculpture of these chapters as a topography of Goanna’s journey, with the seven women’s stories as the pinnacles on the map (seven pillars of wisdom, perhaps), and the seven generations of Bellbird’s belonging as the Pleiadean stars (presences), pictured in between. Later, in Fig. 50 (Chapter 11), this map will be transcribed onto possum skin.

As Benterrak et al. (2014, p. 29) note:

The texture of writing is the material force. By ‘texture’ I mean, quite literally, the way the text is woven – in the same way as one says the texture of a fabric ... Texts are woven – with different colours, if you like – different voices mingling, allusions to someone else’s words, citations, different points of view.

Finally, I recognise the pluralities underpinning the meaning of ‘caring for Country’. I make room for the broadest conceptualisations, understanding that while walking on Country physically and nurturing the biological

aspects of Country is, arguably, the narrowest sense of the term. More broadly, caring can also be understood as sharing stories about Country, teaching others about Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing in a variety of ways, and engaging with Country through the continuation of skills practiced for millennia by our Ancestors. Just as the Ngarrindjeri women of southern Australia have shown, caring for Country, and caring *as* Country, can include the philosophy of 'Speaking as Country' (Bignall et al., 2016). Accordingly, it can be said that the thesis is now entering 'Yarning Country', interwoven perspectives of text and context, reflections and responses together producing our place of learning, practising, caring and belonging. We commence with Kookaburra on Wangal Country, in the inner-city suburb of Rozelle, where she resides in what once was a narrow factory-worker's terrace from the 19th century, packed in beside other renovated worker's terraces, edging the narrow laneways that still, through their proximity to each other, carry a sense of historic and contemporary storytelling of community, local pubs and nearby factories, now rebirthed sometimes as artist workshops and galleries. As I knock on the door, the dog barks, and a kookaburra laughs from its nearby electricity pole-perch.



CHAPTER 5: Kookaburra's Dreaming – a Place of being Strong, Smart and Deadly



Fig. 11: Kookaburra. Sketch: J. Rey, 2018

Who is Kookaburra? (23.04.1953 – 20.01.2016)

CULTURAL WARNING: Some text and images are included of our beloved Aunty who passed suddenly during the project. As she is always with us, her storying is provided in present tense.

Kookaburra is renowned for her fantastic laugh, strong beak and very sharp eyes.

On Dharug Country, our Kookaburra's childhood and youth was mainly spent in the western suburbs of Sydney at Harris Park and Windsor. She attended Riverstone High, enjoyed her tennis and lives on Wangal Country, in the area currently called Rozelle, in the inner west of Sydney. Her Ancestor, Bolongaia (Maria Lock), daughter of Yarramundi of the Boorooberongal people of the Richmond area, was promised to

Bennelong's and Barangaroo's son, Dickie. Bennelong was Wangal, and Barangaroo was Gadigal. Kookaburra thus has deep storied connections to Wangal Country and her Yarramundi Kids puppet troupe express strong values, smart strategies and deadly (Aboriginal English for effective) actions as the fundamental messaging being taught, and as a way to counter colonisation (see Appendix E: Supportive Websites – Maria Lock).






Kookaburra's professional career started in child welfare and she developed an educational puppetry program for children that was recognised and applauded around Australia, New Zealand and Ireland through both her Jannawi puppets and her Dharug troupe, The Yarramundi Kids (YK), named after her Ancestor. In more recent times, her puppet Bolongaia, as daughter of Yarramundi, became an ancestral voice for telling stories to all ages and is also involved in this storying.

Yarramundi Kids has been produced for National Indigenous Television (NITV) in Australia and on the internet by Gracie Productions.

(See Appendix E: Supporting Websites for a tribute to our beloved Aunty.)



TABLE 1: SYMBOLS REPRESENTING VOICES WITHIN THE THESIS

SYMBOL	VOICE
	Country
	Scholars, poets, various others
	Narrator
	Interviewer
	Writer



5.1 Kookaburra's Presences: A Dreaming place

So, the story I wanted to tell, and what I was thinking about, was a long time ago, probably about nearly 30 years ago now, I was in a work situation, it was a very conflicted situation, and I was really caught up in this situation of working with a group of women and, there was one woman in particular and I won't use any names, she was very ... just creating a lot of drama for me and I felt wasn't doing the right thing by the organisation and every time I tried to deal with something with her, it somehow got twisted and I became the subject of enquiry and it was very hard to resolve anything and I tried all sorts of things at the time and I was spending a lot of time and energy on it. And at the time I was studying Gestalt therapy and part of the course that we were doing we had to have our own therapies and I was spending a lot of time in the therapy sessions, dada, dada, dada, and I was thinking why am I spending all this energy on this? Anyway, it wasn't... it got to the point I was almost thinking I can't continue to work in this situation. So, I thought, 'I know what I will do, I will ask for a dream and when I go to bed tonight, and I asked specifically for this dream that would help me resolve this issue.' And so, the fact that I'd asked for it meant that I was very curious in the morning when I woke up and I remembered this dream, obviously it was a very significant dream.

And in the dream I was taken by Aboriginal women, it was almost like I'd gone back in time, and I was one of them, and it wasn't like I was a modern woman, like a fish out of water kind of thing, I was with them and we were part of this and we were walking along this bush track and we got to an amazing, like, rock wall and you could walk around these rocks and you could have kept going, but what each of the women did is by using their body they propped against one side, to the other side, to the other side and they got up onto

this rock, and then they showed me how to do that, so, and it was really easy, once you saw them do it, but there was no way you could see you had to go in and it was like a crevice in the rock that enabled you to get up onto the top, and when we got up onto the top of the rock, it was a big flat rock and it was right on the river and there was a bend in the river and it was like the river went out wide and around and on this side there was a sandy beach and there were a whole lot of kids playing on the sand and it was like this women's ceremonial place and we were sitting there and we were talking, and in the dream the women were basically saying to me that I belong to this place, right?

So, when I woke in the morning, it was almost like... Well for me it was a huge dream, and a huge message, because this woman [the difficult colleague] was not from this Country, was from another land and it was almost like, for me the dream was, like, stay connected, believe in yourself, you belong to this place and what you are doing is honouring this place and we will show you the way, right?

So that was the dream, so it changed my whole feeling about this conflict. That the conflict no longer was having the impact on me that it had had, up until that point. It was almost like I had given my power away, the dream was, 'Take back your power, know you are on the right path, believe in yourself and do what you do.' Do you know? And it wasn't being derogatory or critical of this other person, it is almost like a philosophy for life, do you know, it's like strengthening and stay true to yourself because you are here, you ... and you belong here, and you are right. So that's the message I got from the dream, and in a way, it has kind of shaped a lot of my connection to place. I know that place exists, and I actually believe it is a very powerful women's ceremonial place, whether in real life it does... but in my mind, it does, because I was taken there. I will recognise that place because I had such a strong indication, vivid

memory of the whole lay of the land, do you know? So that is why I wanted to tell you that story because that was like 30 years ago, that's a long time ago, and whenever I feel uncertain or whatever, I always come back to this grounding: I belong to this place, I am of this place, and I also believe very strongly and I've used this when being challenged about Dharug and stuff. I am on the Country of my Ancestors and I have obligation to my Ancestors, and it always goes back to that dream, the Ancestors' spirits were with me, they showed me, they affirmed me and strengthened me, so that's, you know, that's out of that dream.




5.2 The Practice: Weaving Life, Work and Values – a ‘Lifeworking’



Kookaburra's recount illustrates the process of how self-reflection on her dream, the weaving of her beliefs, values and philosophy, prepared the psychological landscape for her to find a resolution to her problem, make the connection between her dream and her ability to move forward into the next phase of her life with the surety of belonging and having been shown by her Ancestors the spiritual place to which she would return. This was to lead her into the next phase in her career as a puppeteer. Contextualising between the two time-frames allows her to gain new insight.

If I hadn't asked for a dream, and I'd just had that dream it wouldn't have had the significance to me, but the fact I was at my wits end, I had no way of knowing, I had expended all this emotional energy, this person was just really difficult and it wasn't going away, and was creating a lot of conflict, really undermining a lot of ... I was embarking on a new thing, which involved puppetry, by the way. Actually, now I think about it and storytelling, and it was cutting across that, almost like sabotaging what I was doing, which in a way, now I think back and only now I make this connection, that has become my life's work, that was the beginning of my life's work 30 years ago.

So ... I use that information and I put it into a story and it is a story that Nakita tells, and I use [Crow's] song, the 'Wirrawee Bubulwal' song, and this is a story I made up for the puppet, but her grandmother sits her down one day, and her grandmother says to her, because she's grieving. Nakita is grieving because her mother is no longer here, loss of her mother and all of this, and her grandmother sits her down and she says to her, 'Now, Nakita I want you to go down by the river, I want you to sit down there, don't take anyone with you, go on your own, and I want you to sing that song, and I want you to see what happens.'

 Kookaburra now shifts from recount into character and performance-as-dialogue. Here, I suggest this process reflects an example of the concept of 'lifeworking', the seamless continuity between professional, personal and values/beliefs/psychological fields, where one creates a pathway in life that does not segment our existences into constructed social roles and responsibilities but enables a weaving of our inner and outer landscapes underpinned by clear understandings of our existential interconnectedness across physical and spiritual realms. The role of creativity for Kookaburra as puppeteer allows her to weave Nakita's and Gran's voices with her own dream-scape within her recount.

... and Nakita, in the telling of the story, she says: 'But where Nan, where, where at the river?' And then she goes, 'Oh, I know, I know where, that big flat rock, that special place you showed me, the big flat rock.'

And she [grandmother] goes: 'Yeah. I want you to go down there and I want you to sit on that rock, and I want you to sing that song and I want you to see what happens.'

And so what Nakita does, in the performance, is, she – there's no props, on the stage there's nothing – but she just sits, she goes walking, pretending walking and I sit down, and just as if she's

sitting as if there is nothing under her and she goes, 'And I sang that song.'

And she goes: 'Wirrawee'

And then she goes: 'And I wait, and I listen and I'm listening.'

🗨️ In this last section of dialogue, Kookaburra is moving between interviewee and explanatory mode to Nakita, recounting an event to her audience at a time in her life when she is grieving for the loss of her mum and within that recount speaking both to her grandmother and as her grandmother. Here we have Kookaburra demonstrating five layers of storying within the dialogical segment, which includes changes of voices: her own voice, Nakita's voice, Nakita playing the part of her grandmother, the grandmother's voice and the singing of 'Wirrawee'. Kookaburra transfers seamlessly between identities in the process, parading her mimetic skills through the voices of Nakita singing and Nakita miming her grandmother's voice. According to Benterrak et al. (2014, p. 66), this is a traditional marker of Aboriginal storying. 'These mimetic moments are the central point of access for the listener, the surprising moments when language is put aside and the illusion of being there is complete'.

From this point, Kookaburra switches to a completely different time frame – another recount, this time of her experience of this performance in the Parliament House, Canberra:

And when she [Nakita] tells this story, you could almost hear a pin drop. Now, I've told this story in Parliament House, Canberra, and you could've heard a pin drop with all these pollies [politicians]. But anyway, everywhere people wait, and then you hear:

'Bubulwal'.

And she goes:

'Ah, Ah. So, I sing it again. I go "Wirrawee", [pause] "Bubulwal".'

And she goes: 'My Nan knew that was going to happen, eh? My Nan knew that was going to happen because...' and then she says, 'You know who what was singing back to me? That was my mum.' Right?

🎯 The multiplicity of identities and characters that Kookaburra displays in a single paragraph of spoken text expresses not only the fluidity of personas that capture both the unreality/fallacy of any fixed notion of a unitary identity but also the speed and power of storytelling and of the teller to capture our imaginations and draw us in. Like Benterrak's (2014) assertion in relation to the power of Aboriginal storytelling, it is a mark of success for the puppeteer, when the audience accepts the illusion of Nakita as a living presence, and at the same time follows the logical cohesion of the storyline as it plays out.



Fig. 12: Aunty Kookaburra and Nakita from the Yarramundi Kids puppet troupe, with permission, 2015.

Kookaburra calls us back:

*And then she [Nakita] says ... Ah, it makes me cry when I tell this story **but** [Kookaburra's own emphasis] it's a powerful story about connection. Anyway, so she tells that story, and then she says,*

'So, I'm going to listen up more to my Nan 'cause my Nan's got heaps to teach me. And see, 'cause my Nan says we're never alone we always got the spirits of the Ancestors and those who've gone

before us, walking with us, being with us, looking out for us, making sure we're safe.'

OK, so, that story is Nakita's story where she believes in herself, so what happens is she says:

'The other day I'm at school and I'm, and I'm, we're having big tests' and she says 'and I'm shakin' and she's ghghghghg, [Kookaburra exaggerates some shaking movements as she speaks] and she says 'but I remember that song that my Nan taught me, that I sang down by the river' and she said, 'so I sing it in my head, right, 'cause you're not allowed to sing out loud in class, (laughter), you get into trouble eh' (laughter) and so I'm singing like this,' and she's moving her head, and the teacher goes "Nakita, stop movin' your head" and so the movement is really little [Kookaburra makes tiny shaking movements], so it's like that persistence and resistance, you know, and she says, 'You know what? I did real good on that test' because it helps me make...' [Kookaburra switches voice to interviewee]

and that's what she was saying, the song, 'My Nan says "you gotta know who you are, and where you're connected", 'cause that helps you be strong and know where you're goin'.'

Here again we have Kookaburra's skill on display, through a segment of text that functions on multiple levels and at multiple speeds. She's moving quickly from the serious to the comic, from the tragic unspoken, but implied, back-story of loss, or at least absence, of her mother to the light relief in Nakita's physical dramatization of her anxiety about her test, demonstrated comically for the audience through her big shaking movements. This is followed by her solution of remembering her Nan's advice and strategy of singing in her head the song she had sung and heard down at the rock ledge.


We have storyline continuity, including a demonstration of Nakita's insider status as a child through the direct dialogue with her children-as-audience,

showing her 'class-smarts' with the comment *'cause you're not allowed to sing out loud in class, you get into trouble, eh?'* Not only is she showing her connection to audience as a child, but also to the adults in the audience when they were children, and thus also to their memories of schooling. The final *'eh?'* marks the inclusivity of her approach, rather than didactics. This lightness is compounded then by the intrusion of the stereotypical controlling cranky (adult) teacher, *'Nakita, stop movin' your head'*, and Nakita's adjustment of her behaviour to tiny head jerks and the quick return to the interviewee-voice as hinterland with her own educator's intellectualisation: *'So it's like that persistence and resistance, you know?'*

The content of the message is quite profound, with the underlying question of how young children deal with such loss, yet it is presented in a light, comic manner. Kookaburra contextualised the experience of her dream and considered how she could incorporate that into her teaching through her puppetry for children to assist them through difficult circumstances.

So that's what that story, that dream, was, that message. You've gotta know who you are, how you're connected to this place, and that's what makes you strong and that helps you to do what you need to do.

So then she talks about - Nakita then says, she then helps, she talks about her little cousin who is having a problem and how 'Each One Teach One' is our [Aboriginal] way, and so, like, I was taught by those women in that dream to believe in myself, Nakita has been taught by her Nan to believe in herself, and then she helps her friend, so 'Each One Teach One'. So, it's the ripple effect of that learning about, having someone who is there for you, knowing who you are and keeping strong and where you belong and all that.


 Pedagogically, we have here a demonstration of the teaching process that has been used for thousands of years to educate countless generations of Aboriginal and other First Peoples before written text was privileged by


colonising elites and demanded to be demonstrated for evidence of 'literacy' and membership of the 'educated' club ever since.


Kookaburra shares her professional analysis through her self-reflections and slips into her adult storytelling mode, recounting various experiences and what she learnt from them:

*So, it's an interesting thing to come out of that dream, for me, but also then put it in a story, and I've had so many times when Nakita tells that story. Like I was saying to the politicians, so this was NITV - a whole group of us went down and we did different things, and all these politicians came down for this luncheon and Nakita told that story, about spiritual connection and belonging, and it was so funny what's his name ... and ... Malcolm Turnbull [Prime Minister of Australia] got up out of his seat, **out of his seat**, and came up to me and held my hand and shook my hand and said that was absolutely amazing and I felt like saying tut tut get away, [laughter] different politics group yeah, don't get too close to me... [laughter] but the other idea is that story. I do that in a school show, and I remember being up Maitland way, or up Cessnock [rural New South Wales] around there and I did the - Nakita told the story, and after the show these kids were kind of hanging around and these girls, were about 11-year-old girls, and they came up and they said 'Can you teach us that song that Nakita sang?', and I said, 'Why?' and they said, 'We want to sing it, we want to go down by the river and see what happens.' Now to me, it's the ripple effect, and I said 'Well, but you know what, that song is about being strong and walking with people and you walk with me, we walk with you,' and I said, 'Because you're from this Country you need someone from this Country to teach you those words, from this place, and then you go down to the river and sit down there and sing that song and see what happens, because if you sing in Nakita's language Dharug it may not be the same here', do you know? But the fact that they,*

they longed for that spiritual connection, they wanted that in some way, and they took the story and they were applying it to their own lives, and to me that's the power of the puppetry; the power of storytelling, is that you plant a seed, you know, and then it helps you be strong and then you 'Each One Teach One', so that's the puppet then and that has the ripple effect, and that's happened many times, kids have come up and say, 'What was that song again?'

 The story of the 11-year-old girls coming after the show to try and learn the song for themselves is evidence of the real-life effects of storying as a method. Alternative approaches, such as puppetry, creatively widen the possibilities for learning through the personal presence of the puppet as storyteller. Kookaburra recognises both the power of storytelling and the importance of contextualising it through the principal of 'Each One Teach One'.

 Later we will see how teaching through song is also taken up in Crow's storying.

 Kookaburra's story and her reflections on how she integrates it with her puppetry illustrate the richness that can be produced from integrating relationships with people, places, values, the non-material world, beliefs around belonging to Country and Community, the role of Ancestors and having a guiding philosophy. Such a weaving goes way beyond usual classroom practice and in the process draws in her audience, so that they are deeply engaged in listening and viewing the performance while responding to the messaging that reflects broad lifelong learnings. By focusing on the underpinning values of belonging and connecting and respect for Elders, Kookaburra creates through puppetry a pedagogy for developing individual resilience when the delivery weaves the spiritual, psychological and relational elements of life.

As Gottschall (2012, p. xiv) notes, the power of storying is so all-encompassing that we become what he describes as ‘the storytelling animal’. In the realm of oral storytelling he notes that in ancient times the role and function of oral storytelling was for

... binding society by reinforcing a set of common values and strengthening the ties of a common culture. Story enculturates youth. It defines the people. It tells us what is laudable and what is contemptible It is the grease and glue of society ... (Gottschall, 2012, pp. 137-138).

Kookaburra’s approach does not treat human learning as the process of cramming a container with facts. Nor is it reliant on statistics, technology, situated in bricks and mortar and costing vast sums of money. Neither is it based on transferring knowledge through writing and reading. Rather, it is an alternative methodology of personal communication, imagination, creativity and connection. It is a methodology of *observing, listening, caring, connecting and belonging* for the individual, the community and their place in a recognised interconnected Country of values, knowledge and multi-diversity: ‘*Each one, teach one*’ becomes an inclusive, not exclusive, methodology that can be employed across communities and beyond classrooms. More on the place of alternative educational methodologies can be found in the Discussion (Ch. 12).



5.3 An Educational Philosophy: ‘You don’t want to tell people what to think, you want them to make meaning out of the story’

The thing is with the puppets, they don’t only tell Aboriginal stories but children’s experience of family life and life with friendship, about friendship, the importance of friendship, ... and the phrase that I use is it is a ‘playful approach to serious problems’ – they [the puppets] address a lot of serious problems, my work, in training people, they

co-train with me, they tell stories about child abuse, domestic violence.

For Kookaburra, whose work involves child welfare, dealing with issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and removal from families, her children's educational program creatively addresses the need for dealing with difficult and sometimes traumatic events using storying and the puppets as therapeutic strategies that establish a less threatening environment; importantly, it is a success where didactic approaches often fail.

This highlights the deep desire she has for making positive change both within Aboriginal communities where children are still being removed from families and more broadly for all children. The role of storytelling for therapeutic purposes according to Golding (2014, p. 29)

... rests on this ancient [storytelling] practice. It is provided within the safety of a relationship between storyteller and listener. Stories provide a fictional world that we can visit together...

However, as Kookaburra shows us, the puppets' success lies in embedding the concepts within the story. According to Golding (2014, p. 27), the role of stories to build bridges with traumatised children is at the heart of creating an 'affective-reflective dialogue':

The child is not lectured to; solutions to problems are not sought; but the child's experience is made clearer through the construction of narratives about this experience. ... Storytelling brings the affective (emotional experience of the story) and the reflective (content of the story) together, with the verbal components of the story being enriched by the non-verbal.

Here we have the essence of storytelling as a non-didactic educational method, one that has been used for millennia, and is at the heart of a curriculum that is not framed as a knowledge feed-lot, but as a relational process. From Dharug perspectives, where the philosophy of existential interconnectedness underpins all beings and becomings, this involves place, people and Country to make meaning (Bignall et al., 2016).

Kookaburra returns to traditional storytelling, using the apparatus of puppetry in her approach, a technique that itself is thousands of years old, originally used for teaching religion or culture (Stutheit, 1981). Kookaburra recognises that by embedding the messages to be contextualised (as making meaning by the audience) within the story itself, for those students whose personal backgrounds have involved trauma, the story will have resonance from which they may formulate a strategy for communicating the experience to someone they trust.




Fig. 13: Yarramundi Kids, 'Strong Smart & Deadly', with permission, March 2014




5.3.1 Kookaburra's Vision for the Puppets: Making them Dharug

I really wanted the 'Yarramundi Kids' to represent our Dharug mob, in terms of the cross-section, and many Aboriginal kids living in the Sydney area, in that there are many fair-skinned children who identify and there are also dark-skinned kids who identify, so with

Nikita who is dark-skinned, Danny and Lily Pilly are more fair-skinned, Danny's blonde and blue-eyed, Lily Pilly has got orange hair, and Max with red hair and blue eyes, Baby Ben who is connected,...their all cuddies, and they're all related, but I really wanted them to represent this place in a way ... they don't necessarily look Aboriginal but identify as Aboriginal, and I really feel many kids of this area, and Dharug kids in particular, struggle with that sense of identity and a sense of belonging and how people see them and how they see themselves ... and it's quite interesting when I go around the country that Max in particular is a really popular character, but he has red hair and blue eyes – and he's a strong little character but no one bats an eyelid, like he's a Dharug mob.

 Her creation of the puppets is embedded in her desire to bring Dharug as white-skinned Aboriginal community to the fore. Firstly, for the adults, it is an empowering way to counter negative discourse around Aboriginal identities and stereotypes – both to other Aboriginal mobs who sometimes have questioned Dharug people's Aboriginal 'authenticity', as well as non-Indigenous people's mental stereotypes of what an Aboriginal person is 'supposed' to look and be like. As Heiss (2012, p. 2) explains it so passionately in her autobiographical account *Am I Black Enough for you*

*This is **my** story: it is a story about **not** being from the desert, **not** speaking my traditional language and **not** wearing ochre. I'm not very good at playing the clap sticks either, and I **loathe** sleeping outdoors. But my story is of the journey of being a proud Wiradjuri woman, just not necessarily being the Blackfella – the so-called 'real Aborigine' – some people, perhaps even **you**, expect me to be.*

 Secondly, as Kookaburra states, creating the puppets' diverse appearances attends to anxieties many Dharug and other Koori kids have about being Aboriginal but not 'looking the part'. This approach is

successfully reinforced when she notes that Max is *‘a strong little character but no one bats an eyelid, like he’s a Dharug mob’*, reinforcing the value of character over appearance in influencing identity and belonging.

As such, we have a powerful example of storying as enactment, of discourse and puppetry-as-education interweaving to potentially create strong memories as sources for the behaviours, attitudes and wellbeing of future generations. I suggest that the contextualisation process, the interweaving of event, place, and memory and the choices we make in that process, is integral to our conceptualisation of ourselves and our ability to create meaningful lives and ‘lifeworkings’.




5.3.2 An Integrated Lifework: Values, Connection, Country and Ancestors

5.3.2.1 Values

When we got the TV deal, they were very nervous when they could see ... about the back stories; they thought, ‘OMG, what are we going to do’, but I had made a conscious decision with the TV content that’s ‘entertainment with a message’. But actually, the way with the TV series is: Strong, Smart and Deadly is their catch-cry. Strong: connections to Country, culture, place; Smart: make smart choices, in terms of learning, in terms of day-to-day choices, all of those things; and Deadly: actions; so, the three SSD choices, deadly action. So, in a way, the message of the impact of the TV show counters colonisation. It’s basically saying we can be Strong, we can be Smart, and we can be Deadly with strategies, and so the whole thing with Yarramundi Kids is that they take an approach which is culture too: which is Dance, Song, and Story, and so that’s the SSD, that is, Songs, Stories and Dance in their cultural stuff too.


5.3.2.2 The Place of Connection

... I go walking, each morning, all the time but there's this particular place that I walk, it's a bush regeneration place, and it's a walkway down to the water. There's a point, and there's a little beach, and it's got fire stains on the rocks there and, like it's a gathering place ... so for me I have that real strong connection anyway, so I don't know who's doing this and it is, if it's council people [who] were doing this bush regeneration and the bush tucker and ... I just walk through there, and do observations and I think, knowing there's pathways walked for thousands of years, for me that's strong already, and the fact that I have knowledge and that Wangal, this country, was Bennelong's country and to know that background, and like for me, to me to learn that, that made a difference to where I live, to know that somewhere in my ancestry and you know, there's also the Irish, Irish stories as well, and that's reflected in the Yarramundi Kids with their names. I guess for me, for an example [of connection], I took a photo of this amazing long piece of grass with all these little black things on it, and then I went to the native bee symposium and I went OMG they're all native bees that I had been observing and then I get meanings, explanations of what they are.

 Connecting to Country is highly important to Kookaburra, even to the extent that she has preferred living on Wangal Country over and above other places because of her connection to Bennelong through Bolongaia (Maria Lock). Here we have an example of living culture, where Kookaburra's life decisions are made based on Dharug storying from the past. At this point we can see it is not only her work as a puppeteer acting cultural practice in her life but also her choice of habitation. Not only is she teaching from Country, but the example of learning about the bees on the grass stem highlights how Kookaburra is deeply connected to learning from Country.


It is noteworthy that Kookaburra also respects her other-than-Dharug ancestry, the Irish, displayed through her conscious decision to use

anglicised names rather than Dharug language for naming the Yarramundi Kids. We can see Kookaburra's integration of values, connections, livelihood and lifestyle were no matters of chance, but a deeply considered whole-of-life practice, a 'lifework' rather than a 'work life'.


 Workshop: 'Lifework: Researching in a Colonial, Multicultural, and Multispecies World', MQU. (Mitchell, A. 08.02.2017 Personal Conversation).

In the following piece, Kookaburra shares with us her deeply held spiritual beliefs that interweave her practice and life, lived consciously through her connections to Country, Ancestors and Community, and that form the interrelated heart of her Aboriginality.

5.3.2.3 Country and Presences

... I really believe that ancestral spirits live around the place ... and this is the story that Nakita tells, that – and her grandmother told her this – and that is that we're never alone, we always have the spirits of the Ancestors walking with us, they're beside us, they're in the plants, they're in the birds, they're in the animals, they're in the insects, they're in the water, they're all around us at all times, and so she tells that story and I believe that and I listen, even the wind that's blowing right now, you know, like what, like and that bird, the Doowan  bird last night, that was ..., like, I'm thinking anyone can just walk along and would think that's a bloody noisy bird but I knew there was something happening now, ... I feel I should go and see my Aunty Gloria ... and when I heard and I tell Leanne that story and she tells me who is really sick at the moment and I'm thinking what's that about, and I believe that kookaburras, I think I told you and this is another story where I was doing a 12 months' scholarship course, and I was working on my own project, final assignment. And I was really getting disillusioned with what I was doing, and I looked out, and I'm downstairs in the office and, there's a veranda and there's a

fence and I looked out through the louvres and there's a kookaburra sitting there, and it's looking at me, and it was looking at me and I was thinking that's spooky cause I have a thing with kookaburras, and then I came up the stairs and was standing at the kitchen window and that kookaburra was out here, this is a true story, just sitting in the tree looking at me, and I went out for two hours, I came back, opened the louvres and that kookaburra was still here, that kookaburra was here for eight hours, now why, why was it around here, and I think that was to keep on keeping on, do not give up, and I think that's a message for me because I feel a very strong connection to kookaburras when I'm being creative and I'm writing, now I've had this, and people are going: 'No, it's just the time of year.' They're here because I feel a strong connection, and I'm writing, and writing Creating the Future, these eight short stories, and then we filmed them, and I was working intensively for a two-week block to write the scripts and get them done, and I had kookaburras, morning, noon and night, that was in February, early in the year. This was November, and this kookaburra's sitting there, and it allowed me - I took photos of it. I filmed it and it allowed me, it allowed me to get almost from me to you close to it. It was looking at me and it was like, 'Is this is my best side, no this is my best side.' [laughter] Like, you know what I mean, it wasn't just hanging there, and I happened to be coming along [laughter], so I really believe in things like that.

 The Doowan is a curlew, and in many Aboriginal groups is a harbinger of disaster or an avenger. (See Appendix E: Supporting Websites – Doowan.)



To summarise, Kookaburra's storying has demonstrated a transformational pedagogy steeped in traditional storytelling practices and performances – a powerful form used for thousands of years by various ancient peoples. In the process she demonstrates her entwining of work with cultural caring in sensitive ways, creating a 'lifeworking'.

We leave Kookaburra's contribution to this work for now. We will return to her perspectives in Chapter 12, so that we may form some woven thoughts to carry forward into the future. And on a slightly different note, Bellbird is calling. While the seven women's story sections reflect the 'pinnacles in the landscape' of the thesis, Bellbird's 'Pleiadean Presences' can metaphorically be understood as representing the seven voices and stars of her female genealogical ancestry. She begins with her own place of belonging and sense of presence. To refresh ourselves on the structure and weaving of the thesis see pages 101 – 103.



Bellbird's Pleiadean Presences: A topography of seven tracings

Following the lead of eco-poets and authors, such as Mark Treddinick (2009), who writes a portrait of himself as six places through the landscapes of his life, so Bellbird offers here a topography of her ancestral voices, not as one story, but as presences that trace voices in places, which in themselves become her belonging places and we hear them calling, watching and waiting, until disappearing into the mists. In weaving terms, the Pleiadean Presences are the warp to the other women's weft. Together, the Presences and the seven women's storytelling chapters form a large portion of this woven knowledges-basket.



Bellbird's Pleiadean Presence 1: A Wallumattagal Dreaming: Moocooboola and voices in the mangroves.

The Wallumedegal survived for generations in a rich environment of river flats, creeks and mangrove swamps, fishing with pronged spears and handlines, feasting on shellfish, hunting birds and small game, and collecting a variety of edible bushfood plants. They spoke the same language as the Port Jackson and coastal clans, from Botany Bay to Broken Bay. The dialect of the sea coast, wrote Marine Captain Watkin Tench, was spoken at Rose Hill (Parramatta). (K. V. Smith, 1993)*

*This is an alternative spelling to Wallumattagal, as is the preferred usage in this thesis.



1950's: Bellbird's Place of Belonging

This place dawns in childhood and a house name wrought in black iron: 'Inala', our 'Resting Place' in 'Aboriginal', so we are told. This name hangs on the front wall of a three-bedroom, beige coloured, weatherboard returned serviceman's house at the top of the last hill on Park Road, just on the border of Hunters Hill and Boronia Park. It sits on a long, skinny block, with a single tall gum tree, an Angophora, in the front and chooks and Casuarinas/she-oaks down the back. Later a flowering-gum is planted near the driveway to the garage, and it's lovely.

(The only thing remaining today is the Port Jackson pine which stood outside my bedroom window, and I'm told triggers asthma.)

Mum is Joan and Dad is John, and sometimes Jack. (Naming consistency was never considered important.) This place is my beginning. A 1950s world of stark outlines: crisply ironed white socks, net petticoats that scratched, and 24 Derwent colouring pencils.

Mostly, it is an orderly place, where daytime is met with a cup of warm milky, sugared tea in bed, where I must stay, so Mum and Dad can get about their business of packing lunches and getting Dad out the door in time for work, without my older brother and me getting underfoot. Dad wears a hat and a suit and tie, with a tie clip and white shirt, crisply ironed with correct lines running down the sleeves and across the shoulders. Mum wears smart dresses and stockings and has her short, dark brown, straight hair permed back off her face into soft curls. She has brown, 'olive' skin and Dad has lily-white skin.

I have two New South Wales Department of Education Year 1 school readers (no date): It's Fun to Read and Stories to Read and I am learning to read from them and others like them. The pictures depict life pretty accurately: very white, middle class and clearly outlined. Both have milk-chocolate brown covers, though It's Fun to Read has a crookedly-cut and somewhat grubby label with a child's unsure handwriting saying: 'a book' glued on the front.

Reading is very important. Both are 'Compiled by the Infants' Reading Committee; illustrated by Katherine Morris and 'Printed by authority of Minister for Education.' Everything is neat and tidy, and through these books we are taught what the world should be like: a white, neat and tidy place full of words, and for me it is.

'This is Mary. She is a girl. See Mary play.' She is white, blond-haired pushing a dark-haired doll in a pram and there is a cat. I have brown hair now, but when I was a baby it was blonde and very straight.

'This is Jim. He is a boy. See Jim play.' He is white, blonde-haired, running and holding up a toy aeroplane.

'Jim and Mary go to school. They read at school. They write and they draw.' School has a white fence, red bricks and white blonde-haired children in the book. Girls skip, boys run and jump. The trees are nondescript – not like our trees at all.

My school is a colonial sandstone construct, built as one of the first in the land, Hunters Hill Public School, in 1870. The playground is shaded in huge Moreton Bay and Port Jackson Figs and the playground is girt, not by sea, but mostly a high sandstone wall.

'Mother is at home. Baby is with her. Jim and Mary come home in the school bus.' Everything is exactly how it is expected to be. Father in his hat comes home in the bus too. Then on page 14 something exciting can be seen. 'Father has a car' and it is just like ours, an FJ Holden.

The children go to the park and play, with rope swings and a wooden seesaw. Then something different: it has a pond where they sail boats. We don't have that, but we have a big bushy area 'the Reserve' and here it is that life doesn't fit the story book and reality struck.

(See Appendix E: Supporting Websites – Boronia Park.)



An 'Other' Place

Here is 'the wild' other place, Wallumattagal world, Moocooboola, and 'Meeting of the Waters'- a Dreaming place that brings together the Burramatta/Parramatta and the Tummerumba/Durrumurra (Lane Cove) rivers, with sandstone outcrops, mangroves embedded in muddy, whiffy low-tide fields, spooky corners, scary single-path tracks leading into unknown places, and one day a man in an overcoat ...

The police are called. The man is found and returned to the Gladesville Mental Asylum from where he has wandered, and we return to our school readers, happy to do as we are told, and 'put it safely in the past'. But that safe white place is never to be the whole world again. It can only ever be a part of it. Out there, outside of the readers, there are other places, other ways – exciting, perhaps dangerous, but definitely not boring. Wallumattagal Country has come to life and with Brownies comes

adventures in the bush – camping in tents, building fires, learning names of bush plants, and working out which flowers match which leaves. Learning ‘survival skills’ – how to tie knots, how to boil water in a billy can, and how to compete for points, badges, and prizes from our ‘Brown Owl’, Mrs. Sims. It’s a start.



A Presence of Placetime mattering: 1963

Now I’m 10, and like many peers, I’m miserable. Sitting in the back seat of the car, another kind of Holden, I look out the window as we swing round a left-hand bend on Pittwater Road, on the way to visit my aunty and uncle in North Ryde. On the right are the haunting mangroves, the saltwater, the lushy mud and the ‘farks’ of the crows. On the left is the overhanging sandstone cliff face, with scraps of Port Jackson fig fighting for a spot of life. We are on the edge of a weird place called ‘Field of Mars’.

In this pre-pubescent misery I churn: what’s the purpose of this life? Is it just a bleak space of nothing to look forward to, just the dismal obedience to parental authority? My net petticoat is making me itch. Right then, on that left-hand bend the mangroves speak: You are here to learn.

Ever since, on Wallumattagal Country, on the left-hand bend of Pittwater Road, with the Field of Mars and Buffalo Creek skimming past on the left, I know why I am here, and I know there are voices in the world to which I need to listen. This is my Dreaming place in Wallumattagal Country, the place and people of the Wallumai, the Black Snapper fish.



CHAPTER 6: Wagtail's Witnessing: A place of unceasing business



Fig. 14 Wagtail. Sketch: J. Rey, 2018

Who is Wagtail?

Wagtail is descended from the Boorooberongal and Wumali/Warmuli clans of the Dharug, the traditional Aboriginal people of western Sydney. She expresses a strong sense of commitment and responsibility to the place of her Ancestors and uses a variety of art forms to evoke an environmental conscience towards the land and respect for its original people.

As a teacher who has spent most of her life on Dharug Country, Wagtail uses her skills to embed local Dharug histories through the development of educational resources and through her teaching within schools and universities.

Wagtail is an established visual artist and through her visual art practice seeks to connect the observer, highlighting their shared role in caring for Country and strengthening the intrinsic and continuing spiritual connection Aboriginal people have with the land. She has also written two

theatre pieces, exploring the complex identity issues Dharug people face as they continue the fight to be recognised and respected in their own homeland.

Wagtail sees her role as a ‘teller’ of stories that have remained largely untold; invisible to others who now live here. Her work explores the local stories of people and place on Dharug land, highlighting the role local people played in the first years of contact and colonisation and reinforcing their place on Country.








Salt and freshwater Ancients watch the waterways rising through creation time, the sacred joining of salt and fresh that unites and binds across hearts and minds. Deerubbin carries the Dreaming beyond memories and place. The stories swim; though laid in day, they shine across the web of blackened space. Those voices, bells, on threads from which they hang, the timeless heartbeats, from which they sang.

Bellbird.



TABLE 1: SYMBOLS REPRESENTING VOICES WITHIN THE THESIS

SYMBOL	VOICE
	Country
	Scholars, poets, various others
	Narrator
	Interviewer
	Writer





6.1 The Transformational Place of Absent-Presences

- For Wagtail, storying weaves colonial practices from the past with communal and personal self-expression into wellbeing within a transitional present; one demanding constant attention, a caring that carries responsibilities and benefits into the future. In Wagtail's world, storying involves transitions and transformations across places, events, art, words and time. Intergenerational storying is recognised as a powerful instrument, both for damage and for healing. By transitioning from the pain of history and other's storying, through the creation of her art, words and reflection, Wagtail creates her world in a manner that enables her work to educate others for the future. In this sense transformation of self, community and Country (as sacred space) present a counter-narrative for the future – one that provides a way for resilience, renewal and reconciliation. As such, I suggest it acts as a second illustration of the process of 'lifeworking'. In the manner of a verbal and visual triptych, Wagtail gives us stories that fold across colonisation, Country and personal transformation layered against time, place and continuity. We open in the first fold, with Wagtail recounting a story witnessed, of desecration, disturbance and disrespect, which attends to the continuing presence of colonising practices through disregard for Country, domination by corporations and governments, and powerless individuals. In a second fold, she recounts the redress that can come through interweaving cultural understandings from other mobs into the gaps that colonisation has wrought in the fabric of Dharug knowledge. We see how her art is inspired from these stories, and how the practice of re-storying through her art creates a new web of storied connection, with places and people, for the continuity of Dharug identity, culture and Country. Finally, in the third fold of this triptych, Wagtail's transformation is recounted through weaving creation stories into personal experiences so

that the transitory and timeless nature of Country, its inhabitants and existence is evidenced in practice.



6.2 Triptych 1: A Witness Speaks

My brother and I were approached by a TI [Torres Strait Islander] woman, who asked if I'd talk with her neighbour, an older man in his 70s, who lived at Castlereagh all his life on a dairy farm. As the mining operation [on the Deerubbin/Hawkesbury River] took over, he ended up working for Pioneer and then Boral. Anyway, he was most distressed. He found it very hard to sleep at night, wracked with guilt over being a witness to where they had dug a swimming pool for Pioneer workers. I don't know what that was about, but he was digging a swimming pool out near Shaw's Island, near Castlereagh and they had dug up a body and it was bones wrapped in paperbark, and this is how he described it to me, and he just said "They just threw it in the river. They didn't stop production or anything", and he was really concerned about the way it was treated, and the way it was covered up and he just had to tell us. You know it was very hard because C. and I heard it and we both felt bad about it and we mentioned it to a few people, to our [Aboriginal] corporations, various corporations but it made no difference because they had no power either. Land Council [Deerubbin] would have been the one to be able to jump on and do something about it but they don't acknowledge us [Dharug] so we're not keen to go and talk to them as much.

- ◉ Wagtail's account acts as intergenerational storytelling. According to Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, and Tebes (2014, pp. 133-134), the political consequences of public narratives of trauma can be recursive: 'They operate in both directions such that the historical trauma narratives and health impacts mutually influence each other.' Wagtail's storytelling of this old man's

witnessing represents an example of some of the difficulties that can be met in trying to find social justice through traumatic public narratives. The interweaving of such intergenerational storying, and the individual's response to public narratives whether through art, music, song or poetry for example, enable a sense of contestation against the silencing that others perpetrate, while providing the individual with a sense of resistance against broader political discourses, which can contribute to a sense of resilience. Research into the importance of transgenerational storying for community resilience has predominantly focused on other than Australian groups. Renditions of Jewish Holocaust survivors (see Goldenberg, 2008; Krah, 2010); Romani (Robins et al., 2010; Van Baar, 2011), Armenian community genocidal transgenerational storying (Azarian-Ceccato, 2010), and African research in Rwanda (Fox, 2014) are examples. Trauma across generations has been associated with colonisation histories and is recognised as significant for First Peoples' physical and mental wellbeing (See Heart, Chase, Elkins, & Altschul, 2011; Herring, Spangaro, Lauw, & McNamara, 2013; Jackson, Power, Sherwood, & Geia, 2013; Sherwood, 2013). Calls for improved colonisation education of social workers in the field of Australian Aboriginal mental and social welfare have been made (Jackson et al., 2013; Sherwood, 2013).

In Australia, there has been much contestation over the definition of the term 'genocide' as the political Right coalesced around Windschuttle's (2003) claims about the fabrication of Aboriginal history, and their labelling of sympathetic interpretations as 'black armband' histories. These are countered with claims of the Right's attempt to whitewash the past (Attwood, 2001; Behrendt, 2001; *Bringing them home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, 1997; Docker, 2015; Haebich, 2001).

It is against this contentious background that Wagtail's and other Dharug intergenerational storying-as-memorial plays out, perhaps rather quietly in contrast, as a 'backwater' that keeps trickling through the maze of discourses on Dharug Country. The Dharug women's storying maintains a staunch refusal to be silenced

when colonisation and re-colonisation continues. In their staunchness, I argue, lies their sense of resilience, determination and cultural continuity and practice for the ancestral injustices of the past as they engage in memorialisation.

From that sense of caring and determination to resist flows a sense of connection, belonging and strengthening that underpins community and identification as Dharug.

Azarian-Ceccato (2010, p.106), using the Armenian narrative renditions of genocide as memorial, explains how a sense of community can be enhanced through memorialisation:

... we see how communities of memory are formed in a space of mediation which links the new generation with the old, the present with its past, as well as with its imagined communities.

For Dharug, memorialisation is often situated in place. One of these, *The Gully*, at Katoomba, has been memorialised in print through the voices of the various residents who lived there as a refuge after colonisation. As Johnson (2006, p. 117) explains, 'The Gully acted as a sanctuary, hiding those who lived within its bushy perimeters, protecting them from harassment and intrusion.' Recent efforts to restore the balance to the storying of place are being made through supportive local shire councils working with local Elders. For example, Hornsby Shire has produced a filmed series, *Our Place - Aboriginal Stories* (Watson, Marne, & Watson, 2014). These however address only those sites that have creation or archaeological storying attached. Dharug voices speaking about events of confrontation are yet to arise. Yet, while we must wait for more Dharug voices to be heard, nuanced interpretations of history on Dharug Country are becoming available. Irish (2013 n.p.), for example, notes from *The Sydney Gazette*, (15 October, 1809),

In October 1809, Tedbury's gang began to attack travellers near [Edward Powell's Half-Way House pub](#) on the Parramatta Road at [Homebush](#). They then stole several dozen of Powell's sheep from his property and drove them south to the Cooks River where they were killed and roasted.

Irish (2013 n.p.), citing Reece (1974), then presents a balancing account of events when he continues:

The targeting of Powell was unlikely to have been random. He was an original settler at Homebush in the 1790s but had subsequently murdered two Aboriginal boys on the [Hawkesbury River](#).

Written views on these matters told from a Dharug perspective, by Dharug voices, are a rarity. One exception to this has been the work of Dharug Boorooberongal man, Chris Tobin (1999), who is a descendant of Gomberrie, Yarramundi and Maria Lock. Chris brings Dharug perspectives to the plethora of writing *about* Dharug that has predominantly continued a process of objectification and othering. His inclusion of the words of ‘Queen Nellie’ of the Cabrogal (Liverpool Dharug clan, c.1804-1898), or to use her Aboriginal name, Oolonga, Da Naang (c.1886) in her own voice, presents a completely different perspective to the white narratives told about events on Dharug Country in the Penrith area:

No houses ’t’all. I member first White come here – all blacks den, no houses, all gunyahs [traditional Aboriginal abode made from sheets of bark] – ev’ybody fight, black gins cry, black men shout and get boomerangs an’ tings like for big corroboree. Oh lor’ – I frightened – get in bush next memmurrer [next to my mother].

Here we see the childhood trauma being storied by the elderly woman in voice and language that not only brings the event to life, but the real fear is still being expressed so many years later. It is in this gap – the absence of voices able to speak for themselves – that this thesis finds its place, a place that attentively and respectfully endeavours to bring Dharug women’s voices, and their stories, to the fore.

Importantly, Wagtail’s intergenerational storying in her first triptych involves multiple times: the times of the event, the times the older man spoke of it to Wagtail, as well as now, and the retelling by Wagtail for this project. If we include the Ancestor, wrapped in paperbark, then we see storied continuity across perhaps a hundred generations. Wagtail’s storying

speaks to the absence of respect and care for significant deep-time heritage in Dharug Nura, which perpetuates feelings of loss, trauma and disrespect.

From an Aboriginal perspective, Lee (2013, p. 16) observes:

The destruction of sites and nature is like ripping pages from our library books. It is like cutting the hearts of our people and cutting our identity and our cultural philosophy that sustains our spiritual connectedness to the country.

In this quote, Lee uses the analogy of library books as symbolic of the West's reification of written knowledge, and the places where that most happens is in our libraries. By making this analogy, she is stating that our Aboriginal sacred sites are the storehouses of Aboriginal knowledges and wisdoms, and their destruction would be felt as sorely as something like the destruction by fire of the antiquities in the ancient library at Alexandria, in Egypt.

To the extent that this quote is analogous between Aboriginal and western traditions of dealing with knowledge, in Australian Aboriginal culture knowledges must also sit in the right place, the right shelf in the 'library' and the right 'library book' and be told/read by the right people. As Wagtail recounts, it was not sufficient that this story rested with Aunty P., a woman from TI Country. Rather it had to be given to someone from Dharug Country to return it to the rightful keepers of this storying. This illustrates ongoing consciousness and maintenance of customary protocols of the respect due across Indigenous groups. As Blair (2015, p. 156) notes, while the 'cleavage' between the academy and Indigenous ways of knowing has resulted in disembodied, delocalised knowledges, current Indigenous research methodologies ensure knowledges are embedded in their place, engaged with rightful 'knowers', custodians of Country, even when Country is a metropolitan city area. Continuing Indigenous practice, including in urban spaces, combined with Indigenous scholarship that acknowledges these ways of knowing, is therefore forming networks of connection, ecologies of knowing, or 'ecosophies' (Bignall et al., 2016).

Following Gregory Bateson's theories on 'ecologies of mind', Chiew (2016) argues that post-humanist pedagogies employ ways of knowing that mirror and are analogous to Indigenous understandings. Post-humanists can meet and find their 'ecosophies' reflected when they recognise First People's ways of knowing and doing. Bignall et al. (2016), working with the Ngarrindjeri people of southern Australia, make a case that in the age of the Anthropocene, the movement towards posthumanism within western academy should recognise Indigenous ways of existential interconnectedness, which have preceded current philosophies by millennia. It could be argued, therefore, that having Country as an urbanised, globalised space allows such a meeting of the ways to take place. Accordingly, Dharug storying, as illustrated by this thesis and including Wagtail's efforts, demonstrates one small example of how this meeting place, the coming together of the 'fresh and salt waters' may be recognised. At the same time, the realities of urbanisation and city living pose great pressures on minority cultures, being consumed by the homogenous dominance of a multicultural 'global melting pot' of city living. Developing Dharug community strength and inter-community (Aboriginal) allies is a key approach for creating a Dharug voice across the noises and silences dominating discourses of Country. Events such as the Barangaroo Arts Project (see Appendix E: Supportive Websites for more information) bring various Aboriginal groups together, enabling positive networking to happen. Within community, the women's gatherings, which became the context in which this doctoral project was initiated, have an important social and political role, while strengthening cultural knowledge, cultural heritage and reconnections on Dharug Country.

Wagtail's concerns reflect fundamental issues involving the power of government instrumentalities and other organisations to speak and make decisions on Dharug Country, without following Aboriginal custodial respect. Gai-marigal (Narrabeen Lakes, Northern Beaches area of Sydney) Elder and scholar, Dennis Foley (2007) addresses this issue and the

ambiguities that play out when two systems of law are unreconciled, as is evident through Wagtail's experiences. He asks: 'What does Native Title mean to the urban Koori who is born, raised and educated on their customary lands now called Sydney?' (Foley, 2007, p. 167). He extends this question to those Indigenous Australians living in Sydney but not Dharug, '...themselves usurpers (p.167).' It is beyond the bounds of this thesis to delve into the legal underpinnings of the NSW Land Rights Act, 1983; however, as Foley (2007, p. 169) points out, until a reconciliation of the two systems, and recognition of *custodians'* traditional rights, as still practiced on every other Indigenous peoples' Country across the continent, takes place, then there will be a 'continuous passage of pain and discrimination for Aboriginal [in this case Dharug] people.' The issues Wagtail raises, as do other women in this project, represent a transgenerational 'black-washed' legacy – histories and lived experiences scrubbed out not only through white colonial-settler colonisation practices, but the re-colonisation practices engaged in by unionised inner-city blackfellas throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (Foley, 2007).

Yet the importance of memory and of its antithesis, forgetting, is critical to preventing cultural ecocide and plays into the pressures placed on Dharug and others to adhere to and demonstrate our community allegiances. In the work of Carlson (2011b) examining the production of Aboriginal identities within mixed-race heritages, it is shown that the regulation by other Aboriginal people, self-surveillance and governmental conformity underpin cultural realities. Arguing that this should be challenged, Martin Nakata (2012, pp. 99-100) illustrates the fragilities in the armoury in the war against cultural extinction.

In their compliance with the definition and its policing, some of these participants were reporting what looked like the oppressive conditions of a police state. Some talked of the relief of going home to be themselves, after watching all day that they did not do anything wrong in the public spaces of the Indigenous community. People used words such as nervousness, anxiety, intimidation and inadequacy. Some felt guilty for living in a nice street or house, or

*enjoying café culture, or sending their children to private schools...
No one likes these things to be said ... Because to say them is to
undermine Indigenous solidarity by drawing attention to the fault
lines that exist in contemporary Indigenous communities.*

As Martin Nakata (2012, p. 100) continues, by not including the complex realities of our identities and our identity productions,

*we forget to focus on the full range of possibilities we can shape, in
the spaces of relative freedom that we now have, for the coming
generations of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.*

It is clear this topic acts as a silence waiting to be addressed – an opportunity for recognition. And that mixed-heritage places, such as our Dharug Nura, not only offer a site for achieving this within western academic knowledge constructions, but also offer possibilities for a third way that undermines humanist colonised binaries. Later we will hear more on this from Ringtail Possum’s storying.




6.3 Triptych 2: Story, Healing, Practice and Place - Wagtail interweaving the Witnessing with her Art into Voice



Fig. 15: *They Disturb our Dead*. With Permission, 2015.

Wagtail goes on to talk about the influence of the burial ground desecration story on her art and creation of the piece 'They Disturb our Dead':

I put more than one body even though it was one body the older fellow talked about because [in]that whole area. We know the sand was significant, because they would bury in the sand along the riverbank there, and there's evidence I think [from Dr.] Jim Kohen. There's a whole lot of different archaeological studies done out there, so it's actually an area that's been quite well researched. So, the artwork was an immediate response to that. So, I have the bodies wrapped in paperbark, the bodies surrounded by the sand, and also the big bluestone or the river rocks that we were renowned for. That area was renowned as a place where you could source those river stones, 'cause they became axe heads, scrapers and sharpeners, and they were traded up and down the coast. So it was a very significant place, so that is what that painting is actually portraying - that story.

 Wagtail's artwork *They Disturb our Dead* is clearly an important way of responding to the frustrations and sense of loss that arise from the destruction of Country and its significant sites when other forms of response are not taken up by people and organisations to remedy ongoing decimation, desecration and disrespect for heritage. In this sense, her art becomes both a therapeutic and political response; it becomes a continuation of storying as cultural practice; a way of transmitting knowledge visually, rather than orally, or through written forms; and, in a manner, it becomes a healing both for the artist and the audience (Roberts, Camic, & Springham, 2011). Oral as well as visual storying come together in the sands of the Hawkesbury River and this sacred place of burial. As Cameron (2010, p. 404) asserts:

Today oral traditions are expressed in many other ways – visual arts, drama, songs and poetry. With cultural and communication difference and misunderstandings, Art provides a voice for Australian Indigenous people and is a valuable tool for healing.

Similar to Kookaburra's cultural practice through puppetry and sharing knowledge through performance, Wagtail engages in custodial obligations of caring for Country through her art-as-storying. Beyond the story of desecration and destruction of a burial site, Wagtail speaks of the significance of this specific place. Her art becomes an act of cultural continuity through remembrance, not only of the human Ancestors, but also the river stones, and how they provide significant storying in their own right, significant to survival and cultural practice, connectors to human craftsmen. The rocks were integral to communal continuity, '*...they became axe heads, scrapers and sharpeners, and they were traded up and down the coast...*' Here, in this seemingly insignificant location, we have discourse that values the small, local, specifically-situated place rather than dominating significance given to the large grand, global symbols of place so commonly valued through discourses of, for example, economics, global politics and celebrity idealisation that the media promotes.


As Benterrak et al. (2014, p. 21) explain:


The most commonly uttered place names refer to large unities 'Australia' ... 'Melbourne', 'the Northern Territory' ... [They] are so large they become abstract and general, they evoke stereotyped and familiar responses which feed off ideologies like nationalism, 'stateism' or the urban/rural division. The study of specific, local places puts things more on a scale of everyday living.

Instead of these 'large unities', we have this local site, comparatively tiny in physical size and discursive influence, though empowered through details of connection as story for local Dharug. Rather than the flaccid blandness of universalised 'giant-places', Wagtail and her community know this as personal, as their Ancestor Yarramundi's place and people, and remembrance, through story (such as Wagtail's story and this thesis) and through art; and enacts it as a place of persistence and resistance. Here place is empowered through storying as a tool for contesting the universalising voice of the media, the state and the corporations. As Massey (2005) notes, within discourses of globalisation, we need to understand place more as a weaving 'of ongoing stories, as a moment within power-geometrics, as a particular constellation within the wider topographies of space and as in process, as unfinished business' (Somerville, 2013, p. 233). While this observation is true across all cultures and places, it is *only* Dharug voices, the custodians of Dharug Country, that can empower this particular site with deep millennial-old connection, from the knowledges embedded in the storying across time and the custodial obligations attached to Dharug place(s). In today's context, this project is one example of how such an empowerment can take place. Wagtail draws on the knowledge of other storying connected to this place, as she continues:


Yes, and there's another one, that's all that sand out there. That's been used all around Sydney. Eighty per cent of sand used in Sydney came from that quarry for a long time (Hawkesbury River Sands). Now that sand, you know, has our bones in it. And it's known [that] one of the churches in Penrith is renowned for the sand coming from there and someone wrote an article about sections of bone found in there, and if you ask Kookaburra, she's got that article called 'Shell

and Bone'. It's written by ... another Dharug woman wrote it ... but it's written as a fictional story but it's wrapped around fact. So that's another one too to check out with Kookaburra ... She's borrowed it years and years ago ... I've seen her office, worse than my studio!
[Laughter]


( Since Kookaburra's passing, this article is yet to be found, though at the time of writing a search was still underway.)

 Yeah, so that notion that the sand has the bones, or the remnants of the bones of the people, how do you see that playing out in terms of Country, and in a response to our connectivity with Country?

Well, it's our bodies go back to the land. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. It was very much on Country that those ceremonies took place, [where] the people were interred into the ground. That was their final resting; they were going back to their mother as such. It's a rebirth ... as well through the trees; it's continuation; it's part of the Dreaming.

 And it's quite interesting that that sand gets used as cement in the houses or the buildings... so Country...

I know, I know...It's another great painting... I can just see a painting.

 Would it be possible to say therefore that energy or spirits or sacred connection goes into all this concrete and all these buildings that are now represented on our Country?

I'm thinking yeah, absolutely!

 I find that very beautiful. I find that powerful.

Yeah, I'm sitting here thinking, there's some real artworks that can come from that, that's very significant, important.



- In these passages, there is a movement in the storying, a *reconciliation-racine*, from the destructions, losses and tragedies of the past, to a narrative where Country is not overwhelmed by the colonisation of this place but is timelessly interweaving the ways of the old into the present and the new. The corporate-government alliances that become storying-as-actions with the removal of the sands that hold the bones and sacred remains of Ancient Ones, are now woven into the concrete, bricks and cement and worked throughout Sydney's suburbs, making them a living continuum within the storying – the Dreaming. *Hawkesbury River Sands* are iconic for my generation and my parents, across Sydney's storied past through the post-war building boom that saw massive housing projects under construction. Later, how death becomes continuity rather than ending is explored (Ch. 13).

The wheel of storying continues, but in the process, we learn that it is not the colonisers' building their new dreams that will remain, but Aboriginal Country – in this instance Dharug Country – because place and storying are not destroyed but rewoven into the fabric of timeless continuity. As Wagtail was inspired to do more art, Bellbird was inspired to sing a song beyond the unsustainable consumption practices and tales that politicians and corporations ask us to believe. Instead she sings from the voices of her Ancestors, those continuing places that keep us strong, inspired and resilient.



BONES IN OUR BRICKS
*The bones in our bricks hold us up.
Still they seep, with the creek,
Through the debris,*

*The muck, that sucks
Through the sands, and sighs,
Draining.*

*Hawkesbury blood and bone,
Dharug blood and bones
Hold up the Sons and Daughters,
The offspring of new cement, concrete and steel,
Peeling.*

*Where old cages of crinoline,
Scrunched and crushed,
Ours, scraped from the skin,
Like bark torn, the paper
Wrapping bodies of Us,
Bleeding.*

*Dharug people, Dharug birds, blood, fish, feathers, songs,
Sons and Daughters,
Bones in our bricks,
Our bones hold your Homes'
Dreaming.*

Bellbird.



6.4 Triptych 3: Creation Stories, Transformations and Cultural Practice creating Place



We continue with Wagtail linking ancestral Dreaming stories with the significant places expressed through her art, and how the knowledge from the landscape and its presences transforms both the storying from the past and the present through art practice and Elders' knowledges.

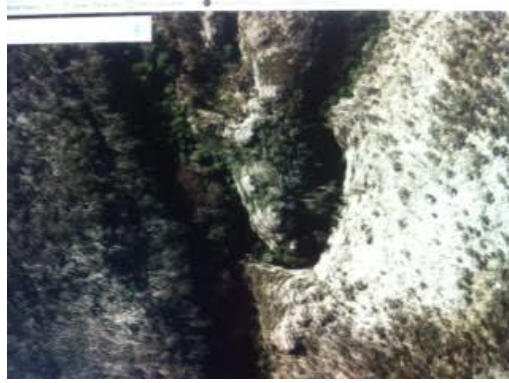


Fig. 16: Garangatch/Garangati place in Aurang Country – a gift from Nura. Locational details removed to privilege community knowledge privacy. Image: J. Rey October, 2015



Fig. 17: *Custodial Flight over Country*

6.4.1 Gurangatch/Gurangati, Mirra Cat and a Custodial Flight over Country (Grose Valley)

‘Custodial Flight over Country’ is a painting that came about very quickly and easily and [by] a process of putting canvas out on the lawn and throwing paint onto it and it just looked like landscape ...

and I just thought ... perfect ... It's the Grose Valley [in the Blue Mountains].


[The painting's called] 'Custodial Flight Over Country', and basically, it's referring to that responsibility we feel about Country, and I guess it's me flying over the top, looking out over Grose Valley, almost like astral travelling. The Grose Valley is a significant place and it flows out into the Deerubin [Hawkesbury River], and then moves out to sea, and it's also the pathway of the snake, the serpent that created [it]. The Gundungurra [people] call it Gurangati. I've[also] heard the name of Goodjiwamma, so there's a few different names used for this creator, ancestral Spirit. [The Valley] is right in the middle of Dharug [Aurungal] Country and adjoining to Darkinjung [Country], ... but it's very important Country for us and its one of the cleanest rivers we've got around here. And so, what I found interesting, because I was aware of the story when I came back down to [Dharug] Country [from up north], and I'd been reading a lot about the Gundungurra stories as well, and it links in with the story of the Gurangatch/Gurungaty and the Mirra cat [storying], and I think that's like our native cat, the quoll. That's the story of the chase. The quoll was a hunter and had gone fishing and threw his spear and woke up the Gurangatch/Gurungaty, who then chased him and the chase took them through the mountains, created the mountains, rivers, valleys, right out to Jenolan Caves, and then Bent's Basin is where he [Gurangatch/Gurungaty] is supposed to be resting.




6.4.2 From the Dreaming to Transformation: Restoring Connections

There are lots of stories. Yeah, it's a creation story, and the interesting part was, I guess, I put the paint on the canvas, and then I saw that it looks like a valley and mountains. Then I enhanced it and so I went onto Google to see the Grose Valley, and I guess Yarramundi, that place, where I was very familiar with and the first

[place] I was so connected to, and the Kangaroo site, that I took you to [Hawkesbury Heights], and so all of those places, and I used to go swimming there, so I had a special relationship there, ... and it just transposed onto this painting and so I just enhanced it and I really loved it, and I don't know why, but I put this figure flying over the top, surveying Country, watching Country, and it was sort of alluding to the Old People [Ancestors, Ancient Ones] and their ways of ancestral, astral travelling, and I didn't think too much more about it, I just knew I loved it and put it in a show up in Blackheath, and during this time we had gone on cultural exchange. A whole group of Dharug artists and a couple of Wiradjeri artists as well stayed with the Pupunya, Pituli [Central Desert] people, stayed two nights there in their centre, and they took us out on Country, developed a beautiful relationship there, and with J. C. we went down and sat at the school and talked to the kids and explained the story from Sydney, what happened to our people and why we are this colour. So, it was a very important cultural exchange, and then we went back and it was a few months later that T. A., a lovely woman, who worked with and had a personal relationship with the woman managing the art centre at Papunya, and so that's how we got the exchange. Well, she brought the women, two women down [to the Blue Mountains], some of the artists from up there, Is and M and I wasn't able to be there that day. So, it was really upsetting because I had to work and couldn't be there that day, but I was working at the jail and I don't like letting the girls [women in prison] down so I couldn't come out on Country, but D and K. M. took them out and they went to Govett's Leap [Blue Mountains]. And they said, 'I can see that serpent coming down here' and they said, 'I can hear, hear him'... and so that touched [them] M and I; the women were touched and moved by it, and I guess it was a connection to how they see Country up there, ... [bringing] that [way of relating and seeing Country] down here.

 Wagtail's account takes us into the way the Central Desert women were relating to the Country laid out below Govett's Leap lookout, across the World Heritage landscape to the north of Blackheath, in the Blue Mountains. This was using the sense of hearing in connection to the movement of the serpent (Creator Being) who is said to have formed the valleys and rivers. To hear the serpent is to recognise the vibrations in the landscape as sound. More will be discussed on this vibrational interpretation as 'reading' of landscape in due course.

[So] they came back to the Blackheath Jemby-Rinjah Eco-centre, where they had lunch and they went to the exhibition of art works, and they saw my painting in there and they just called out loud, 'This is it, this is it!', and they put their hands all over it and D. was telling me, it was goose-bumps stuff, cause they really connected with it and for me that was an affirmation that I am doing the right thing with my art, and it was just affirming the whole point of my art, exploring Country and exploring my own identity and connection with Country, yeah.

 In this passage, Wagtail recounts the relationships being woven between creation storying from Dharug Country, her painting as practice and caring for Country, and the renewal of ancient storylines through engagement with Central Desert community. She saw their response to her art as an affirmation that she was 'doing the right thing' with her art, 'the whole point' of her art, and using this practice as not just a way of making money but as exploring connections to community and her own identity formation – her spiritual practice.

According to Larrakia Elder, Bilawara Lee (2013, p. 52),

Spirituality was not something to be labelled. It was a way of life. It was what one did to live a healthy, abundant life. It was realised that for Mother Earth and the Creator Spirit to continue to supply the people with what was required for them to survive, they had to honour the source, live in

harmony with nature and treat each other with love and respect.

According to Blair (2015), Indigenous spirituality involves relationship with Country as expressed through storying and Indigenous knowing. Benterrak et al.(2014, p. 31), speaking in relation to Roebuck Plains, Broome region, and in the context of ‘nomadology’, note that Aboriginal culture and philosophies are ‘located *in* the country, the stories and songs ... strung out across the Plains and are brought out as one moves along the tracks’ (emphasis original).

Accordingly, we can see Wagtail is moving between creation storying, incorporating the spiritual present, and transforming those understandings through her practices of art, teaching and storytelling. As such, cultural continuity is a living approach that is creating a way for the next generation to better understand their relationships with place and people, while keeping ancient knowledges attached to places alive. Wagtail’s embedded spirituality and beliefs in creation beings link with Kookaburra’s storying around her dream and the Dreaming as Always-(k)-now-ing (my term), in her case expressed through her puppetry practices. The weaving of presences, places and practices by Wagtail illustrates a living approach – a lifeworking – that entwine and strengthen a sense of belonging to the stories, the places and people within and across communities.

Wagtail now proceeds to weave in her own personal journey, as a child who knew nothing of her Dharug identity and how engaging with Country enabled this discovery and how it has impacted her life.




6.4.3 Walking and Storying-up Country: Tracks to Aboriginal Literacies and reweaving the Storylines



So how do you see your identity within that painting (Fig. 17), that exploration that you are talking about, how would you tell someone about that exploration?

Because I didn't really grow up knowing about it, ... but as I grew up we used to go bushwalking a lot, my brother and I, and we used to take S. out a lot [when I came back from up north] and different Aboriginal people used to come out with us and we developed a love of the bush and of the Country. We came across so many discoveries, engravings, and that place of the kangaroo engraving

I came across that [place] by accident, but that was a place of my childhood, 'cause I used to go swimming at that place. Anyway, so I had a strong connection to that place. So to have this other layer put on it was exciting to me, and another time, when my brother and I were out there, to see the kangaroo prints engraved in the rock and then to go down and then see the kangaroo prints in the sand, and being Boorooberong – belonging to Kangaroo [totemic connection] – so we had all these connections that came up and that sort of cemented and helps confirm your identity, cemented in and strengthened it, and I guess I always had a conservation way, I've always been a Greenie from way back, before I even knew about my Aboriginal identity. So, it was an easy fit, and a lot of things that you think are coincidental, they're not actually coincidental. They're not coincidental at all but happen for a reason and I'm learning to read that now, whereas I never looked at it like that before, and starting to see it, it's much more clear now.

 Wagtail's childhood and young adulthood involved bushwalking and engaging with Country long before she realised her Dharug ancestry. She positions her early sensitivities: 'I've always been a Greenie', a love of bushwalking, being out in nature and finding the kangaroo engravings as a forerunner to the later knowledge of connection to Kangaroo. '... belonging to Kangaroo'. The Boorooberong clan totem affirms the childhood relationships with those places and engravings as '... not coincidental at all but happening for a reason'. Wagtail's expression, 'I'm learning to read that now', as a form of literacy, reflects a change in the way she is interpreting

life through events, places, people and connections to other species. It could be said that such a change demonstrates a movement away from understanding the world where events and connections coming together are interpreted as 'coincidental'. Instead, Wagtail is understanding inclusively and holistically, reading for connection, particularly to place. While there are multiple ways of reading, e.g. reading for information, reading for plot, reading for resistance and criticality, the method of reading for spiritual and cultural connection, through events and stories embedded in landscape, reflects other ways of relating and knowing. The Aboriginal notion of 'storying-up Country', and 'growing-up place' involves these other ways of creating and maintaining relationships with and for place, with other species and, by association, growing-up people, and a sense of belonging. Reading connections to Country and all beings as an act of literacy revitalises and contests the paradigm of unitary or singular forms of interpretation.

Benterrak et al. (2014, p. 29) explain Country: '... itself is not a text, not until it is read or interpreted by someone ... and then produced as an Aboriginal reading of that Country', where '... its substance is a vibration which penetrates the bodies of those listening or present.' We can see that the Central Desert women's response to the landscape below Govett's Leap lookout, as told by Wagtail, when they were 'hearing' the Creator serpent and then they're emotional response to Wagtail's art piece is an example of this.

Benterrak et al. (2014) articulate the relationships created by site-specific locations by enhancing that experience through the associated stories attached, an enhancement through relational vibrations.

From another perspective, could it be that the psychology of music and art, and recent research into frisson – the physiological response or 'pleasurable aesthetic chills' from various artistic forms, for example in music or environmental noise, could be touching on what Aboriginal people's relational interpretations of landscape have been articulating? Colver & El-Alayli (2016) suggest that 'cognitive attentiveness' could be linked to the

frequency of frisson experiences and that 'openness to experience' is a factor in its occurrence. This follows from earlier work by McCrae & Costa (1997), McCrae (2007) and Grew, Kazur, Kopiez & Altenmuller (2010). It is beyond the frame of this thesis, however future research into the connections and the role of storying-up and human physiological communications with landscapes, could provide interesting insights for non-Indigenous people to better understand spiritual connectedness with Country. Crow's storying and the importance of 'vibrational theory' in singing-up Country and stories involving transubstantiation explores this further.

The role of place as a foundational concept for a web of relationships, whether they be via 'reading of Country', aesthetic 'chills', hearing or feeling vibrations from Country, spiritual storying/s associated with Country, or continuing walking on Country, transforms our sense of how we construct knowledge. As Somerville (2007, p. 149) declares in relation to her early work with Aboriginal researcher Patsy Cohen (1990),


The idea of place ... (both specific local and metaphysical imaginary) ... as an organising principle, introduced by an Aboriginal partner researcher in my first research project with Aboriginal people, turned my knowledge frameworks upside down.

Somerville (2007, p. 149) explains further that

place has come to offer a way of entering an in-between space where it is possible to hold different, and sometimes contradictory, ideas in productive tension. It is a meeting point for my own interest in ecology and body/landscape connection, and Aboriginal ontologies and epistemologies based on land.

Thus, connections to Country and specific local places underpin creativity, memorialisation and continuity with community. Additionally, they allow multiple interpretations of understanding and ways of knowing. Localising knowledges through storying in-situ produces greater possibilities for reinforcing those knowledges more powerfully in the memory, as engagement with place can involve all the senses. Examples include olfactory (bush perfumes), visual (seeing Goanna), audial (hearing

kookaburra), taste (sucking the nectar from certain flowers) and touch (the smooth bark of the angophera).

 In Wagtail's witness story, this concept of transformative vibration speaks to the connectivity and power transmitted between teller and audience, which results for her in the creation of new artwork. For Bellbird, such connections can lead to a poem. Each of these instances transforms both recipient and teller, even if in only minute ways, but when this transformation is ultimately realised in the production of an artefact, that, in itself, can become transformative for others as retold stories. A web of interconnection grows. In metaphysical terms, vibration permeates, transforms and remains, analogous with understandings of interconnectivity. According to Benterrak, et al. (2014, p. 22) the Dreaming involves constant displacement,

*as a way of talking ... as song, as a power he [Elder Paddy Roe] controls and as things to do with **particular places** (emphasis original). To talk bugarrigarra [Dreaming] ... is to talk in a special way which disrupts the uniformity of everyday language. It is a bit like the talk which we call poetry, attributing it with special qualities of transcendence.*

Could it be that the Dreaming is creativity transferral; of knowing the 'Always-(K)-nowing' (my term)? If so, a sense of reflexivity within the process of the Dreaming arises. More discussion on the place of reflexivity takes place in Chapter 13. According to Lee (2013, pp. 15-16), 'When an Elder passes away a great library disappears' but for Aboriginal community


Mother Earth is an essential part of our library. It holds not only material evidence of our ancestors' lifestyles ... but also a spiritual connection to country and the identity of place and spiritual belonging.

Wagtail still sees herself as a student going forward, not as an expert in reading Country, but through her art and storying, she expresses her relationship with those places, through childhood into adulthood. This expression is the basis for her own spiritual life journey, her life work. It could be argued that in a world of polluted waterways, destroyed

landscapes and detachment from the natural systems that provide the balance of existence, the skill of reading Country today could very much be a matter of survival. We will later see this understanding of vibrations as transformative, and the spiritual connections expressed as ‘astral travelling’ further clarified in Crow’s storying.



6.4.4 Belonging through Presences in Places and Transformations

 We close with Wagtail’s return to the storying of the Creation Being, Gurangatch, and how it interweaves with the serpent/eel-like creature’s place in various geographies. From the Deerubbin/Hawkesbury to Parramatta, to the Coral Sea and even to Vanuatu, the storylines are interwoven through creative connectivity, the Dreaming.

[The Gurangatch/Gurungati] story is one of many, but it’s an old story which we come from. I guess the eel story, it’s the serpent, it is an eel-like creature that has been a re-occurring theme in my work, whether I’ve been doing it intentionally or not, it seems to come back all the time, and the more I’ve found out the more I see the connection of it, even the installation at the hospital connected to it ... the Blacktown Hospital, the eel story it’s called ‘The Call of Home’. It is that returning home, and that has been a main theme of my life and my coming back to Country, which totally recreated what I was.



And that links to the story of Parramatta. Would you like to tell us that story?

When you start looking at the life, so Parramatta is just one place, and we know that from the name the - Burramatta [‘Parramatta’ is a corruption of the Dharug language where burra is ‘eel’ and ‘matta’ is place] - place where the eels lie down, place where the saltwater and freshwater come together, and it’s a place where, when the eels are

fat and ready to move out to sea, which I think happens in November, with the rains, they head up, all the way, they come out of the estuaries, and they head up the coast all the way up to the Coral Sea. This goes for the whole of the eastern board, the eastern landscape, the sea coast, all those eels, way up the eastern seaboard, so they travel up when they are mature, they go up, and they go up to the Coral Sea, the Gulf, and they have their babies, and then they die there, and the babies all return home, and they come back to the same [place], wherever their parents came from they come back to that place, to the same creek, know where to go home to.

And it's also the story of transformation, because the mature eel changes in shape, and when the eels were gathering at Parramatta and it was the place where all the clans and different tribal groups would meet there, and hold ceremony, they knew that was the time when the eels were the fattest, they were built up ready to go on a long ocean journey, and so their anuses would seal shut, their eyes would become bigger, they would carry lots of body fat so they could feed themselves to make the journey and off they'd go, which is just an incredible story. And then after they'd had their babies of course these babies would come back. They're called glass eels 'cause they are actually tiny transparent things, thousands and thousands of them heading down the coast, and they're all coming at the same time, heading up the creeks, and once they hit the freshwater, they then transform from being the glass eel, transparent glass eel, into the colour of the river, they become the colours of the water. So, I guess the diet changes, and I guess that the eel story is a transformation, procreation transforming identity, infant form to adult, from salt to fresh, fresh to salt, and it comes from your own personal journey, and I was just interested, and I don't know, I even linked Maria Lock to the eels, and I don't know why...



Well, she was in Parramatta Native Institution

and she would have eaten eels, too and they were a healing food.

Apparently, they were given for women's problems. It was medicinal food and I've heard that recently it's apparently also in NZ and Japan where they eat eels. It's supposed to be very healing for nutrition.



The cycles of existence are the essence of the significance of place, connection and belonging, and through those cycles the vibrational transformations prevail. In an environment dominated by concrete, steel, traffic, congestion, pollution, suburbia and colonising mindsets, we have the dammed/damned Parramatta River, permeated by disconnection and non-belonging since white invasion and polluted by toxic chemicals from the early 20th century.



To summarise, Wagtail's yarnning has shown us a 'lifeworking' through the practice of her place-based and Dharug-placed art, through the sharing of cultural knowledges, both in formal education settings and through participation in events held in the wider community. Through her connections to presences, places and practices, we can see Wagtail has a strong sense of belonging, underpinned by values of caring for Country, and her desire to continue Dharug culture, recognising that the city-state of Country today is both a challenge and an opportunity for community.



To continue the landscape of this thesis from the 'pillars' of the six women's storying, with the intertwining presences of Bellbird's ancestors, we now hear from her mother's saltwater place of connection: Bondi, on Gadigal country. To remind you as to why this interweaving structure is used, I refer you to p.102 of the thesis.

Bellbird's Pleiadean Presence 2: Joan's Gadigal Saltwater Boondi Place (1919-1982)

Boondi, Bondi, distant saltwater under moonlit night
Thumping the sand like women of old,
Grinding the rush plant seeds for flour,
And we wait together, for their landings,
Lost in the measure of their pace.
Yet hostage too, trapped in their shadowy thuds
As though from distant forlorn invasion grounds.

So, I roll to snatch another drag from Jack's sad fag remains,
And ask, 'Tomorrow, when the war will end,
'What ways can we remove these ghostly old-past stains?'
He pats my arm and draws me close, as if our love can keep them out,
'It's enough to listen to the waves, and know we are
Resting in our moon's bright light,'
And that's all we have,
And that will do, for now.

Boondi sand slips through our fingers
And the stench of salty-seaweed sticks
Like deadened blood on a sand-stoned face.
The moon melts the black subsiding silhouettes
And once again spins the sliding slick
From ancient terrors into golden Boondi place,
And draws breath in hope, while we remember and wait.



It was Wartime, and the waves of Boondi-Bondi brought invaders once again, into our *warrane*, our Sydney Harbour. It was 31 May, 1942 when three Japanese submarines launched their midget babies to attack the shipping sheltering there. Some were ferries, some were cargo carriers, and one was the USS 'Chicago'. In they came, those deadly little three, and each was spotted along the way: one mistaken for a ferry, one caught in an anti-Mother net and the third the target of a firing squad. Each responded in its way. Little One sank a ferry and Midget Two flapped in its tangled throes, till it submitted to its explosive suicide below. Number Three swam swiftly to escape the firing line, and seemed it was free, only to find Mother gone from her hiding subterranean home. The efforts of those invading mariners, were acknowledged formally with a military funeral at the Eastern Suburbs Crematorium and in 1968, Lieutenant Matsuo's mother, skipper of Little One, travelled to Australia to visit the spot where her son had died. It is said, that 'During her visit she scattered cherry blossoms in the water where her son's midget submarine had been located and later she presented a number of gifts to the Australian War Memorial.'

It begs a question, how is it that these forsaken mariners can be remembered, and yet our old warriors, and Ancient ones are not?



The Tale of Three Little Midgets

*Three Little Midgets they did sail
Along with their mother
To New South Wales.
Little did they know
How sad stories can be
When traps and mistakes
Make sub-marine tragedies.*

*One little midget it did seem,
Arrived for the sinking of the US navy
Sadly, its shot did go astray
And instead sank a ferry
along the way.*

*Number Two little midget then came along
To give a helping hand to Little Number One,
Only its forlorn plans did truly run amok,
When it landed in our nets and got all strung up.
Such was the mess
Of this fated discovery,
That Number Two self-exploded
And sank in depths of misery.*

*Then along came Little Number Three,
Tried to salvage the situation
But had to flee,
Only to find Mother-sub had gone,
So, in shame scuttled itself
on a reef for its tomb.*

*Alone at last Little One decides,
It's time to join the brothers
In the deep Other-side,
Years come and go and tellers do say,
That none of the Three Little Midgets
Managed to get their way.*

*Now here is a tale both sad and true
Of Three Little Midgets that didn't quite get through.
As we wonder how it could possibly be
That such a watery end could be classed, 'bravery'?
For surely the truth lies somewhere more deep
That if the goal is to kill*

*Then the Sower must reap,
And as we listen to the waves of old Boondi,
Let's build up the fire
under South's starry cross
and rest in peace.*

R.I.P.

Bellbird



CHAPTER 7: Aunty Crow's Yarning – Some secret song and dance



Fig. 18: Australian Crow. Sketch: J. Rey, 2018



Who is Aunty Crow?






Crow, for Dharug, is the messenger, the harbinger of important news. As such, messaging and passing on stories is essential to Crow lives.

Our Aunty Crow is descended from the Boorooberongal and Warmuli clans of the Dharug, the traditional Aboriginal people of western Sydney. Aunty Crow is a singer/songwriter, musician and storyteller. Through her singing, both in Dharug language and in English, through her music and writing, she expresses her strong commitment to her Ancestors, her Dharug Country and her community. As a storyteller who has spent most of her life on Dharug Country, Aunty Crow connects in Dharug language to her Ancestors and community, singing-up Country through vibrational processes, healing not only the singer and audience, but Country itself. Aunty Crow brings local Dharug stories to adults and children alike, as a way of teaching Aboriginal ways of being, doing and knowing through song and music. As such, she carries important stories of spiritual connection

that have remained largely untold and unheard by others who now live here.



TABLE 1: SYMBOLS REPRESENTING VOICES WITHIN THE THESIS

SYMBOL	VOICE
	Country
	Scholars, poets, various others
	Narrator
	Interviewer
	Writer



Goomeda Nangami

Ngallowan Mittigar Guong Burruk

Didgergoor Yanna Janawee,

Tiati Dungarra Burria Ngubaty

Euroa Bulbulwul Goomeda Nangami

Come in, Sit Down A good friend is happy to see you,


Thank you for walking with me,

And strengthening my Dreaming

Learning. Dancing. Singing. I love it.

Here from this place we have Strong Spirit Dreaming

Aunty Crow's Welcome to County.

 In Aunty Crow's yarnning, she takes us on a journey that travels between places, times, voices and events. We travel back to the year 2000, when World Heritage status was awarded to the Blue Mountains National Park and in the same year the 2000 Olympic Games was being held in Sydney. Within these two events, connections were made between Central Desert and Dharug communities and, in the process, Aunty Crow discovers an historic secret - one kept for over two hundred years. This secret was only realised because these events brought the Central Desert women to Sydney to dance. Keeping customary protocols, they were welcomed onto Country in the Blue Mountains by the Dharug Elders. In the process, the unknown knowledge, previously hidden in the landscape, rose from the shadows of the 'Hidden Years' or 'Silent Generations', and reconnections from a storyline of the past could be made. In this account, Aunty Crow shows how culture, communities, storylines and songlines are being maintained in the face of urbanisation. The two stories are interwoven by Aunty Crow, showing the strength of connections between Central Australian communities and urban Dharug.

So, ... there was the World Heritage Congress [for the Blue Mountains].

People from all around the world plus different Aboriginal groups with World Heritage status [came]. So, all the different Aboriginal groups from Australia came to the Blue Mountains and stayed at the Fairmont [Hotel]. We were asked at the last moment to be present: Aunty JC, Aunty BL and Aunty from Gundungarra, because they [the organisers] asked people to welcome them traditional way. Just before they came I wondered, by gut instinct, if they were going to bring gifts. So, I picked them up and we went to the Fairmont. They brought gifts and laid them at the feet of the Aunts. I had CDs, C's book, L's painting; they had plates they had made, art from Murries, a range of different gifts, and then we gave them a gift from Country, a lovely respectful gathering.


We got them dinner that night, then next day we were going on a bushwalk to show them Country. The [local] Aunts didn't come with us that day[but] CT, SH of Parks and Wildlife, NF, from Teeke Maro, Palawa from Tasmania, [were there]. So, we were taking them to different areas – and we were going to take them to the Three Sisters [rock formation], but we knew orally some areas are female, some male, and didn't want to cross boundaries as people from all States were there, so we were conscious of that. So, we took them to a place called Sublime Point and Orphans Rock. You can see the Three Sisters from there, and as we headed to the lookout as soon as they saw the sandstone, they started dancing and singing and they saw there's a movement, there's a song too – the movement of the sandstone ... and when they went around the corner, and as soon as they saw the Three Sisters, then they started wailing, and dancing, and crying and singing, 'We have your song, we have your song, we are dancing and singing your song.'

[I] said to the women: "How can you be dancing and singing a song from here?"

They said: 'Long time ago someone come from your Country and must've gave us your song. We knew it wasn't from our Country because we have it painted and carved. We know it is your song because it is here in rock.' And that's how the whole story [of the return of the song] started.

And now it's what, 2015, and I am trying to organise family to come with me, because I didn't want to go by myself, not from any fear ... but for something so big ... and for what they told me ... and they danced it for me in the hotel room and I tried to video record it but the camera played up [Laughter implying that spiritually it wasn't meant to be recorded at that time].

And so, they said you must come over [Central Desert Country] and take back the song. We have been dancing and singing it because someone at the time of colonisation realised so much was being lost from Country, that they took the song all the way to Central Australia. What they do traditionally is have 10 dance and 10 sit down so then the 10 sitting down make sure they're dancing correctly ... dancers make sure they are singing it correctly, I gather. So, it would be ideal to take 20 Dharug but I can't see it happening. But they have since that time ... I went to ring them first off like within six months, but ... I dunno, there might've been something went on, because it was a big song to share, but I never got to hear from them.

 From Dharug and Central Desert communities' perspectives, this was wonderful news and a significant surfacing of ancient lines of dance and song cultural practice. The fact that the women spontaneously responded with wailing and singing and dancing at the sight of what is commonly called the *Three Sisters* sandstone rock formation at Echo Point, near the town of Katoomba in the Blue Mountains, would have been a very moving occasion and deep recognition of a story they knew only from art and carving. For Dharug, this site is much more than an important tourist destination for the estimated 2.2 million tourists visiting it each year ("Blue Mountains Tourism Industry Profile," 2015). It is not a site of *three* sisters, but of the *seven* sisters and is integrally linked to the Seven Sisters constellation, more commonly known around the world as the Pleiades. The fact that there are only now three rock formations visible is simply explained because of weathering over deep time and that if a person looks closely they can see where those other sisters-as-pillars would have been.

Just as all continents of the world have their own version of The Seven Sisters story, for Australian First Peoples, all communities have their own version, both in dance and in oral storying, because the constellation can be seen right across the continent and as such has its own songline (see the

opening to Chapter 4). However, this was the first time anyone had realised that a story had been hidden purposefully as a safekeeping tactic against the destructive forces of colonisation. As Ringtail Possum later discusses, knowledge of Aboriginality, as intergenerational stories of connection, was kept in domestic spaces, in many cases because of the fear of white-looking children being removed. Those affected by the policies of removing children later became known as 'the Stolen Generations'. During these times, the knowledges were hidden; they went 'underground', a period as explained by Reynolds (1987, p. 76), recounting from an 1861 parliamentary committee spokesperson:

The only reason for their being 'in a state of subordination' was to be found in their dread of the white man; it was not 'respect or love but fear'.

To the extent that this fear response was common, it is possible to ascribe to this period the so-called 'Hidden Years', or 'Silent Generations', when the fear that the story would be lost during the decimation of people and culture meant much knowledge remained indoors. Several of the women speak of the silences by previous generations which led to their own late discoveries of their heritage. When we look at the attitudes of the day from texts of the times when our grandmothers were children, we can understand why such decisions were made. As one 'old squatter' in 1901 explains:

In spite of the improved civilisation to the present day, ... there stands this hereditary barrier of inappreciation [sic] and ingratitude – the remembrance of the blood-red dawn of their civilisation. ... so that whatever a white man might do to gain fidelity in his black employees, ...he is baulked and baffled in all his endeavours by ...the hereditary hatred of the whites through the butchery of their ancestors. (Reynolds, 1987, p. 76)

In terms of Dharug experiences, Aunt Mary Cooper-King, one resident of 'The Gully' (Aboriginal community at Katoomba, in the Blue Mountains)

recounts graphically the fear and threat caused by white people and the events that led her to 'living white'.

I think back now, and I think they got me out of the Gully because they were coming to take us, because Pud said, 'I'm off bush Sis, 'cos they're coming. I'm going bush.'...Dad Essie said, 'If Pud's around, can't talk to Pud no more'. Lenny took me up to Leichhardt Street, to Abe's place. Got me out quick, see, because he [Abe] looked more white (Johnson, 2006, p. 143).

At the same time as this process of self-silencing was underway, according to Martin (2008, p. 27) research as a colonial instrument was employed purposefully to reinforce the notion of *terra nullius*, making it in the academics' interests to discount and reduce the credence of Aboriginal perspectives or voices.

To achieve this, Aboriginal People were made invisible and Aboriginal voices were effectively silenced, ignored or regarded as unnecessary or oppositional to the weight of ... Aboriginal research expertise.

As such, dispossession of stories, along with voices, was enacted in various ways, across two centuries. The 'weapons of colonialism' (Martin, 2008, p. 25), such as schools, research institutions and the media, went unchecked, at least until the 1993 Native Title Act rendered the *terra nullius* story a myth. Aboriginal sovereignty was consequently acknowledged (Martin, 2008, p. 29) and intended cultural genocide thereby exposed. As Fredericks (2013) confirms, places and spaces can never be neutral but are always political. A vacuum can never exist, because as soon as one voice is silenced, another fills the space.

However, while the process of families hiding their Aboriginality for fear of child removal played out, and while colonial intent rendered Aboriginal perspectives as counter to the colonisation agenda, some resistance enabled cultural connections to continue – those 'frayed edges' that Karskens (2014) speaks of.

Dharug language knowledge stayed in domestic spaces. Ringtail Possum gives a detailed account of this in her family storying. Keeping knowledges

safe in the form of oral tradition and dance was critical to surviving the attempted cultural genocide underway. When a people have an ontological basis of existential interconnections, then any knowledges lost creates a hole in the fabric and has an existential impact – both human and other-than-human. They are the interwoven threads of understanding as represented within the songlines and dance practices kept alive in the storying over many thousands of years.

However, this silencing is not something from the distant past. Foley (2000) argued that white-skinned Aboriginal students were still self-silencing in response to questioning by some teachers over their identities (Foley, 2000, p. 47):

... 93% of the total students spoken to no longer openly identify their Aboriginality to non-Indigenous staff. The common comment was, 'I would rather not identify and not cause a fuss', and 'It is not worth all the fuss'.

This pressure to conform to non-Indigenous people's expectations and to endure racial profiling is a continuing concern for Dharug people in the face of their desire to keep cultural practices and connections to Country alive. As mentioned above, Nakata (2012), reporting on Carlson's (2011b) study, indicates that such self-regulation is continuing due to pressures across the spectrum for Indigenous people of mixed heritage. It is in the face of these continuing forms of coercion that our seven sistas, to name just a few, are determined to fight such pressure, and why this project finds its important place in the literature.

Given that Australian First Peoples are now recognised as the oldest continuous cultures on the planet, it is worth noting that without such earlier determination to keep stories hidden and safe, they would never have been available again for reweaving into our cultural fabric. Both positions – 'living white' and 'living black' – within their context are significant and valid. The tension between 'living white' and 'living black'

underpins continuing dilemmas for Aboriginal people living in urban spaces. However, as Fredericks (2013, p. 5) notes,


There seems to be a widespread myth that when Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people enter cities or regional centres we somehow become less Indigenous. It is almost as if we have to leave our identities at the city limits, jetty or airport. But when Indigenous people live in a city or town, we don't become any less or any more Indigenous.

Yet it is the complexities, the pluralities and diversities of voices that enact place and show us that place as Country is a living, constantly changing, yet constantly continuing, system of connections, that brings a sense of being and of belonging. It is the voices and stories that entwine us with/in Country, as Auntie Crow's storying shows in her rendition of the Seven Sisters story.

I'm not an expert on this, not a great knowledge-keeper of the Seven Sisters, which is why I want to go to Mutitjulu ... I'm wanting to learn how we're connected ... I understand part of women's Law, why it goes right around the country because women married out of country, men kept the Law of land. Land and language stayed within Country. Women married out of country, and when you think, women's Law is about water, water doesn't get restricted to a boundary [so can go anywhere].


So, the Seven Sisters is about the Pleiades, and Orion was a great hunter, same as in the Greek mythology, and he chased the seven sisters across Australia, because he thought he deserved seven sisters. The seven sisters didn't think so. Unfortunately, he captured the last one, the youngest, and I suppose it's about that 'not right-way love' but that's how the human form came to the earth. But I'm not 100% sure because I haven't learnt the story because I haven't gone over there to get the understanding back. That is part of what I understand the women are dancing and the other part is the movement of the sandstone. The song of the sandstone, which I feel

is quite ... that's got to do with Country, because if we identify as Dharug, people of the sandstone, that would make sense [having a sandstone story].

 Aunty Crow's rendition may vary from other tellers, but I suggest it is within the varieties that we can recognise as part of the storying that makes its fabric intricate and engaging. It stops us from seeking universality and homogenisation. Rather, in the diversity and complexity, we have a deeper understanding of Country's vibrancy and living agency.



7.1 Right-Way Practice and the Cultural Gap


 Aunty Crow's concern for continuing cultural practice and protocols, 'right-way', in the face of modernity, underpins the next part of her storying, set against the second event, the Olympic Games.

[The Mutjijulu people] were there [in the Blue Mountains] and they came to Springwood, and they came and danced with us in Springwood before they danced in the Olympics, 2000, because they wanted to do it right way ... [But] they wouldn't dance and sing, because people tried to pretend they were from Sydney[Dharug], and went to welcome them and they said, 'We feel sick, either you get the right people or we're not dancing.' So, they [the organisers] went to get Aunty Edna Watson [Dharug Elder]. She went and welcomed them, then, all of a sudden, the sickness left and that's when they danced. Because at the Olympics we were kind of ignored, even though we went to meetings after meetings, about it but ah ... yeah, we don't sort of look the part to sell the tickets, I suppose. But, yeah, it's nice to know that traditional folk from around the Countries know the difference.



Yes. So, what you're suggesting is that Dharug participation was affected because you didn't look Aboriginal?


Um, yeah, and also all the politics around being Dharug, where ... ironically, they told us that our language is extinct, yet it's the most spoken (Aboriginal) language in Australian English ... The world speaks our language, they say boomerang, they say corroboree, they say woomera, ... so, yeah, for some sort of extinct language, the world is pretty well versed in our language.

 Aunty Crow also raises the point of colonial appropriation of Dharug language, where it is not recognised and acknowledged sufficiently. Until recently the homogenised use of 'Aboriginal language' was commonly the only referent, rather than recognising that prior to colonisation more than over 250 Aboriginal languages were spoken, and that many of those common words in use today are Dharug language. ("AUSTLANG," ; Caffery, 2002; Horton, 2000). Getting the message out to the general population about the diversity of peoples across the continent, rather than searching for a one-size-fits-all Aboriginal culture, is still a work in progress within our educational systems (Butler, 2000; Harrison, 2012; Harrison & Murray, 2012).

The politics of belonging, respect for Country and First People's sovereignty underpin Aunty Crow's concerns. We move back to the theme of continuity.


... and then there's also that understanding of women's business right across Country, so if one mob wins for Native Title all mobs should have won for Native Title. ... and also, as Dharug people, 'cause we haven't signed anything to say to the government you own this Country. I'd like the government to show us, as people from Sydney, where our Ancestors signed off and said you own this now, and you own the people and you have got all the Law for this land now, and no one can produce it, and so therefore the government has been fraudulently placed on this Country, and I've said that in public before today. And I've sent two letters off to two previous

Prime Ministers ... and I'm going to send the letter off to this Prime Minister ... yes.

 I've heard someone refer to it as the government dealing in stolen goods

... Yes. That's right ... very apt description

... none of us would be on welfare benefits or needing assistance from the government if it was done fairly from the beginning, if there was any respect for Law, custom and culture. We wouldn't have the predicament of the world, and the poisoning of the waterways, and the disgusting behaviour of Australians, you know, being the ... highest polluters per square kilometre than any other persons of the world. We would actually have respect for Country, and understand how to use less resources, and be more environmentally friendly ...

 Well, hopefully by telling stories, that's how people's knowledge grows. So, the relationship between the Three Sisters in sandstone in the Blue Mountains ...

There were actually seven pinnacles ... geologically, before they were worn out, worn down over time. Three are still standing, but I learnt from the Elders, Aunty J and others, they only talk to three from this area, but you don't know what's happened over that time of colonisation and that's why I think it's important, and even not understanding the full heart, the full magnitude of the story, once its sung and danced on Country, I believe it will help us all as Dharug people to understand more, because we are bringing back the original sound, the original dance and to me it's about the vibration. We know string theory is now a quite accepted understanding of quantum physics and that everything vibrates. So, if you're singing language from Country that's what they talk about 'massaging Country', so the vibration or geometric shape, or the vibration, that

vibes from that song and dance, would be way more effective in the place where it came from.



So how do you see that in terms of everything being interrelated?

Well, it's like a web. With the magnetic fields, and [this learning] is before I knew I was Aboriginal, 'cause as we were growing up, we were told we were Spanish ... So, by the time I was 17, although my Aunt brought us up in Aboriginal ways but didn't say it was Aboriginal, 'cause Aunt GS knew we were Aboriginal. She was Mum's cousin. We were always brought up [same] as the cousins by the Aunties.




Many Dharug have this storied identity, where their parents or grandparents kept their Aboriginality secret. Wagtail also speaks of this, as does Sandstone in her storying. Bellbird was told she was French, and this tale was told through six generations, for example. One Dharug lady only found out about her Aboriginality when she was 88. As she stated at the time, finding out was like 'putting the pieces together in a jigsaw puzzle' (Finneran, 2015 Personal Conversation). Keeping silent about your Aboriginality was a way to protect the next generation from ostracism, profiling and/or bullying at school, but also to protect the white-looking children from being taken away by the authorities. As Carlson (2011b, p. 4) explains about her early childhood,

I learned a number of things from these everyday expressions ... One was that 'being Aboriginal' was not a good thing and another was that any reference to being Aboriginal was an insult...

Non-Indigenous scholar Kristina Everett (2009; 2011) claims Dharug community is an example of ethnogenesis, based on the role of the work of Kohen's genealogical research (1996, 2006; 2010), which has led to many more people being able to identify. In addition, Everett (2009) highlights the fact that continuity of language and the *Dawes Notebooks* (Nathan et al.,


2009) prove previous and continuing connection to Country, which is required for any future Native Title claims.

Dharug cultural continuity resides in a process of ethno-re-gensis – a process of cultural re-formation and reconnections due to the impacts of colonisation. Evidence of the *uncovering* of Dharug identity (rather than its creation) can be seen through such practices as ‘Welcome to Country’ ceremonies undertaken in language and cleansing and healing ceremonies by smokings with eucalyptus leaves and branches. The revival of Dharug language use outside of domestic spaces, participating in such events as *Dancerites* at the Sydney Opera House, and artists’ camps at the BNI site, are all evidence, not of a creation of an identity from something non-existent, but an uncovering of identity that is grounded in place, language and cultural continuity through practice – a regeneration. As such, it is cause for celebration of survival.

 Aunty Crow then returns, bringing with her a strand of how geometry and vibrations are perceived as interwoven into a tapestry in life, weaving the knowledge of the physical, geophysical and quantum realms into loopings of interconnection. Those loopings challenge us to familiarise ourselves with the world outside lineal time, space and matter as separations, certainties and continuities, and engage with connections of Aboriginal ways of knowing, and their translations of the quantum physics that a western education can provide. Here we have an example of ‘Goanna Walking’, the method of testing the air for possibility through the tongue, the steps on the right for incorporating knowledge from science and western way, and the steps on the left for including Aboriginal understandings. The conclusions leave a trail as tale-tail for us to follow. Here we are in intercultural space.

I look at a lot of life as geometrical shapes, that’s just how my mind works ... not that I see anything as geometrical shape, say for example, like a snowflake. If there weren’t these magnetic fields

running through the earth, then a snowflake would be just like a sheet of glass just straight down. So that's how I see all these amazing magnetic fields interweaving into this cosmic tapestry or web of life, that creates everything. So those vibrations, those songs and dances, those old ways of knowing about how to move in that plane of existence as best as possible to be effective, but not by pushing in. You don't have to push for it, it is actually, harmonically and harmoniously working in with all that is.

 Aunty Crow's 'old ways of knowing' are spoken about by Lee (2013, p. 12):

We teach the knowledge deposited in the earth by the ancestral spirits. From the beginning of time, every event and every creative process that happened on Mother Earth effectively left behind a seed. ... All things formed during the Dreamtime carried with them a vibrational memory that holds the memories that birthed that place. Just as nature carries the memory of the events that helped bring about its creation, so it carries the blueprint of the ancestral spirits whose actions helped shape the land. The memory stored within the land is what we refer to as 'the Dreaming', which represents the primordial sacredness of the earth.

They also resonate with post-qualitative researcher and physicist, Barad (2010, pp. 240-268), who tackles the questions of continuing dis/continuities, diffractions, timespacematter loopings and hauntological inheritances through the lens of her quantum scientific expertise and knowledge of electrons and their behaviours. Like Lee (2013), Barad (2010, p. 261) states that '... the world "holds" the memory of all traces; or rather, the world *is* its memory (enfolded materialisation)'. By blending knowledges from the disciplines of quantum physics, theatre, history, and philosophy, Barad (2010) illustrates the incongruities that disrupt a singular conceptual certainty and create a deeper, more nuanced understanding about timespacematter relationships – those quantum entanglements.

The electron is here invoked as our host, an interesting body to inhabit (not in order to inspire contemplation of flat-footed

analogies between 'macro' and 'micro' worlds, concepts that already presume a given spatial scale), but a way of thinking with and through dis/continuity – a dis/orienting experience of the dis/jointedness of time and space, entanglements of here and there, now and then, that is, a ghostly sense of dis/continuity, a quantum dis/continuity (Barad, 2010, p. 240).

- Exploring the metaphysics, she questions the ontological blinkers that have defined phenomena.

What could be the source of such instantaneous communication, a kind of global conspiracy of individual actors acting in concert? What kind of spooky action, at-a-distance causality is this?! The difficulty here is the mistaken assumptions of a classical ontology based on the belief that individual, determinately bounded and propertied objects are the actors on this stage, and the stage itself is the givenness of a container called space and a linear sequence of moments called time. But the evidence indicates that the world does not operate according to any such classical ontology, an ontology exorcised of ghosts. On the contrary, this is empirical evidence for a hauntology! (Barad, 2010, p. 260).

- Against that background, Aunty Crow's insights into interconnections and Aboriginal understandings of continuing presences and absences-as-Ancestors, the Dreaming as 'Everywhen' (Stanner, 1969), and the non-linear view of time become more accessible. An earlier examination of this topic was undertaken in Chapter 1 when the interplay between Bastian's (2009) and Barad's (2010) explorations into alternative conceptions of time and their impact on agency, Derrida's analysis of 'invention', the role of 'events' and Plumwood's (2001) approaches to nature, human and non-human agency, were discussed. These explorations challenge Enlightenment and Cartesian bifurcations and binaries while respecting the un-knowings. Self therefore is a co-production, a co-becoming through an interaction, a mutuality, and an intervention of an Other (Bastian, 2009). Barad (2010, p. 258) extends this: '*Phenomena* are never one, never merely situated in the present, here and now. Phenomena are quantum entanglements of intra-acting agencies. Crucially, intra-actions cut things together and apart.' In

Chapter 13, we will explore the role of reflexivity of self and the ‘ghosts’ behind the physics.



7.2 Singing-Up Country: Aunty Crow's Way

Mother Earth is a harmonic song which is created by the winds from the Darug land blowing through a guitar so our land sings first.

Extract: Tobin, J. (2001). *Yarramundi and the Four Leaf Clover*. CD.2001.

- In response to a question of how Aunty Crow connects her spiritual perspective to her *Yabun* (Dharug language for making music) way, she is very clear (see Appendix E: Supporting Websites – Yabun).


Well that's why I sing. I didn't sing because I wanted to be a rock star, or such. I can't be bothered with the make-up or the costumes and I put my poor old son on touring - that's a lot of hard work. I sing because it's a way ... I always used to do massaging, and my hands can't heal enough, you know, so if you can sing, and sing well, then you can heal many ... and I think about all of the great musicians, John Lennon, Bob Dylan, Cat Stephens and even G ... [Dr. G. Yunupingu] – as a blind person, his ear for rhythm and tone ... Joni Mitchell, just all of those. See old way singing... I believe it's a way to actually, to help create.

From here, Aunty Crow shares some of her deep spiritual beliefs about singing-up: the relationship between vibrations and the creation of Country, and making connections between the worlds of science today, and the ancient knowledges outside of colonisation. Later she expands on this, explaining how, within some Dharug families, clairvoyance comes naturally. From Aunty Crow's perspective, these are natural talents, and a major difference to the dominant thinking around psychology and psychiatry.


Look, I don't have any doubt that those old ones can sing up possum.

 Sing up?


Possum...

 Oh, Possum,


...Creating into existence through vibration.

 Would you like to expand on that?

To me if you know how to do it right, in the right place – it can't be in any place – you have to be in certain areas to work, the right place to work, so if you are in the right place, singing the right harmonics and with the [vibrations] ... right way of body movement, or being, you can actually sing up possum, or sing the rain, ...or with the women [as another example]. Denis F., he talks about how the [Gai-marigal/Guringai] women would sing the whale in if it was sick, but only if it was sick.


 Again, Barad's (2010, p. 244) voice resonates:

It is not merely that the future and the past are not 'there' and never sit still, but that the present is not simply here-now. Multiply heterogeneous iterations all: past, present, and future, not in a relation of linear unfolding, but threaded through one another in a non-linear enfolding of spacetime mattering, a topology that defies any suggestion of a smooth continuous manifold.

 Azarian-Ceccato (2010, p. 106) notes in her exploration of Armenian genocide narratives '... it is through the chain of generations that voices of the past reverberate and testimonies endure which fuel and form present day notions of the past.' While Azarian-Ceccato commences with a lineal metaphor, 'chain of generations' to express the connections over time, she goes on to argue how entanglement of the past with the present happens through intergenerational narrative transmissions and their 'reverberations'. As such, Aunty Crow's expression of interconnectedness


across species, time, place and matter and the ‘vibrations’ that singing-up involves become more plausible. Further, as she tries to explain it in ‘western’ way, she and Barad meet again.

Western society had to catch up with old way knowledge ...it’s so true. We talk about quantum physics, but that old way of thinking is quantum and understanding of quantum mechanics ... you know they talk about the old fellows that would turn up in two places at the one time, well, apparently a photon does the same thing ... it’s a long time to sit on your bum and do nothing, 60,000 years. Come on, you know we weren’t distracted by what we were going to look like.

 Barad (2010, p. 246) walks us through the basics of quantum science and in the process aligns with, and refines, Aunty Crow’s storying.

In particular, the electron is initially at one energy level and then it is at another without having been anywhere in between. Talk about ghostly matters! A quantum leap is a dis/continuous movement, and not just any discontinuous movement, but a particularly queer kind that troubles the very dichotomy between discontinuity and continuity. Indeed, quantum dis/continuity troubles the very notion of dichotomy – the cutting into two – itself (including the notion of ‘itself’!).

While Aunty Crow may have mistaken her terms (photon rather than electron) as she is no physicist, generally we can see that the realms within which physics is wandering have some remarkable resonances with Aunty Crow’s knowledges. As Aunty Crow sees it when asked about how these knowledges can be understood, she explains:

[It’s] just being human – not just Dharug. [However] the reason why they [knowledges] are stronger in Aboriginal people is because there’s a part of us that never got caught up in ... in the western world. The western world brought the shame of wearing clothing [
*See Karskens (2010)]. ... Yeah and I think that’s why its stronger connected to us, and also, we never lost that connection because of the way we lived as Aboriginal people. My understanding is we went*

barefoot because the earth could remember us, and we could remember the earth through our feet, not by the clothing.

Bignall et al. (2016, p. 462) speak to this sense of connectivity and subjectivity as intrinsic to the 'three ecologies' of self, society and the environment that Guattari (2000) articulates as co-implications:

... the ecology of relations that comprise the existential territory of the self is at the same time part of a wider social ecology of mobile forces. And, because the self is constituted through shifting relationships forged in a dynamic social environment, active processes of subject-formation necessarily involve an effort to manage this social ecology by creating, encouraging and seeking out positive connections that increase the capacities of the self and do not diminish its existential powers.

These subjectivities are not simply human, but also include all other-than-human beings. That the earth and Aboriginal people can 'remember' each other carries the understanding that even the planet is a living being and as such has agentic relationship with us and, according to Crow, being barefoot assists in the matter. This is easily recognised through dance, which for Australian Aboriginal people is always undertaken without shoes. Recalling both Lee (2013) and Barad's (2010) references to existence as vibrational memory, the concept of the earth remembering us resonates. A conscious universe of reflexivity will be discussed in Chapter 13.

As Bignall et al. (2016, p. 465) continue, for generative purposes, knowledges from these three ecologies seek positive relations and express themselves in three ways which from a human relational dimension are resonant: 'getting to know you', 'learning commonalities to enable deeper understanding of the affective nature of combinations, or natural agreement and disagreement', which in turn leads to a third form of knowledge:

a knowledge of God or of Nature as a universal and infinitely complex field of interconnection, through which being is actively and lawfully expressed as becoming, moving through increasing levels of complexity and affective potentiality.

It is at this point that we have a meeting place, between the ‘ecosophies’ of posthumanism and our women’s articulations of their understandings of Aboriginal ontological and epistemological relationships. Aunty Crow brings us to how these understandings are expressed as ‘Law’.



7.3 Weaving a Web of Remembering: Responsibilities and Reconnections

Having ‘flown’ from photons to footprints, Aunty Crow speaks about Law as she understands it and commences with our interspecies connections that different Dharug groups have and how those relationships do or don’t work and what responsibilities those relationships imply.

So, Eagle and Crow aren’t going to get along necessarily, or snake and kookaburra; different personality types, different understandings of how you fit into culture and custom and your kinship. So, there was certain animals, and there wasn’t just an animal, [as your kinship connections] there was a whole[range] - a feather, a fur, a scale, freshwater, saltwater, muddy water, people of the sandstone, the Dharug. That’s what I’ve learnt. There was a whole system we were connected to and we held a responsibility within that system.

Here we are reminded of Wagtail’s storying around responsibility towards our other-than-human kinship connections, as a responsibility and custodial obligation to care for Country. In this way, everything was cared for and responsibilities were shared. Additionally, as people didn’t eat or kill their relatives, then it meant that only certain people could kill certain creatures as food sources, and that kept the balance and diversity of nature, so that species were not wiped out. So, for the Warmuli, the possum could not be killed; the Boorooberongal were the people of the

Kangaroo and so didn't kill them, and the Wallumattagal didn't hunt the Black Snapper fish. After all, you don't kill family, do you?


Derrida (1994, p. xix) explores the question of justice and responsibility across time.

No justice ... seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, ... Without this non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present, ... without this responsibility and this respect for justice concerning those who are not there, of those who are no longer or who are not yet present and living, what sense would there be to ask the question 'where?' 'where tomorrow?' 'whither?'

Derrida's call for a sense of responsibility beyond human contemporaneity resonates with First Peoples' notions of interspecies connections and obligations. The resonance rests in this question of justice, beyond human social justice. Ringtail Possum, later, speaks to this intergenerational obligation as a continuing caring for dead souls, with the smoking and cleansing of sites of trauma, for example, the BNI site, and that of Marella. For Bellbird, it is this sense of the need for justice across her seven generations of women Ancestors, who were made to feel ashamed of who they were, that this doctoral project was undertaken: a 'life-work' (Burke, Fishel, Mitchell, Dalby, & Levine, 2016), producing a 'lifeworking'. It is this consciousness of responsibility to past, present and future Elders, the relatives, including those across species, that situates our seven sistas' storying and their associations with place.



7.4 Spooky Hauntologies


 Channelling Barad's (2010) language, Aunty Crow flies into 'spooky' hauntological relations:

God, I love Aunty GS. She was an old spook. She had the gift of sight and she trained me up a bit in all that caper, and she knew all that, but they were sworn to secrecy by the mothers, not to talk because all the kids were coming out too fair. As soon as they came out too

fair they clammed up, but they were all mixing with each other and Aunty J had the colour but not saying who they were. But mum didn't know point blank that she was Aboriginal, at all, because she was the youngest. But the older ones knew. I mean Aunty G looks Aboriginal. Now I look at Uncles T and R, and Aunty G they used to tan up really well ...

 Aunty Crow, seeing something strange, swoops towards it


I moved out of home and moved up to the [Northern] Territory... see, I had a lot of the spirit stuff going on, I had a very strange experience happen in my 20s ... as soon as that happened I turned up at mum's [place] at 7.00 a.m. ... and we are possum people, so we don't do mornings ... so she knew something was going on ... I said, 'Something's happened' and so she took me to see Aunty GS, she said 'She's got the gift', that's what they used to call it... and she showed me the chakras, but Aunty GS would have others. She said there were others not just the seven, but ones around the wrists, feet and behind the head, there were other parts. She taught me how to astral travel. She used to talk to the ones past, and she showed me that, but I wasn't...

 Aunty Crow looks away, then continues telling of her connections beyond:


'Cause kids and animals like me are not just in this world but in the other world [too] and it's very hard, but kids, when you are trying to send the child to the light, but they are a bit scared. I find that a bit hard, and she taught me that dreams work out... I wish I had studied with her more...

 A cockatoo arrives

The cockatoo got hit by the electrical pole, and I buried it down the back garden and now one always turns up by itself, and I wonder if it's a partner ...

 I saved a kookaburra out of the pool and ever since then the family keep coming back and when Aunty Kookaburra passed there were eight that arrived.



 After the yarning, Crow took Bellbird onto what is thought to be Aurungal Country, to a women's birthing site. Bellbird's response to Aunty Crow's sharing of place, and storying attached, opened for Bellbird a deep and powerful sense of belonging to timelessness, to Country. Here are Bellbird's words:

These sacred sites are so powerful. After the yarning, I visited there with Crow, and for me spontaneous tears flowed in response, as much because as a mother I can physically read how they must have used it, but also because it mirrors in shape, form and structure, another women's birthing site that I have visited on Garigal Country – a distance of perhaps 100 kilometres away. These places of connection set in the geology of Country go way beyond quantitative 'scientific evidence'. They are core evidences of continuity of connection, placement and enactments that are transformative and empowering, bringing physical and emotional responses in their spiritual connectivity, these places of belonging.



Mother's Love

*Today is good. You have come.
Here, sit and enjoy my gifts
Warm sandstone, comforting sun,
Watchful birds, cooling breeze, new growth on the gums.*

Can you remember me? I am Enduring, Timeless.

*My track is hidden, respecting Mother's face,
Away from unknowing Ones' mistakes,
My sentries sing your welcome,
This place I still keep safe.*

Can you protect me? Yet, I am Enduring, Timeless.

*You share no grief this time.
No tears of recognition
For lost memories, lost Dreaming like the last
Just the peacefulness of knowing I welcome you.*

Can you feel me? I am Enduring Timeless.

*Here, is Mother's birthing pond pillowed in sandstone,
Foot pedestals in place,
Room for receiving the new one,
Sheltered by the she-oaks and shaded by the gums.*

Can you touch me? I am Timeless, Enduring.

*There, there is washing-baby place,
Sparkling salt jewels encrusting sandstone lace,
After-birthing gifts continuing in the sun,
Sending placental pulses powering through space.*

Can you hear me? I am Timeless, Enduring.

*Here see, see the Old Ones dancing across me,
Cicadas sing the thermals rising up this face,
Birds wrapped in the stillness,
You are here with me, you are safe.*

*I am Timeless, Enduring, and cradle you
in Mother's love.*

Bellbird, 2016.

- In summary, Auntie Crow shows us a living practice and engagement with presences, places and people through her music, her stories of connectivity to her Ancestors, the impact they have had on her life and the way her spirituality is entwined into a 'lifework'. By so doing, she brings to life her interpretations of the ancestral creation stories, and through her concerns and connectivities searches for cultural and communal continuity in her daily living. Along with Kookaburra and Wagtail, we can see a web of connection on Country that continues to play out in spite of Country now being an urbanised, cosmopolitan presence. Auntie Crow's sense of belonging, caring and connectivity can be seen not only through her music, but renders itself as performative – a spiritual flight, creating its own points of connection. Through the thesis production, we have a co-becoming (Bawaka Country et al., 2015) across time, space and matter, a timespacemattering and co-becoming time/s (Bawaka et al., 2016).



We must leave Crow's storying as Bellbird is calling us to her grandmother's places of remembering and belonging. Vi's storying reflects many Dharug who were born off Country because their families were searching for work in the developing settlements elsewhere. For Vi, that area was Paterson, near Maitland in rural NSW. However, as a young adult it was the reverse pull of opportunities in the city, that contributed to her return, where she spent most of her life, on Country. As an old woman her storying speaks of her belonging places.



Bellbird's Pleiadean Presence 3: Vi's Remembering Place (1900-1992)

Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal

(NSW: 1851 - 1904),

Saturday 14 April 1900, page 2

YESTERDAY'S VICTIMS.

SEVEN CASES AND TWO DEATHS.

CREMATORIUM FOR DEAD RATS.

A CHINAMAN SUICIDE

Seven fresh cases of plague were reported yesterday, namely Mabel Davis, Woolloomooloo;

Hugo Bogan, Pitt-street; John

Hachett, Bathurst-Street; John Quill,

Ultimo; William Taylor, Woollahra; Henry Griffiths, Glebe; and William Davis, Darlington.

Forty-two contacts in connection with these cases were sent to the Quarantine station.

William Davis and T. Kennedy are dead.

Up to date there have been 111 cases, 88 of which have proved fatal. -

A crematorium was erected at the foot of Bathurst Street yesterday, where rats upon delivery are destroyed and paid for by the Government at the rate of 2d per head.

A Chinaman named Ah Duok hanged himself at Canterbury yesterday, fearing that he had the plague. The post mortem showed that he was suffering from a different complaint altogether.



COMLEROY ROAD

Hawkesbury Advocate

(Windsor, NSW: 1899 - 1900),

Friday 20 April 1900, page 4.

News came to hand on Saturday that a son of Mr. Griffiths, fruit buyer, had taken the terrible malady which is now raging in Sydney, the bubonic plague. If this statement be correct, though we earnestly hope it is not, it is certain that Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths have the sympathy of all Kurrajong people, who also wish their son a speedy recovery.

The sun is setting as I look out the kitchen window, across the sloping rock garden, to the distant pines. Imports they are, but the cones are great for getting the fire started. Though I can't see it, further down the slope is the lake.

I'm 80 now, and there's no getting away from the fact. No more golf and very little brandy. No more drives in Norm's Oldsmobile, down to the Royal National Park or up to the Hawkesbury for picnics dressed in my checked woollen skirt, beige hand-knitted jumper, grey woollen socks, sturdy walking shoes and smart checked linen headscarf tied at the back to match.

It's bird-feeding time. The crows and magpies are carrying on, and the lorikeets love the callistemon I put in.

I was born the year of the Sydney Plague, 1900, up Paterson way near Maitland. Well that was a good thing, I suppose, being away from all that trouble. Harry had it you know, and actually, he survived. Mostly they didn't. Maybe it was all the lemons and oranges they could get their hands on that helped.

I never knew my mother, Mabel, except as my sister. I only found out that Nana Sarah wasn't my mum when I did the sums one day and asked around. In 1900, she was 56. Mabel was 15 when I was born, and I remember her as my sister. You do foolish things when you're young. I did too, so I can't blame her. She left when I was five, and that was that. I never did find out who my father was. It just wasn't talked about, and I didn't dare ask.

When Harry came to Paterson, I was young and foolish then, just like Mabel must have been. He played the piano beautifully and had shiny eyes. But unlike Mabel, I had no one to hand the baby on to. Nana Sarah was 74 by then, so I was on my own. You spend the rest of your life raising the consequences, and dealing with the times, two Wars and the Depression. Life teaches you to forget the dreams and remember the pay packet and take the opportunities when you can.

So, I left Paterson with Harry, when I realised Joan was on the way. He was 31 and I was 18 when she was born. We couldn't marry because he already was married. The story goes that the wife wouldn't give him a divorce because she was Catholic. But that didn't stop us. So, we took off together to Sydney, where he had a job and some security.

I never went back to Paterson. It was a place of too many stories not to be told, so I learnt to keep quiet about the past. In those days, you didn't talk about having Aboriginal blood, though up there everyone knew because Nana Sarah was as black as the ace of spades. Her mob, so the story went, was from Windsor, and Dharug, but that information was kept indoors. Out of doors we were French. So, we spent the years our three girls were growing up around Stanmore, Lewisham, and Hurlstone Park, and when I eventually left Harry to his bottle we moved on to Bondi and Waverley ways.

It was Norm who made the difference. I was a barmaid in the city then, and he walked in and we got along. An Army Major he was with connections down Goulburn way, and he'd take me out, in that swish Oldsmobile, up here and to Katoomba, visiting the sites, like Govett's Leap, and Echo Point. He at least was divorced. I finally had my first wedding – a simple registry affair, in 1945, when the war was ended. Seemed like a good thing, you know. But it wasn't to last long, as he passed away in '58. By then all the grandkids were born, and we got a great photo at Joan's place with all of us and the kids together. Maybe we knew it was the right time to get one of us all. My heart was always up here in the mountains, so I sold up in the late 60s and moved up here. Just up the road from the golf club, and with a lovely walk near the Lake.

I don't get out much anymore, but at least I know I am where I belong and where I'm heading. First stop, Buckland's nursing home and then the cemetery. Resting in the Mountains is a good place to be.

Nana Vi.



Fig. 19 Nana (Vi) fishing c. 1956. Rey family photo



CHAPTER 8: Ringtail's Remembering








Fig. 20: Ringtail Possum

Who is Ringtail Possum (Bukari)?

Our Ringtail is descended from Yarramundi and his daughter Bolongaia (Maria Lock) of the Boorooberongal, and from Boorin (a Koradji) of the Wumali, both clans of the Dharug Aboriginal custodians of a large part of western Sydney. Ringtail is a grandmother, mother, storyteller and holder of Dharug knowledge. Of our seven sisters, she is the only one who always knew she was Dharug. Ringtail passes on her knowledge through dance, song and storytelling, both in Dharug language and English. Like all Ringtail Possums, she works tirelessly for her Ancestors, family, and community and as such spends much of her life in custodial practice caring for Country. Her ring of yarning (Bessarab & Ng'Andu, 2010) today includes many voices and their stories, crossing generations and wrapping them in her tail-tale.



TABLE 1: SYMBOLS REPRESENTING VOICES WITHIN THE THESIS

SYMBOL	VOICE
	Country
	Scholars, poets, various others
	Narrator
	Interviewer
	Writer



8.1 Putting Matters and Presences in Place



The first step in liquidating a people ... is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster.

Milan Kundera, 1980. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. p.58.
In Azarian-Ceccato (2010, p. 108)

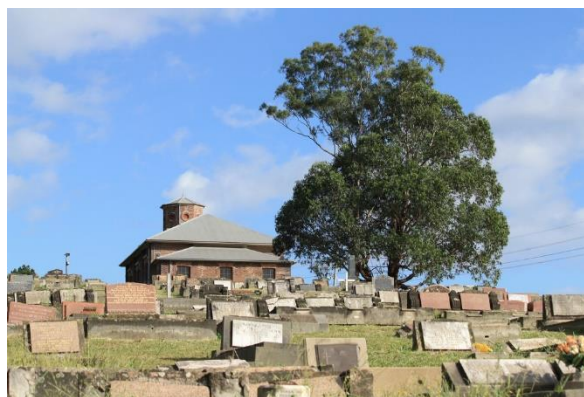




Fig. 21: St. Bartholomew's Church, Prospect


https://c1.staticflickr.com/5/4143/4752009264_24a3e79fca_b.jpg

Accessed 15.02.2018

 Ringtail will take us on a journey that crosses many layers of family storying, and by so doing will wrap us with her tales (one could say her ringtail) into a transgenerational memorialisation of the past that connects us to community, discourse and continuing cultural practising. Storying is the essential weaving that enfolds the family in belonging and creates a sense of identity. It resonates for future generations, while also provides a legacy of remembrance, resilience and renewal. By doing so, Ringtail shows us how she weaves presences, places and storytelling into a practice of caring for Country.



 We are in an historic cemetery, a sacred space where Maria Lock [c.1805 – 06.07.1878], also known in Dharug community as Bolongaia, and her husband Robert Lock [1800 – 1854] are said to be buried in unmarked graves, here in St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church at Prospect. It is a fresh December day, and we are on the top of a rise with a wide suburban view looking across to Prospect Hill. Here in 1792 was the frontier and one site of Pemulwuy's rebellion against encroaching settlements. Bellbird's convict Ancestor John Nichols was one of those settlers, given a land grant at the foot of the slope on which St. Bartholomew's Church resides and today we sit. The birds are starting to join us, and a cool breeze is rising.

 St. Bartholomew's Church opened in 1841 (see Appendix E: Supporting Websites – St. Bartholomew's Church for more on its history).


It feels nice, its calm, it's peaceful, and we talk about Maria wherever we go. But being here, it's almost like she's included in the conversation. We always talk about her being put into the [Parramatta Native] Institute site and her achievements, and ability to get land grants, but coming here feels like she's been included in the conversation, and of course the family wouldn't have existed either without Robert, who is buried here with her, and so it's like


being able to bring family in rather than talking about them. And we've come here a few times, on a few occasions and it's always felt a kind of calmness here, and so I think she's OK here. It's Warmuli Country, not Boorooberongal ... possum Country. We've never felt any kind of angst here and I think it does make a difference, and I'm always proud to talk about her and proud to let people know. But to include her in the conversation seems a little bit more real, and not just a tokenistic person that people talk about to make a point, because she was still our grandmother and still a human ...




... almost saying hello and paying due respect to all she has given?

Absolutely ... because the opportunities that she has given us continue. Like we are still taking advantage of those opportunities today ... But I want to acknowledge the black side of who she was too, the Aboriginal side, not just what an Aboriginal girl achieved in a white space. Just what she meant to our family, as a strong woman, who was able to go ahead and push boundaries, and we've always taken from that. I guess personally for me I draw a lot of strength from the fact that most of our men, we always talk about Goomberi, Yarramundi, and Pemulwuy, Bennelong, Boorin, (actually he gets a bit left out too), but we don't talk about our women, and our women have been the backbone of our [Aboriginal] culture for thousands, hundreds of thousands of years, and we don't tend to talk about them unless it is something they have achieved in white man's history, or white man's world. But just generally for me, personally, I just want to make sure those other parts of her, the Aboriginal parts of her, as the strong Aboriginal woman she was, get acknowledged as well. I always say to my kids, just remember, grandma used to do this, this, this just to remind them that there was another side to her before whitefellas got here.

 Ringtail does not differentiate between grandmothers and earlier female generations. She speaks of Bolongaia (Maria Lock) as her grandmother, whereas from genealogical perspectives, she would be her great-great-great grandmother. This perhaps reflects a continuing practice of the understanding that in the spiritual way of the Dreaming, the 'Everywhen' (1969), time is a non-linear concept, and in a sense, 'Always-K-knowing' (see discussion and explanation of the Dreaming in Chapter 1).

 Would you like to talk about those things now?

Yeah, well, I know it's probably nothing like what she really was, but we all build up an image or a scenario of the kind of woman we think she was, and we've sat with some of the cousins and discussed what we thought she was like, and they'd say 'Really?' But I think she'd be a really strong, calm, soft person, so we all view her differently ... I just view her as a grandmother, as my grandmother ... and I guess when I think of that, to survive first contact...

 How old was she when all that happened, approximately?

I'm thinking approximately around 13 or 14, but to even survive that and to handle that and to know how to negotiate that whole situation, she already had to be a pretty smart cookie at that age. And then of course, when her mum went off to be a cook on one of the farms at Pitt Town Bottoms very early in the piece, she stayed with the mob, she didn't go off with her mum, so she was obviously strong enough to say she'd stay, 'No, I'm staying', with her grandpa, and that's what sucks me in, because I was always really close to my Grandpa and my Nan, so that's what I relate to. The fact that she stayed with family and continued to, and still with respect for her father, and tried that whitefella way, [at Parramatta Native Institution] and then I guess to even have the resilience to survive that, and then in later times to turn that around as a way to benefit

her children and give something back to her mob, and well, maybe she was smart enough to know the legacy that would leave. I don't think she had the best of white man teaching but her Aboriginality and her natural skills that come with that were easily adaptable to the white man's way of teaching ... Yeah, she's a bit of a hero for me.



Yes, and the fact she could walk both worlds, and ... like one of those things as reading your environment?

And she would have travelled all over Dharug Country, and at 14, she would have known more than most of us will know in a whole lifetime, even if we live to be one hundred. So, I think the traditional upbringing and just the way to read Country, and we can all connect to Country, but to be able to read it and understand every message whether minute or huge ...



At that moment, the Crows arrive, and Ringtail begins 'reading Country':

[Here are] the Old Grandfathers ...



The crows are coming to talk to us

See, I think that's amazing, [that] we should be so lucky to be able to have that kind of knowledge ... And the Old Grandfathers are getting noisy now, because we are talking women's business, feeling a bit left out.



Welcoming us on Country



Now I am calling you through the Crows in your garden as you type these letters and they are calling you and trouble is happening and the phone is ringing ...



8.2 A Collection of Voices, Remembrance and Belonging



So, in terms of your story that you'd like to talk about particularly...

Yeah, it's kind of not just one story but lots of little anecdotes I've picked up over the years from Aunties, Uncles, Grandfathers and even my Grandma, who was white and married a black man all her life, and supported his family traditional way, and when they bought their house, in Merrylands, because my Grandpa was working and the others weren't, so his whole family, all the others, all the family, mother, brother, sisters, wives, husbands, children, all converged on my Grandpa's place, and he just built them all humpies to live in...

And my Godmother used to live across the road. She often used to say, 'Remember the days when your granddad used to be out building another humpy and the whitefellas in the street would be like: "Oh my God they've got another one coming."' [Laughter]

And you know, I guess, so all those little stories, they kind of get passed down from bits and pieces, tend to give you a really good connection to who you are, but they may be a piece of the puzzle, but they allow you to build that puzzle, so it's not really one particular story, it's just lots of anecdotes.



Ringtail draws our attention to the role of storying to enhance belonging, connection to community and strengthening individual identity. She highlights hers is not just one story but 'lots of little anecdotes', together forming a collection of stories. As we have seen earlier (Chapter 7), Azarian-Ceccato (2010) explains how within the Armenian community context transgenerational testimonies enable the present to reverberate with voices from the past. We can see this happening in Ringtail's narrative, when she relates some details of Maria's mother, working as 'a cook on one of the farms at Pitt Town Bottoms' (near Windsor and the Hawkesbury/Deerubbin River). For Ringtail, this is something significant,

that she identifies with, something that ‘sucks her in’. Maria’s refusal to go with her mother, but instead remain with her grandfather is, for Ringtail, not only evidence of Maria’s spirit, strength and independence – values that Ringtail obviously holds dear – but it also reflects her loyalty and ‘closeness’ to her grandfather, ‘because I was always really close to my Grandpa and my Nan’. Ringtail’s personalisation of her Ancestor from the scraps of historic knowledge and those stories passed down is an example of how we build our identities and sense of belonging through transgenerational storying.

Azarian-Ceccato’s (2010) Armenian work resonates with the storying of trauma and adaptation that is integral to each generation’s Aboriginal identity formation since colonisation, what Schiff, Noy and Cohler (2001) call part of *collective memory*. In Dharug terms, every generation born meets with the stories of trauma from the past and must decide whether to accommodate them within their personal sense of identity. Through the experience of time/s/telling/s shared, new knowledges affect us, causing adjustment to our sense of self, our sense of belonging and impacting our future decision-making. Such an accommodation, a co-becoming of intergenerational storying, necessarily brings past into present while transforming us into the future.

Yet such storying was not the heritage for white children in mainstream classrooms, or for those Aboriginal children who could pass for white, and whose families chose to not speak of the past, out of desire to protect them from being taken or tagged by others as second-class citizens.

The school curriculum for most of the 20th century did not cover these stories. Historical accounts of trauma through first contact with the British on Dharug Country, the murders, rapes, loss of access to food sources as well as hunting and fishing grounds, loss of language or deaths by the introduction of diseases – overall a loss of culture and its perpetuation through policies that Read (1999) so aptly describes as ‘a rape of the soul so

profound’ – this is no easy history to be incorporated. So when the educational objective is to write a national narrative, creating the myth of *terra nullius*, by *not* educating the children about the realities that took place, a deep gap is formed: between the histories that Aboriginal children receive from home, stories about what happened in the local area on Country, and those that non-Indigenous children are taught. White children are protected *from* their Ancestors’ stories. Aboriginal children are told the stories as a warning for the future. In educational terms, in social justice terms, who and what should children be protected *from*? As Ringtail will explain below, the trauma of being lied to also becomes a transgenerational story of harm.

Till now, every generation since the British arrived must make that decision, to build their identity acknowledging the attempted genocide on the part of settler-colonisers (Tatz, 2017) or continue whitewashing the curriculum. This question, of how to incorporate such histories, is part of the national conversation we are still waiting to have. Related is the question of what role the inclusion of such storying within educational curricula may play in producing such a conversation? For some background on the politics of genocide in Australia see Wagtail’s storying (Chapter 6) and later discussion (Chapter 12).

Transgenerational storying not only involves historical facts, but transgenerational questions and historical sensitivities. In the meantime, Australian Aboriginal peoples have begun reweaving the storylines that were cut and hidden, in some instances for seven generations.

As Azarian-Ceccato (2010, pp. 108-109) recounts:

For as long as I can remember, as the descendant of Armenian genocide survivors, I grew up listening to the stories. My grandfather told and retold his mother’s story in an effort to make sure that we didn’t forget. I began to remark that anytime I was in an Armenian milieu and someone would speak of the Armenian genocide, others would organically chime in with their own ancestrally anchored stories of familial displacement. I listened as a collective ‘we’ was

often referred, as in 'we' the descendants of Eastern Anatolian deportees who were marched into the desert. This 'we' was dichotomously drawn up against a collective 'they'. The 'they' referred to the Turks ...

For many within Australian Aboriginal community and family contexts this experience would resonate. However, Azarian-Ceccato (2010, p. 111) also distinguishes the difference between *collected stories* and *collective memory*, following the work of Schiff, Noy and Cohler (2001, pp. pp.160-161). *Collected stories* are 'the individualised articulation of stories that were not discovered through direct experience but were, rather, vicariously encountered. They are the stories of others (p. 160).' In contrast, *collective memory* refers to 'the property of social groups who talk about, and reconfigure, defining moments of a group's history through the frame of present-day concerns' (Schiff et al., 2001, p. 161). As Azarian-Ceccato (2010) notes, 'collective memory is thus the cultural fabric of a society and its stock of significant stories and events'. In this respect, it could be said that the narratives of the Stolen Generations would be an example of collective memory. In terms of our educational curriculum, however, it was the covering over of these stories that governments have wanted as collective memory instead. Being lied to by people in power is just part of the collective memory of Australia's First People, especially the Dharug.

In the following retelling by Ringtail, not only are we being given a 'collected' story – one heard of or from another's recount, but we are also receiving, by allusion, a reference to the 'collective memory' concerning Stolen Generations, fear of the authorities and so-called 'educational' institutions. As such, 'the Stolen Generations' becomes a 'collective memory' that binds a community, just as in the Armenian community's renditions of earlier experiences of genocide.

This is another thing, ... this is kind of not a Dharug women's story, but it kind of is, so just with talking about Aunty RW, I don't think she will mind if I tell this story. She was actually taken, when she was two years old, from in front of her grandmother's house in


Brewarrina, and brought down to Dharug County and to a place called Marella – it's on Bidjigal Country [Kellyville, north-western Sydney]. The 'unknown mission', the 'unknown everything' at Marella, and so many atrocities and hardships were done to all the kids at Marella. ... So, Aunty RW quite often shares her story so that people understand, because she had to go back home. She didn't know where home was but had a chance meeting with somebody, that led her back home [to Brewarrina, western NSW], and they had contacted people up there and said, 'I've found your daughter'. And so, when she got off the train, there's all these blackfellas waiting on the train station and she's [RW] going: 'Who are these people?' And this woman's saying: 'My daughter, my daughter', and there was this black woman, and [RW says] 'SI was looking at me.' [All happening] by a chance meeting.



See Appendix E: Supporting Websites – Marella


When she [RW] got back, the words, which she says to us here, which make me cry, she said, 'I didn't know how to be black. My family said to me, "You're so white." ... She [RW] looks black ... 'And I didn't know, and they said, "We're going to have a feast" and I'm waiting for these stale sandwiches and weevils in my porridge, and they bring me out cockatoo.' And she [RW] says, 'I'm not eating that stuff,' but the story in that is that a couple of women, our mothers, used to say, 'Keep away from that [Marella] place,' and so while it's not a story about a Dharug woman, it's about a place story on Dharug Country, that affected so many of our women ... and so many of their women.

As can be seen, Ringtail is sharing with us both a collected story as well as engaging in the collective memory of the broader Aboriginal community.

 It's like the story I used to be told [as a kid], if you misbehaved they'd send you to 'Brush Farm', and that was told to me as a place for all the naughty children, and I don't know if that's the same kind of institution, but that was how our parents would sort of keep us under control. It was this [intimidating] authority 'system' and it was always this institutional space: that was scary, it was awful, and I think that's come down through the generations as this real deep fear of the [governmental and] institutional world.

 See Appendix E: Supporting Websites – Brush Farm

Absolutely and [that includes] fear of education, because when you think about it, they say, 'Oh no, we're going to take them away and give them a good education.' Their 'education' was to put them in a little mob cap and white dress, and give them a bucket and a scrubbing brush, and teach them how to scrub a floor properly, on their hands and knees, and how you never saw them again. So, I'm not surprised how, generations later, Aboriginal families are still hesitant to send their kids to school, especially if they are in a community where they feel there is a judgement attached. But, yeah, it's kind of like with the story of Marella. My boss and her daughter have helped Aunty RW get in touch with Hills Shire Council and after a lot of to-ing and fro-ing they're now going to fix that place up and do an acknowledgement of it, for what it was, and so as Dharug people, we are going to do a smoking [a traditional form of cleansing using eucalyptus leaves] at the opening and all that stuff because that's on our Country.

 From Ringtail's account, we can see her yarning functions across a spectrum of storying. First, she is yarning as 'collected story', from the voice of government (as welfare) concerning education: 'Oh no, we're going to take them away and give them a good education.'

Second, she presents a 'visual voice' delivering a 'collected story' in terms of what historical accounts and other interpretations of history have engendered, e.g. through films such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Rabbit Proof Fence*, which are rendered to us visually with stories of appearance and dress (as also cited above):

Their 'education' was to put them in a little mob cap and white dress, and give them a bucket and a scrubbing brush, and teach them how to scrub a floor properly, on their hands and knees, and how you never saw them again.

Third, she passes on a collective memory, a rendition and context involving institutional structures as places of fear, intimidation, abuse, control and cultural denigration through the system of 'education' – perhaps better termed 're-education'. Colonial 'education' silences Aboriginal perspectives and implies Aboriginal people had no education prior to 1788.

Finally, Ringtail tells her own story in the interaction with Aunty RW and Ringtail's boss, his daughter, and the Hills Shire Council, leading to some healing through the cleansing of the Marella place through the traditional practice of doing a smoking ceremony. As such, there is a resolution to the tragedy of that place, by acknowledgement, enactment and a reclamation of that space to be inclusive of Aboriginal ways.



And that's the same with the Parramatta Native Institution...

... and the Female Factory thing.

(See Appendix E: Supporting Websites for more on these Institutions.)

People say, 'Do you mind doing a clearing here?' [a smoking ceremony to clear away bad spirits and negative energy] and 'No we don't.' Yes, some of those people were our people, but no we don't mind, because you know, that goes back to traditional Law too. It's

our obligation to look after anyone that's living or travelling or visiting our Country, not just our own. So, you know, that includes the dead. You've got to look after souls, and I think that's how we've been able to lift the heaviness out at the Institute [BNI, Plumpton] site, because we've not gone out there and just acknowledged the white history of the place: we've acknowledged the sorrow, acknowledged the children, and acknowledged that they're still there, because their own people weren't able to take them back, and [we] promised them we will care for their souls like we will care for our own then and now.

- 🟡 Ringtail's talk of obligation to the dead spirits relates to transgenerational and trans-species obligations, which supports the storying of Crow and Wagtail, concerning obligations involving caring for Country and for totemic relatives.

And it's not a sad place there. We go out and I've said to my kids, 'If you feel that wind over your shoulder, it's the kids just coming out to play.' They'll [Ringtail's children] run and play and are giggling round there now, and it's kind of funny, because they'll be talking to someone and I can't see it, and they can sense something now, that's really beautiful. They understand those kids [who died there] had a horrid life, [that] they never knew the enjoyment and they never will run free again, and so if we can do that with their spirit ...

Ringtail's account illustrates clearly the spiritual education that her children are receiving, and the cultural practice of interpreting or 'reading Country' that she is passing on. 📖 And [I think about] what that institutional life would have done. Just with my great-great-great grandmother [Ann Randall], and how they were left there and how she survived afterwards. That is a really dark space, and how they got past that, and then became strong enough to go on to have their own children ...

And this is what we have taken on board at DTAC [Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation]. DTAC is now going to take over the corroborees, and every year at around about the same time, just as we had the artist's camp, instead of a Christmas party we are going to have a corroboree, so we can get out and do all that stuff, sing up and dance up a storm.



It's reclaiming through traditional practice, so that we're re-storying that space, and that doesn't have to have concrete and cement. It requires us to re-engage with that space and just do our thing.



8.3 Yarning: A Telling as Continuing Cultural Practice



It is important at this point to address any qualms the reader may have concerning the validity of collecting stories, and collective memorialisation. Qualms around 'truth' and 'facts' are missing the point. As Azarian-Ceccato (2010, p. 112) explains, rather than looking for 'proofs', we are 'demonstrating an affective affiliation with the story being told. The story is foundational as a part of one's own personal history.' Here, as we sit under the old Mother Tree, not only is the storying collected and collective, but the place connects us and cradles us with a sense of continuity. Rather than conceptualisation of time as separated events, presence enfolds past into a 'co-becoming' through shared time/s/tellings that entangle notions of lineal temporality (Bawaka Country et al., 2015).

For Bellbird, knowing her two stories come together here in this hillside carries a sense of completion – a closing of a circle, a transmission of stories that becomes internalised – a memorable meeting of the ways – a point of transformation. She is reminded of other meeting places: the places of fresh water meeting salt water – the places where the 'eels lie down' (Burramattagal Country) and the snapper fish renew (Wallumattagal

Country). Like this cemetery, they are the places of transformation: and as such are sacred.

As Bellbird sits here, she sees below her the place where one of her convict Ancestors, John Nichols, would have walked across his land grant. It is marked by the line of trees at the bottom of the slope (see Fig. 22 below). It is a slope that holds the dead, marked in a field of gravestones, signifying a white past. At the same time, and in the present, seven generations later, his descendant sits within the shade of the embracing gums, yarning with her Dharug cousin, while the Dharug Ancestors remain unmarked in the soil but nurtured through memorial storying, and the continuity of Country. Surely, here is a co-becoming in place.



Fig. 22: Mother Cradling – a ‘co-becoming’ place – Image: J. Rey

And you do know when the wind blows up, when you’re talking like that, it’s the Grandmothers sending you kisses. Thank you, Grandmas.

📖 No, I didn’t know that, so thank you Grandmothers.

The Cemetery Sings

The cemetery sings no sad song
Beyond scripted message stones
Of lives lost and loves forlorn
Of ghosts and gruesome groans.

Yet 'Not So' comes upon the breeze
As we sit beneath the old gum's limbs
And hear the rustling of her skirts
And words from eucalyptus hymns.

'Grandma's blowing kisses', she said
With the sweep of a satin breeze
And as we sit cradled in belonging
We are embraced with memories.

'It's like she's with us still' she said,
And listening as we sat,
'Grandpa's chiming in of course,'
Not left out at all, not one little bit.

So no cemetery sings a silent song,
But rather joins on in,
It's up to us to include them still
And hear their telling strings.

Bellbird, 02.03.2017



So, which are the [stories] that you think you would you like community to remember?

The funny ones I guess, um ... but not just community, for some of our family, I used to talk to Auntie N a lot and at her funeral I was talking to her children about some of things we'd discussed, and they'd say, 'I didn't know any of this. Why didn't she tell me?' and I said, 'Well, did you ask?' They were like, 'Well, no.'

So I've always had that inquisitiveness and I've probably really annoyed people by constantly asking for stuff but they've always been pleased to offer, and even if it was a rare occasion with Auntie BL, when I picked them up to come to my grandma's 70th birthday party I think it was, and I picked them up from the mountains and drove them back to the mountains, we did so much q & a on the way up and down ...



... a captive audience

They couldn't get out of the car, late at night. It was Aunty BL, Aunty V and Aunty J, and yeah, we hammered out things all the way up and down the mountains. It was just beautiful, but it was all backing up what the Aunties down on the plains here had been saying, and so when the family kind of headed back up the mountain and my grandfather had stayed down on the plains, the letters that came back and forward between him and his sister, I have them - my Nan left them to me. So, one of those letters from my pop's sister J, she wrote very phonetically, 'cause they didn't have great education, and she wrote it in a way so that when you read that letter you can almost hear that blackfella accent come out:

'Down da gully, and I saw this snake come wigglin' out of there, and I was back up there like Flash Jack lightnin'.'

And it was just so, when you read the letter I always get a smile on my face, 'cause not only was there a sharing of love between them, but it was also just for me that connection to pidgin language.



... that voice

Yeah, it gave me a real connection to her, and I could almost hear her, even though I'd only met her probably twice in my life, as an adult, before she passed away.



Transgenerational storying, whether in print or orally, involves voices.


Ringtail's identity is connected and transforms through the phonetic writings of her Aunty J. The transmission of story in print can impact us physically and the voice that she 'can almost hear' brings her Aunty to life in a way that could not have happened had she received a 'great education', as they make her smile. It raises the question of how deeply ingrained our aural interpretations are, and yet how little the role of listening to tonalities

in voices is valued when we consider training for our preservice teachers, except using voice as a mechanism of disciplinary control. How much of teaching is performance, and how do teachers' performances impact students' ability to learn? If our Aboriginal children are taught to read Country, how does this education impact on their ability to read teachers?


Ringtail continues:

So, I guess lots of little things like that, and Aunty N telling us the story about Granny Lock [1885-1970] and how they were out on the orchards at Sackville and they used to go to work at the fruit orchards across [the river] and then come back to the reserve, and [she, Aunty N] said that she did that and that Granny used to always take the pay. The kids would get really frustrated 'cause they were 16 and 17, and wanting to go into Windsor and do things, but she'd take that money, and so they'd tried to keep a shilling here and there, and she'd give them a wack for they were holding back the money. Then one day, Aunty N come back, and she said, 'Oh there was no work today, I didn't go to work today,' and she [Granny Lock] gave her a floggin' and so she 'ran back down the reserve, back over the river through the orchards and never went back.' It just leaves you with a sense of ... 'Wow!' I look at the photos of Granny and I don't see her to be like that, but no, she was a hard woman. Oh wow, like just the things you learn about your family and then you kind of think like, why was she a hard woman? And then I look back at her life and I get it, you know. They've had to adapt, and you know, I guess they were still that last real tribal lot that really struggled to adapt, and so, you know, she probably was resentful, and she probably didn't like taking their money off them either, but that responsibility of having to look after everyone in her care and she was not able to do that, and she was not able to work herself so ... And I just sit there, and I think well, you know, here she was, she was the granddaughter of Boorin, the Kuradji [spirit man] of the


Wumali [Prospect] mob. Granddaughter of the Kuradgi, and here I'm thinking, here she is stuck on a reserve, and the indignity of that and for her after being tribal would have been quite challenging I would imagine.


 It would have been like prison ...

Yeah.


 And to be told you have to stay here, and my understanding is that they had to get permission to marry, to go and visit family somewhere else ...

Yeah that's right ...


 And every step along the way they had to get permissions. So how infuriating, and I feel infuriated on her behalf, and them not being allowed to speak their language.

 Here we see knowledge transmission, not only knowledge of what family life and the impact of mission life had been, and how the need to survive might have produced harsh realities, but Ringtail uses this story to connect her own understandings with those of Ancestors, even to Boorin, the Koradji, the Warmuli spirit man who saw the arrival of white man. Connecting past with present weaves patterns from which her own future could evolve.


Strong women in our family

 And because of their strength we've come forward and now have our own children ...

And those opportunities, and we are still living those opportunities because of those ladies and I guess you can hear all those funny stories but when you try to put yourself back in that time frame in the kind of [world] and she, she had quite a lot of responsibility. To our knowledge Boorin never had sons ...


 Ringtail loops us back to her earlier statements of how Bolongaia (Maria Lock) had also been a strong woman and how conscious she was of the opportunities she and others had been given from her female Ancestors – Granny Lock being the granddaughter of Maria.

So, Boorin was the Kuradji for the Wumali [Prospect]. He was the Kuradgi [spirit man] and he held the knowledge of fire, and that's supposed to go down through a male line and to our knowledge he didn't have sons, so it went down through his daughters and that's why we [women], that direct line, can actually smoke [do smoking ceremonies for cleansing]. Sometimes we get challenged for doing smokings because that's men's business. But we are actually permitted through that chain of Law to be actually able to do the smokings because it came down that female line. He didn't have sons to pass it to, as far as we know.

 And is there other Law, in terms of the women, that you have also received?


Well we've always been told that ... we've always grown up knowing ... that women were originally given Law by the Creator, and that it was then passed on to the son, so that he could then take Men's Law and pass it on to any men that come along. So, our Law originally was given to women and passed on, and that's how we've always believed that. Obviously, Law at some stage had to go underground so that it could survive, and I guess there's a lot of people that think, because they haven't visually seen it practiced for a hundred or so years, they think it doesn't exist. But it does, and Law is, while we had our own [Dharug] Law, Law was pretty national. It travelled along the Songlines all around the country so that, you know, if we went to Western Australia there would be similarities and stuff and there'd be the exact same processes through Law via the songlines.

And yeah, I mean, it is, it is still getting practiced and I think that's how we've been able to help it survive, it had to go underground.


 Discussion of Law and practice of Law are critical to continuing cultural obligations. As Ringtail highlights, cultural continuity was fractured throughout the 19th and 20th centuries by the assimilationist agendas of subsequent governments and their policies, but not dissolved. Instead of wiping out these knowledges, people took them into the privacy of domestic spaces where storying continued, wherever and whenever it was safe to do so and the transmission of knowledge continues. Trying to wipe out language was one of the core strategies.

I know for a fact that like, when my grandfather and his brother used to train boxers at Blacktown Police Boys Club, they'd won a fight one particular night, and were walking back home from Parramatta to Merrylands and you know, had had a drink or two and were talking lingo [Dharug language] to each other on the way home. And [they] walked under the tunnel near Harris Park, and were set upon by two cops who were standing there listening under the tunnel as they were speaking language. So, they were beaten black and blue and thrown in the lockup for speaking [Dharug] language. And my Grandma, my Nan, thought he'd gone walkabout and after a few days she was pretty furious. She was thinking, how dare he piss off and was pretty cranky. Where's the pay? How was she to look after the [five] kids? And then it went on for an extended period ... and if it wasn't for friends of his, one who was a policeman at Merrylands, who got on the phone to find out what had happened to him, otherwise I don't know how long it would have gone on for. So, language itself, even in my Grandpa's day [1910 – 1972], language was not to be spoken. My Grandma told me he [Grandpa] used to speak language to my Uncle but when he [Uncle] went to kindergarten, that's it, you don't speak it out loud anymore, because he'd [Grandpa] been taken, and the reason he didn't teach the girls


because of Nan's fear they'd be taken. So that's an actual case history of what all the other mobs' stories are ... they're the same. And of course, such a disconnection from culture, for my mum and three sisters, totally disconnected from any parts of their language.

 As Ringtail describes it, the prohibition of speaking Dharug language in public has created one of the key cultural losses, though in a very small number of domestic spaces it has been maintained.

And with language, and people say, 'Oh Dharug language hasn't been spoken here fluently for x amount of years,' and they'd often talk about it in the Gully [Katoomba]. My great Grandmother Eva [née Lock] Webb, [1885-1970] was the last woman to speak fluent [Dharug] language, but she only passed away in 1970, so she did well. So, in 1970 she was still speaking fluent language.

 And was there a reversion back to language in her very late years?

I don't think she ever stopped speaking language. I think she spoke English when she needed to, and I think when at home she spoke language when she could, 'cause there's so many who have different words and songs, and things. For example, Aunty J, N, B had the "The Kookaburra" song passed down and now we're singing that song...

 The painful legacies of racism that forced people to feel shame for who they were, what families they were born into, the colour of their skin, cannot be undone. For those whose skin whitened across the generations, had access to privilege that enabled them to hide, participate and become upwardly socially mobile through education, access to work and wider social networks, there is another form of legacy that plays out. As Ringtail comments, concerning her mother's laughter 'to cover up that pain', there is a legacy of disconnection, a rejection by others, an inverse racism because you 'aren't black enough' (Heiss, 2012); you can only be a 'book

Black'. These kinds of statements act as lateral violence: 'the bullying, gossip and family feuds that are taking devastating tolls on Aboriginal communities' (Grant, 2012 n.p.). Alternatively, should you desire to learn and are 'hungry for it', as Ringtail says, when such a discovery happens later in life, it can be considered pretension or idealistic, or even a positioning of identity as lost between cultures (see Bellbird's story). I consider it Goanna Walking as a transcultural journey. For Dharug, such positioning is part of their 'Dharugness', and involves impositions placed upon us by some others, of whatever shade. Negotiating these perspectives and prejudices is an individual task, though family and community become critical supports, especially for people who discover their Aboriginality only later in life, like Bellbird.

So, my grandad was really dark, [and] 6 foot [tall]. My grandma was 4 foot 10 [tall], white, very stubborn, very staunch. She had to be, as her dad died in the war and her mum had daughters that were 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 when he died. So, they had to be a staunch family to survive that. So, my grandma was really, really, strong. And I know when they had their first child, my Auntie Na, who's passed away, she was just beautiful. Everyone was quite shocked that she [Auntie Na] was snow white, pure white. And when they were getting on public transport to go into Parramatta, Nan had walked onto the bus and Pop was carrying her [Auntie Na] and he got spat on and yelled at to 'get his filthy black hands off that child'. And everyone was yelling at my Granma, 'Why are you letting that filthy black man touch your child?' and my Nan stood up and said, 'Because he's the father', and of course my pop then got off the bus, and said, 'I will meet you in Parramatta' and he never ever caught public transport again. Ever! He just walked everywhere. And my Nan was going to get off the bus, but then said, 'No. You're not going to win.' So that's my [white] Nan's story. So, while it's Nan's story it's still a black story.



A racist story.

She was still our Granma and had her story, and perhaps she was stronger than many, but she copped a lot. She had to go and clean rich white people's houses, so she lived the black way.



So how would you describe 'the black way'?

I would describe the black way ... So, it's family, and not having a lot, but being grateful for what you have. It's about helping your family and staying connected as you can and trying to take all the lessons that we've been left and sort them out and try to find that line where we live and honour them traditionally, while still living in the white world and that's not always easy, but we all struggle with that. Yeah, where money, money wasn't important.



Is it the values?

Yeah, the values, we didn't have to eat till we were full. You eat till you're not hungry; you don't eat till you're full. That was a rule that Grandpa had: you eat till you're not hungry, not till you're full, and I guess those values come back to [the fact that] food was always hard to find, and when adjusting to the white world, pay was always a shilling or something a week, and that had to often feed very big families. Everyone. But rather than whingeing about that, let's divide it up and so long as everyone gets a bit, and so I guess all those values like greed and the financial benefits of the dollar, those things, well it's not what our family (and lots of other families, not just mine) worried about, because they never had the money in the first place. So, you just go back to tradition and find your way around it.



Sharing resources across family networks, rather than competing for material wealth, is positioned by Ringtail as Aboriginal cultural practice. It is not hard to note the marked difference in values that have seen the rise in nuclear families and individualism as neo-conservatism and capitalism drive

globalised financial markets and western materialism, what bell hooks calls 'urban' values:

... a world filled with individualism, agnosticism, narcissism, and indifference, which prevents the germination of any culture of place and therefore a sense of belonging. It is a world ruled by the dominant ideology of liberal individualism, which feeds and is fed by the 'imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy'. (Antonsich, 2010, p. 693)

Sharing out the resources traces back to approaches that kept clans and communities alive prior to colonisation, where if a kangaroo was killed it was butchered and divided up according to each person's place in the family. Sharing is a critical value that is highlighted across communities. As Laklak Burarrwanga recalls:

When my grandmothers collected food, they saved it in a basket and shared it. Now we are putting our knowledge in the basket and we share it – mother to grandchildren – and now you have to share it with your family.

(Burarrwanga et al., 2013, p. 187)



Fig. 23: *Dance Rites*, Sydney Opera House, 2015



8.4 Placing Story in Dharug Nura



So, for me when I'm working and writing [as storying], I think in terms of [speakers of] language ... and there would have been those marriage guidelines that you've told me about in the past, where the women would marry out, to a neighbours' group, ... in order to learn their language as well as your own.

And you had to learn their language and ways and be a part of that family, but there had to be a similarity for you to go in there, otherwise you couldn't communicate. It was complicated, but it was simplistic.

Even in regard to Dreaming Stories. Like I have two Dreaming stories, my pop being Boorooberongal and Warmuli, but just being in Parramatta having the fresh water Dreaming story and the salt water Dreaming story ...

(See Wagtail's storying Chapter 6.2, concerning *Life of Eels Festival*, Science Week, 2016.)



Which is the unification of both streams within the river?

Yeah, exactly and people go, 'Which one's right?' And my answer is 'Well, they both are.'

'But how can that be?'

'Well, because you just don't question, you've got to have faith. That's the way it is.'

Because our Mountain Story says for Freshwater [that it] is all about the Creator, you know, creating everything and going back to the mountain and leaving his body there and then going back up to sky.

Acceptance

Something there is in acceptance,
That doesn't like the light,
That shyly hides between,
The doings of flight and fight.

Between those blinkered binaries,
Some fresh or salt, and bitter or sweet,
Lies the taste of dreaming,
And place of poignancy.

In those minds of meeting,
We find what deeply matters,
Streams of creativity,
Eons of starlight patterns.

Bellbird: 04.04.2017




Do you want to tell that story?


Well, the saltwater story is that Baiame (Creator) started at the mountains and created down, and when he had done everything that he wanted to do, he laid along the coastline, so he could keep one eye on the land and one eye on the water and that's where he wanted his body to lay while he went back up to sky. Now if you look at an aerial map now from Barrenjoey, like from Palm Beach, all the way back down into the city it's the exact shape of the shovel head (shark) and the snake's body.



This place that Ringtail is describing is the strip of coastal land which separates the sea as source of saltwater and protects the waters of Pittwater before they meet the mouth of Deerubbin (Hawkesbury River) and become the Pacific Ocean edged by Palm Beach.

 So, the mobs were already there? Or He created the landscape and then the mobs arose?

Well I guess, see, one of the stories from here goes: he married Murrion (murrawung, ma-ra-rong) Emu, and they had a son Daramulun, and it went from there.

 See also: Reed, A. W., (*Aboriginal myths, legends and fables* 1993, p. 19).

There's also another story that I remember Uncle N talked about was all the tribes all being in one place; everyone lived together, and everyone could understand each other, and then Baiame had said it's time for me to go; it's time for me to leave. So, this is another creation story. [Baiame says] when my body dies in the morning I want you to cut out my tongue and give everyone a piece. So that's what they did, and all of a sudden, nobody could understand each other. And so, everyone that could understand each other began to form their own groups, and someone in that group said, 'No, we have to go here,' and someone said, 'No, we have to go here,' and they kind of knew. So that's my belief from that. That was one story of how the tribes' languages split, and how they all went to where they are now. The first knew where they had to go to, and so that's the start of the Kuradgi (spirit knowledge) and how they split and went to all the places where they are now. Now I know when cuzzie J went to Adnamattna Country about 10 or 15 years ago, she came back with exactly the same story from central Australia.

 So that's exactly the same story?

Yeah.



*There is a certain resonance,
That attracts the eye to see,
A certain sense of poetry,
A weaving harmony.*



8.5 Absent-Presences in Future Places



Ringtail ponders the influences of her absent Aunties' ways of childrearing, and how they sit in relation to current social patterns of parenting.

Maybe a modern women's story is kind of where we are at. For me, now, I have an older family and a young family, but now having a grandchild is a whole new opportunity for passing on. But him being a boy, it's making me touch base with my Aunties in my head again, [my emphasis] and how they did it and how to do it the right way with my grandson. They [the Old Ones] never leave, and the little things we think are insignificant ... watching them in the kitchen ... I remember my grandma, a little white woman, in the kitchen – and this is what I mean by black way – I remember with my pop's brothers and sisters doing 'Shake-a-leg' ... [laughter] that dance ... and of course, saying only men can do 'Shake-a-leg'. Well not down here, because they wouldn't be doing it, and they remember getting Eva Lock Webb teaching my grandmother how to do it. She was adopted in, even though she was white. They didn't have a close relationship, my grandma and my great grandmother; they had quite a wild time with Eva. Well in the end, Eva left my mother her Bible, so still it passed on. So even that they didn't get along, so that's huge, and that's another thing about being black – is at the end of it all, you have to put things aside and go back to Law, and living our ways, we have so many ways we can do that now. We

have a whole new generation of people now who are confident enough to step forward.

We have our people that are more confident ... you're doing this for the mob, and the PhD, but also for the mob: doing history, still dancing traditionally, we've got people going off doing Law traditionally, painting traditionally. I think the 200 years of suffering will be really worth it ... and because in honour of them we will bring it back, I believe, it will.



And our obligation for all the long silence and for me it's a silence that has been for maybe six generations.



Fig. 25: Suggested burial place of Maria and Robert Lock, St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church Graveyard, Prospect. Image: J. Rey, 06.12.2015



After-telling:



I'd just like to close now with a question. OK, prior to you telling your stories, I asked you about how being in this place, how that was going to influence your telling. Now that you have finished your telling would you like to tell me how it *actually* influenced you?

I came down here with it in my head, I was going to sit with you and tell you particular things and that hasn't happened. We've talked a lot of women's stories and women's business but fractured, like puzzle pieces that have to be pulled together. I wanted to include my grandmother in the conversation and I'm really glad I did it here,

because I'm still feeling really peaceful. It's been a beautiful day, and all the things that my Aunties have taught me to look out for have happened. And the winds once again have just blown up, which is their way of acknowledging us and sending us their love, a perfect place, and the Grandfathers [Crows] came to have a chat with us, and I think it's been the right choice, even though a lot of people would say it's a cemetery, it's a really sad place, but I think it's been the perfect place to have a chat. And I guess too, when talking about the future, what better place to do that than sitting in our past, and it's nice to be able to sit and chat without constantly being challenged on your thoughts and sit there and talk and get it all out and being with like-minded people. It's a nice way to go and thank you, Bellbird, for having me as part of your project, I'm excited.



In summary, Ringtail's contributions are centred on passing down stories from her Ancestors, talking us through the gap between Dharug knowledge as she has received from her forebears and how others engage with wider understandings. In the process we can see how transgenerational storytelling strengthens a sense of belonging to Country, community and family as our human and other-than-human connections weave within Dharug Nura, physically and metaphysically into a relational web (see Figure 51 – Dharug Nura Web). Ringtail's connections to presences, both living and past, as we saw through her interpretation of the arrival of the 'grandfathers' in the cemetery, where Maria and husband Robert are 'listening', illustrate the living expression of cultural continuity, through presences, places and people. In contrast to Aunty Crow and Wagtail, for example, engagement with the political discourse also involves the 'funny stories'. Focusing on the humorous memories, lightens any sense of mournfulness that may be associated with the dead, and contrasts with the other storytellers in our project. At the same time, Ringtail's renditions are not dismissive of the

pain and suffering that Ancestors have endured, as her telling of RW's experience keeps the very real difficulties of the past in the foreground. What we see from Ringtail's contribution is the living connectivity to and enhancement of cultural continuity, through the presences as Ancestors and 'Grandfathers' as Crows, the places of significance, as this cemetery shows, and the practice of transgenerational storying, both as collected story and collective memory. As such we have on display one place of her belonging, her practice as caring and participation in cultural continuity.



Bellbird's Pleiadean Presence 4: Mabel's Place of Dark Absence (1885 - ?)

BIRTH TRANSCRIPTION from NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages	
Registration Number	*****
Date of Birth	...1900
Birth Place	SALVATION HOME, ALBERT STREET, WICKHAM
Sex	Female
Father	NOT LISTED
Occupation	"
Father's Age	"
Father's Birthplace	"
Date of Marriage	"
Place	"
Previous Issue	"
Mother's Maiden Name	MABEL HEART, SPINSTER
Mother's Age	15
Mother's Birthplace	PATERSON, N.S. WALES
Accoucheur	
Nurse and/or Witness	ISA CARTNER
Registered	28 th July, 1900
Comments	

Fig. 26: Adapted copy of Gertrude Violet's Birth Certificate... with Absence-Present

I'm sorry but I had to go. I was in a very bad place back then. Just so ashamed and nothing else could be done. They said it was for the best, and at 15 who was I to argue? I was a 'moral defective' and had a 'mental deficiency' ... and so they sent me to 'The Lighthouse' for your birth. But they didn't know the real story, and I wouldn't tell them for all the world. Some things are just best left unsaid, and so I walked away. But not straight away.

Indoors, as a tiny baby, you stayed with me. Out of doors, you were Sarah's. Of course, there was talk. There always is, isn't there, especially in a small place like Paterson. It was suffocating.

*There was nothing left but to make another go of it. More lies to tell,
more doors to close behind me. So, the tale began. It started with us
being French, and then I changed my name to Heart, and left that
with you as a trinket to keep for the future.*

Mabel

'Moral defective' was a category of 'mental deficiency' that was applied to children and adults who were considered of normal intelligence, but who engaged in sexual or criminal behaviours that were disapproved of by authorities. The term tended to be applied to more females than males and although it was applied to prostitutes and habitual criminals, much of the behaviour experts 'diagnosed' as 'moral defective' was mild and would not be considered a problem today. 'Moral defectives' were considered to pose a risk to society, so were institutionalised for long periods, often in the harsher sections of industrial schools, reformatories and jails. Unmarried mothers were often described in this way, as were children and young people who had suffered sexual abuse. See Appendix E: Supporting Websites – Rescue Homes and Franklin (2011, 2014) for further background to these types of institutions.

The Rescue Home began in the late 1880s. It was in Albert Street, Wickham, but the number and exact location is unclear. It was run by the Women's Temperance League and/or affiliated with the Salvation Army (SA). Its purpose was to pretty much provide a safe house for fallen women and/or street girls. I don't know whether it catered for other clients but the articles I photographed contained phrases such as 'villainous men'. The name changed in the early 1900s and by this stage it was definitely operated by the SA. Eventually the organisation moved to Merewether and Wickham house was no longer used (Link-up, 2017 Personal Conversation).



Absence came upon me one day
And in Absence do I breathe,
As a footprint rises from its indent
So, Absence inscribes me.

Absence arrived as Present in my life,
Where Presence once had slept,
Now Absence lives as forcefully,
Where Presence once had dreamt.

In Absence I's eternally
Reside beyond horizon's line,
While Presence washes up along the sand
With every recurring tide.

As every Story ever told
Relies upon the teller
So, every Absence ever lived
Denies a Present giver.

As every song spun through a tune
Requires a love for spacing
So, every silent melting sun,
Needs a Present night embracing.

As we live in Absence's Presence,
Like a story lives in us
So, Presence absent continues
Forever ashes into dust.

But in Absence's always presence,
Silent as the sun's demise,
Grows Acceptance in the midnight,
And life's Present in day's bright skies.

In daylight, we walk accompanied
By Inversions of ourselves,
Only momentary glimmers
Reveal our Shadows to our Selves.

©Bellbird, January 2017.



CHAPTER 9: Bushytail Possum: A Story of Belonging, Caring and Connecting








Fig. 27: Common Brushtail (Bushytail) Possum. Sketch: J. Rey, 2018

Who is Bushytail?

Our Bushytail is descended from Kitty, of the Warmuli (Prospect) clan of our Dharug people in western Sydney. She also has a Maori heritage. Bushytail is a mother, educator and bricolage storyteller, using materials from Country to create items and traditional practices for the continuation of skills and stories that have been maintained for thousands of years. Working with stringy bark from our trees, gumnuts, possum skin, shells, cockatoo and emu feathers, she makes jewellery, costumes and head decorations for ceremony and dance occasions. As such, Bushytail is a holder of important Dharug knowledge. Along with Ringtail, she also passes on her knowledge through dance, song and storytelling, both in Dharug language and English. Like all possums, she works tirelessly for her Ancestors, family and community and spends much of her life in custodial practice, caring for Country and reinforcing core values.

**TABLE 1: SYMBOLS REPRESENTING VOICES WITHIN THE THESIS**

SYMBOL	VOICE
	Country
	Scholars, poets, various others
	Narrator
	Interviewer
	Writer

**9.1: Placing Bushytail's Storying**

Bushytail possums range across Country frequently, though their favourite places are constantly revisited. Today we are in Bushytail's very special place, where she and her partner have raised their family to be connected to Country. Their family story is grounded in this place, a site in the Blue Mountains, where the waratah rises at the headwaters of the Grose River, not far from the place of the Garangatch/Garangati, Serpent/Eel Creation Spirit, as mentioned in Wagtail (Chapter 6.2) and Ringtail's (Chapter 8) storying. It is also the place of the Aurang clan of the Springwood area. Later Bushytail will take us also into Durramattagal (Turrumurra) Country, in the context of a women's cultural sharing weekend, and Goanna will visit along the way (see Figure 1 to locate these areas). Among all these physical places, we also wander through places of storying, belonging, crafting and learning, creating a weaving space for yarnning about culture, caring, connectivity and creativity.



Nula Gumada

ngara gumada
naalabiyuni gumada
nula gumada
dijurigura gumada

baraya gumada
dangura gumada
dyalgala gumada
ngubadi gumada

Here, there, everywhere, Gumada

Listen, think, hear, spirit
Look, see the spirit
Here, there, everywhere spirit
Thank you for spirit


Sing to spirit
Dance with spirit
Embrace spirit
Love spirit

©Song by Bushytail, 2015.




Today, the rains have poured. The heady perfumes of eucalyptus drip from the gum trees, beckoning us to walk further down the slope towards the neighbouring sandstone rock shelter. Bellbird's cousins give away their presence as the watery mists rise from their hollows down in the gully below us. Bushytail struggles with a heavy cold and sodden leaves that make it difficult to do a smoking for cleansing and preparing our presence for the Ancestors of place. Bushytail sings-up Country in language, as the bush beauty and vitalities surround us. Our presence is noted. The sandstone waits and the bellbirds fall silent. Listening starts and with wet logs for seating the storying begins.


9.1.1 Storying Bushytail's Place

 You speak about story ... Is it only humans that have story? Are we beyond biology and geology ...?

A lot of our stories, like Law stories... talk about the creation period and how we came to be, creative beings that created animals and we are looking at our Dreaming and it was passed down. That was Law, to show us how to live and so I believe everybody has a story, we have a past, present and future, and for myself I think of the Dreaming, and I think of the creation and how we are connected to our spiritual totems through which these animals give us meaning, life, and we are connected to everything. And we all have a story and we all have a part to play together.

 A bigger story...So the rocks have a story?


Yes, they have life.

 So, it's not just humans or animals, or things with life so inanimate objects are felt to have presence and life.


And power. And we have very significant sites, which we believe have Ancestral Beings still in the rock that are sleeping.

 Are you aware of the story with this (rock shelter)?


No, I'm not aware if it has a particular story and whether it has an Ancestral Being in it. But for us it's living and it's alive and we respect this beautiful rock shelter over here ... It's Mother Earth and so it's alive and we are caretakers of this beautiful rock.

 And it does have a presence in the landscape and it's totally interacting with the animals who live in this area as well?


Absolutely, and it's beautiful up the top if you go up there.

 In terms of telling your story today, will you be impacted in the way you tell your story because you're here, rather than at the house, for example, if it had been pouring with rain?

For example, when I thought it was going to be raining, it made me feel really sad, because for me telling the story there is not going to have the same impact as if I was here on Country, so I am glad the sky opened, and the sun came out.

 Yes, so when you say it impacted you and made you feel sad, would you say there is a strong relationship between the telling and the place and not just for you but all people ... is it a Dharug thing, or a consciousness thing perhaps?

I've never thought of it that way, I just know that with my upbringing, I think it's an innate thing. When you're telling a story you can be as creative as you want and be a story teller, and you can imagine that place in your head, but there's nothing like being in that place and telling the story because you feel so connected in the present.

 Would you like to tell us how you are feeling now?

I'm feeling really happy and relaxed spiritually, I'm looking around and I'm at home. This is our family place, we have good memories where all the children have been here and lots of good laughs and you can have that anywhere on Country ... but to know this is a place where I have learnt lots of cultural things from this place and L. has been my teacher, in terms of this place, and shown me different pathways and we have ... the rock shelter, further down steep into the bush where myself and children spent time there ... you feel like you are with your Ancestors, and you feel like they are watching and walking with you and you feel you are coming across things to show they were here, whether it's our artefacts, or a sound, for example

*the lyrebird, who helped L. find this place, for us to be down here,
and sometimes you'll hear the lyrebird, when she tries to mimic you
... even that special connection to the lyrebird.*



In terms of your own mother's Country – Prospect – do you have the same sense of connection or as strong or differently as here?

When I go to Prospect it is an overwhelming sadness – it needs healing, that place, and it's hard to heal a place when you are surrounded by industrial infrastructure and housing, and so we haven't quite found a place. Of course, there's Prospect Hill but there's a lot of busy stuff, so for me my connection is not severed but it needs powering up.



So how would you anticipate doing that if you had the chance to power it up?

Well, I have been talking to some other cousins and we want to start replanting around there, and go there, not perform ceremony, but just be able to cleanse the area and put our spirit back in there.



From the outset, Bushytail recognises the underpinnings of place as steeped in storying. Her connectivity to place is expressed through her spiritual beliefs, which are associated with Dreaming stories and provide guidance as ancient Law for living and ways of caring for Country through relationships to human and other-than-human beings. Her sense of belonging to this place is clear when she says, 'I feel really relaxed spiritually ... and I'm at home.'




9.1.2 Bushytail's Belonging Place




Yeah, so that relationship between place and a sense of belonging ... Do you have a sense that even though there's a lot of concrete, cars, etc. in Sydney it's a ruined space?

I will give you an example. Yesterday my energy was so low, because we spent the day in the city – and while there are beautiful places, like the Botanic Gardens, I couldn't wait to get home, and jump in the shower. But we have evolved, we have to accept the way of the world, but for me, I thank goodness, we have national parks.

 So, your spiritual connection to this place [on Aurungal Country] is based on family or to you individually?

Well, for me, both. Initially I wouldn't have this connection if I hadn't met L. and this was the place we shared. I was pregnant at the time, but we did come one or two times down here, but for me just walking around here myself, having my own connection to Country – going into the rock shelter down there – the Wombat Dreaming we call it here, because of all the little families of wombats over there. But there's all creatures, but the dominating factor for me is the beautiful wombats, and my connection, my walking through the waratahs – and the sacred feeling...

 You can really feel the energy here and it would have been a great spot.

... and having fresh water down there when we need it. We've had family here and [to] share this beautiful place with them is even more connected.

 How important is that connection for psychological wellbeing?

I mean ... one example. One person come down here, and asked for some help, to be away from everything. We've told him the rules of the place – but he didn't do the right thing, and left rubbish here – didn't respect our area – and we talk about karma or “payback”, because that is part of our culture payback, and so the police came down this service road and his car was unregistered – so he got booked. ... Because for us we sign in here, we come down very

respectful, and there is a place down there where L. has signed into Country and when M. is old enough he will sign in too...



I don't know what that expression means.

It means our hand stencil going on. It's an even more special spot.



9.1.3 Placing Identity



Like Crow, Wagtail and Ringtail, connection to Country is critical to Bushytail's sense of identity. As we shall see, identity is interwoven not only with place, but also with the politics of place, colonisation and, more recently, questions raised around Aboriginal identification and some of the consequences associated with that. Additionally, identification with and across landscapes has been particularly associated in Australian transcultural spaces. As Percopo (2009, p. 110) reminds us:


... landscape is not merely static but rather a dynamic concept, being part of the travel and movement that inevitably landscape the lives of people belonging to transcultural milieus. As a cultural and social construct, landscape is also always open to transformations.

As such, and as we will see, place as space across our identities and how we identify through connections with materials on Country engage a crafting both of and with the materials from place, but a crafting of our sense of belonging and self in the process.


[So] my story is where I come from. I wasn't born on Dharug Country, but I have Ancestors – my grandmother, this is her country on my father's side. My mother is from New Zealand. The majority of the time we were brought up in Australia but there was a significant part of my life when I was 17 I went back to my mum, and I spent nine years in New Zealand, when my parents separated over here. We were moving around a lot, and we went to Brisbane, but I knew that our Country was here and my Nan had always said, and she told me I

was Aboriginal at four or five years old, and 'Don't you forget it ... and you may be Maori, but you're black.' So, she talked about her time growing up, so historically she never shared any Dreaming stories, or growing up culturally, but certain things she shared with me that shows me what her mother did, and her grandmother did: going out on Country, going bush, making Johnny cakes, because they lived very simply. So, she was still living culturally but they wouldn't have seen it that way as it was part of living and survival – so and my Nan does talk about the struggles, that her and my pop had, moving around because work was hard, and so targeted by police.

So, they identified at that time. I know my pop did, I'm not sure how far my Nan identified, but they were targeted by police ...

 At this point, Bushytail focuses on her identity as Aboriginal and the connection maintained through her grandmother.

Nan – she's always instilled who I was, but how far she went with identifying, but grandfather was Dharawal. She'd always told me the story of her mother, having to be hidden in the sugar sack when going on the back of the horse and cart. 'Cause they lived around Surry Hills, Redfern, because she was quite dark although she wasn't taken away because she was seen as a half-caste. That's a story Nan talks about. She was hidden so she wouldn't be taken away, so she was open about that.

 For Aboriginal children, the relationships with and influence of grandparents in their identity formation can be seen to be critical. As Lee (2013, p. 14) asserts of grandparents:

We are often the keepers of traditional knowledge and the advisors to the younger generations ... We have many opportunities to pass on the values and beliefs of the culture to them ... Through this relationship, children learn their lineage, their history and many

values and skills. They learn about their connections to the land, their country. This cultural inheritance lays the foundation for young people to construct their personality during childhood and adolescence and adds great meaning to their existence.



9.1.4 A Crafting Learning Place



And so, creating a piece of work if you could speak to me about the ... relationship you have with place and how you create your pieces? What is the relationship between the creativity that you have using the materials and from that particular place ... what comes first? The place? Then you choose the materials? Or do you choose the materials and then the place?


It works both ways. So, for example, over the next few weekends I will be in Parramatta demonstrating plant use, and weaving in relation to Parramatta area, and what they have. So, I wouldn't come up here to choose materials and fibres from here, I would go to Parramatta to around that place to where there are special spots to gather my materials because I am demonstrating particular plant fibres from that place, there. For me it's that spiritual connection to that place - Burramatta— and I know I can get Lomandra [longifolia, commonly called RTA grass because it's often grown on median strips] from anywhere, but for me it's all about honouring that part of Country.



So, in terms of your artwork, how did that all come to be?

At school, I'd always been artistic, and always had visual arts or music, a natural ability. It wasn't until I was through having my children, while doing so, finding time to be creative, and being with other women who had small children [that I could get involved]. ... It was also when living on the Gold Coast, through school, and yeah, through family, but it wasn't teaching me anything. But, say, on the beach, I'd find the middens, shells. I had that feeling people had


walked here before, and with particular weaving materials there, I'd just be doing it myself, and having these ideas and felt I knew what I was doing. But that's not my Country, but I had a yearning to be making and doing, rather than just sunbaking.

 So you feel it's an innate aspect of your identity to be engaging this way with Country and resources?


So, I guess, I became really involved in creating all my pieces of art, over the last ... well, there were different phases. Weaving was when I was growing up. Then that stopped when I came over here in 1999 and I had had my two older sons. ... It wasn't until I started to go to Uni that I was put on an alternative pathway, and I found that quite interesting, interviewed by a panel, and had to take my genealogy, and had to do this and that. This is the confrontation that I had. They didn't know me. I found that quite disrespectful but had to do it because I was Aboriginal.

 So did you feel that is discriminatory or just differential?

I felt offended that I had to prove that I was Aboriginal, when I'd grown up knowing that I was and then, all of a sudden, I was being questioned.

 And who was doing the questioning?

An Aboriginal woman.


 And how did that make you feel?

I got cranky with her because I was asked, 'Would you be inclusive teaching children from different backgrounds?' Well, no [meaning, no that's not right] – I treat everyone the same. She didn't like my answer and then [she said:] "You're either Aboriginal or you're not." [From my perspective] it's because it doesn't matter who you are –

you should be proud of all sides. And she goes, 'You're either Aboriginal or you're not,' and I said, 'I beg your pardon?'

[I'm going] 'You don't know who I am. You don't define me. I feel disrespected. I would love to come to Uni, to finish my degree to make a difference in the world and share culture – but I am Aboriginal and Maori ...' and I got in. She looked at my genealogy, 'Oh yeah, you're a blackfella.' And I'm thinking, 'God she called me a "blackfella". Maybe I came across as too staunch ... back in 1999.


At Uni I did education, Primary P-10 bracket – [a Queensland model.] Then I fell pregnant and deferred a year, but I did get in and we all accepted one another, and all were from different mobs.

 Bushytail's account of identity challenge by other Aboriginal people and her associated transcultural identification is one of the ongoing issues for Dharug community. This is because allegiances are demanded in response to political and colonisation histories that have torn apart the community connections between Aboriginal peoples. As we saw in Kookaburra's story (Chapter 5.1), the creation of the puppet troupe *Yarramundi Kids* as predominantly white-looking puppets was directly in response to the need for Dharug children and other Aboriginal children to recognise Aboriginality beyond stereotypical appearances. Carlson (2011a) points out that while confirmation of identity may originally have been intended as an instrument for reparation of damages done in the past by colonising governments, now it is also used as an instrument of self-regulation within and across Aboriginal communities themselves.


 So, did you practice singing, dancing, weaving, possum skin work there?

Possum skin was more during my time here in Sydney, while singing has always been there – I've written many songs, though not just in Dharug language, but Maori language. There is a difference singing in language. For me language is how you express yourself, movement, body language, then able to speak your first words, for


me, it's my first love, language, because it is so expressive, and it is our connection to everything.

 So, did you learn any language growing up?

I learnt Dharug as an adult. I researched it on the Gold Coast. I had a yearning to be here, I dreamed about it. I felt it calling me. The first time when I was in New Zealand just before coming over here, and saw on TV, and it was Colin Gale being interviewed and he was calling on Dharug people and I didn't know who he was ... it was to do with Native Title, before 1999. I only knew about the start, of Granma Kitty. I didn't know where it all fitted in. It was just some interview.


 And just by chance, fate.

[I thought] he's got to be connected to me, he's talking about my mob, and I couldn't believe it. Yes, I was so excited ...

 How do you feel those kinds of experiences moved you into a different path?

I just had to be there and was not just about being part of the movement about the Native Title, but just wanting to be there on Country. I just wanted to learn ... to suck it in ... but the possum making has only happened in the last ... 2007.

9.1.5 Boundless Places and Presences

 How does possum skin relate with Dharug? Did all Dharug use possum or only certain people? Or like western Sydney Dharug? Or certain, like, Boorooberongal are people of the kangaroo – how does that notion of the totem and the use of the material interact?

No, Boorooberongal are the people of the kangaroo.



How does that notion of the totem and the use of the possum-work?

My family is Possum. Prospect people are of the Possum. Possum is my totem and we always have a spiritual connection to Baiame, and that's my actual language name.



Did your grandmother give you that name?

No, the possum I had always had a spiritual connection to but [Baiame name] and it was given to me by my grandfather, but he wasn't Aboriginal. I want to talk about knowledge that can be passed down. It doesn't mean the teller of the knowledge has to be Aboriginal. I've come to know and now with my journey and certain things with Law [can come from anyone]. Baiame doesn't see black or white, he sees us as people, he's not prejudiced, it doesn't matter where you come from, you're from this place.



That's a nice learning.

Lots of people don't get that. 'Separateness' and 'boundaries' wasn't a word for us. We didn't war. I personally won't kill my own totem, and of course we can't kill possums here [in New South Wales] as they are protected. ... Kangaroo was mainly worn by the men. I can't speak for every clan, but from a Dharug perspective though, and from what I've been taught and shown, it doesn't mean women couldn't wear kangaroo either, because we interchanged. It was a way of being warm and sheltered; it was a token gesture to make something and give it to someone else, and rules around totems are sacred – but if we are talking about kangaroo and possum, we had plenty of them. We traded with other mobs and had a balance.



Will you be continuing that practice of the skin with your children?

He [M.] has a spiritual totem and it's from around where he was born – his particular - who he is – as caretaker of the Eastern Waterdragon, ... so that's his, and will be his responsibility.



So, what about your use of materials and the relationship with Country?

If I don't use materials on Country, I feel I'm not being authentic, not true to the end product, like I've ... taken a short cut. So, for example we did a Parramatta demonstration, and so I make my own weaver, rather than using a needle. If I use a needle I feel I'm disrespectful, [so I'm] trying to be true to the process ... and I use [commercially available] beeswax [if I don't have native beeswax], because it's still natural [so I guess it's hard to find native bees wax on Country] so we do have lots of materials. So, for example, if there was a kangaroo that got hit:

L. will say: 'I hit one' and I'll say: 'Did you? Where is it? Have you got it? We need its teeth and its tail.'


And he says, 'Bub, you could ask if I am ok. (Laughter) ... Well, I got the leg.'

'Is that all? – Did you send him back to Father Sky?', because we don't like to waste anything.




Bushytail's dedication to doing things in a manner she considers culturally correct, and the significance of spiritually wrapping the act of butchering the carcass by 'send[ing] him back to Father Sky' is another example of the lived experience and practice of culture. As such, we can see the continuity both spiritually and in practice of Bilawara Lee's (2013; 2000, p. 11) statement that:


Aboriginal people believe that all life, human, animal, plant, and mineral, are part of one vast unchanging network of relationships which can be traced to the great spirit Ancestors of the Dreamtime.

 So, the use of the parts of the animal is an honouring process, rather than wasting it?


... but if you can't take it, put it back in the bush so that Mother Earth and for the other animals ...

 And so, you know how to look after them, and dry them –

I learnt from Aunties and Uncles, (not just from L.) sharing knowledge – [from those] that have gone through initiation. So, a lot of my knowledge has come from Law women and Law men.

 Are you an initiated woman?

No. I haven't gone through the first processes of Law. I've been out with women, but

 Bushytail at this point asked the interview to be cut here out of respect for the process of undertaking Law. It was not considered respectful to push her to tell more than she felt comfortable with.

On the way back to the car, we passed a beautiful waradah/waratah flower standing against the backdrop of burnt-out bush from recent fires. It stood as our women's symbol of resilience, renewal and resolution. All these understandings were on display this day: Bushytail's resilience in spite of her unwellness, her renewal with place as we sat in the dampness of the rain sodden logs and yet knowing that those same rains would bring renewal to Country through the blessings of the downpour and our resolution to continue her storying and sharing on Country at another time when she could manage it.





9.2 Sharing Place: Ways of knowing and doing as being, belonging and becoming



9.2.1 Placing Ways of Knowing and Doing

- The second part of Bushytail's storying is happening on Durramattagal (Terrumattagal/Turrumurra) Country during an Aboriginal women's workshop weekend, organised as part of the Barangaroo Arts Project in the springtime of 2016 (see Appendix E: Supporting Websites - Barangaroo Arts Project). This brings together women interested in sharing and learning various aspects of culture, such as weaving, bush tucker cooking, possum skin decoration (burning the skin), making of garments and dancing. By involving various Aboriginal communities connected with the Barangaroo site, women have input into the cultural underpinnings of the recent Barangaroo developments taking place on Gadigal Country. In this respect, it is a healing endeavour with Dharug involvement and acts as recognition of both our continuing existence and our ability to contribute to events happening on Dharug-speaking Country. The workshop is undertaken at Glengarry House, which belongs to the Girl Guides movement, and as such continues as a women's place. Outdoors, it backs onto our natural bushland leading to the area currently called Kuringai Chase National Park (see Appendix E: Supporting Websites – Kuringai).



Today, the bush is alive and although it is somewhat chilly, the sun is warming the fallen log on which we sit, straddling the edge of a steep slope, overlooking the rocky sandstone escarpment and forests of red bloodwood, blackbutt and some old man banksia. The perfumes and noises and activities of our bush never fail to wrap the dweller in a sense of living-presences, where we are but one in an infinity of belonging. In the distance, the chatter of the women learning their respective cultural practices brings a sense of safety and belonging.



Fig. 28: Durramuttagal Country, Image: J. Rey

📖 So, this morning we're focusing on cultural practice and I have something here which might start us off by Bilawara Lee ... a Larrakia Elder [Darwin and surrounds], and one of the *Grandmothers Council of the World*, and she says that Aboriginal spirituality is not something labelled but is a lived experience (Lee, 2013). So perhaps that's a good start for our thinking ... what would you say?

I really resonate with that ... like it's embodied in terms of spirituality, as ... I am constantly thinking about who I am culturally as a person from the time I wake up to the time till even in my dreams when I go to sleep about my spiritual connection and how I can improve on that in a good way, and not only for myself but for my community and also my children ...

🎯 Bushytail's practice is deeply part of her identity as she engages with it as a lifelong learning process. As we sit together, it is clear she is at peace in this bushland, where fallen logs are placed strategically for humans to sit and peruse the landscape falling away to a distant canopy of tall eucalypt forests. Like her Bushytail cousins, her gentle nature seems perfectly suited to her environment.

📖 How does that play out across your various hats? [roles across work, family, community etc.]

First and foremost, my Ngoongupa, or my big connection, is with my family. We are trying to make, [and] our family ought to be first, and always in our thoughts and how we can assist and facilitate; how they can lead and be good people, so starting there is my core. ... So for myself I've a little son, I have four sons [and] spiritual teaching goes to them as well, that's my core, and our little son, in the house M. and from the time we wake up in the morning we're speaking [Dharug] language, and there's that love, that Ngulbuddi, straight away, and we might be singing a song, and that connects us to Country, and its happiness, and because of the work that I do, I might be preparing my grasses of a morning and he's there outside, and so its shifted out with L. [who] might be doing his woodwork, and so M. is part of that, and he might go out on his bike but he may still be singing in language. He's still calling out Ngulbuddi.



Would you say M. is being raised bilingually?

Yes, definitely.



That's fabulous, because as far as I am aware ... that in Sydney area, in Dharug Country, it was always multi-lingual space, with and between neighbouring groups and marriages, would you say that's correct?

Yes, absolutely. We [women]married out, and there was a point where we married back in again, and it's important to know that we shared Country all over Country. We walked our Dreaming and songlines and spoke each other's language.



Bushytail's family life as lived experience is interwoven with her personal values around the importance of language-learning for cultural identity, as well as educating her children in cultural values and cultural practices. The previous paragraphs provide us with strong evidence of 'lifeworking' as a matter of interweaving our roles to strengthen belonging, caring and connecting, not only to other humans, but also to Country and

other-than-human beings. Language-learning is seen as critical for a deeper sense of culture.



9.2.2 Being and Belonging in Place



Fig. 29: Artist: C. Tobin, included with permission – *Belonging*



So, talking about your different hats, we've talked about your family hat. What would be the next most significant, if there is a priority ... or whether it just goes around.


Family is in the core, that would be in the circle in the middle, then another circle going out in another circle, with lines going out, which is how we belong to the community, and in a workspace, but there's effects of that as well. Community and school, Community is always on my mind, so that runs through, but the education is important as a teacher always on my mind too.




Are you talking community, are you talking organisations, or individuals ... or both, to clarify a bit?

When I'm thinking of Community, I'm not just thinking, I'm particularly involved in DTAC, and ... that's impacted on me since 2014. I've always been a member for a very long time, but now on the Board, and just with that, that has now impacted me the most, for Community, or a voice for the members of that Community, and


in the Blacktown and Parramatta and Blue Mountains Councils really.

 And it's all interwoven?


It's all interwoven, actually. So I work two days at school and the rest is really Community and family ... So Community can mean lots of different things, and I have my relationships with Aunties and Uncles, in my Community, who I consider family as well...and then there's other people identifying as Dharug Aunties...and so connecting, and a lot of us have experienced what it's like not to belong and so they have a yearning to belong, and we hope DTAC is there for them to belong, and the generations are coming out now, because in the past they felt shamed or feared, but they are making a step to come out and identify.

 So, if you have to talk to what is belonging, what does that mean to you, to belong?


Love comes up first, knowing that you are loved, that you have a place, a place not only to go to but to create more love.

 And do you think in the wider community, beyond Dharug, outside of their families, do they have a longing for place?

Dharug?

 No, in general.

A lot of people I have come across, they might belong somewhere, but they are still searching. Love and belonging comes across as culture. That's the yearning for a lot of people because they have lost culture ... connection. Wanting to reconnect and that is the journey for a lot of people ... and I think the positions, or our journey or our pathway, is that we be strong in that sense, and very lucky, and a lot of nightmare history ... lots of perseverance, and this generation and the next and the next will be able to become strong, smart and deadly, eh, Auntie?

 Bushytail pinpoints the heart of Aboriginal values and the importance of connections for belonging, to family, to place, to Community, to love. In an era of globalisation, where the discourse is focused on modernity, progress, wealth creation to have 'security' (not-belonging), the values Bushytail speaks of resonates with core values that do not position

materialism as significant. In terms of pedagogy, recognising the place or standpoint of learners and teachers enables equity and an openness within the relationship of care.

Additionally, as Davies and Seuffert (2000, p. 273) wrote:

Valuing knowledge which explicitly acknowledges location or standpoint epistemology is valuable as a strategy. We value located knowledge and the 'view from below' partly because we believe that these approaches currently provide more rational criteria for judging knowledge than the spurious claims to objectivity

The sense that today's place of learning on Durrumattagal Country embodies the acceptance of Aboriginal values underpinning the event common across groups creates a bond within the learning process: a bond of sharing, a bond of belonging, a bond of caring, and recognition of connectivity within and across Aboriginal groups on Dharug Nura. Such a place of connectivity underpins healing across communities, strengthens individuals and, through the sharing of knowledges, such as weaving, possum-skin work, and/or bushfood knowledges, restores cultural practices that in themselves grow resilience, renewal and wellbeing.



Fig. 30: Co-becoming in place



9.2.3 Co-Becoming Place

🎯 At this point, cultural practice through artistic expression brings us to an understanding of how we ‘co-become’ (Bawaka Country et al., 2015) in place. In the process, we weave creativity, place, practice and belonging into a web of connections, with each strand staking out new opportunities for storying as opportunities for becoming.



So, we’ve talked across ... family as the core of cultural practice, what about the artistic side and artistic expression of cultural practice?

I’ve talked about working in the morning, and singing, and speaking in language, and going into that space of creating and making, that’s all interwoven, but the possum-skin working is important to me, not only because of the warmth around it, and how traditionally to use the possum skin to wear and honour, and that’s my family totem as well, and apart from not being able to kill it, we can still keep warm ... And obviously here we can’t do that but that’s where the connection with New Zealand [is important], where they are feral [and so can be hunted], so we can continue cultural practice [by bringing them in from there].

🎯 Possums are a protected species in New South Wales (see Chapter 11 for more on possum-skin knowledges).



And back in the day it was about keeping warm and keeping balance, not wiping them out?

But also the possum skin, ... it became a way of recording who we were as people, and like today, it’s a great opportunity, for us women, to look at ways of how that would’ve been, and to have the opportunity to learn, to be with my family, and I consider you as part of my family, my Aunties, and mentor, and for me I’ve had the opportunity to be able to work with possum skins, and having the opportunity to make something for Bolongaia, and Auntie C., and the next step, not just to be creative, but to make something for our clan and to work together with women.

🎯 Bushytail’s warmth can be seen in her deep commitment and caring, her desire and willingness to wrap Bellbird in her realm of Aunties and cousins,

and through her possum-work give back to clan and the women. These are the values of sincerity and inclusiveness that stand so prominently in contrast to the commercialised and competitive modernity of urban life which so many must endure. She highlights possum skin becoming a lifelong relational practice with the skin from birth until death, 'a way of recording who we were as people', a relationship of time/s/telling-doing (Bawaka et al., 2016; Bawaka Country et al., 2015).

According to Wiradjeri woman, Aunty Lynette Riley (2012b),

... kangaroo and possum skin cloaks were worn for two reasons. The first being an everyday purpose to provide warmth [and] as a protection from the rain as the water runs off the fur side as it flows for the animals. The second use was for ceremonial purposes, where the underside of the pelt would be incised with various designs to indicate the person's moiety and totemic connection as well as their journey through life and as such would provide information on that person's status within nations and across clan groups.

Expressed simply, the skin is first provided to the baby at birth for lining the coolamon (wooden carrier) with its soft fur to protect the baby's skin from the hard surface. Skins can also be made into carry bags for holding the baby on the mother's back. On its reverse (leather) side, the child's totems are inscribed, burnt or otherwise engraved, as a marker of her foundational identity and place of belonging. As she grows, the skin is enlarged with new pelts added, making a blanket or a cloak, and with the passage of time more inscriptions are placed on the pelt, so that the garment becomes an identity marker, a recording of a life. Thus, no two cloaks are the same. Eventually, at death, the body is placed in its skin, and together they are returned to Mother Earth. As Riley (2012b n.p.) explains,


*... each was unique to represent that person and as such each person's cloak would be valued and recognised by all. The intricate design on these cloaks represented a person's Moiety; Nation and Clan affiliations; their Totems; and recorded specific ceremonial or other experiences in that person's life. Significantly the designs on the Cloaks would be symbolic of and used in particular territories. This 'Cloak' would therefore be worn by the person it was designed for, in all ceremonies, initiations and be associated as **an extension***

of that person [my emphasis]. *Ultimately and often the person would be buried with their cloak.*

Therefore, growing the relationship from a single skin to cloak and as a recording of a life, it is easy to understand how it becomes ‘an extension of that person’ (Riley, 2012b), a relationship of time/s/telling-doing (Bawaka et al., 2016; Bawaka Country et al., 2015), a co-becoming. The works of Lynette Riley and her sister Diane Riley-McNaboe, e.g. the *Thubba-ga Cloak* at Dubbo, provide important examples of cultural continuity and practice. (Riley, 2012a, 2012b; Riley & Riley-McNaboe, 2012). Such an ‘extension’ illustrates the notion that we as human beings go beyond our physical, corporeal bodies in our identities, and that these identities include the relational processes that inform our consciousness of intersubjectivity, in both life and death.

Deborah Bird Rose (2011b) challenges us in *Wild Dog Dreaming* to explore our place of kinship with other-than-humans, our places of connection to our Ancestors, our identifications beyond the corporeal, suggesting they are all woven through the storying in which we engage. Facing the realities of human extinction connects us with all species facing extinction. I suggest as a small step that this involves shifting from urban lives of dis-Integration to woven ‘lifeworkings’ (Chapter 2), where we entwine values of caring for Country into urban existences by practices that create connections to places, presences and people, strengthening the collective, which supports families and grows individuals who are strong in belonging, caring and connecting. I have called this the Dharug Nura Web (see Fig. 51).



 We close Bushytail’s storying with some thoughts on how weaving customary practices that force us to confront our place of mortality into the curriculum can be more broadly beneficial than to just the local community. Bushytail sees working with raw materials as reweaving our identities back into Country, and therefore as integral to an education curriculum. The

gathering which was the context for our yarning this day was one example of how reconnection can be healing, and allows us to co-become.



Is there a place for Saturday school for doing this?

Absolutely, a wonderful curriculum ... to have that [cultural practice] mapped out



How inspiring would that be?

And to have the space to sing and dance, 'cause that's a way to tell our story. So, it's been a privilege and honour to dance up Country and share with community, and belong, and very much I feel belonging to Country and having a voice as well, to show how proud we are as a nation, and that we haven't lost our culture.



It is more than just having this story of deficit, of loss, but so inspiring, we just gain so much, and ... it is integrative. It brings our physical, spiritual, emotional ways together for healing ... This is so much more healing for the planet.

We are just an intricate part of it and if we are doing our part, then we are helping everyone in the world, to be sustainable, and not only for the land, but culturally for practice and looking after people, and teaching them, and continuing on. But I think every part of the artistic side for me, they are one. Going out some days, the foundation for me is language, the vehicle, in writing, or continuing, evolving the language through our practice. And that really is important to me, and most importantly is having the space to make, like this weekend, like making our belts, for dancing, and the belts are for the dancing.




It is an integrated philosophy.

And when I make, I'm not making because there's a market coming up, and some people are like that, and there are people and I wholeheartedly support they are making from resources from here.



People have to survive.

But people making, like in China, of boomerangs, and that's not fair. But having, for example, the skills to make these things, and having someone wanting to find out about their culture. And she [one of the workshop participants] hadn't made a belt for dancing and so I let her have mine, and she was crying. She was honoured and touched that I was giving her my belt, and she was so touched, and I was touched that she had even felt that way and that she had learnt so much, and she was coming over to give me the belt back, and she said thank you for lending me your belt about a couple of hours later. And I said no that's yours now. And she felt so included 'cause she's not from our mob, and she wants to belong and I'm crying.

 Me too, and I'll give you a hug and I think that's a good space to stop in.



MOTHERING FIG TIMING
(Mother Fig Day – 19.01.17)

Enormous arms outstretching
Rough bark, ants scraping hollows,
Patching mossy age spotting,
Patting the passages down.

Woven momentings on beds beneath
Leaves fallen, dried or dying,
Ancient Mother's daily dreamings
Children's laughter, babies sleeping.

Coolamon's rocking times
Women's voices chanting,
While clapsticks beaten beating,
Drops dancing on fireside camping.

Smoke and eucalyptus ashen,
Buried between roots remembering,
Bearing memories, bearing songs
Of broken spears, cracked palms,
And sighs winding.

Chanting clapsticks
Cracking time together
Spacing through sound,
Spreading texture through rhythm,
Making placings in hearts.

©Bellbird, 02.02.2017

Bellbird's Pleiadean Presence 5: Weaving strands and stories into living-places of Sarah Charlotte (1844 – 1931)

 Across this continent, places have multiple layers of human storying, and it is along the traces that survive we find our places of connection.

Tracing Windsor

For Sarah Charlotte (1844 -1931), Bellbird's great-great grandmother, her journey began on Dharug Nura, where she was born to Ann Randall and George Smith Holmes in 1844, (V1844 2082 62/1844), probably in the Windsor-Wilberforce district. George was the son of convicts William Smith, tailor, of Windsor, and Mary Margaret Holmes, Second Fleet convict. Sarah has three siblings from this partnership, Caroline (1841), James (1837), and Harriet (1840), and with Ann's later partnership to Charles Young, Sarah Charlotte gains many half-siblings to follow (Hunt, C., 2017 Personal Conversation).

Tracing Parramatta



Fig. 31: St John's Cemetery, Parramatta, around July 1870. ("St. John's Cemetery, Parramatta," 1870)
Accessed: 11.02.2018.

In 1869, Sarah marries John Thomas Heard at St. John's Anglican Church, Parramatta, (see Fig. 31 above) and they have their first three children there: Elizabeth Alice (15016/1870), Alice Maud (15366/1872) and Matilda May (16932/1874).



Tracing the Hunter River

Sometime between 1874 and 1878, John and Sarah Charlotte move north to the Hunter River area, probably in search of work, as high unemployment rates were occurring due to the recession of 1872.

(See Appendix E: Supporting Websites: Health and Welfare for more on the economic conditions of the period.)

The transfer of Dharug population to the Hunter River resides within the storying of dispossession and adaptation that many Aboriginal people had to undertake during the late 19th century (Kohen, J., 2015 Personal Conversation). Perhaps the most significant time-place in her life is documented in 1878, when Sarah Charlotte and John lost their three daughters within three weeks to diphtheria.

Local News

A Sad Tale – Three cases of diphtheria, ending fatally, have occurred in one family at Belford. A labouring man named Thomas Heard, in the employ of Mr. R. G. Yeoman, has lost three children by this dreadful complaint within the last three weeks, one girl eight years old, one six and one four. After the deaths of the eldest and youngest, which took place within a few days, the parents took the six-year-old here to the Maitland Hospital, where every attention was paid. The girl died on the tenth day after admission, on Sunday last. Some enquiry should be made we think by some properly qualified persons as to the origins of this malignant crises. The parents are, as may well be supposed, almost broken-hearted.

Fig. 32: LOCAL NEWS. (1878, August 22). *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW: 1843 - 1893), p. 4. Retrieved February 19, 2018, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article18836082>

I reflect on what such a life in rural New South Wales must have been like for you as woman and black woman at that. How hard it must have been physically and emotionally. What sources of strength and resilience underpinned what must have been a tough determination to not be beaten by the misfortunes that life presents you? — Bellbird.



Tracing the Coolie Camp

However, by 1879 Sarah Charlotte and John deliver their only boy child at the Coolie Camp, a place of many stories. One would like to imagine camaraderie at the Coolie Camp, sitting around the fire, dishing out, from the swinging pot, some rabbit stew or perhaps a snake from the coals. A bed of she-oak in a hessian sack, on the ground under a canvas tent? Yet, under the stars on cold winter nights, how many unknowns and silences are rendered as we ponder the quiet in respect and response? — Bellbird.



Tracing the Sacred Site for the Wannaruah people of the Paterson, NSW, area

Native Burying Place. - On Saturday last, as one of the men in the employment of Mr. Jones, A. Smith, of **Coolie Camp**, was digging in a field belonging to that gentleman, he turned up the entire skeleton of a man. Information was immediately given to the coroner (J. S. Parker, Esq.), who was promptly on the spot, and on making some further enquiries amongst the old inhabitants of the place, it was found that tradition handed the spot down as a former burial ground of the blacks. Some further search was made, and other skeletons found, which fully corroborated the tradition, and the bones of the former lords of the Australian soil were consequently returned to their former resting place. We are glad to have it in our power to mention that Mr. Smith, with much feeling and delicacy, has had the spot fenced in, so that the heedless foot of the European may not desecrate the last home of his less fortunate and savage brother. **Maitland Mercury, Saturday 19 April 1845**

Fig. 33: Coolie/Cooley Camp 1: Native Burying Place.
Copy of Extract provided by Judy Nicholson, Maitland Library, by email 31.05.2017.



Tracing a Coolie Camp Remnant

16/5/78 **Camp mystery**

M.M

The mystery of Cooley Camp (mentioned in The Mercury last week) looked like being cleared up with recollections by Maitland and Paterson men.

Now information from Maitland resident, Mr Roy Hamson, clouds the issue again.

He has information from publications placing Cooley Camp near the junction of Largs and Flat roads, not on the Woodville-Seaham road as last week's correspondents put it.

Mr Hamson writes: "In 1846 a wood chapel 25'x18' and capable of seating 100 people was erected at 'Cooley Camp' on one acre of land given by the Australian Loan Company. I believe this church was near the junction of Largs and Flat roads amongst the farms cleared of cedar near the Hunter River.

"When the Bolwarra estate of 2030 acres was sold in 1847 there were 60 tenant farmers upon it at that time.

"Residents at Cooley Camp in 1846 included William Burgess, James and Herbert Eggins, George Unicomb, Edmund Starr, John Field, James Boorman, Silas Gill and John Delves.

"Wesleyan preachers at Cooley Camp in 1847 included Messrs Fredrick Lewis, Jeramiah Ledsam, McClelland, Pankhurst, Crofton, Somerville and Silas Gill.

"In 1854 this building was shown as Bolwarra Methodist Church."

AH.

COOLEY WAS THE LOCAL ABORIGINAL
CHIEF

THIS WAS TAKEN FROM THE BOOK
"A GIANT FOR JESUS." BY ERIC G. CLANCY
PROBABLY WRONG

See Scrap book re Cooley Camp
Irish Myths

Fig. 34: Coolie Camp Remnant. Extract from *Maitland Mercury*, 16.5.1978, provided by Judy Nicholson, Local Studies Librarian, Maitland Library, by email 31.05.2017. Note the overlay of Aboriginal burial site by Christian Church.

[illegible]

Fig. 35: Notice of Property Sale of 'The Hill', Paterson, Maitland Mercury, December 21, 1945.

Transcription of Advertisement above.

Property Sale at Paterson, Tuesday, 8th January, 1946.

Wilson & Keppie have received instructions from J. T. Heard, to sell by auction at their rooms, Paterson, 3 allotments:

Block No. 1: of about 11 ½ acres. Improvements consist of 4 room brick cottage, bathroom, wash house, and shed. Also small orchard.

Blocks 2 & 3: about 3 acres securely fenced.

The above property is one of the pick sites of Paterson, being well situate, having a high elevation, overlooking the township of Paterson and for many miles of the surrounding district. The property is watered by spring and will be offered without reserve. Terms: 25% deposit, balance on completion.

Wilson & Keppie, Licensed Auctioneer.



CHAPTER 10: Sandstone's Country - A place of outlooks and viewpoints








Fig. 36: *Rock Faces*. Sandstone Bluffs along the Deerubbin/Hawkesbury River. Image: J. Rey. Note the 'thumbs up' in the top right-hand corner of the cliff face! Ancestors giving approval!

Who is Sandstone?

Sandstone, like several of our storytellers, is descended from Yarramundi through his daughter, Maria Lock (sometimes known as Bolongaia) of the Boorooberongal clan of the Dharug-speaking peoples of Sydney. Sandstone is a local Aboriginal Heritage Officer, a singer, dancer and storyteller. Like many of our seven sisters, she discovered her Dharug heritage only as an adult. Like all our women,

Sandstone sees her cultural practice as ‘lifework’ (Burke et al., 2016, p. 38), which she carries out through her job of visiting schools and organisations to give factual Aboriginal heritage accounts to her audiences. Our yarning (Bessarab & Ng'Andu, 2010) today broadens our perspectives both geologically and geographically, as through her we are now enjoying coastal Country and hearing coastal perspectives.

 **TABLE 1: SYMBOLS REPRESENTING VOICES WITHIN THE THESIS**

SYMBOL	VOICE
	Country
	Scholars, poets, various others
	Narrator
	Interviewer
	Writer

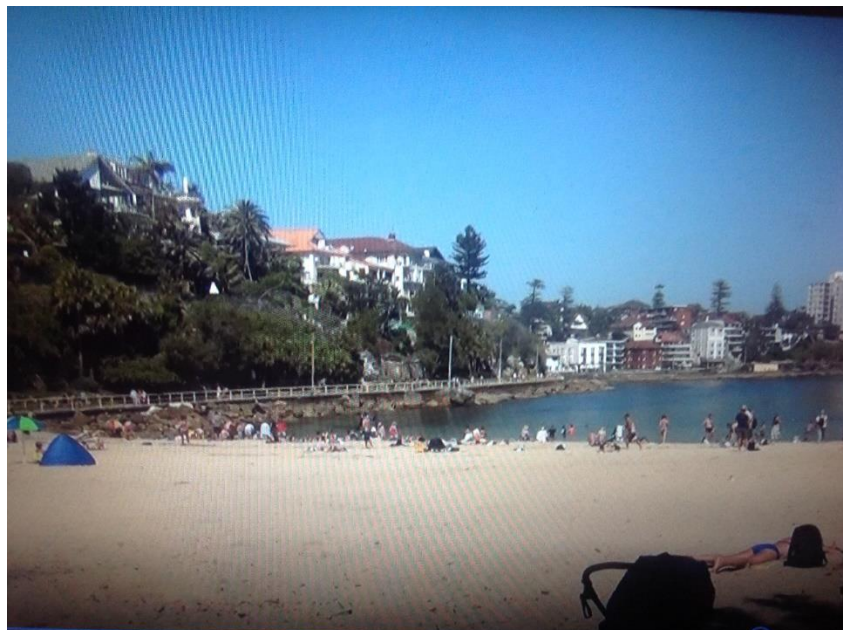


Fig. 37: Shelley Beach, near Manly, Gai-marigal Country. Image: J. Rey. November 2015.

🕒 It's going to be a stinker of a day – over 40 degrees Celsius by lunchtime, so the weatherman says. Sandstone chooses to heed Mother Country's call and here, at Shelley Beach, we sit in the shade of a woody headland to the east, which acts as a protective barrier to the open waters of the Pacific Ocean. It is a truly beautiful sheltered cove with pristine waters facing north, looking along the eastern coastline. In our immediate locale, we have to our west dramatic cliffs holding modern mansions and apartment blocks overlooking the cove; they lace the rocky foreshore that eventually meets with what is now called Manly Beach, a world-famous tourist destination of Sydney. A concrete path between the two places is a favourite walk at dawn, as the sun rises to paint the waters gold, and the cliffs turn to fire. Mother Country blesses us in dramatic colour-scapes across the various lights and shades of a day. To our south, the land rises behind us to become part of the northern headland that frames the entrance to Sydney Harbour. North Head, part of the *Sydney Harbour National Park*, is a rugged landscape of sandy scrub, delicate harbour coves and spectacular views down the harbour to sky-scrapered Sydney's central business district.


Today, we are not yet overburdened by humanity. The quiet lapping of the waters on the sand and slapping of the rocky waterline portends the heavy heat, and we will slip into the waters for relief, just as has happened for tens of thousands of years. We sit under the Port Jackson figs, a few steps from some lovely cabbage palms. This is one of Sandstone's favourite spots, and in the enveloping heat, it is totally the right place to be.




10.1 Storying-up Place

See ... it's one of the things I like to do at Manly, to look at all the old rocks that were there and in the old days all the original houses were made from the sandstone. My uncle told me Fairlight Hill [a neighbouring area] used to be called Red Hill and I think it was

someone from council who told me it used to be a sandstone quarry, probably why it was all red. I reckon all the carvings and stories would have gone from that place, but you get these tiny little pockets where you can feel Country really strongly, and that rock, where I sat, was so beautiful and the nor'-easter was blowing, cooling me down and I could see all the way out to sea, so beautiful. ... I've had this idea I keep thinking about it. I'd like to go and photograph the sandstone remnants around Manly and Fairlight ... I'd love S. to do that, cause I've seen his work. But you can see even with this wall here [edging the pavement] it is an old sandstone wall, but when I began living here none of these mega mansions (along the cliff tops) were here, they didn't exist. So, it was a very quiet sleepy bay. We could come here in the evening and be the only people here, have a fire and cook some fish and a glass of wine it was just beautiful ... but here today we have the perfect spot (under the cabbage trees (Livistona Australis)) but now people come down with their ghetto blasters ...

 It's clear from Sandstone's storying that her love of place is grounded in deep connections to Country and through family ties her attachments are embedded in being in its natural beauty. Her nostalgia for a time before modernity and population density drives her desire to save the 'sandstone remnants' through photography, but would it be the same? A landscape of loss lies just behind us.

 So, in your description you've said your story today is coming from an ancestral origin, so I'm wondering how you got your story and how that story comes to you?

I suppose it came to me a long time ago, and my connection to country ... It's like the land. Country talks to me ... even when we were little kids living in the Riverina [south-western New South Wales].



Did you always know of your Aboriginal history?

No, I didn't always know, and then I started having these vivid dreams of a woman with a black face and green eyes and it was like she was trying to tell me something, but I couldn't tell what it was ...



Sandstone is leading us into her story of becoming, a sense of who she was before the revelation of her Aboriginal connections. This is not concrete, steel and cement space, not the world of hard-edged materialities here. Sandstone's Country is scaped with dreams and we are reminded of the role of dreams and dreaming that was significant in the life of our Aunty, Kookaburra. We must tread carefully in this spiritual space, respectfully.

... I always thought I was Aboriginal. When I was dancing, I wanted to join the NAISDA (National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association) Dance College at St Johns Road, Glebe, but because I didn't know that I was [Aboriginal], so I couldn't get in.



Here we see the blockages that are characterising her life. There is a sense of tension and frustration as she contrasts what she thought and felt about her life and the realities and limitations attached to not knowing. We are reminded of Carlson's (2011b) exposé of the regulation of lives concerning Aboriginal identity and identification, as discussed in Bushytail's storying (Chapter 9). This opens the way for her revelation.

How we found out was through a woman, which was quite an extraordinary occurrence because she phoned me up one day, and she told me my connection to Yarramundi, [Boorooberongal clan], and she had been working on (doing the genealogy for) a second cousin or third cousin, an Irish fellow and was looking into children of the potato famine that had been sent to Australia and they didn't know who they were.



Do you remember her name?

Oh, it was a long time ago now, that she rang me up. So, I immediately rang my sister and she had always wondered, and we just thought we were ... At that time, she was the Aboriginal Liaison Education Officer and she was creating all the Indigenous programs for the school and I was doing the Guringai Festival for Manly Council and ...



So how long ago was this... 10, 20, 30, years ago?

Can't remember...

So, she sent my sister all these documents and I found out she only lived around the corner from me, and I asked if I could come and see her and she said, 'No, darling, because I have leukaemia and I'm in isolation.' ... So, she sent all this stuff off to my sister N. and she researched it all, but the day after she gave all this stuff to my sister, she died.



Can you hear a bell ring?



And I was gobsmacked. And one of our family wrote a poem for her because she brought all of us together, and I went to her funeral in Dee Why.




Emphasis is shown in bold italics to highlight moments, seemingly insignificant, yet with enormous consequences creating dramatic changes in how we story ourselves and our identifications. Bellbird also noted this concerning her discovery of an Aboriginal heritage and later moments,

when connections were made as if Ancestors were influencing her journey (see Bellbird, Chapter 11).

She was this extraordinary woman ... She had been the first woman CEO of a company, she'd brought up kids that weren't her own, she was extraordinary, and she came into our lives and changed our lives forever. For me it was like I became a whole person, it was like all the final pieces of my life ... the missing pieces in the jigsaw came together. Suddenly they were all there, they explained to me all the things that I thought I was weird about – the way I used to go and sit on rocks and draw in the sand ... And I don't know if that says anything, but just my connection to the places and the Country way around me, and all my dancing and singing, my spoken word and storytelling through music and movement ... And MB, she did what's called dance drama, and she told the social stories of the world. When you go back into it, it is storytelling through dance, and as I got older and I left my touring life behind, I have come into my own story and 'Walking Country' was a result of that ...



10.2 Placing Identity

 Sandstone's story is an account of a huge event in her life and understanding of herself and her identity. As she says, 'For me it was like I became a whole person.' The context of this revelation about her Dharug heritage cannot be removed from the impact of the knowledge. Learning of another aspect of identity previously hidden is a huge matter to digest. This raises the question: what does this mean to who 'I' am, given the label 'Aboriginal' carries enormous resonance within the 'narrative accrual' underpinning 'Australian' notions of identity and nationality (Attwood, 1996a, 1996b), as discussed in Chapter 1? I propose this identification, even

if desired, is a loaded state of being which requires major psychological processing for it to be absorbed, because of the weighty history associated with it.


However, for Sandstone, the fact that the woman came into her life, delivered the information that changed her life and then died the next day brings us into a deeply spiritual sense of understanding who we are, the place we are in and the transience of conceptions of self, place and identity. Such experiences open us to understanding ourselves also as a *gerund* rather than a static noun – full of movement, adaptation and changing. Sandstone walks us through that period of change in her life.



Would you like to tell me about *Walking Country*?


‘Walking Country’ [is the name of the] project. Well, I was so overwhelmed as you are when you find out so many parts to the history and what happened to our mob out in western Sydney, and I was extremely upset for a long time ... It’s so important to talk about things like genocide, torture, the oral stories from town and bodies being [strung up]. The stories that come from Country and Richmond Road and round the Native Institution story, and what happened to the families, because they were all of the surviving families, and there’s these names and they were the survivors of the holocaust really, and our brave Pemulwuy, and he fought so hard, until he was killed and had his head chopped off, and the stories of the women and the children – it’s heartbreaking. So I realised that not many people know them, about Australia’s [history] and certainly the history of this place, Sydney. So, I didn’t want to tell just my story, I wanted to tell our story with a broad brush-stroke but my story was the heart of that. And because I suppose of my creative background I wanted to sing and wanted tell the story and I wanted imagery as well, so I spent about a year collecting images and researching, and Wagtail, I love her paintings, she paints Country and our story and I

asked could I have her work in the story. It wasn't just my story, it was everyone's story, so that's what I did.

 Here we have the 'narrative accrual' that attaches itself to the concept of 'Dharug-ness' and provides a co-becoming in the process: the connections to stories and debates that rage across Country, both broadly and across Dharug Nura specifically. Richmond as a site where Dharug were strung up to terrorise others against resistance continues to cast its shadow across conceptualisation of Dharug identity. As Reynolds (1987, p. 38) reminds us in relation to the Hawkesbury/Deerubbin River conflicts in 1795:

The soldiers were dispatched [by Governor Phillip] with instructions to 'destroy as many as they could meet with of the wood tribe' and in the hope of 'striking terror to erect gibbets in different places, whereon the bodies of all they might kill were to be hung.'

At a time when Sandstone was absorbing and incorporating this new aspect to her identity, her response can be seen to create, through her own *Walking Country* project, both an inclusion of storying and passing on story. This becomes very relevant when we consider Bellbird's participation in this project. It is also relevant when we consider ways of bringing resilience, renewal and reconciliation for the individual. As we have seen across several of our Dharug women, each has used a form of storytelling to assimilate the past into the present, to strengthen themselves and community and, in the process, to strengthen their understandings of Country. As we shall see, Sandstone recognises storying as integral to Country.

 Where did you put it on at?

My favourite time, because I think it looked so great, was at Blacktown Arts Centre, in an old church with a white wall, and I was working with my dear friend BV, and he organised the sound and band and the projector. So, we had an image going all the way up to the top of that Cabbage Palm, and you had these curtains that you

drew in, and I had all the floor area where I could walk and talk, and he got me a microphone, and I had the band in the corner, so when I sang I came over and stood by them, and it just looked really, really good. And BV said to wear white, because of the black background which I'd have never thought about, and I just wore no shoes. I've also had a lovely performance with the help of BV again ... at the Manly Art Gallery, and my friend S. gave me a beautiful drop sheet that she had painted of Country with the trees and sandstone, and that was the backdrop with the band, and that one was filmed, and I very recently after, four or five years, I got a copy but I'm too scared to look at it in case it's really bad.





Fig. 38: Sandstone's Practice – Manly Ocean Care Day, 2017. Images: J. Rey.

So, through my work at the heritage office I have a deeper understanding ... and all these people talking to me, and he filmed all the people talking to me, and the questions they were asking of me ... that show's very important to me. I'd really like to do it for the Sydney Festival

I've also done it at the opening of the Grantham Centre, Seven Hills Road, (DTAC centre), and my mother was there, and she saw it ... and my family were there, and they were so proud of me and all

these Aboriginal people, and local government, ... but there's many people telling our story, and I think the story of Sydney needs to be honoured.

 As can be seen, Sandstone originally used her project to assimilate her Dharug identity as a learning process and as a way of honouring the past. We are reminded particularly of Ringtail's storying in the cemetery at St. Bartholomew's Church, Prospect, and Wagtail's recounting of the destruction of the burial grounds in the Nepean as expressions of honouring the wrongs of the past, but also honouring Country by passing on those knowledges to other people, Dharug and non-Dharug. The pride that Sandstone acknowledges that she gained from the support of family, community and local government is particularly important, as the community searches for ways to assist in the recovery of identities, stories and connections. We are reminded of Crow's storying of the reconnections with place and knowledges through the desert women's responses at the sight of the Seven Sisters in the sandstone, and Wagtail's sense of affirmation as the women responded to her art piece 'Grose River'.

 I'm thinking about Manly ... how you relate to Country here?

When we found out about family, we tried to track their movement, how did they survive, and we found the story of Bolongaia, Maria Lock, her strength, courage ... so brave and powerful, and what she did and the fact that the family survived because of what she did and her connection to Country, powerful country, and she brought up nine children, who all had families.

Jim Kohen talks of the irony of her survival, the fact she married William Lock, and the immunity from smallpox, but [also] other families, and they tried to stay together, but it was impossible. And the story of Katoomba, Long Gully and the Mission at Sackville Reach, and the house at Singleton's Mill. I read Jack Brook's book

Shut out from the World (Brook, 1999) and this book was all about the people living on different places, living on Sackville Reach [Hawkesbury/Deerubbin River].

Over here [Manly way], you hear about people living in pockets surviving in Mosman, ... Wakehurst Parkway, at Deep River ... near the Narrabeen, near the lakes, good food source, powerful place to stay alive ...

... So I had started writing my show Footsteps around Manly. I wanted to do my mother's and grandmother's story, really my grandmother's story, and I tracked what happened to her, and she moved into ... (daughter of Louise Lock and Walter Sims) ... and all the family lived here. Her brother used to live at Dee Why, he looked like a really black Indian ...

... So, they all went to live where they could work ... and they came to Manly/Harbord/Freshwater, J and JW worked on the Harbour Bridge, and on the David Jones site. So, the Harbour Bridge brought work, and they also worked on the breakwater at Manly, and I found where the seawall collapsed (several times), part of my sandstone story, and I talked to the family and I know their survival depended on fishing during wartime.




So, did you have any particular memories of here as a child, or is that more as an adult?

Here I remember being amazed when the first flats were built, I don't know the physical structures, but I think my connection to here [Shelley Beach], I've been coming here for 28 years, and ... my father moved us every five years, so this to me has my strongest connection, and I've walked all the headlands and the rock faces.



10.3 A Place of Connection

 Her circle of storying completed, Sandstone returned at this point to where she started, a focus on the rock faces and the constructions that have taken place over time, on top of the sandstone, but underneath, Sandstone's Country remained. While the coastal places of her connections and memorialisation offered a contrast to the inland storying of Wagtail, Crow and Ringtail, they also reinforced the others' storying through her love of Country, her understandings and knowledge of the storied nature of Dharug Nura, and the legacies of the past. Through her ongoing sharing of stories in her work, her deep desire to learn and finding out more about her own Aboriginal heritage, the reader gains a sense of meaningful living – a 'lifeworking'. As she says,

For me it was like I became a whole person, it was like all the final pieces of my life ... the missing pieces in the jigsaw came together ... they explained to me all the things that I thought I was weird about the way I used to go and sit on rocks and draw in the sand ...

In other words, she gained a sense of completion, a sense of belonging, in time and place, an experience that brought Ancestors, otherwise silenced and buried, to life.



Bellbird's Pleiadean Presence 6: Ann's hauntological spaces (c. 1816 – 1904)



Fig. 39: Casuarina Dreaming – Narrabeen Lakes entrance. Image: J. Rey, 2016.

Like Sarah Charlotte's strands of living-place, Bellbird's great-great-great grandmother Ann comes into being through the mists of time, and yet, amazingly, she arises so freshly in the present, too. This presence illustrates the complexities of temporal linearity, as previously discussed in reference to Barad (2010) and Bastian (2009); as sorting yarnings (Bessarab & Ng'Andu, 2010), narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and voices in places (Benterrak et al., 2014; Tredinnick, 2009), while co-becoming (Bawaka Country et al., 2015). It creates, I suggest, an example of timeplacemattering, which opens us to ponder the unreality of 'certainty' and question whose voices count.

*The lake welcomes the creek,
As the breeze, a southerly, mid-squall,
Plays with the Casuarinas,
Singing place calls.*

*The magpie warbles, relaxed.
Only two finches, alerted by my steps, seem disturbed.
If I try hard, I can ignore the distant rumble of traffic,
Those airborne, water-borne, land-borne churns that turn.*

*The cicadas sing the breeze, while the women's voices hum their needles.
There's memory here, and I stretch for it.
I reach for those simple voices on the wind, for the splash,
Not of the spear entering, but the raising of the catch.*

The laughter and the shout!

*I wait. No lizards here now.
Perhaps the recent rain sent them underground.
Instead, bobbing by the bank, an upturned bottle
Not quite the message I had in mind but one still,
A callous clanging call of shallow plastic carelessness,
From a Country with No Frills.*

*I find my place, as Casuarina roots bring a seat,
and Casuarina bark carries comfort for these Older's cheeks.
In times past, a Casuarina gave much more,
A brush for sleep when Dreaming called the mob
Into Baiame's deepening keep, and star-laden store.*

*They still give their songs, though, playing upon the wind.
They still give harmonies softly,
As the lake laps under them,
And the birds delight their branches,
Moving them to sway,
And the waves keep them company
Joining in the sensual sprays.*

*Ancient Ones – I wait and in the waiting rises
The wind again calling a gentle rhyme this time,
That bobs like the No Frills plastic PET
That nudges the edges of the mother-bank,
a restive adolescent.*

*This time a distant rumble comes,
The eastern clouds turn to slate,
When a sprite skims the watery mirrored clouds
Speeding homeward, a darting storm's escape.*

*Preliminary spots spit. The finches silent now.
And the misty gossamer settles on the page.
Closing the curtains before the storm plays out
As the world hunkers down, simply, still, to wait.*

Extract from 'Casuarina Dreaming on Narrabeen Lake'. J. Rey, 2017





Hauntology as Changing Places

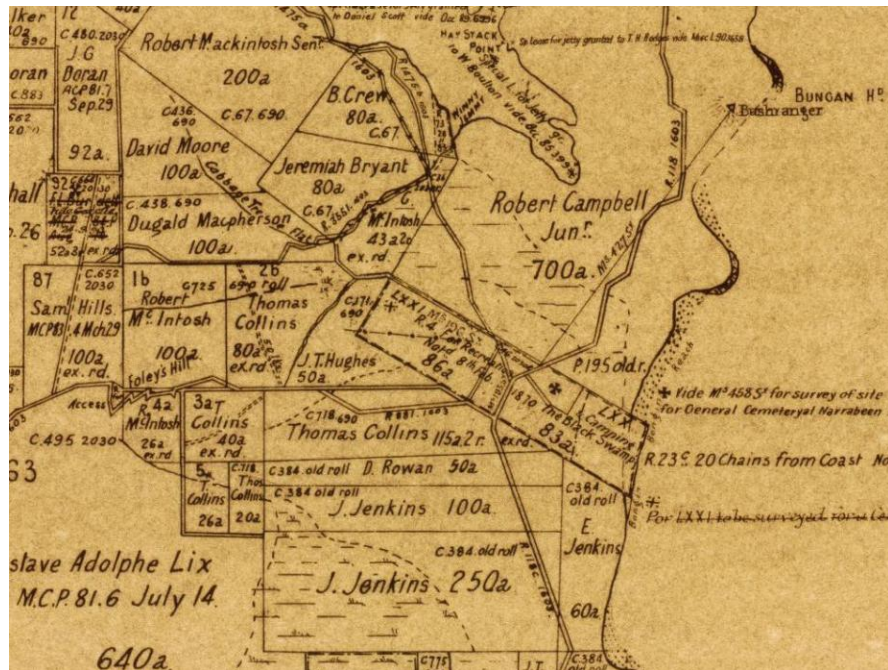


Fig. 40: Ann Randall's birth place (c.1816) as 1. Garigal Country. 2. Site of Robert Campbell junior's Land Grant, where John Randall Senior, Bellbird's g-g-g-g-grandfather, was employed. 3. Today's Mona Vale. Interestingly, this map also shows the land grant of Robert McIntosh, g-g-g-g-grandfather of Bellbird on Joan's father's side. Robert McIntosh and John Randall Senior were both in the military corps bands and they were neighbours. This map represents the coming together of two lineages, through the marriage of Bellbird's grandmother and grandfather, and through place - Garigal place - thus closing the circle after 100 years of walking different paths.

Map: Parish of Narrabeen, County of Cumberland [cartographic material]:
Metropolitan Land District, Eastern Division N.S.W. 1886. MAP G8971.G46 svar
(Copy 1). Courtesy National Library of Australia. Retrieved from:
<http://www.pittwateronlinenews.com/pittwater-reserves-mona-vale-village-greens-parks.php>



Hauntology as the Female Orphan School, Parramatta: Ann's Institutionalisation Phase

83
1 May 1822

Members present
 Orphan House Parramatta
 The Hon^{ble} Mr. Justice Pile
 The Rev^d Dr. Marsden, John Palmer Esq^r
 T. G. Palmer Esq^r, T. Garling Esq^r
 The Secretary.

The Minutes of the last Meeting being read, —

Mr. Garling read a Letter from Mr. Greenway touching Mary Greene.
 Resolved that the Secretary be requested to inquire where Mary Greene now is, and what
 would be best to be done for her, also to inquire into the facts of Mr. Greenways
 Letter to Mr. Garling; and to request Mr. Greenways attendance at the next
 Meeting of the Committee. — Mr. Greenway afterwards attended and promised
 to assist the Secretary in inquiries as to Mary Greene.

That Mary Kellys application for her daughter, as considered at the last
 Meeting, be dismissed.

The following accounts as audited by the Local Committee, were submitted

Female Orphan School . . .	£ 374. 7. 10 ¹ / ₂
do. Farm . . .	169. 10. —
say Five hundred and forty four pounds 3/10 ¹ / ₂ . . .	£ 544. 3. 10 ¹ / ₂

Resolved that the Treasurer be authorised to pay the above amount.

Read Petitions from Fanny Randall in behalf of her two children,
 Eliza aged 9 (and Ann aged 7)
 do. from Elizabeth M. Smith in behalf of her three daughters viz^t
 Mary Ann aged 10 years
 Margaret . . . 8 . . . 8
 Ann . . . 4 . . . —

Also Letters from Mr. Stapell on behalf of an Orphan, Ellena Diggins aged 7
 do. from Dr. Douglass on behalf of a girl, whose Mother is in the
 Factory, named — Hamilton, aged 6 years. —

Resolved that, Ann Randall, Mary Ann & Margaret M. Smith — Hamilton, and
 Ellena Diggins be admitted. —

Fig. 41: Record of Ann Randall's admittance into the Female Orphan School, Parramatta, 1822, by Fanny Randall, listing Ann as one of her children.

Randall Colonial Secretary Papers Special Bundle 1803 - 1824 Reel 6040. Image: J. Rey.



Hauntology as crowded, noisy spaces

There are several voices telling various versions of the story of Ann's parentage.



1. Ann was 'half-caste'

Pybus (2006) has it that Ann was the daughter of Fanny and her black First Fleet convict partner John Randall Senior (c1764 – c1822). John Randall Senior was born during the American War of Independence into a slave family in Newhaven, Connecticut, who belonged to [and therefore took the name of] Captain John Randall, of Stonington, near New London (Pybus, 2006, p. 24). Pybus casts Fanny as a white woman, possibly Catholic, however, there is a conspicuous absence of records supporting this perspective.

The first absence is within the marriage records. Catholic marriages were not always recorded. However, equally, Aboriginal marriages were not recorded either, so it is difficult to confirm she was Catholic, based on this aspect, and Pybus acknowledges this (Pybus, C., 05.11.2014 Personal Conversation).

Second, there are also no birth, transportation or death records for Fanny either, whereas white Catholics had transportation and death records held, along with any records of later births. In contrast, Aboriginal births, deaths and marriages were not often recorded officially. Thus, Bellbird's oral family history (see Chapter 1), that Fanny was Dharug, is supported by these absences in the records. Third, as two of John and Fanny's sons drowned at Manly in 1816, as reported by Pybus (2006, p. 163), and neither of their births or deaths were recorded, and no names given, it reinforces the fact that there is a lack of evidence available to support the claim that she was most likely white and Catholic.

Fourth, no records, outside those from the Female Orphan School (see Figure 41) have been found to date of Ann's sister Eliza. Such absences, therefore increase our sense of uncertainty around the veracity of the Pybus version and leaves the question of Fanny's and Ann's origins decidedly open. 2. First Fleeters opening the accounts



2. First Fleeters opening the accounts

A second version opens the written record, following in other footsteps. In the quote below, the organisation Fellowship of First Fleeters informs us of Ann's story, acknowledging their source as Brook & Kohen (1991, pp. 224-225):

... Randall had a de facto wife, Fanny, by whom he had four children. Of these four children, the two boys died in an accident in 1816. In 1822 Fanny asked that the two girls be admitted to the Parramatta Native Institution [my emphasis], as she was a widow. The Native Institution was, needless to say, for Aboriginal children which (unless Fanny was Aboriginal) these children were not. Of the two girls, Eliza (b 1814) was rejected as being too old. Ann (b 1817) was admitted and was still there when the Institution closed in 1829. When admitted in 1823, it was recorded that she 'spelled and sewed well' even though she suffered ophthalmia [conjunctivitis]. On the closure of the Institution she was fostered by the Rev Robert Cartwright who fostered all 10 of the children remaining. However, he had to return Ann to her mother (Fanny) 'because of the injury sustained by the Aboriginal children from witnessing [her] vicious conduct'. (Best, n.d.

*<http://www.fellowshipfirstfleeters.org.au/johnrandall.htm>
Accessed 18.02.2017).*



3. Settling the matter ...

However, we know that in fact Ann was admitted in 1822 to the Female Orphan's School [my emphasis] above the river at Parramatta, now Rydalmere. The Parramatta Native Institution by this time had already closed in 1821. Later, Ann was then transferred to the Black(s)town Native Institution (BNI) in 1826. As Brook and Kohen (1991, p. 205) tell it:

The accounts of the Native Institution at Black Town were opened by William Hall on 9 October, 1826; six Aboriginal girls, transferred from the Female Orphan Institution, comprised the initial intake. Each girl was issued with a shift and dress. Oddly, only three mattresses, three pillows, three blankets and 12 sheets were issued, indicating that the children slept two to a mattress. The girls were Fanny, Jenny (Jane Cox), Tonch (?), Mary Walker, Helen Shanglely and Ann Randall.

As noted earlier, it was the Female Orphan Institution, not the Parramatta Native Institution, that recorded that she 'spelled and sewed well', in spite of suffering ophthalmia (conjunctivitis).

Bellbird: I suffered conjunctivitis often as a child. Mercury ointment, branded as 'Golden Eye Ointment' was the common remedy, until it was realised its dangers. It worked a treat, too.

Following the closure of the BNI in 1829 and the transferral of the remaining 'Ten Native Children' to the care of Rev. Robert Cartwright down at Liverpool, Ann's name comes to our attention once more. Apparently, she and the Reverend didn't get along very well, as it is recorded that:

she should be returned to her mother's care 'because of the injury sustained by the Aboriginal children witnessing [her] vicious conduct'. (Brook & Kohen, 1991, p. 225).

There is no record that she was returned to her mother, nor is there any record that either Fanny or Eliza were alive or dead at that time.

In 1829 Ann would have been around 13 years old. One wonders what that 'vicious' conduct could have been.



4. ... or not? Shining another light

However, according to Kohen (2010), Ann was the granddaughter [my emphasis] of John Randall Senior. Kohen (2010, p. 38) shows Ann as born to John Thomas Randall, (1797- 183?), the son of John Senior and his second wife, Irish convict Mary Butler. In 1816, John Thomas Randall's partner was listed as an 'Unknown, possibly Aboriginal' woman (Kohen, 2010, p. 38).

In c.1816, when Ann was born, John T. Randall would have been 19, an age when such alliances could well have been made. As records show, he became a seaman, and possibly a sealer. There are many references to a John Randall in Western Australia, in Major Edmund Lockyer's journal of 1827, when John T. Randall would have been 30. These connections are relevant because Brook and Kohen (1991, p. 212) indicate that one little Aboriginal girl, also named Fanny, was abducted along with her mother by Samuel Bailey, one of the sealers associated with Randall in Western Australia. The child was eventually placed in the BNI during Ann's time there. Little Fanny probably would have known John T. Randall, after making the voyage on the 'Success' with him, when he returned from Western Australia in the employ of James Sterling. Samuel Bailey was sent to Norfolk Island for his crimes and is recorded there in 1828 (see Appendices E: Supporting Websites – Tasmanian Bailey/Lockyer/Randall Connections).

The parentage of Ann is anything but certain. If John T. Randall was the father of Ann, we are then left with the question of who was the Aboriginal woman Fanny, mother of Ann? The fact remains that neither Pybus (2006), Kohen(2010) nor other family, researchers,

including myself, have found a birth or death certificate for Fanny, and as a result, the oral family history stands, namely that Ann was Dharug, from Windsor (having lived most of her 96 years at Wilberforce, nearby), and accordingly, Fanny had to also be Dharug.



Hauntology as Clearing the Mists

Whoever Fanny was, Ann's early years can only be described as 'character building' (see Appendix E: Supporting Websites - Female Orphan School).

She went on to have at least two relationships (between c. 1844 and 1911), during which time life must have been tough for a black woman. Ann, who left Sarah Charlotte's father, George (Holmes) Smith, later partnered with Charles Young, and they are buried together in Wilberforce cemetery (Kohen, 2010, p. 38).

Ann was famous as a local fortune teller and wore a lavender bonnet, smoked a corn pipe and juggled (Hunt, 2017). Ann also began the tradition of passing down 'the black doll' (see Figure 42) within her family.

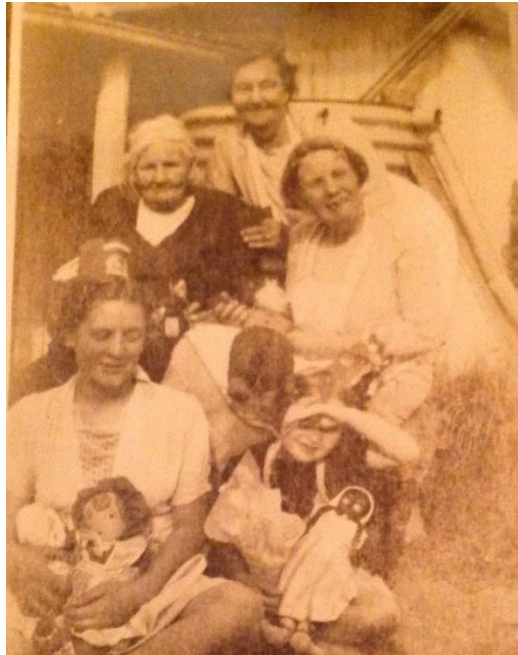


Fig. 42: Descendants of Ann Randall and Charles Young with black dolls. Top row: Lena Martha Moulds (nee Young), granddaughter of Ann Randall; Second row: Lena's mother (left): Violet Young (nee Rossthorne) m. George Absolom Young (son of Ann Randall); Lena's sister (right): Florence Young; Third Row: Lena's nieces (from left): Edith Maud (nee Young); Sarah Young (back to camera); Isabella Young. These three girls were daughters of Daniel Lee Young (son of Ann Randall, brother of George Absolom). With Permission Cheryl Hunt, 2017.

Ann was also the source of a story that was passed down Bellbird's family for seven generations, the story of a French connection (Pybus, 2006, p. 179).

Ann Randall had only the faintest memory of her father, who must have died or disappeared when she was six, and she explained her origins as being an 'islander', from 'the French Islands', presumably exotic Tahiti. A descendant who remembered the old lady from her childhood said that she was as 'black as the ace of spades'.

Bellbird passed this onto her own children prior to learning of her Dharug history. It is possible both are correct. I would like to end with two photos of a woman who actually knew Ann Randall. As a young woman Mrs Honora Cupitt (known as Nora) (see Figures 43 and 44 below) knew Ann when she was already elderly. She is the source of the lavender bonnet, corn pipe and juggling storying. Mrs.

Cupitt taught for decades at Windsor Primary School. Cheryl Hunt, a great-great-great granddaughter of Ann and Charles Young, attended this school, and Mrs. Cupitt became a family friend. Mrs. Cupitt also taught Kookaburra, who was in Cheryl's class – such interweavings!

At the beginning of this Pleiadean Presence, I suggested I had a sense of being only two voices away from Sarah Charlotte. At this point I feel I am now only two voices away from Ann's, via Cheryl and Mrs. Cupitt. Thinking through voices dissolves time. The fact that the process of this research has brought voices to me via the internet and the telephone is deeply moving. In 2008, nine minutes after Kevin Rudd said 'Sorry', I knew nothing of my heritage. Nothing beyond a 'French connection'. Today, how blessed am I? Certainly, a Dharug Nura 'event'.



Fig. 43: Mrs. Honora Cupitt, (nee McMahon) OBE, as a young teacher (left) & Fig. 44: as a very old lady (right). Family friend of Ann Randall and teacher at Windsor Primary School of Cheryl Hunt and Kookaburra. Photos courtesy of Cheryl Hunt.

Ann's abilities as a fortune teller remind us of Crow's storying about having 'the gift'.



DEATH OF A CENTENARIAN.

An old age pensioner, named Ann Young, a widow, died suddenly at Wilberforce on Sunday night. She was on the verge of 100 years of age, and was full of remarkable vigor up to the time of her death. For many years she had been a fortune-teller, and people from far and wide had visited her. She had resided in the district for half a century.

Fig. 45: Transcription of Article: DEATH OF A CENTENARIAN. (1904, October 18). *The Maitland Daily Mercury* (NSW: 1894 - 1939), p. 3. Retrieved February 26, 2018, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article124046006>



CHAPTER 11: Bellbird's Becomings



Fig. 46: *Bellbird*. Sketch: J. Rey

Who is Bellbird?

Bellbird is descended from Dharug Ancestor, Fanny, and the Randall family in the Dharug colonial community. Unlike the other Dharug storytellers featured in this dissertation, Bellbird is also the researcher, interviewer and writer, so she occupies many spaces. Bellbird's territory flies between places of past, present and future, weaving in the process a trailing tail/tale.






Chronologically, Bellbird is the oldest participant in the project, yet culturally she is the youngest, being only nine years old since learning of her Aboriginality, at the time of writing. From this incongruous perch, she contemplates some places she has been, what Barad (2010) calls the 'dis/continuities', such as 'white', 'colonial', 'expatriate', 'trailing spouse', 'widow', 'Aboriginal' and 'Dharug'. These are notions that are positioned as 'bricks' (Blair, 2015) in a scholarship wall of concrete certainties yet, when met, they dissolve like the memory of a Bellbird's call after nightfall.

Bellbird's conceptions of self are fluid, and are voiced through fictional narrative, historical genealogy, hauntological memorialisation and/or poetic

rhythms. Goannas, dragonflies, she-oaks and shimmering watery places inhabit her territory. Ancestors in the forms of Fanny, Ann, Sarah, Mabel, Vi, and Joan come to visit her and together they share this Dharug Nura as seven sisters, resting together fleetingly in one place despite crossing seven generations simultaneously. Sometimes she catches them wafting across the seven sistas of the project like she-oak fingers waving and whispering in the breeze. Bellbird's particular contribution rests in the producing, the weaving together, for co-becomings.



TABLE 1: SYMBOLS REPRESENTING VOICES WITHIN THE THESIS

SYMBOL	VOICE
	Country
	Scholars, poets, various others
	Narrator
	Interviewer
	Writer



11.1 The Place of Bellbird's Callings and Arrivals



Just as this Bellbird busily works upside down (see Fig. 46 above), so our Bellbird's storying moves from present to past and interweaves voices, events and places in the process. Bellbird becomes with the seven sistas, and the doctoral project co-becomes as a place of belonging, caring and connecting through the presences, places and practices woven into it.

This particular learning journey, the one directly associated with my Aboriginal heritage, commenced on 13th February, 2008, 10 minutes after Kevin Rudd, then Prime Minister of Australia, gave his historic 'Sorry' speech in the Australian Parliament. Following that deeply moving moment I decided I would make the phone call that would tell me if I had an Aboriginal Ancestor. I had already suspected such a connection, based on snippets of memory: my mother's darker skin, the silences about my mother's family history and the deep suspicion that those silences represented a secret. I planned to call the widow of my grandmother's cousin, FH, and ask if she knew of anyone in the family who was Aboriginal. I didn't need to ask her. She brought the topic up herself, and asked me if I knew that my maternal grandmother's grandmother, Sarah Charlotte Heard (née Holmes) was Aboriginal? I said, 'No, but I suspected there might be something.'

She went on to outline the story that Sarah Charlotte was 'Dharug from Windsor', she was very 'black skinned' and that 'she used to visit the Coolie Camp' that was not far from the township of Paterson, in rural New South Wales 'and help them [the residents] out a lot' (Heard, F. 13th February, 2008 Personal Communication)

From that time on, I began researching my Aboriginal family tree. I had already begun following my maternal grandmother's story, based on the fact that Vi (1900 -1992) would never say anything about her childhood, except that she was raised in Paterson, near Maitland, and that if I wanted to know anything, I could go there. 'It's all there.' I was told this rather perfunctorily only when she was 91 and I had brought my new baby daughter up to meet her. It was the last time we spoke.

The journey since discovering this heritage has been remarkable. The timing was totally dependent upon previous events in my life, the

'dis/continuities' (Barad, 2010), particularly the accidental death of my husband while hang-gliding, one year before in 2007, and that in itself totally dependent upon our return to Australia two years before, and that dependent upon a car accident in France two years before that. So, it goes, a woven journey called life, moving forwards and backwards or, perhaps more correctly, spiralling like a hang-glider rising on a thermal up the face of a cliff, though others could say like a hawk or sea eagle. My consciousness of the journey has been a significant by-stander; perhaps Ancestors were directing the call.

Two other examples of timeplacematterings are, I believe, noteworthy in their unexpectedness; I consider these events involved the universe speaking to me and contacting me in this doctoral journey. I like to consider them as bells ringing, places of arrival calling me to attention. Others might label them as 'hauntological' connections (Barad, 2010). This reminds me of Kookaburra and her consequential Dreaming story. While hers was a solution to a problem that she knew about, my examples were almost completely out of the blue, arriving as solutions to problems almost unknown. To the extent that these callings are unconstructed, I place them as co-becomings, as if the people being revived through this thesis are assisting in the matter. As storying, they become a form of identity-as-narrative accrual (Attwood, 1996b).



11.1.1 An Arrival from the Other Side: The unknown Half-Sister and Family

RC lives in Coffs Harbour, not a place of strong connection for me, though my brother lived there for a time. I had begun the indulgence of 'doing the family tree' and just after Christmas Day, in 2012, being 'on holidays', thought I'd 'play' for a while. I threw into the computer my mother's father's name. A conversation from 12

months earlier popped up. Not expecting it to still be live, but being an optimist, I typed in a question. Five minutes later a response came through, dismissing my assertion of what I had known about my grandfather, with the statement, 'I have been researching HG for 25 years and there is no connection between the G... family and the tea people. Who are you?' I gave my relationship details, and immediately RC replied, 'OMG. I have been searching for you people for years! Ring me.'

From that point of contact, a whole family history on my mother's father's side opened, and RC shared with me 25 years of her research. She knew nothing of my maternal grandmother, but she had found my mother's sister and had tried to contact them earlier that year, but to no avail. Her mother and my mother were half-sisters that never met, and so I discovered a half-cousin. While this may not sound important, it opened me to the possibilities of what an identity may mean, and how fluid it can be.

Identity had already been something of interest, given my previous existence as a 'trailing spouse' living outside my language with a Swiss-French husband and children in Europe for seven years. In 2005, I published an historical novel, a fictional memoir of First Fleet convict Mary Bryant (née Broad), so writing in first person opened me to conceptualisations of the fluidity of time, perhaps even its unreality, as I and Mary co-created ourselves (Rey, 2005).

Additionally, I had completed a M. Ed. (International Ed.) in 2008, looking into 'third culture kids', which my own children became identified as during our time offshore. The concept of 'third culture' as an identity place added to my sense of self as transient (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

Our return to Australia in 2006, which involved my recognising the experience as an identity 'repatriation' and retrieval process, was

followed by the split-second death in 2007 of my partner of 23 years. For at least six months this felt like a piece from my brain – as life’s jigsaw - had fallen out, which certainly fit Dastur’s (2000) definition of an “event”:

a split between past and future and so allows the appearance of different parts of time as dis-located ... irremediably excessive in comparison to the usual representation of time as flow. It appears as something that dislocates time and gives a new form to it, something that puts the flow of time out of joint and changes its direction (In Bastian, 2009, p. 111).

Accordingly, identity and the need to find a self as a place for revival led to the family history retrieval path, which brought my Coffs Harbour-cousin to my door. It also led me to explore my mother’s and grandmother’s silent places, which had already presented themselves as places of unknown storying, previously hidden.



11.1.2 A Second Unknowing Arrives

The journey of the doctoral research came directly from that search for better conceptualisations of self, through storied knowledge and ‘events’. While the initial identification of the Dharug heritage has been discussed (see Chapter 1) and the research continued part-time through 2014 and 2015, then full time in 2016 and 2017, it was only in 2017 that the second significant ‘narrative accrual’ (Attwood, 1996a) or ‘disjuncture event’ took place.

This was an email in response to a message concerning Ann Randall I had left on a blog site of local historians, which I had looked at only occasionally during the previous 12 months. Arriving in June, 2017, the email was from a connection I had been searching for years, someone with links to the Young family, Ann’s second partnership. The wealth of information that Cheryl Hunt provided has been wonderful (see Pleiadean Presence 6). In addition, she provided the knowledge that Kookaburra was a classmate of hers at Windsor

Public, and as such would also have known Mrs Cupitt. This fact, to my mind, is so remarkable, it's joyous in its unexpectedness; it also challenges the requisite for constructed certainties, rather than the spontaneity of surprise. Such spontaneity opens us to deeper appreciation of human existence within a more boundless place of unknowing.



11.1.3 A Missing Person Arrives

In contrast to the spontaneous contact with Cheryl, finding Ray Fairall, whose website was an early source for my understanding of Randall history, represents my dogged persistence in making connections. He is a descendant of Frances Randall, another child of John Randall Senior. I had pretty much given up on the effort, because the site had not been updated since 2013. In my efforts to contact Ray, I telephoned Cassandra Pybus in 2014, as she had referred to him in her work (Pybus, 2006). However, she was unable to provide any contact details.

Unexpectedly, in 2017, contact was finally made, and so the long-awaited discussion around the Dharug-Randall connection took place. While not being definitive and while acknowledging the 'messiness' due to the absence of hard evidence, Fairall supports the possibility of Aboriginality both through Frances Randall (Ann's Aunt or half-sister, depending on who fathered Ann), and 'Fanny', the woman who had Ann admitted into the Female Orphan School. As Theroux (2017, p. 352) argues:

The world we inherit is composed of the dreams of the dead. We can never wake from them entirely... From them ... I have learned to ask certain questions: whose stories are we in, to what end are they told, why are they believed?... A feeling of timeless profundity is created by leaving out what is most messy and most characteristic of ordinary human lives. Gravitas is achieved by exclusion, by not acknowledging the monarch's farts, the lover's bad breath, the piles of Lego in the living room.

To this extent, while 'messy' definitely characterises our knowledge of 'Fanny', unknowing the facts becomes both a state of influence and a connection to the dead; a state of 'timeless profundity' and a source of future possibilities.



11.2 Bellbird's Unknowing Place – A Practice of Unlearning Knowing and Doing

The point of significance in all three connections (to RC from Coffs Harbour, Cheryl Hunt from the Young family, and Ray Fairall of Randall descent), resides in the place of the unexpected, the uncertain, the surprise; this place of unknowing in turn carries opportunities. Unlearning 'knowing' has been claimed as a place of criticality, essential for attention, perspicacity, insight and imagination – a liminal place (Somerville, 2008).

As an example of the significance of apprehending 'knowing', I use Knott's account of Hannah Arendt's description of Nazi holocaust organiser Adolf Eichmann. Arendt observed Eichmann not as the media and commentariat of the day reported him, as a crazed murderous and sadistic anti-Semite, but rather as

*... all too ordinary and average ... He simply had **never imagined what effect his actions had.** (Knott, 2015, p. 4)*

She describes her understanding as arising from her act of unlearning evil, perceiving it not as a dramatic monstrosity of exceptionalism. Instead, Arendt observed Eichmann's ordinariness and introduced to the world the concept of 'the banality of evil' (Knott, 2015, p. 22).

In the process of unlearning the familiar concept of 'functioning', Arendt was able to consider the dangerous nature of the 'pleasure of pure function', which Eichmann personified in his 'thoughtlessness, that is, absence of thought' (Knott, 2015, p. 5).

*By using such an example, I don't attempt to dramatise the significance of inhabiting the place of unknowing, but to emphasise the power that unknowing provides us. Unknowing enables action, rather than functioning. I argue that crossing from knowing to unknowing is the **active** process of unlearning that Arendt was trying to bring to the world's attention.*

For Bellbird, the process of receiving the Possum knowledge required an initial process of unlearning: rejecting the desire for fast 'facts', and accepting the process of collective participation, the co-doing across time that leads to co-becoming. In pedagogical terms, the place of unlearning is smothered by the driving force to deliver knowledge so students can 'function' in society. In the competitive rush to insert knowledge into students, within constructed, tight timetables, there is no room for unknowing. As such the entrenched orthodoxy demanding 'functioning' (as in Arendt's 'thoughtlessness'), can be seen therefore as a method of 'dumbing-down' the curriculum, one that prevents us from seeking solutions from unknown places, which is a more time-consuming approach. When critical planetary ecological damage is at stake, such an education system reinforces ways of knowing that promote practices that grow unabashed consumerism, capitalism, multinational colonisations and rapacious destruction of Country/ies.

The rest of Bellbird's story presents one example of working through Dharug ways of knowing and doing that open up and strengthen our understanding of co-becoming. It also presents opportunities for belonging, caring and connecting, a way towards unknowing and a way for Country to track our voices. Unlearning the places of certainty empowers us towards action, rather than simply 'functioning'.



11.2.1 *Unknowning Possum*

Possum as an unknowing place is probably familiar to the majority. In Dharug Nura (and for me) possum was often known only as the night-dweller that rumbled across my tin roof, into the carport rafters, to scratch an attempted nest in springtime and to get out of storms. They are soft and furry creatures with bushy tails or ringtails; they like the nights and sleep in dark hidden places during the day. If they get into your ceiling or roof space, you need a possum catcher to remove them. This was all I knew of possums close up, until it was suggested that as Bushytail and Ringtail were important participants in this thesis-Country, then perhaps having the thesis wrapped in possum-skin, with a map of my thesis journey from Wallumattagal Country burnt into the hide, was an important perspective. I was in Toronto with Anishinaabe people when the seed was planted. Four months later it sprouted.



11.2.2 *Diary of Meeting, Learning and Co-becoming with four Possums*

Day 1: Meeting Possum, Friday, 10th November, 2017.

I have driven for two hours from Wallumattagal Country, into today's farmlands on the outskirts of the Sydney basin, on Dharawal-speaking Country. With my guides, Bushytail, L. and M., we proceed to a nearby paddock, the designated meeting place for me to start my possum-skin knowledge journey. The late morning air is cool, a crow calls, otherwise it is still – a waiting, an expectancy, hushes our voices.

Bushytail lays out 20 or so pelts on the grass. L. and M. are preparing the fire for the smoking ceremony to come. There is a crackling as

the eucalyptus oil from the leaves is fired in the flames. The eucalyptus smoke rises, and I wonder if the possum Ancestors are remembering their connection to Country through the perfume – some primal connectivity we can only imagine. It is time to respect their giving as a matter of pastpresentfuturing, a co-becoming.

Respecting Possum



Fig. 47: Smoking the Possum Pelts. Image: J. Rey, 2017.

Prayer at Ceremony of Smoking: We pay our respects to the spirits and Ancestors of the creatures whose material lives have passed but whose skins contribute to this transmission of cultural knowledge; a transmission practice that has been undertaken for thousands of years. We thank them for their part and contribution to building knowledges and wisdom for the benefit of all sentient beings. From the smoking with eucalyptus leaves, a cleansing practice for millennia, we recognise the healing properties of the eucalyptus oil within the leaves. Ancestrally, may your spirits return to their Country of belonging.

Selecting Possum

Selecting Possum involves me hearing the story of the pelts. As New South Wales protects possums, the skins must come from New Zealand. In 1837, brushtail possums were exported to New Zealand from Australia as part of establishing the fur trade, and so today's New Zealand possums have Ancestors arising from places in our Australian Aboriginal Country. So, part of the learning involves which region of New Zealand they came from, the differences in the hides

*and the tanning processes that allow their locale to be identified.
The whiter the hide, the stronger and more modern are the
chemicals and methods used for tanning.*

(See Appendix E: Supporting Websites - Possums in New Zealand: for the history of the possum industry in New Zealand)

*The process begins with the selection of the pelts that I feel
connected to and attracted by. This is the first time I have seen so
many pelts and I can't help but think of the lives lost for them to be
here with us today. Such a sight prepares me psychologically and
emotionally for the respect and remembrance process that will
unfold through ceremony.*

*I greet them with my eyes; their deep fur speaks viscerally of soft
primal warmth and I recognise why such material is used for
blankets, cloaks and to line babies' wooden coolamons. Some pelts
keep their tails, some don't; some are rich brown-reds, some grey-
yellows and a couple have grey-pink markings. Some keep their
scalps, and I see the spaces that would have held their eyes, edged in
the bone colour of the hide. The waved edges of their skins are rough
and raw, not neat. I don't feel horrified by the proximity of death
that these skins story, though perhaps some would. Rather I have a
sense of connection through the deaths that we all undergo. Here
death lives with us and is not fearful. A bullet hole marks the
moment of crossing and I pause: why is the shooting of another
species not equivalent to the shooting of a human being? Like the
skins themselves, the question hangs, leaving trailing tail/tales
dangling.*

*I mark our greeting through touch, running my hands gently through
the fur, delighting in the softness I saw with my eyes, and the depth
of their pelts, and select one and turn it over. The hide is clean cream*

and smooth, industrially so. A sense of disappointment passes through me.

I turn another. This is rough, with splotchy grey-green patches. A sense of satisfaction arises. I turn to Bushytail and ask, 'Why?' She explains the difference in the tanning methods as regional; clean is generally from the north and grey-green from the south.

I return to the task of selection, and choose to respect both regions, two from the north, two from the south. Two have tails, two without; two with eye spaces, two without; two are grey pink and two grey yellow. I feel a design has begun; a place for arranging and mapping and a landscape for creating has arisen.

From the moments of meeting, we have travelled through the process of ceremony for cleansing, respecting and selecting. Now we return to the house and commence the next phase of learning: transforming the skins from separate stories, separate beings, into one.

From Possum Skin to Possum Wrap: A Process of Practicalities - planning, fitting, cutting, positioning, altering and engaging

Making things fit requires accommodation, adaptation, a reconciliation between past, present and future; a negotiation between what was, is and what we want it to be. In this place of possum-practice, we release the spiritual and move into the material. From sources to purposes, transformation requires a process of doing. In this instance, it involves planning, fitting, cutting, positioning, altering. Temporally speaking, we walk past-present with tools and materials, knowledges and practices involving contexts from being-to-becoming-to-co-becoming, a pathway to the future; not separations but weaving time, place, matter and 'natter'.



Fig. 48: From Possum Skin to Possum Wrap. Image: J. Rey, 2017.

A Question of Methods

Just as the thesis involved a process of planning, acting and strategic decision-making, so did the creation of this possum wrap. Planning involved lots of discussion, sharing knowledges, making choices: which pelt should sit where; how the edges would meet; what trimming to undertake, what thread to use for stitching, what stitching style, what stitching tool? Other questions arose: what design, and how to make it fit on which of the four segments when they were stitched together. Should it be drawn on first, or simply burnt directly onto the skin and what symbols to use? What was the purpose for this wrap? Only for presenting the thesis, or something more? A wrap to wear at ceremonies, dances and welcomes? All these questions were shared and discussed, and at each step, if scissors for cutting were used, what would have been used customarily? It became a place of sharing knowledges, time, 'getting to know you', outside of community business, in Bushytail's home, with newborn baby suckling. A beautiful place of belonging.

I remember Bawaka here, and their co-becoming in time/s/telling/s, and I feel our place of 'home', with baby, women, hearth, some

transgenerational forever presences and continuities unfolded (Bawaka et al., 2016).

Some clear choices were my own. I chose to place the skins from regions in the North of New Zealand at the top (north) and those from the south at the base. This meant the two top panels were very creamy and smooth, but these two had the tails attached. The two panels at the base of the wrap had no tails but they held the flaps with the empty eye spaces, which when sown together formed a pocket, unseen on the hide-patterned side, but very obvious on the fur side. I chose to keep them to honour the living raw nature of the animals who previously gave life to these skins, and the knowledges that might be transmitted by their presence. Each of the skins required trimming along the inside edges to be stitched, while the outside edges were unchanged. All the edgings that were removed and the fur that was trimmed were kept so that nothing from the animals was wasted, but could be used for possible wrist-bands, head-bands or decorative pieces at other times.

When it came to the technical matters, I chose as much as possible to use natural materials and tools. However, such desires were tempered by the practicalities of today. Bushytail had an array of yarns of different colours, several needles for piercing the skin in advance to align the stitching through the thick hides, and several marking pencils. I chose to mark the skin in advance with the design I had decided upon, for fear of making irrevocable mistakes with the burner. Because it was impractical within the time frame in which we were working to source and obtain enough gut or sinew which would customarily have been the stitching material, I chose a dark brown synthetic waxed yarn.

We used scissors to cut the edges, to facilitate sewing the seams, rather than sharpened stone as would customarily have been

undertaken. Similarly, the burner, a modern, electric tool used by artists today, was much quicker and safer than using heated sharp rocks of earlier times. However, for the process of piercing the holes for the stitching to take place, I was able to use the kangaroo bone, with a wooden handle, rather than a modern needle.

Finally, I decided I preferred what is called blanket stitch for sewing the panels together (see Figure 48). This stitch I have known from childhood and always considered it both attractive and practical.

While many craftsmen may do a hundred stitches to an inch, sewing has never been my forté, and so I knew this was not going to be me. Happily, I lost no sleep over this deficit, but headed along the freeway for the two-hour drive back into Wallumattagal Country, reflecting on the amazing privilege afforded me by learning what has been practiced across Possum Country for thousands of years.

Without Bushytail, and her family, the transmission of this knowledge would not be happening. Yanu, mudjins (thank you, loved ones).



11.2.3 From Planning to Doing

Day 2: Crafting Possum, Tuesday, 14th November, 2017

Today, it is cool, cloudy and it has rained overnight. A sense of the earth refreshed and cleansed surrounds us. I also have a sense of excitement, for today we begin the joining to become one. The skins were smoked, positioned, shaped and trimmed the previous session, so today was the sewing and the mapping of the design.

First, having already decided to punch holes with the kangaroo bone tool into the 'southern' skins, I became familiar with working this tool, the force required to pierce the hide and how the fur hid the puncture, with only the tiniest mark of a tear visible. Mapping the stitching through these ruptures in the hide enabled me to plan the

position of the stitching and see the size of the gaps that would become evident when the garment was sewn (see Figure 48).

Working with the kangaroo bone was made simpler as it had been crafted and bound into a wooden handle and was easy to grip. Its sharpness was undeniable. Knowing that such a technique was using material from Country, not manufactured in some industrial factory, somewhere, as are modern steel needles, I felt this was somehow more 'authentic'. Yet such compromises are necessary in the world in which we live, so reflecting on the practice today, it is not the binary of good and bad but recognising the blending of approaches that work within today's context.

Working with the thread (waxed and synthetic) was its own learning journey, knowing what length to work with, its strength, how to place the (double) knot so it would not be seen through the fur, how to position the needle and hold the two pieces of thick pelt so that the second piece aligned so that the stitching on the 'northern' side looked neat.

All these techniques were discussed and practiced during the course of the day, and the process took all day! This was no speedy, electronic, zippetty-efficient place. This was steady, concentrated, carefulness, where force, speed and placement were counter-poised, and when the balance was achieved, I knew I would be happy with the result. Each stitch became an harmonic act, in its own right. I couldn't help but wonder how anyone doing much tighter stitching could know the hide so well, that they could balance placement so closely, without creating long tears in the skin.

Gradually, the four skins evolved into two panels. First the two 'eastern' panels of 'north and south' came together, and then the two 'western' panels became one. So, having sewn two 'equators', I was left to stitch them and fabricate the 'meridian' for the four to

become one: the 'northern' panels with their two bushy tails and creamy hide across the top, and the 'southern', darker, rougher panels, with their eye-places in the centre at the bottom (see Fig 49). What was needed now was to sew the tricky bits, at the central heart of the four meeting places and around the pocket. In terms of starting and finishing places, these were assessed, planned and discussed along the way. The 'eye-pocket' was sewn first, and then discussion took place about its purpose.

By this time, five hours had passed, and both Bushytail and I are exhausted. I happily relinquish the task of sewing the remaining 'hole in the heart' of the panels to Bushytail, and like a true Aunty she centres them with her skilful knowledge. I drive the two hours in the traffic home, exhausted yet content, knowing that next time, possum wrapping will become possum-thesis-mapping.



Fig. 49: Possum Wrap – fur side, showing tails, pocket and central seam.
Image: J. Rey, 2017



11.2.4 Transcribing Knowledges: From Written Thesis to Pictorial Presence

Day 3: Mapping Possum, Friday, 17th November, 2017

Possum mapping day starts earlier than the others, because we know it will be a big day to transcribe the thesis journey onto the skin.

This journey reflects both the knowledges written on the pages of the thesis and the relational journey with my six sistas over the years. Working with each of the women, co-becoming in the places of their telling/s/time/s, will now be etched as Goanna's journey into the possum skin time/s/telling/s, transposing the memories, relationships between human and other-than-human places, materials and lives, between researcher and co-researcher-as-Goanna on the one side, and Goanna's trailing burnt story and possum through the skin. Our wianga (sista-group) now includes our four-co-becoming-one possum-Ancestor/s as well.

Bringing from New Zealand possums whose Ancestors came from Australia, perhaps even Dharug Nura, illustrates interconnections of time/s, beings, identities and knowledges. To arrive at a summation of the thesis-Bellbird-Goanna-Possum-Country, burnt into the skin of another creature, resonates with the multiplicities of other cultures' relational processes. Christian transubstantiation, through the covenant of taking bread to symbolise taking the body of Christ into the body of the believer, is one example. Transposing knowledges from western traditions of writing from paper to skin or rock, for example, is the continuation of ancient practices of writing on papyrus. As Van Toorn (2006, pp. 225-226) notes, the word 'write' itself comes from Old English, Old Norse and Old Saxon origins:

that denote scratching, cutting or scoring with a sharp instrument. These words reflect the physical and technological aspects of the practice of writing on tough, unforgiving surfaces, in European cultural contexts where writing was considered a craft, a form of physical labour, rather than an art or an indicator of cultural advancement on the basis of its ability to encode spoken language.

Van Toorn points out that when writing is the dominant form of knowledge transmission in a society, it is an act of political domination. However, when it is transformed by the minority culture to reflect that local culture's values, ways and knowledges, it becomes an act of political resistance. It follows, therefore, that when the minority culture uses its own symbols and written forms to articulate its own values and meanings in the dominant culture's space, e.g. the university, then it, too, becomes an act of resistance to that domination. Thus, writing, as burning the journey of the thesis on possum skin, resists domination of academic orthodoxy, and places the onus of ethical equivalence, equity and social justice into the hands of the academy. Their acceptance of this can be interpreted as a step towards reconciliation of past injustices.

I begin with sketching with a black artist's pencil the outline of the Goanna-walking story, one panel at a time (see Figure 10). This requires mapping three sandstone pinnacles across the north-western panel of the wrap and the next four across the north-eastern panel. With these in place, the seven Pleiadean stars are inserted between them across the two top panels. When the stars and pinnacles are in place, I sketch in the two ancestral dragonflies, one flying on each of the top outer corners. This is concentrated work, because it is a question of fitting each form proportionally to the space available.

Next, I sketch the forms of our seven sistas: Kookaburra, Wagtail, Crow, Ringtail Possum, Bushytail Possum, Bellbird, and the final pinnacle, which is left empty for Sandstone, but with the waves of the sea curling at her base, to indicate the coast.

At this point, it is time to sketch in Goanna's tail, winding between the four panels, interrupted by the blanket stitching, but matching the lines of continuity that such a trail would leave. From here, it is a question of recognising the openings to indicate the start of the journey. I include in this production Wallumai, the Black Snapper fish, showing the start on Wallumattagal Country on the north-western panel. I then use the texture of the skin on the south-western panel to illustrate a whale-like figure, since whales were once commonly found in Sydney Harbour. This acknowledges the meeting of the waters of the Lane Cove River and Parramatta River at Moocooboola (Hunters Hill), where whales would visit before colonisation took place. We can interpret this from the rock-engraving at Ball's Head near Wollstonecraft, on Cammeraigal people's Country, for example.

With tail in place, I turn to sketching Goanna, then the Angophora tree, with her shapely curves, the baby in her coolamon, lined with possum skin, resting beside the fire. I pause to remember and reflect.

The inclusion of this baby image is reminiscent of the occasion when filming took place in preparation for the reclamation of the Barangaroo headland, on Gadigal people's Country, just west of what is now the Sydney Central Business District (CBD) and Sydney Harbour Bridge. While the filming was shot in Centennial Park (still in Gadigal Country and under a magnificent mothering Morton Bay Fig), there was powerful symbolism in one of the participants bringing her newborn baby girl to be rocked in just such a possum-fur-lined coolamon beside the fire for the camera. It held a magnificent sense of not only continuity across millennia, but of becoming and co-becoming, as discussed earlier. These moments and hours mark us by their emotional intensity, inscribed in our minds, just as we inscribe the skins of the possums, or as some cultures inscribe their own skins in body art.

I return to the task. In the south-western panel it was time to include the buildings of the university, marked as an open book, representing the written world, a relatively recent phenomenon on Wallumattagal Country. Butterflies complete the sketching, as they fly from the checkered place, the constructed buildings of the university institution. The butterflies mark the moments of inspiration that have come along the way during the process, and from the thinking and writing of other scholars, including my three supervisors and colleagues, that have contributed to my understandings along the way.

It is time for the burning.

I practice on some scraps cut from the original skins.

It is a matter of delicacy. Holding the burning electrode for too long on the hide, and a hole is cast. I think of the holes burnt into the knowledge-webs across the continent by colonisation.

Instead, a light scorching of the marked lines 'writes' the story to be told. The 'cool burn' methods do not destroy; they enable future knowledges to be interpreted and new growth to arise. I think of the firing of the landscape to regenerate multiple species, practices that 'farmed' the continent to the 'park-like appearance that colonial settlers and artists noticed (Gammage, 2011).

The physicality of the work is a surprise. Maintaining the posture, the angle of the electrode, the position of the skin, the placement of the burner, and line by line, slowly and delicately progressing across the 'landscape' of the map reminds me of the journey of the project: the imagining, the talking, the reflection; the searching, the reading, the reflection; the writing, the reflections on the reflections. This reflexivity, the process of reflection in action, plays out with every stroke of the burner, every shift of the skin, every pause to admire

and every word of encouragement and assessment that Bushytail proffers from across the table as she breast-feeds her newborn.

The burning took all day, and like the previous days, created an amazing sense of contentment and exhaustion. However, even deeper was the sense of inclusion, of belonging and of sharing around the 'hearth' that was softly burnt into me that will last a lifetime. This was Bushytail's wisdom, and why she will always be my Aunty.

Similarly, such has been the weaving of knowledges by Goanna's steps across the women's worlds: across the academy and the co-becomings as placetimetatterings of Dharug Nura today. Both are integral to the wisdom and understandings that the journey has offered. Nothing would be the same if any participants had been left out. Engaging with more than 400 articles, papers, books and other written material along the way, I have found the process of writing the thesis has been a co-becoming, in its own right, to a place of knowing and be-ing.



Fig. 50: Goanna Walking as Thesis Journey on Possum Skins – 17.11.2017.
Image: J. Rey



Bellbird's Pleiadean Presence 7: Fanny First One

**FANNY, FIRST ONE (c.1790 -?) – PITTWATER 1816-1822.
(05.01.2016)**

*The binds that tie us are not of now, nor yesterday or tomorrow.
It's not the blackness or whiteness of your skin,
That signifies and flies across this eye-blink called two hundred
years.*

*In fact, our shared knowing, our determining,
That led to the giving away of a child (or two).
Binds us beyond time, beyond right and wrong, within deep
remembering.*

*Your face may be just a smudge in sandstone; your hair, strands in
the mists,
But still you stand clear on a grey horizon,
Behind you ten thousand hands of Woman,
Slapping forever on the water's edge, where mud meets mangrove
nests.*

*You are the first one found on a white page.
A footnote in a ledger of His-tory,
A jotting as an Orphans' record, saying
You gave away Ann and would have given older Eliza too,
If they'd let you.*

*I carry you and Ann with me too,
A root in genealogy and genetic trailing offshoot,
For me in a name to trawl, for you a fact of life in blood and pain.
Born from what? A necessity at the time,
A way to feed the first, the thirst,
Or was there some fascination – a honey that drowned all common
sense -
A lure in every John Randall's eye,
Or simply an answering hunger to trust?
Perhaps it was all of that, in fact, or none.*

*I thought you would be so hard to find,
Being first in the line blacked onto a new-born white space in this
'god-forsaken' place,
So remote, hidden, but 1816 is just a shadow across the blind shine
of time.*

*Cabbage palms and Casuarinas sing you back,
No golden goddess drawn on colonial convict carriage sees you
arrive.*

For you, only your own rough-hewed bare feet

*Beat back and forth on Bongan Bongan beach, when the cuts
arrived.*

*Was it the continuous carping crows,
Winging between the eucalyptus stands,
Or the wailing She-oaks – those Mothers from all time,
Singing goodbye to lost love, lost hope, lost child?*

*Again, and again, the rise and fall of sobs in the wind, for all the
deaths,
In seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, seasons, years, decades,
centuries, millennia, Eons, on and on and on.
Those namings in white-witchery-world between the breaks, and
breakings,
That only emphasise the gaps, and call-up the non-named lacks,
Where, by naming what we fear, we call you out from the shadows,
A power over, not with, the endlessness
Of which all the yous and Is and Anns and Johns are part.*

*Bongin Bongin, Winnererremy, Winji Jimmi, place-naming still
remains,
Ringing spirits like bells along the breezes.
Where whales and dolphins arriving sing us to your place,
Or when the wattle blossoms message the fat fish are running.
These mark not the breaks, they mark the flow,
the Dreaming stream that enfolds us so
that carries Ann and you and me – and yes, John too –
together in those umbilical places –
the wombs and dawns, the mangroves, the yam beds, the foggy
horizons,
and even (or especially) in the sleepy gaze that arrives before the
certainties of day.*

*Fanny, First One, I know you're not more or less, first or last, in my
tome of being.
We are joined in timeless mind.
We both limp, carrying our bundles of memories,
Sweeping back the sands in our caves, wiping our tears
and those of all the Anns and Johns in our lives.
We swim together, knowing there's no necessity for forgiveness.
After all, does a branch that snaps need to say sorry?*




CHAPTER 12: Weaving a Yarning Basket



12.0 Country at the Core

As Dharug Nura is at the centre of this knowledge production, attention is focused initially on the findings in Country, and then turns to the findings from the women's chapters.

From the outset, Country () (detailed in Chapter 1) is positioned as an agentic contributor in the seven women's yarnings. Figure 3 illustrates how different Country-centricity is to humanist priorities. Following broader Aboriginal understandings, we exist relationally, as co-becomings across Dharug Nura place/space, from Ancestor Creator Beings bringing forth the landscape, the seasons, the forms, for constant renewal. We reside with/in/from/through/as pasts/presents/futures. Nothing is left out because belonging to Dharug Country is simultaneously limited (through Dharug-specificities) and boundless (through interconnections and agency cosmically). Co-becoming involves the relational processes that take place when time, place and matter come together, being influenced by and influencing others. As Country is agentic and co-becoming, it follows that it is reflexive, in that it involves mediations and adaptations between internal and external circumstances involving responsive action within context (Moffatt et al., 2016). McKnight (2015, p. 280), reflecting on Country (as Yin), recognises its unity and includes self. By so doing he recognises Country as self. Arguing that Freire's theory of oppression (as fear) and renunciation (as freedom) is a dualism, he posits:

... by placing Country as the centrepiece of the reality, the fear would be a fear of looking and being self. If looking at self and being is freedom, then a question can be posed: why rationalise self when you can heal with all participants as Self existing as Country?

The role of reflexivity for healing therefore becomes a significant method of resilience in the face of ongoing oppression from colonisation and global extinctions. Moffatt et al. (2016) see reflection, reflexivity and self-care as being critical to creative facilitation, and in social wellbeing contexts are

fundamental to sustainable programs for the care of others. When content can involve trauma, abuse and deprivation, developing emotional resilience is critical. Reflexivity and reflection are self-care practices in social and educational engagement. In Aboriginal contexts, yarnings as sharing stories and time/s/telling/s can be seen as contexts for social wellbeing, often facilitated by such artistic endeavours as weaving, carving or painting sessions.

Reading can be another important site as reflexive Country for developing resilience. The use of literature for healing purposes is called bibliotherapy. However, reading is not necessarily only of the written word. McKnight (2015, p. 279) states from a Yuin perspective, 'Country/Yuin culture does not need English to exist; it can "read" memory, emotion and the behaviour of the body and spirit.' 'Reading' as reflexive process and internalised action is also recursive when memory is involved. Memorialisation becomes reflexive and recursive through the transgenerational processes of times/telling/s.

As the seven sistas stories show, yarnings as sharing stories bring Ancestors into being when Country is included. For example, Wagtail's art practice, as shown in *They Disturb our Dead* (Figure 15), is reflexive as reflection through creative action, recursive through transgenerational memorialisation and healing in its responsiveness to colonisation practices. Ringtail's reading of Country with the arrival of 'the grandfathers' (Crows) helps generate a sense of wellbeing for her (Chapter 8).

Bringing Country into the heart of the thesis has also been undertaken methodologically and epistemologically. While McKnight (2015) uses the terminology of 'tripartition' to express the place between dualistic understandings, I use 'Goanna walking' and posit that this place of being involves reflexive engagement with contexts and between 'knowledge landscapes', namely, those of the women and those of the academy. Reflexivity involves not just the recognition of dualism between the

processes of knowing as expressed by the women, and in contrast, those encountered in the literature, but adaptation to contexts with the inclusion of Goanna as companion-researcher when engaging in either new ways of knowing/doing and/or meeting new insights through written form. Such a practice, according to Kim, Kim, and Lee (2015) promotes empathy with other-than-human beings. The focus on storying as presences, practices, and places enabling co-becomings is therefore situated as agency and reflexivity through Dharug Nura.



12.1 Women's Weavings

In my reflecting on the women's stories, three key questions became apparent. First, how do these Dharug custodians continue cultural practices and obligations around caring for Country in Sydney? Second, what do the lives and practices of these seven Dharug women show us in terms of mitigating the pressures of city life? Third, how do those ways enhance Dharug resilience and wellbeing? The following discussion will engage these three questions.



12.1.1 How are Custodians Continuing Cultural Practices and Obligations as Caring for Country in the City?

The women's storying shows that Dharug women are continuing to live according to Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. They are doing this by (re-)engaging in many practices that have been, in some instances, handed down for generations. Language was kept in domestic spaces. Transgenerational storying has kept alive events and knowledges around important places, although Dharug Nura involves vastly altered spaces.

Within the project, and in terms of engaging and revitalizing Dharug language, Crow, Ringtail and Bushytail involve themselves with activities using Dharug language. All three women sing, make music and write songs both in English and Dharug language. Bushytail has a particular passion for

seeing Dharug language revitalized in writing with a standardized spelling and grammar (Chapter 1). Additionally, her home is a bilingual space.

Undertaking ceremony and the cleansing of sites of colonial trauma is part of community engagement. For Crow, doing this 'right-way' and engaging in welcomes was part of her storying concerning the opening of the Blue Mountains National Park as a World Heritage site (Chapter 7). Healing places such as Bushytail's concern for the Prospect area (Chapter 9) and Ringtail's discussion around the healing of the BNI site and the Marella Children's home at Kellyville (Chapter 8), are another two examples. Kookaburra's revitalization of Dharug knowledges and cultures are creatively engaged through the puppets. Using educational methods such as 'Each One, Teach One' (Chapter 5) provides a succinct and yet effective way to express her educational approach, and one which has been customary for thousands of years. The use of puppetry as an educational performance method is both an ancient continuity from other cultures and innovative within today's community settings. Sandstone's daily employment is a constant commitment to educating the wider population about our presences across places and times (Chapter 10), while Wagtail's artwork challenges her audiences to reconsider places through a Dharug historical and justice lens (Chapter 6). Her art and education practice are also bringing non-Indigenous students to greater understanding of Dharug ways. The *Country Tracking Voices* project entwines Bellbird's academic work with cultural engagement and, like the other participants, creates lifeworkings. Although these are only a few examples, this entwining of culture through work and community brings us to the project's second question.



12.1.2 How Do They Entwine these Practices with Work as Resistance to Pressures in the City?

Work within these areas, that is, the visual arts, puppetry, song, dance, education, poetry and research (including modern interpretations of customary ways), support and strengthen Dharug continuity. Through these adaptive approaches, we can entwine Dharug cultural practices, beliefs and values with contemporary social norms in a manner that offsets the pressures of urbanized and commercialized modernity, and the ravages of public trauma narratives (Mohatt et al., 2014).

Living and working within and from customary values, knowledges and practices enables the women to grow resilience and wellbeing (individually and at family and organizational levels). They do this by entwining values centered in Country, community and family, rather than following the humanist practice of privileging the individual over and above the collective and communal. Such approaches enable lives to become lifeworkings.



12.1.3 How Do Those Ways Enhance Resilience and Wellbeing?

Teasing out how such wellbeing and resilience can be understood has to be set against the context of life and pressures in the city. It is argued that the values and practices expressed as the Dharug Nura Web (Figure 51) illustrate the reflexive web of connection that underpins Dharug culture and interrelationships. This web provides evidence of alternative ways of being, knowing and doing to enrich community, strengthen families and raise individuals strong in belonging, caring and connecting. The sustainable resilience and improved wellbeing arises by repositioning the human *within (not above)* Country-as-city. These interconnections are not singularities but interweavings, creating hybrid practices as well as hybrid perceptions (Kim et al., 2015). Contextualising across different times, places, and knowledges decomposes certainties and repositions dynamism rather than hierarchical constructivism at the centre (Seibt, 2018; Young, 1976).

Obligations to the wellbeing of Country and its dynamic interweavings dislodges human-centricity. Caring for/with, rather than exploiting, Country realigns the relationships of humans with other-than-human species by increasing empathy. Kim et al. (2015), show how hybrid perception and creative hybridity through human-

other-than human relationships enhances empathy and contributes to humans reflexively (re)storying lives. Today, re-aligning priorities that inspire empathy requires reasserting the importance of the collective and communal to benefit other-than-human presences in Dharug Nura.

When we are attentively present and engaged with other-than-humans (Plumwood, 1993) through intimate localised knowledges of places and their stories, conditions can then arise to change priorities which in turn can effect changes at the eco-societal, communal, and individual levels. More enquiry and developing relationships with custodians can better expose the extent of existing knowledges to site-specific places and presences, opening conversations for the future. Being in the moment, or attentively present, aware of the creatures and beings around us, enables us to 'read' the landscapes and their inhabitants reflexively. These are critical practices so different from the values of human-centricity at the expense of others (see Figure 3). Recognising reflexivity in Indigenous knowledge systems (as in the Dreaming) sourced in storied landscapes can align with post-humanist and eco-critical perspectives. However, respectful acknowledgement of the pre-existence of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being is long overdue. I suggest that bringing other-than-humans into equitable partnership in research opens conversations for future respectful engagement. Attending to the presence of Goanna in this research was one approach for de-centring the human in place and, following Kim et al. (2015), enhanced my sense of empathetic connection.



Web

12.1.4 Dharug Nura as Seven Sisters Weaving within the Continental

While *Country Tracking Voices* reflects only *some* specifically Dharug viewpoints, yarning many perspectives resonates with broader Aboriginal understandings. While the thesis cannot be a voice for all, and offers only partial perspectives, as time/s/telling/s, they prove useful as a way of connecting with others and opening future conversations. These are the tendrils that entwine Dharug Nura in the web of knowledges across the continent. Alignments between custodian knowledges and researchers, for example, is only relatively recent. It is a process of sharing that has been expressed as co-becoming time/s/telling/s (Bawaka et al., 2016; 2015; 2013).

The influence of such understandings arising from Bawaka Country on this thesis is significant in several ways and has contributed to Goanna's pathway.

The first contribution was an understanding of the interrelationships between Nura, community and the individual decomposed human-centric barriers created by mainstream educational practices and experiences. The second contribution was a recognition of the resonance of such understandings from remote northern Australia with practices taking place in Sydney, the largest capital city on the continent in the south-east. This was made apparent through the ongoing web of knowledges that continue to permeate the continent, albeit with large holes burnt into the fabric by continuing colonisation practices. These resonances, I suggest, are not expressions of cultural (re)fabrications. Instead, by understanding Nura as reflexive agency, they can be viewed as current co-becomings in globalised urban spaces arising from the specificities and multiplicities of our reflexive Dharug Nura. The third contribution was Bawaka's influence in enabling reflection on the significance of these understandings in higher education. This is beginning at the undergraduate level. Outside of the academy, opportunities for conversations at local council level concerning ways to care for Country have also recently commenced as a direct result of this work.

From all of these steps, the role of 'Goanna walking' became apparent. Bringing other-than-humans into research methodologies de-composes the way we do research 'business'. We (as the various roles and voices of researcher-Goanna-Bellbird-participant) no longer work hierarchically 'above' and separated from our area of interest. Instead we reflexively recognise our co-becoming *within* our area of interest. In that process of reflexivity, adapting our processes as our understandings change, deconstructs the process. Instead, it opens us to the dynamism of agency and the fluidities of self. With only minimal caveats on the process of the project being placed by researcher-Goanna, Nura can engage and open us to deeper and broader ways of knowing and doing. As a result, a deeper

sense of being human arises from a deeper sense of presence, place and agency.

Recognising reflexivity as agency within Country unmasks human-centric concerns around certainty and control. In the search for control, and knowledge-depth, knowledge-silos have built up across western academia. Bringing breadth across the disciplines as well as the customary search for depth in fields of knowledge offers vast possibilities for greater reflexivity, because cross-contextual/cross-cultural engagements offer insights that cannot be derived from narrow specificities. Additionally, opening academia to Indigenous priorities, perspectives and practices works towards resolving ethical and biodiverse injustices.

In this discussion as a yarnning basket, we have shown the centrality of Nura, addressed the key questions that arose from the women's storying and then shown how Dharug Nura knowledges engage with other places. Now it is important to focus our attention on how such agency and reflexivity can be perceived. I suggest these patterns can be found in the Dharug Nura Web of values, interrelationships and co-becomings (Figure 51 below). The women's stories show that cultural continuity resides in enacting this web. The mitigation of pressured city-lives resides in the supportive interrelationships provided through this web. Resilience and wellbeing is grown as the strength of this web. We seek now to clarify the various ways the seven Dharug women participating in this project enact the web of Dharug Nura. Through this web we can better understand the processes of enactment that demonstrate recursive and reflexive Country as dynamic.

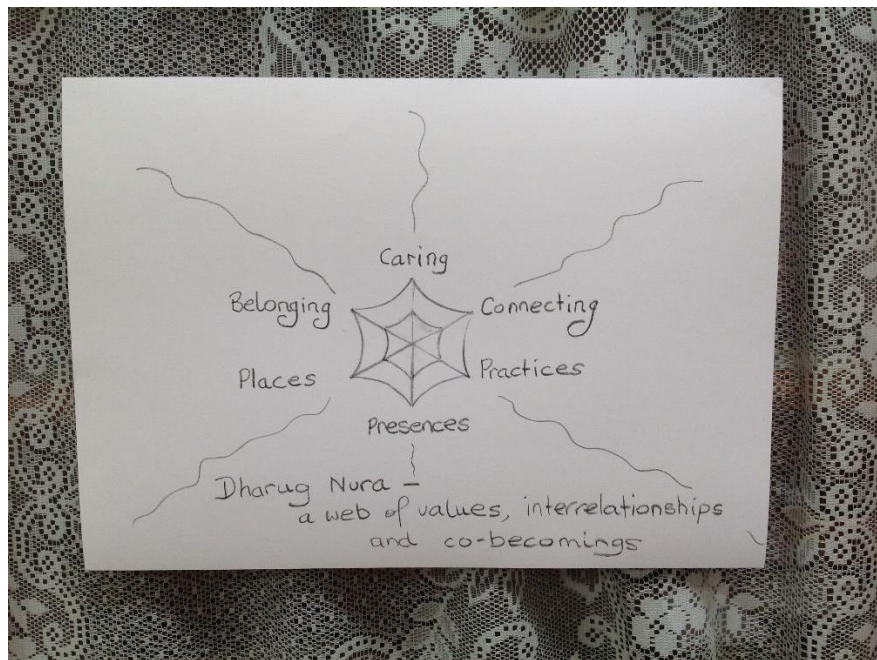
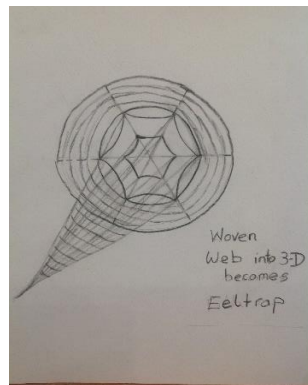


Fig. 51: Dharug Nura Web: a reflexive story of values, interrelationships and co-becomings. (J. Rey, 2018.)

12.1.5 Yarning Country from the Heart: Enacting Values of Belonging, Caring and Connecting Reflexively

Belonging within Dharug Nura involves reciprocity in action: from Country we are sustained, and by caring for Country, sustenance and nurturing is reciprocated. Belonging, through caring, involves meaningful connectivity, which is dependent upon co-constituted time. For example, a web as shown in Fig. 51 (above) extended and enacted into 3-D form can become a spiralling form, such as a woven eel trap (see Fig. 52 a and b below) as timespacematter intertwined with meaning and purpose. Transformations therefore enable co-productions with potential; physical co-becomings with agency, such as an eel trap, provide a means to get eels for the fire for sustenance. Reflexivity as purposeful Dharug enactment and connectivity, as shown through the seven sistas storying, is strengthened through practices that involve engaging with presences (human-other-than-human) and places. Practices such as cleansing ceremonies, with the burning of eucalyptus leaves, creating a smoke for spiritual healing, build belonging to

a group in an event, and demonstrate caring by Elders for place, people and Ancestors. Caring underpins the doing and the belonging.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 52: a) From Web to Eel Traps. Sketch: J. Rey, 2018.

b) *Secret Life of Eels Science Festival 2016*. Image: J. Rey

12.1.6 Caring as Practice towards Belonging

Our seven Dharug women have shown their practice of caring for Dharug Nura by their participation in this project and sharing their knowledges and stories. *Caring* for Country as a practice involves *connecting* to places, remembering the storying of those places and passing on knowledges to next generations so that caring can continue. Co-constituted time involves meaningful sharing, and this has been amply demonstrated by the women. Each in her own way has shown her caring and connecting. Bushytail's caring through her passing on possum-skin working skills to

Bellbird requires many hours in meaningful sharing. Ringtail's storying and connecting with her Ancestors through the St. Bartholomew's cemetery also involves hours of meaningful sharing time, place and knowledges. Every performance Kookaburra gives illustrates her caring for her audiences as her storying promotes resilience and wellbeing. These represent three of many possible examples of caring through meaningful sharing as co-constituted time. Harrison and McLean (2017, p. 365) engage with the question of listening as an act of caring and belonging. They show that when listening involves 'getting yourself out of the way', we are then in a position to practice actively with others and demonstrate active, rather than passive, care.

Listening requires attentiveness not just to the meaning of words but also to the people involved, to tone of voice, to emotion and sensation, and to time.

Further they suggest reflection on our listening deepens our relationships and sense of belonging. For Bellbird, participating as listener and yarner and then reflecting after the event provided a much deeper opportunity for both a sense of connection to the women and to the places where the yarnings occurred and to which they were connected. The women's shared belongings allowed Bellbird to belong more deeply in community and Dharug Nura. Through writing, Bellbird is further entwined and her sense of belonging reinforced by the memories of those shared times that influenced the outcomes of the thesis. The written sharing of this thesis gives back to Dharug Nura, entwines it in the Dharug Nura Web, and entwines and connects with other peoples' Countries as it engages others.

Thus, caring as practice demonstrates motivations and attachments and provides one way into understanding reciprocity through/with/in Country. Choosing caring as the entry point of the web drives the sense of belonging to/with/in Country. If we do not care, we are not motivated to spend time connecting with Country. If we don't care and connect, we cannot have a strong sense of belonging. However, there is more than one way of entering this web. We can enter the Dharug Nura Web equally through our belonging.



12.1.7 Belonging as Practice for Caring

For Ringtail, growing up knowing from her relatives that she was Dharug was her way into a sense of belonging with/in/to Dharug Nura. When we belong to/with place or persons or other-than-humans, we have affective relationships. Harrison and McLean (2017) demonstrate that belonging is more than a cognitive conduit; it is also an emotive channel, reinforced through connection and affecting our identities. Wright (2015, p. 399) notes ‘belonging’ is about ‘being’ and ‘longing’ (what Bushytail calls ‘yearning’) for connection and is emotional, fluid, yet binding us into forms of identification as insiders, not isolated or separated from others. Belonging can offer a sense of security involving being and belonging to ‘home’. Wagtail demonstrates her sense of belonging when she speaks of her connections to places such as the site of the kangaroo tracks and quoll engravings, and the Grose River valley expressed through her art works. Bushytail speaks of her sense of being at ‘home’ in the place where her family have spent so much time, and where they have ‘signed in’ by leaving their hand print on a rock shelter wall. Crow expresses her belonging through her songs and music to/with/for Yarramundi her Ancestor. Thus, a sense of belonging can be both an initiator of connection to places and people and other-than-humans and a result of the practices of connecting and caring.



12.1.8 Connecting as an Opening for Caring and Belonging

Can connection without caring and belonging also be an entry point into the Dharug Nura Web? The question of connecting requires a context, but it doesn’t have to be a context of caring or belonging. Socially, people constantly meet people through intermediaries. This ‘friend of a friend’ form of connection can initiate a sense of interest or enquiry that can lead to caring.

Additionally, connection can happen through attentive deep listening and what Motta, Rafalski, Rangel, and de Souza (2013) call dialogical reflexivity: talking and listening to oneself. For example, Bellbird’s philosophical question to herself: ‘What’s the purpose of this life?’ as a young somewhat miserable ‘tweenager’ in the back of her parents’ car was not inspired by a sense of caring or belonging to Dharug

Nura, Dharug community or any knowledges of Ancestors. None of that was known yet. However, the response ‘You are here to learn’ that came back as we swung into mangrove-Wallumai-black snapper Country, can be recognised as Ancestors and Country speaking back, Country connecting through reflexivity. Psychologists and social scientists would call the answer part of that internal dialogue and reflexivity process, a human-centric view. Within my Dharug understandings, whatever the naming, that internal dialogue set in play the very winding pathway, one like a goanna’s tracks, over 40 years, that led to Dharug Nura, to this belonging and caring place of connection with Ancestors, other-than-humans and understanding self within an Aboriginal flow of identity. If Bellbird had asked the question out loud, it is very possible an adult response would have led her on a very different path. Deep listening is not only about attention to other humans talking but listening to Country and the messages that Country carries. Thus, reflexivity as connection can become an entry point into the Dharug Nura Web before caring or becoming are even enacted. The relationship then between humans and other-than-humans becomes recursive.

12.1.9 Dharug Nura Weaving Collectivity and Community for Continuity, Resilience and Wellbeing.

Collectively belonging, connecting and caring creates community. Strong communities support families, and strong families create selves that are strong in belonging, caring and connecting. This is the web of continuity that is Dharug Nura (Figure 51 above), shown through the women’s storying, even though today Dharug Country is a globalised urbanised space. As the woven eel trap (Figures 52 (a) and (b) above) shows, weaving as a web of continuity is not simply metaphorical. Physical sustenance grounds agency (reflexivity and action) with purpose. In today’s Dharug Nura, grounding agency with purpose commonly involves paid work rather than producing eel traps. However, weaving paid work into this Dharug Nura Web has the potential to entwine non-Indigenous workplaces into the web of caring, connecting and belonging, and thus, a ‘work life’ can become transformed into lifeworkings (Mitchell, 2017). Workplaces can co-become

as/through meaningful co-constituted time/s/telling/s across human and other-than-human agencies. Recognising the influence of the narratives around the binaried placement of 'work' and 'life' opens possibilities for weaving webs of meaningful 'lifeworkings' and, hence, closing the gaps.

Respect continues to be the ground seat of wellbeing. Respect for Elders, past, present and future ensures you know your place in the scheme of things. Respect for Country ensures your survival and wellbeing. According to Ringtail,

Elders are those with the wisdom, knowledge and ability to contribute, guide and watch over cultural and communal wellbeing through deep connections with Country and Creation enacted through cultural practices set down through Law/Lore and passed down through time immemorial. (Ringtail Possum. Personal communication, 20.06.2017).

For Dharug today, repairing the holes created by colonisation and gaining understandings and knowledges of Law/Lore is sometimes undertaken by connecting with other Aboriginal peoples on and off Country. Likewise, taking understandings from Dharug Nura to other communities is a reciprocity that mends holes in other Countries' fabrics. Kookaburra's work off Country enabled those communities to better understand the place of Dharug Nura in the storying of colonisation, the colonisation impacts suffered and the place of Dharug Nura today in the wider fabric of knowledges across Countries. This thesis contributes to the weaving and closing the holes in the continental and broader Indigenous fabric.

12.2 Yarning a Web of Presences, Places and Practices

12.2.0 'Wheelbarrows' of Heritage-Presences

'Heritage' is one of those 'wheelbarrow words' (L. Dadd, Yarning Session, 19.06.2017) that carry multiple meanings depending on the context. Most commonly, 'heritage' sits within history and geography as something left from the past (where time is presented lineally), yet something ongoing

between places of being. Geographically, our heritage can be within the landscape, while historically, our heritage can be cultural, conceptual or through human-centric artefacts. Conceptually, therefore, 'heritage' is cross-Country.



12.2.1 Yarning Absences and Presences

Heritage in the context of our wianga (women's grouping as seven sistas) is evident throughout the women's storying. For Kookaburra, Wagtail, Crow, Ringtail and Sandstone, there is direct connection to Yarramundi, a Koradji (Spirit) man, Boorooberongal Elder, father of Bolongaia (Maria Lock). From this Ancestor, many of our Dharug community today are either directly or indirectly related. Ringtail is also connected to Warmuli, as is Bushytail from 'Kitty' of the Prospect area.

As Dharug, we are connected to all those whose lives were lost either during the 1789 smallpox 'campaign' or the battles, murders and general non-placements in the written records. They are our absent-presences, our heritages. These Dharug 'Unknown Soldiers' are marked in writing only by their clan names: the Durramattagal, the Wangal, the Bedjiagal, the Wallumattagal, the Gai-marigal, the Gabrogal, the Wianamattagal, the Cattai-gal, the Burramattagal. These are just some of the groups that returned to Country, with large numbers of individuals unidentifiable in the written record. As such, the unknowns of 'his-tory' are vast, because the field of history is deeply dependent on written records.



12.2.2 Yarning Transgenerational Memory: A Practice of Grounded Learning and Teaching in Place

Much has been written about memory, its nature and the way it functions. Genocide memory is a different and special category. You didn't have to be there, see it or feel it to both believe it and experience it, even vicariously. Decades or even centuries later, the echoes and shadows are audible and visible by an 'atmospheric osmosis', an absorption of something momentous, an overwhelming sadness that has seeped into the sitting room, the cuisine, the wall hangings, the music played or not played (Tatz, 2017, p. 129).

Transgenerational memory is a place of cultural practice through storying heritages, and on Dharug Nura, these are sometimes traumatic. All the women in this thesis address this heritage of transgenerational memory in some way, and by so doing, practice bringing the past into the future – each co-becoming time/s/telling/s/time/s (Bawaka et al., 2016). For Kookaburra, it is through the puppet Nakita retelling the story of her grandmother sending her to the river to listen; for Wagtail her recount of the story of discovery and disrespect for paperbark-wrapped remains; Bushytail recounts her grandmother's ways. These are a few examples. However, this can be particularly seen through Ringtail's contributions (see Chapter 8), concerning colonising injustices around prohibitions on language, institutionalisations and connections to places, such as at *Marella*, and earlier, the Parramatta and Black(s) Town Native Institutions (PNI and BNI respectively). Each of these two latter stories involves transgenerational storying, both as collected story and collective memory (Schiff et al., 2001).

Boorooberongal Ancestor, Bolongaia-Maria Lock, was among the first to be placed in the PNI in 1814, then transferred to the Black(s) Town site after the PNI's closure (see Appendix E: Supporting Websites – Maria Lock).

Bellbird's Ancestor, Ann Randall, was among the first to be placed in the BNI in 1825, after first being admitted to the Female Orphan School in 1822.

That the BNI site is literally across the (Richmond) road from the land earlier granted to Colebee, her brother, creates a heritage place of belonging.

Later the site becomes entwined in the story of Maria and husband, Robert, when she receives the land in response to her *written* petition to Governor Darling. This illustrates the system and its realities and recognises the literacy skills that she had determinedly acquired and used for the benefit of her family. It is a statement of her spirit, intelligence and tenacity. Once acquired, this land became a place where many Dharug gathered and/or were/are connected. It is thus a place of belonging and a heritage of agency since colonisation. This is enshrined in the name given to the area today, 'Blacktown', and signifies the importance of place and placement in the

notion of belonging. As Kookaburra expresses it, belonging to the BNI is a way of being 'Strong, Smart and Deadly' for continuity (Chapter 5). Every time Dharug community gather here, they remember its place for family across generations, and its role in the commencement of the 'Stolen Generations'. It regenerates and renews collective memorialisation and refreshes connections; renews belonging, caring and continuity of community, Dharug Nura and sacred storytelling. These acts of reflexivity create Country by influencing co-becomings in places. Remembrance of this legacy is a continuing example therefore of collective transgenerational memory.

I have shown how yarning heritage is one aspect of a web involving presences, places and practices. Together they create a sense of belonging, identification and connective continuity, a web of meaning that underpins our sense of 'Dharugness'. We must now look at how place and placement participate in that web.

Employing Dharug storytelling as a teaching-learning space, grounded in place, can only be undertaken effectively through traditional custodianship. While all our seven sistas act as educators in some form or another, Sandstone's designated full-time employment becomes cultural practice through her daily interaction with schools, workplaces and other organisations seeking authentic, respectful engagement with local Aboriginal heritage officers. Several of the women have links to educational settings. Educating across cultures about heritage as places for belonging is critical for bringing non-Indigenous and other Indigenous peoples into a consciousness and respect for Dharug Country that in turn could lead them to help care about sustainability for all sentient beings.

Here questions arise as to the roles custodial storytelling can play in developing others' sense of caring, connecting and belonging in Country, particularly when inclusive curricula are informed by locally embedded knowledges. As just one example, the integration of traditional custodial alternative ways of

knowing, being and doing into curricula can foster greater wellbeing and resilience across disciplines and various settings. Such a process also re-writes the his-tories that have dominated educational spaces for the benefit of a white non-Indigenous national identity.



12.2.3 Yarning Heritages as Impacts: Lateral and Vertical Violences and Wedge-tales spiralling between

As much as is possible, each of the women places her Dharug belonging in relationship to the written records, and to that extent, the role of genealogy, and the work of scholars Jim Kohen (1991; 1996, 2006; 2010) and Jack Brook (1988; 1991) cannot be underestimated. Several women recovered their connections only as adults, and each then faced the legacy of traumatic narratives for the first time. Heritage and placement in others' storying becomes entwined, both through genealogy as 'evidence' of belonging, and simultaneously as a tool of exclusion, for those not having a 'lived' experience, not being 'real Aboriginals'. As Shannon Dodson (2017) makes clear, this kind of labelling is evidence of lateral violence perpetrated within and across communities and as such is another form of 'heritage' at play. Mohatt et al. (2014) argue further that it is the *degree* of 'public narrative salience' for individuals and communities that influences health impacts.

Identifying as Aboriginal impacts lives. Bushytail uses the example of being challenged about her identification in Queensland. Crow recounts how her mother was protected from that knowledge because of the risk of being taken away. Sandstone speaks about finding her Aboriginality helped her explain herself and the things she was 'weird about'.

Placement in 19th and early 20th century patronising and denigrating narratives impacts not only individual lives but generations of lives through trauma from racism. Being made to feel ashamed of one's heritage and culture, generation after generation, made Bellbird so disgusted and

outraged with the legacy of colonisation that, on discovering her own lineage, she began a journey that became her lifeworking, a sacred act of duty for the seven generations of her women who suffered shame at the hands of colonisers and for all those who could not speak for themselves.

Denying equal opportunity in housing, employment and education and removing children from communities are all ways of undermining identity. Tatz (2017) speaks of the genocidal heritage of Australia as 'unthinkable' in the opinion of upstanding white men, yet the undeniable truth of the matter is that colonisation undermined the wellbeing of people, culture and Country, and the civilisation that was here prior to invasion.

Understanding storying as multiplicities, as multi-voiced co-becoming time/s/tellings, weaving agentic paths trans-generationally, and as perspectival productions-destructions, is critical to developing or hindering resilience, renewal and wellbeing - individually, communally, or ecologically. To this extent, we live in urbanised modernity through multiple places and violent presences at once. Calling out against these trauma-inducing co-becoming heritages is critical for reshaping lives across human and other-than-human beings. In the process multi-voiced, multi-modal methods are used for sustaining Dharug contributions. I suggest that this is our Dharug strength: our multi-ways place becomes a 'wedge-tale' dislodging the binaries, a 'third' place already happening. By transforming our perspectives, away from human-centricity towards the other-than-human presences in our lives, we can open new opportunities for co-becoming, and find alternative places of belonging and ways grounded in Dharug Nura. As Kim et al. (2015) argue, it raises our empathy.



12.2.4 Being Dharug: Lifeworkings and places of tension.

... Aboriginality is not the colour of your skin but the essence of your heart. My identity is not based on who I am (my gender, race, social class, achievements, and possessions), but where I am in relation to my country, family and community (Lee, 2013, p. 12).

Underpinning all the women's yarning is the sense of connection to Ancestors, the caring for places in the fabric of Dharug storying, and the desire to continue traditional custodial obligations and cultural practices throughout our lives. As such, these stories involve belonging, through identifying, connecting and continuing. When these aspects are in place, we can become and co-become with Country. As shown, Dharug Nura becomes a web, or matrix, a set of conditions that provides a system that is nurturing, and that enables opportunities for renewal, resilience and wellbeing. Consolidating these becomes a place for re-colonisation resistance. I call this a place of lifeworkings.

One example of this can be seen in community events, such as those that take place on the BNI site. In 2014 and 2015, artists' camps engaging Dharug artists, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) and the Blacktown Arts Centre (BAC) together enabled opportunities for Dharug storying to take place across a diverse program. These included the visual arts, dance, puppetry, weaving and oral storytelling. Such activities strengthen community, individuals, respect and knowledge about ancestral connections (as the BNI site emplaces), and by so doing build resilience, renewal and resistance to continuing colonisation discourse and practices. Such practices strengthen lifeworkings. One example is Wagtail's spiral eucalyptus bark installation, *It Starts Here Now* (Figure 53), which was constructed communally at the BNI site, in 2015.



Fig. 53: *It Starts Here Now* - Image reproduced with permission: Artist: L. Tobin. Photographer: S. Tobin (2015).

The act of identifying, the sense of belonging and the demand for continual participation are what Dharug community (as represented by our seven sistas) express through their daily lives. The conditions of resilience, renewal and resistance lie within the state of traditional custodianship itself. For Dharug living in the web of Dharug Nura, custodial identification, belonging, caring and practising creates the enabling conditions that facilitate resilience and wellbeing. However, when the respect, obligation and belonging that underpins custodianship are absent in the attitudes of the inhabitants of Country, then colonising mentalities and practices *can* (though not *must*) prevail, undermining individuals, community and connections to Country. Dis-Integrations (see Chapter 2) can be fostered, leading to paternalistic discourses (Cowlshaw, 2003). It is in the interface between systems that value and promote individualism and human-centricity and systems and values that support sustainable Country-centric and collective practices that places of tension arise.

Patriarchal practices imposed on communities, founded in a paternalistic caring that *assume* custodial values, knowledges and ways of being and doing are deficient, is at the core of colonising mentalities. There is an assumption that rescuing is required to fit the system, rather than recognising that the patriarchal system can be contributing to (if not causing) the problems. This thesis displays examples that contest the rightfulness of such paternalistic thinking, and that provide lifeworkings that entwine cultural obligations, practices and paid labour.

Mitchell articulates the contrast as underpinning the concept of lifeworking. As she explains in her blog, the *Creatures Collective* understands lifework as:

... centring life, [rather than extinction] and [is] opposed to the harsh severance of work/life or the disjointing of work-life. Within this group, we talk about work as ethics, as the embodied fulfilment of responsibilities, as relation-weaving and worldmaking. Work is lived,

and work has life – one lives, and lives with, one's work as one lives with other beings (Mitchell, 2016a).

When practices within community, such as these Dharug sistas demonstrate, are given freedom to flourish, they foster a desire to strengthen belonging, caring and connecting. Such inclusiveness provides the basis for establishing ways to enhance resilience, wellbeing and renewal at the individual, communal and Dharug Nura levels. Additionally, in this intercultural space, sustainable wellbeing and resilience can be spread to other-than-Aboriginal peoples who suffer from the effects of globalising forces that penetrate to the core of communal and individual dis-Integration.

12.3 Yarning as Seven Indigenous Placements: Digging Deeper into the Discourse

12.3.1 Grounding in Indigenous Place

Each of the women discusses physical places on Country: Kookaburra's is Wangal; Wagtail's and Crow's is Boorooberongal and Aurungal; Ringtail is Warmuli; Bushytail is Warmuli and Aurungal; Sandstone, Gai-marigal, while Bellbird flies across the Garigal, Wianamattagal, Cattai and Wallumattagal heartland.

Physical place marks heritage and continuing connection. St. Bartholomew's Church, where Maria and William Lock are buried, is an example. Wagtail's place of storying is an Aboriginal burial site that marks a place of contemporary injustice through its destruction on Boorooberongal Country in the Deerubbin (Hawkesbury River). Bushytail's Aurungal site with the beautiful flowering Waradah (waratah) and rock shelter takes us into creation storying because of its proximity to where Garangatch chased the Mia Cat (quoll). It is also critical to her family's wellbeing, spirituality and ongoing cultural practice. Crow's connection to the place of the Seven Sisters creation story in the landscape of Aurungal Country (the Blue Mountains), is

also important. Equally important was Bellbird's visit after an interview to a local women's place on the escarpment where it looks across the Jamison Valley, which was unforgettable. As Bellbird relates (Chapter 7):

These places of connection set in the geology of Country go way beyond quantitative scientific evidence. They are core evidence of a site's agency, their ability to transform and empower us, bringing physical and emotional responses in their spiritual connectivity - these places engender belonging.

However, it is probably the BNI site that today holds the most regenerative significance across the broader Dharug community.

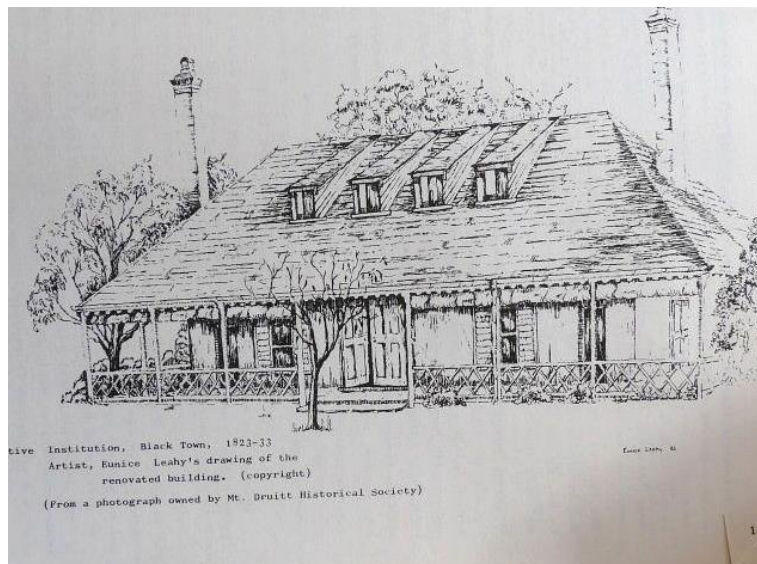


Fig. 54: Blacktown Native Institution 1823 – 1833. Image retrieved from <http://www.bniproject.com/> 14.02.2018

Geographically, it is in the heart of Dharug Country, close to the South and Eastern Creek networks that water the area now known as the Cumberland Plain, but called Wianamattagal (Mother) Country by Dharug. Pre-invasion, it was a significant home to many birds, ducks, kangaroos, wallabies, emus, and many other species. Although weakened by the dominance of urban growth, some recognition of the rarity of its once natural richness is understood.

*The Blacktown area is typical of the Cumberland Plain landscape with gently undulating hills and creeks associated with the Hawkesbury-Nepean and Parramatta River catchments. A range of plant communities are found including Castlereagh Woodlands on Wianamatta Shale and River-flat Forest/wetland communities along the creek systems. Prospect Reservoir contains some of the best examples of Spotted Gum Woodland and Grey Box Woodland in western Sydney. The understory includes a number of regionally significant species such as *Pultenaea microphylla*, *Daviesia genistifolia*, *Lotus australis*, *scutellariaea humilis*, *Ranunculus sessiliflorus* and *Acacia pubescens* (James, McDougall, & Benson, 1999, p. 34).*

As of June 2016, Blacktown shire was home to an estimated 348,138 people, of which 7,815 identified as Aboriginal ("Blacktown City Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander profile - Key statistics," 2018). There are no statistics as to how many identified as Dharug.

The Cumberland Plain Woodland (part of which lies in Blacktown shire) in the Sydney basin bioregion is, according to the website *Threatened Species of the Cumberland Plain*, on the 'critically endangered ecological community listing.' Among its fauna and flora are 16 threatened bird species, 12 threatened mammal species, and one invertebrate (the Cumberland Land Snail) and seven threatened plant species (see Appendix E: Supporting Websites - Threatened Species of the Cumberland Plain.)

As mentioned above, the BNI site is literally across the road from what was, ironically, Nurragingy and Colebee's original land grant from Governor Macquarie, in 1816. This land was later purchased by Maria Lock after she left her own land grant near Liverpool. This is sacred heartland of Dharug Country. It has been recognised as having state heritage value and is on track for National Heritage listing.

Adjacent to the Blacktown Native Institution Site is the location of the first ever Aboriginal land grant in Australia's history to two Aboriginal men, Colebee and Nurragingy, by Governor Macquarie in 1816. The land chosen by Nurragingy was part of the traditional lands of his people and lay west of Parramatta on the Richmond Road. Nurragingy lived on the land with his wife Mary and sons Bobby and Billy, farming and living in a hut provided for him by Governor Macquarie. The location of the Colebee/Nurragingy land grant directly influenced the choice of the site of the Blacktown Native Institution,

which was purposefully sited opposite to the land grant. Nurragingy stayed on the land in the area that became known as Blacktown until the late 1820s. The site of the Colebee and Nurragingy land grants is representative of the relationship between Aboriginal people and the Colonial Government and is an example of the first attempts of Aboriginal people engaging with the colonial administration in order to establish their independence. While this site has not been included in this nomination, it is important to recognise the importance of the land grant and the associated values the two sites share. Further research would be required to establish whether or not the Colebee and Nurragingy land grant be included in a larger National Heritage assessment boundary.

Fig. 55: Extract from the ("BNi Project," 2015).
Accessed: 14.02.2018 from <http://www.bniproject.com/>

For Bellbird it is more than symbolic, it is personal heritage. Ann Randall was one of the original seven children put into that place as a nine-year-old when it opened in 1826. It is the place that grounds and connects Bellbird in her Ancestor's life. Physical placement is significant for connecting past storying in the present and for sharing knowledge for healing.

The knowing of place and its story recognises what Lee (2006, p. 12) calls 'the seed ... as memory ... formed from the Dreamtime' (Chapter 1) and as such connects us to our home. Knowing the place and the story keeps respect for what has gone before. For example, the place where the salt and fresh waters meet at Parramatta (Burramatta) enables the Dharug Creation Dreaming story of the lifecycle of eels (Burra) to continue, as has been happening for ever. This story is now scientifically recorded as fact and celebrated annually. This is also significant for interweaving with other communities on the east coast of Australia (See Chapter 6, Wagtail's account).

However, intimate knowledge of physical place also supports and maintains continuing cultural practices, embedded in and prioritising local significance, such as the skills involved in possum skin crafting. Bushytail's account of her selection and collection of materials from Burramattagal Country, particular to and specifically related to the place where she was

going to use those materials, e.g. in dance, or song, is critical to ongoing connection, ongoing local site-specific knowledge to source the materials and for Country's empowerment. Keeping knowledge on Country, for Country and its inhabitants, is central to ceremonial practice and cultural strength. When Country is predominantly a globalised, multicultural urbanised place, where the glamorous and glitzy narratives of internationalisation and multinational corporatized money flows, dominate media and economic rationales, recognising the importance of local is critical for continuity of custodial practice. It is only the relatively small number of Dharug community that holds custodial obligations for maintaining local knowledges and places that in turn can enrich our respect for what was here for many millennia before colonisation and white ships entered our *warrane* – our Sydney Harbour. As each of the women engages in cultural practice as her lifeworking, this in turn involves us engaging with places inside ourselves.



12.3.2 Ceremony as Place

The place of ceremony in cultural practice is central. No Dharug gathering is complete unless opened by a smoking ceremony, that is, the burning of eucalyptus leaves, and everyone present immersing themselves in the smoke for cleansing and healing purposes. It is an act of re-cognition and remembrance of our connection to Mother Earth, and at the same time remembering our communal belonging (Absolon & Willett, 2005).

One significant example of this Wagtail's cultural practice, which is undertaken primarily through her visual arts, that is, her paintings, or her landscape installations, be they murals, sculptures or other productions. The spiral piece, *It Starts Here Now* (Figure 53), made from eucalyptus bark and leaves, is a universal symbol of growth. This installation, enacted on the BNI site in 2015, is one example of how cultural practice as passing on

knowledge through storytelling can be visual as well as oral. The fact that its enactment involved a group event with many female Dharug participants was highly important for healing the community, and the site itself, through her ceremonious smoking of the heart of the spiral.



Fig. 56: BNI Artists' Camp, 2015. Image reproduced with permission:
Photographer: S. Tobin

As Wagtail's spiral installation was created as a participatory piece with several other Dharug women present on the day, the communal enactment empowered the event; its inclusiveness strengthened the sense of community, the sense of belonging within community, and the sense of identification with that place, particularly as a memorial site of our Ancestors. Wagtail's connections to heritage places, storied places and artistic places and the transformation of those places into art pieces expands not only our understanding of how Country influences and transforms us but illustrates how this transformation in turn transforms others. The place of performance where such transformations occur is also important to acknowledge, and Kookaburra's role here is integral.



12.3.3 Performance as Lifelong Reflexive Educational Place



Fig. 57: Nakita and Aunty. Image reproduced here with permission from the C. Burke Estate.

Aunty Kookaburra's consciousness of the role of performance is complex. It can be seen simultaneously as a place within herself, an aspect of enacting cultural practice as puppetry and as an educational methodology (Chapter 5).

While she articulates this notion of performance as separate from her storying for this project (as she put it, puppetry is her 'bread and butter' and how she earns her money), what underpins that, and makes it her lifework, is recognition of her values, cultural obligations, concerns for the wellbeing of children, both Dharug and others, and politics around continuing removal of children from their families by government welfare agencies.

While puppetry is her method of cultural practice, and employment, it also comes from the place of imagination, woven between external realities, internal interpretations and the process of contextualisation. That is, the process and place of reflexivity. The storying and performance evolve from a place of engagement and creativity that affects her own life journeying. In this sense 'place' becomes agentic, and hence reflexive, and her ability to be influenced by her connectivity with Country (for example, her interpretation of the arrival and steadfast persistence of the presence of the physical Kookaburra), is integral to her understanding Country's agency and influence. To the extent that we are changed by such relationships with Country, so we co-become with Country.

Finally, Kookaburra's puppetry and the place of performance becomes a methodology for *observing, listening, caring, connecting and belonging* for the individual, the community and their place in a recognised interconnected Country of values, knowledge and diversity. It is not a didactic place of instruction, constructed through a timetable for mass education. Rather, as we have seen, her educational philosophy is one of

‘Each one, teach one’, where the children (or puppets) each teach the other through times/telling/s, rather than employing a systemic method of the teacher being the source of all knowledge, often not localised but globally oriented. Kookaburra’s approach, in contrast, is a methodology that can be employed across communities and beyond classrooms, providing opportunities for lifelong learning, a place for co-becoming and lifeworking.

To clarify, currently, learning that takes place outside the control of the classroom teacher is categorised as ‘informal’, and something separate from, and less central to, mainstream pedagogical practice. As such, it is an approach that often is less valued by time-poor professionals needing to get through the pre-established curriculum. Yet, it is exactly in these informal places of learning that key moments of reflexivity can occur.

The continuing dilemma resides where the limitations of mass education don’t meet the needs of community-oriented peoples, whose values privilege relational learning, localised knowledges grounded in caring for Country, belonging, connecting, and place-based, personalised communication.

Kookaburra’s performance/s-as-educational place/s enable reflexivity and by using puppets, she practices human-other-than-human communication and information transferral. When we listen to the puppet speak, we suspend our disbelief, as we do in a theatre. We are attentively present to the story and the character and suspend our knowledge of the engineering behind the scenes. At the same time, we are reflexively engaging as participants (audience) in the performance, being transformed through response and reflection, seeking meaning from the event.

As such, Kookaburra’s methodology resonates with what Plumwood (1993) called ‘attentive presence’ as relationally essential for sustainable ecological practice with other-than-human beings. Such an approach brings opportunities to engage alternative teaching methods that align more closely with Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing.

Opportunities arise also, to align First Peoples' values and learning/teaching methods with critical ecological dilemmas that mass globalisation systems continue creating.

In our relationships with other-than-humans, we place ourselves within, but not above or separate from, the reflexive web that is Country. When we engage with storying, whether in literature, performance, art, dance or other means, we transcend constructivist realities and submit ourselves to the place of unknowing. To the extent that this is the place of the 'child', who arrives unknowing, we meet our unknowing selves, defying lineal conceptions of time. We are not 'lost' in the moment, but rather co-become in the moment.



12.3.4 Spirituality as Place

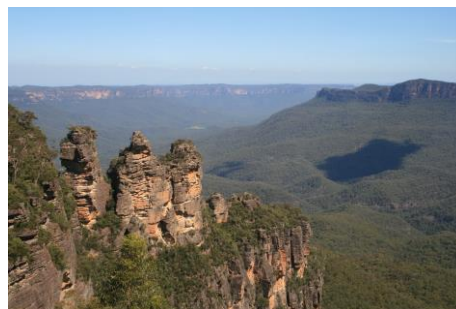


Fig. 58: The *Three Sisters* or (as known to Dharug peoples) the *Seven Sisters* in Sandstone. Blue Mountains. Source: pixabay

Aunty Crow's contributions are significantly related to the Blue Mountains site of the Seven Sisters story, as shown in Fig. 58. The pinnacles stand as remnant sandstone rock formations, weathered over millennia into what are now commonly called the Three Sisters. However, Crow's place of spirituality also resides in grounded place through the earth's vibrations, and she enacts her beliefs through song. Place as a static concept is challenged by Crow, and her beliefs around ancient Aboriginal knowledges, where singing-up Country required you to be 'in the right place – it can't be any place ... singing the right harmonics ... right way of body movement, or being, you can actually

sing up possum or the rain.’ Place as spirituality is here linked to movement and sound, as well as physical location and her example of the women singing in the whales if they were sick illustrates the weaving of sound, vibration, place, timing and being as a method for bringing to life, or actualising, a knowledge, making a connection.

As outlined in Aunty Crow’s storying (Chapter 7), recent quantum theory as discussed by Barad (2010) resonates with these understandings. While it is not suggested that one set of knowledges proves or disproves the other, the question of respect for alternative knowledges is brought into play, so that dominance by scientific discourse has to be moderated by the simple fact that there is much that the scientists still do not know, and the more they delve into quantum physics, the greater the possibilities for the unknown seem to arise.

12.3.5 Memorial as Placement

Throughout the yarnning in this thesis, remembrance is integral to connection both with physical sites and to Ancestors. Kovach (2005) places this as a significant act for *re-membering*, regenerating connections and belonging to community. Kookaburra uses Nakita’s remembrance of her grandmother’s directions as the place of learning for her audiences. Bushytail uses memories of being in place as connectivity to Country and spirituality, and as opportunities for learning and passing on knowledge. That internal place of remembrance which all human beings engage with as memories in a single lifetime is extended across lifetimes as our wianga (women’s group) shares stories. These create new memories and new connections within community and connect to stories from the past, through heritage and across generations. Transgenerational memorialisation is shown to have its own agency and place in transforming the present, be it by individual interpretation (through art, puppetry, song, dance or bricolage, as examples) or communally as an enactment for belonging. Transgenerational memorialisation enables a re-membering as

resistance to continuing colonisation practices but also as re-growth after the decimations some of those practices have produced (Kovach, 2005). Dharug women's voices and lifeworkings are like the waradah (waratah) rising from the ashes of the human-bushfires perpetrated across Country. Extermination has not happened, and hatred has not prevailed, despite individuals' intent. Rather, as ab-original, we co-become with the eucalyptus, the banksia, the waradah, farmed through fire. The fires of remembrance ignite re-membering, and for Dharug communally, as the first to be burnt, we are the custodians of Dharug Nura re-generating.



Fig. 59: Waratah, Waradah. Image: J. Rey, 2016.

Memorial as remembrance becomes a place of connectivity, a place of belonging in a broader story and a place of agency as the details are woven through the contexts of the tellings and tellers. Depending on the storied landscape, memorialisation can become a journey enacted by heroes or devils, crossing magical heavens or deserted hells. As storying entwines, it simultaneously omits, and as such becomes a place of empowerment or enfeeblement. Memorialisation can also be a place of learning, discovery and acceptance, both for the teller and the audience. As Bellbird realises when she listens to all the women's storying, these remembrances are places of openings, co-becoming and belonging.



12.3.6 Belonging as Place



Fig. 60: 'Belonging' - Frog in Camouflage, Sydney Opera House, 2014. Image: J. Rey

A sense of belonging as a place is deeply rooted in acceptance and connection. Each of the women in this thesis who identifies as part of Dharug community has a sense of their belonging in a fabric of connection that is mapped across geography, across time and timelessness. Just as the frog in camouflage in Figure 60, place enacts belonging, so, I suggest, do the women illustrate belonging as also within self. Not-belonging is an uncomfortable place, which can also be mapped physically, socially and within self. Exclusion can be a method of punishment. This thesis is not the place to discuss the role and psychology of fear, but places of exclusion, loneliness, fear, shame, humiliation and degradation are all inversions of our place(s) of belonging. As Wright (2015, p. 399) notes:

Non-belonging, like belonging itself, is generated through proximity and desire but occurs when closeness generates a sense of unassailable, unconnectable difference, a lack of sameness with what is on the other side. The border, in this case, separates rather than bringing together.

To the extent that all humanity has a connection to place and a sense of belonging, it becomes a question of timing. As the Mak Mak people (Rose, 2011a, p. 1) articulate it:

My strength, the strength of the land. You can feel it in yourself, you belong there. It's your country, your dust, your place. You remember the old people. The white eagles always greet me. It's home. Safety and security. You see the birds, you see the country, and your senses come back to you. You know what to do and where to go.

12.3.7 Connection as Place



Fig. 61: *Weaving: A Place of Connection*

Weaving a place of connection can be seen therefore as integral to our sense of belonging, our sense of being from the original. I have suggested this place involves connection to physical Country and to places that involve spirituality, interpretation, memorial, heritage, creativity, learning and storying. To the extent that all of these places are interconnected, interwoven and transformational, we must recognise them as places of timing, rhythm and movement: places of change, be-coming and co-becoming. St Bartholomew's Church, Prospect, is one example, changing from early colonial Christian establishment on a hill to the burial site of Maria and Robert Lock, to memorial and co-becoming sharing time/s/telling place for Ringtail and Bellbird. For Bellbird, this place of connecting is expressed through words, as poetry; through words as sound, through words as dances on the page, through words unspoken. These places are not fixed with a unitary meaning, but ambiguous, diverse places within context, the spaces between dots and commas, the rhythms, backgrounds as dramatic images and the silences. I suggest they are reflexivities, agentic human-within-other-than-human agencies.

12.4 Practising as Dharug Nura Placings

12.4.1 Poetics as Practising Place

Bellbird's calling recognises the place of storying generally, but her preferred nest rests in poetic places; this applies particularly to the poignancies, those places of mixed emotions intensified by a sense of meaningful endings that become transformations (Ersner-Hershfield,

Mikels, Sullivan, & Carstensen, 2008). Seeing in the poetic poignancy a source for spiritual, artistic, intellectual, musical, political and purposeful sustenance, Bellbird's contribution to the project brings together the strands that are the women's voices and then weaves them into this basket of knowledges that becomes this writing-place: this thesis-Country. Combining her own places of connection through her Ancestors brings pasts (those meaningful non-endings) into presences, creating places of poignancy and enabling poetry. Recognising the poetry of place is to acknowledge its movement and beauty as well as its sinews. By understanding the poetics of place, however, is to unwrap the diversity in those places and to engage reflexively. This thesis enables one way of meeting Dharug Nura so that we may co-become with Her.

*We have waited quietly.
We have observed
Across two centuries
While we wait to be heard
We listen to all the noise
Spreading across our Dharug Nura
Like the scrape of grey plastic shopping bags
Lost along the concrete culverts
Eventually to hang limply
Stranded, in the stormwater drains.
We practice patience of the eternal kind
Not immune
We weep deeply from the place beyond tears
As we keep walking quietly, watching, waiting
We teach our young ones
To read the places they meet on Dharug Nura
To listen to the Elders
The storied ones, on whom we depend
And to remember
Together this is our place,
In the Dreaming with Ancestors,
We live our belonging
Because we belong in this place*

Bellbird, 2017.



12.4.2 Practising as a Third Place

It is in the process of engaging with our stories and these places, passing on knowledges as caring for Country that custodial practice is undertaken.

Meeting Nura is a communicative and interpretive practice, a non-verbal holistic engagement with place. Observing, listening, waiting, learning, interpreting, processing, translating, copying, all bring intimate knowledges and ways of being and doing, despite Country being a globalised urban space. To this extent, Dharug are critically placed for communicating unique perspectives that can introduce Nura to others.

The process I suggest can be seen as walking and being in Country like Goanna (Chapter 3), taking left and right steps based on the testing and tasting of the Country within which one walks. It can be seen as learning from and about your place of belonging, the patterns of being that hold it all together (the individual ways of understanding), taking steps on the left (working with/in community) and the right (becoming smart in others' knowledges) and producing a trailing tale/tail for winding a passage through the sands of time. This is the method of the 'third' way, that breaks the binaries of 'them' and 'us', the dualistic heritage of colonisation (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). Kim et al. (2015) call it the hybrid place and to reach it requires hybrid perception in order to grow empathy. This hybridity is the place of Dharug Nura, as cosmopolitan, globalised city-Country. What can be lacking is the empathy or altruism required to care for others, especially other species. However, under the cold concrete, brick walls and polluted places are the stories that hold the places of respect for the heritage of learning from Country, through Country and becoming with Country. Those Dharug stories and relationships are the key to changing from competition to co-operation; changing from self-centric to connectivity and putting in place stories for the future.



12.4.3 Kookaburra's 'Strong, Smart and Deadly' Place: Putting identity, knowledge and agency in place

I have shown that the idea of place is deeply woven into our sense of belonging, connection, and our ability to perform, that is, our agency through our placement. Conversely, our place in Country, community and family is critical to our places of belonging, identity and continuing cultural practices. When these aspects are felt strongly in place, and we care for, care about and have empathy with Country in all its multi-species diversity, we can become and co-become with Country and be empowered. As Kookaburra reminds us, knowing who we are and how we fit in enables us to be strong in identity; being clever, having knowledge and being strategic in our thinking allows us to make smart choices and leads to making empowered and correct decisions for 'deadly' (effective) actions. However, when we co-become through empathy we move beyond the human-centricity of modernity and recognise our place in the larger cosmos. For Bellbird, this involves poetics in place. Such poetry is expressed in many places throughout this thesis, and from these places, Bellbird as Dharug woman, as researcher, as Goanna, has seen herself transform within the landscapes traversed: a reflexive journey. For all the seven sistas it involved being in places of significance to be with Ancestors. Altogether, we experience lifeworking, the Dharug way with-in Dharug Nura, as a reflexive empathic co-becoming place.



CHAPTER 13: Yarning the Heart

The heart of this thesis lies in the significance of yarning (Aboriginal English term for sharing stories) for Aboriginal cultural continuity in relation to place(s). The specific context focuses on the traditional Aboriginal custodians, the Dharug-speaking peoples, of the land, waters, species and metaphysics supporting most of Sydney, Australia. This space of belonging is called Dharug Nura in Dharug language and Dharug Country in Aboriginal English. Through seven Dharug women's voices and our stories, the thesis demonstrates the importance of yarning in a variety of ways. It is the purpose of this final chapter to consider why continuing Dharug yarning and storying is important within urbanised colonised landscapes.

First, it shows that yarning, sharing stories, is a continuing practice of connectivity embedded in caring. Second, yarning as connectivity is central to our sense of belonging to place and community. Third, yarning as continuing connectivity enhances personal and communal resilience and wellbeing by sharing. Together, yarning that involves transgenerational storying associated with relevant significant places strengthens human-other-than-human connectivity.

The importance of this system of interconnections in the context of urbanized Country is critical in the face of anthropogenic forces that have caused extinctions. By fostering interconnections, our storying responds to Rose's (2011b) call for humanity to address and take responsibility for its culpability in the burgeoning extinctions occurring across the globe. Denying our interconnectedness, and interdependence damages our ability to care. Our yarning nurtures the local continuities rather than the extinguishing destructions. In the process, it opens us to deeper understandings of our relational, reflexive meeting places.



13.1 Dharug Nura: Yarning as a web of reflexive interconnections

The Dharug Nura Web (Figure 51), is a graphic representation of the ways of interconnection demonstrated through our women's yarnings. As a web of values and interrelationships (sharing time/s/tellings in place/s), the experiential nature of yarning involves memory, memorialisation and reflexivity. In human terms, reflexivity, according to Moffatt et al. (2016) involves our inner-scapes (feelings,

spirituality and reflections) mediating with and adapting to external circumstances (Nura). When those mediations and adaptations result in change, we have reflexive agency. Yarning together, expressed as shared time/s/tellings, provides opportunities for human reflexivity. Bawaka Country et al. (2015) describe the process and effects of these shared time/s/telling/s as co-becomings. It is in these co-becomings that we find reflexive agency as Country (involving humans and other-than-humans), mediating, adapting and creating change. When patterns of reflexivity are established across millennia through relationships between place/time/matter we see examples of what Young (1976) describes as the reflexive universe and what Barad (2010) calls timespacematterings. Yarning therefore is critical to deeper understandings of the relational space that is Dharug Nura: Sydney.



3.2 Yarning is Important Cultural Continuity

In the face of colonisation, enormous cultural knowledge has been lost but is not extinct. Dharug cultural continuity is grounded in retaining and passing on Dharug knowledges (the stories) of places, the presences and the practices that entwine them. The eel Dreaming story of Parramatta is one example. The Seven Sisters storying at Echo Point is another. Knowing the places of the Wallumai, the Black Snapper fish, and where the yams grow, are others. Yarning these knowledges is critical for reweaving the holes in the fabric of Dharug Nura. Giving agency to Nura by listening and attending to Her patterns of place, e.g. the seasonal differences, the productions, and recognising the connections, assists in the process of reweaving, resistance to re-colonisations, and renewal. Knowing when certain flowers bloom, certain species will be arriving, are examples.

Underpinning storied continuity is transgenerational memorialisation. Examples are Ringtail's recognition of the Crows as the Grandfathers, Wagtail's inclusion of the Ancestral Beings flying over Grose Valley, Kookaburra's signification of the arrival of the Chough bird and her Dreaming place of belonging along the Hawkesbury/Deerubbin River with the spirit women. All are examples of bringing Ancient Ones to life. Bellbird's Pleiadean Presences bring to life her ancestral

placements. As such, those past presences *enliven* the connections and are also examples of giving agency to Country. This can be seen in Ringtail's final statements:

I wanted to include my grandmother in the conversation and I'm really glad I did it here, because I'm still feeling really peaceful. It's been a beautiful day, and all the things that my Aunties have taught me to look out for have happened. And the winds once again have just blown up, which is their way of acknowledging us and sending us their love, a perfect place, and the Grandfathers [Crows] came to have a chat with us, and I think it's been the right choice even though a lot of people would say it's a cemetery, it's a really sad place, but I think it's been the perfect place to have a chat. And I guess too, when talking about the future what better place to do that than sitting in our past, and it's nice to be able to sit and chat without constantly be challenged on your thoughts ... (Ch. 8).

Caring for Country in urbanised landscapes embraces continuing, inclusive, sustainable balance, not exclusive, destabilising extinctions. Listening to the Ancestors, being attentively present to human and other-than-humans, enlivens and entwines us all, as we live and belong in a reflexive universal system of changing continuity. Reviving hidden knowledges prevents extinctions. Like the acknowledged custodial inheritances and obligations that belonging to country entail across all Aboriginal peoples and their Nuras, for Dharug Nura, it is only the Dharug who have the continuing ancestral custodial connections across the millennia.



13.3 Yarning Today Builds Belonging to Place and Community

In the contemporary context of Dharug Nura, we have local conditions and voices raising questions about the colonial priorities of the past. Narratives of nation building and then 'progress' have underpinned the demolition of vast tracts of Nura with associated extinctions. Today we have traffic congestion, overpopulation, pollution of air and waterways, threats from extraction (extinction) industries, desert-lands of factories, a rising gap between rich and poor. The list is getting ever longer. Searching for solutions in local caring places opens us to looking at life differently. As Bushytail (Chapter 9) tells us, the city causes exhaustion, and needs healing, so that humans can be energised rather than drained. Belonging and caring

for/with Nura in Sydney for sustainable biodiversity is a major challenge and requires heart.

Caring (as empathy) is shown on the Dharug Nura Web (Figure 51) to be one portal into connectivity. But belonging, the longing to be *with* and part of place and others reinforces the motivation for caring. The search for belonging and the enactment of caring are entwined with responsible fulfilment of Aboriginal cultural obligation to and for sustainability.

Belonging is more powerful when it is situated in proximity. We can better feel we belong and be heard in local places. Service to and for local places grows belonging and being heard. Together, lives co-become meaningfully through belonging. Radically changing lives from separated existences working competitively for profit to lifeworkings (Mitchell, 2016b, 2017) involves belonging, caring and connecting locally. Educating for lifeworkings, where lives are lived in meaningful connection with others, represents a radical change and an opportunity for future research.

Many examples have been provided of the seven sistas empathetically engaging with and in service for others. For Bellbird, empathy arose as listener to the sistas' stories and her being in places of her Ancestors inspired her to write with/for/as Ancestors. Wagtail's empathetic response to the disrespect given to her Ancestor's sacred burial ground resulted in her artwork, *They Disturb our Dead* (Chapter 6). Bushytail's connection to the rock shelter, her family's place of signing-in, articulates spiritual connection and care responsibilities for that area (Chapter9).

These are just some examples of how each displays caring-as-empathy, from their close connections, their transgenerational storying, and how the experiences offer opportunities for empathetic reflexivity in local settings. Storying and participating in this thesis is working for others and is service for Nura. By so doing, change is made. The reflexivity in this thesis is not about completing a circle from thesis-start to thesis-finish. Rather, it aims to raise a spiral, dependent-on-caring, dynamic, purposeful agency. It aims to

change perspectives and perceptions to assist others to connect, respond and have empathy for/with Country. When we view Nura as our physical, spiritual source of resilience and wellbeing - our place of belonging - we *feel* at home.



13.4 Yarning is Meeting Places

This project and thesis are deeply grounded here on Dharug Nura - our home and belonging place from where we can nurture our caring, connections, resilience and wellbeing. It is centred in 'local': local stories, local presences, local places, local events, local practices. Dharug Nura offers a meeting place that others can contextualise, where they can engage reflexively and from which they can create new opportunities. Doing so may initially create unknowing, because of its particularities, but it can also be the place of creativity and future radical change elsewhere. Radical change takes heart. In some contexts, it requires courage (McCarthy, 2010). Instead of speaking about 'lion-heartedness' as the symbol of courage and caring, let's speak of Goanna-heart.

Taking on Goanna, or third way, methodologies, which entwine diverse contexts by seeking commonalities rather than differences, can help create re-alignments for future beneficial outcomes (Chapter 3). Getting down in the dirt (metaphorically and sometimes actually) to meet with another requires being open to change. It demands firstly we re-cognise our unknowing places. When we own our unknowing, we can empathise with others in their places of unknowing. Together we open ourselves to finding new places; we can hear each other and engage reflexively *together*. Doing so requires Goanna-heart.

As Australian Aboriginal civilisation has been continuing for more than 65,000 years through Aboriginal cultural practices, knowledges and wisdoms grounded in sustaining changing localities, it follows that change and adaptation is central within that reflexive process.

Hearing the continuing traditional custodian voices from the oldest self-sustaining culture on the planet requires recognising that such ways of being, doing and knowing continue within Dharug Nura and are especially critical for sustaining urbanised landscapes. Those voices and stories enable Nura to make us human and humane. It requires others to accept the places of unknowing, uncertainty and yearnings for belonging. It requires transforming fear into an embracement of changing continuity.



For this Dharug-Goanna-Bellbird woman, finding these meeting places is finding her places of belonging in Dharug Nura. They involve yarning, walking with goannas, bringing along kind hearts, big ears, plenty of humour and perhaps some *Lomandra longifolia* (also known as RTA grass because it lines the roads across Sydney) for reweaving pasts/presences/futures into exciting sustainable knowledge-baskets so that we can co-become respectfully, and together create lifeworkings.

Digerigur. Yanu. Thank you.



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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A – Participant Questionnaire 1 – Pre-Storying

COUNTRY TRACKING VOICES

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

YOUR DHARUG STORY - BACKGROUND

The following questions are designed to obtain background information concerning the Story that you wish to contribute to this research Project.

If more room is required please include extra statements at the end of the questionnaire, indicating which Question you are responding to at that point. It is expected that this questionnaire should take you around 10 minutes to complete.

Information provided in this questionnaire complies with the permission consent form that you have already completed as a participant in the Country Tracking Voices project. Should you require more information please contact Jo Anne Rey (0459.538891) or Neil Harrison (02.985.08716)

Personal Information

Name _____

Preferred Contact Details (*Please provide at least one point of contact*)

Email: _____

Phone: Mb. _____ Home: _____

Work: _____

1. Which of the following best describes the form of your Dharug Story?

(Please circle. More than one is fine.)

Ancestral	Crafted Item	Dance	Painting	Poem	Puppetry
Reflection	Reminiscence		Sculpture	Spoken Piece	Song
		Weaving			

Other *(please tell us more)*

2. If your story has been passed down to you, to the best of your knowledge, from where, who, what has your Dharug Story originated? *(There are no wrong answers)*

3. If your Dharug Story is created by you, who/what/where inspired you to create it?

4. Has your Story been told, displayed, published, sung, performed, etc., on Country before?

(If so, please tell us briefly where, when, how many times.)

5. Briefly describe why you feel this Story is important to Dharug Culture, Community and Country.

6. Briefly describe what you feel you receive from this Dharug Story – how has this story contributed/influenced/affected you?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this Questionnaire.

If you wish to add more information concerning any of these questions, please do so here.

Information provided in this questionnaire complies with the permission consent form that you have already completed as a participant in the Country Tracking Voices project. Should you require more information please contact Jo Anne Rey (XXXXXXX) or Neil Harrison (XXXXXXX)

APPENDIX B – Participant Questionnaire 2 – Post-Storying
COUNTRY TRACKING VOICES

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

REFLECTIONS ON YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

The following questions are designed to allow you to respond as freely as possible. If more room is required please include extra statements at the end of the questionnaire, indicating which Question you are responding to at that point. It is expected that this questionnaire should take you around 10 minutes to complete.

Information provided in this questionnaire complies with the permission consent form that you have already completed as a participant in the Country Tracking Voices project. Should you require more information please contact Jo Anne Rey (0459.538891) or Neil Harrison (02.985.08716)

Personal Information

Name _____

Ancestor/Clan: _____

Date: _____

Preferred Contact Details (Please provide at least one point of contact)

Email: _____

Phone: Mb. _____ Home: _____

Work: _____

Now that some time has passed since you participated in this research project, we would like to know your responses to that process, by taking a few minutes to answer the following questions.

1. Has participation in this project helped you in any way? Please explain.

2. Thinking in terms of your relationship with Country, has participation in this project affected your relationship with Dharug Country? If so, please provide some details.

3. Thinking in terms of your relationship with Community, has participation in this project affected your relationships with Dharug Community? If so please provide some details.

4. Thinking in terms of your understanding of Dharug Culture, has participation in this project helped your appreciation of Dharug Culture? Please provide some details.

5. In general, do you feel this project has/will assist in the regeneration/growth of Dharug culture? Please explain.

6. In general, do you feel this project has/will assist Dharug Community? Please explain.

7. In general, do you feel this project has/will assist Dharug Country? Please explain.

8. Finally, will your participation in this project influence or affect your priorities for participation in regeneration of Dharug Culture, Community and/or Country?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this Questionnaire.

If you wish to add more information concerning any of these questions, please do so here.

Information provided in this questionnaire complies with the permission consent form that you have already completed as a participant in the Country Tracking Voices project. Should you require more information please contact Jo Anne Rey (XXXXXXX) or Neil Harrison (XXXXXXX)

APPENDIX C - Ethics Approval

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Research Office Research Hub, Building C5C East Macquarie University NSW 2109 Australia T: +61 (2) 9850 4459 <http://www.research.mq.edu.au/> ABN 90 952 801 237 CRICOS Provider No 00002J

18 March 2015

Dr Neil Harrison School of Education Faculty of Human Sciences Macquarie University
NSW 2109

Dear Dr Harrison

Reference No: 5201500053

Title: *Country Tracking Voices: Understanding the relational space of Dharug women's frontier - views on country, story and identity*

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical and scientific review. Your application was considered by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities)) at its meeting on 27 February 2015.

I am pleased to advise that ethical and scientific approval has been granted for this project to be conducted at:

☐ Macquarie University

This research meets the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007 – Updated March 2014) (the *National Statement*).

This letter constitutes ethical and scientific approval only.

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the *National Statement*, which is available at the following website:
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research>
2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol.
3. All adverse events, including events which might affect the continued ethical and scientific acceptability of the project, must be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.
4. Proposed changes to the protocol must be submitted to the Committee for approval before implementation.

It is the responsibility of the Chief investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on 9850 4194 or by email ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Office website at:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karolyn White

Director, Research Ethics & Integrity,

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and the *CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice*.

Details of this approval are as follows:

Approval Date: 27 February 2015

	Version no.	Date
The following documentation has been reviewed and approved by the HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities):		
Documents reviewed		
Macquarie University Ethics Application Form	2.3	July 2013
Appendix A: Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People		
MQ Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF) entitled	1	24/01/2015
<i>Country Tracking Voices</i>		
Participant Questionnaire 1 – Pre-Storying		
Participant Questionnaire 2 – Post-Storying		
Interview 1 – Pre-Telling		
Interview 2 – Short Post-Telling		

APPENDIX D: Letters of Community Support

LETTER OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT 1.

I wish to acknowledge that Jo Anne Rey is known to me and the Dharug Community and that I am aware she is proposing to complete a Phd. (*Country Tracking Voices*) with Dr. Neil Harrison (Principal Supervisor) of Macquarie University. This project involves gathering and recording Dharug women's Stories on Dharug Country. Jo Anne is part of a group of Dharug women who have already begun gathering to share Stories. Jo Anne's project will involve both group and individual meetings for the purpose of better understanding how Dharug women's Story-making (e.g. song, dance, theatre, art, craft, writing, etc.) is working to regenerate Dharug culture, community and Country. It will involve various locations, and individual permissions will be sought concerning the method of recording, the keeping of the Stories, and the publication of those Stories. I am also aware that should anyone participating in the project choose to withdraw that permission, then they are free to do so without any further repercussions.

As such, I support Jo Anne's Phd. project *Country Tracking Voices* and feel it will contribute positively to Dharug Community wellbeing. Other Elders and members within the community are aware of Jo Anne's project and bring their support.

Chris Burke Date: 6/02/2015

LETTER OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

I wish to acknowledge that Jo Anne Rey is known to me and the Dharug Community and that I am aware she is proposing to complete a Phd. (*Country Tracking Voices*) with Dr. Neil Harrison (Principal Supervisor) of Macquarie University. This project involves gathering and recording Dharug women's Stories on Dharug Country. Jo Anne is part of a group of Dharug women who have already begun gathering to share Stories. Jo Anne's project will involve both group and individual meetings for the purpose of better understanding how Dharug women's Story-making (e.g. song, dance, theatre, art, craft, writing, etc.) is working to regenerate Dharug culture, community and Country. It will involve various locations, and individual permissions will be sought concerning the method of recording, the keeping of the Stories, and the publication of those Stories. I am also aware that should anyone participating in the project choose to withdraw that permission, then they are free to do so without any further repercussions.

As such, I support Jo Anne's Phd. project *Country Tracking Voices* and feel it will contribute positively to Dharug Community wellbeing. Other Elders and members within the Community are aware of Jo Anne's project and bring their support.

Chris Burke Date:

Jacinta Tobin Date:

Leeanne Tobin  Date: 3/02/2015

APPENDIX E – Supporting Websites (in alphabetical order)

- Barangaroo Arts Project:
 - <http://www.barangaroo.com/discover-barangaroo/arts-and-culture/barangaroo-ngangamay.aspx>
 - <http://www.barangaroo.sydney/about/barangaroo-ngangamay/waradah/>
- Boronia Park Reserve: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boronia_Park
- Brush Farm: <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/nsw/NE01115>
- Connection to Country: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-03-09/dna-confirms-aboriginals-have-long-lasting-connection-to-country/8336284>
- Decolonizing Against Extinction: <https://worldlyir.wordpress.com/2017/07/28/decolonizing-against-extinction-part-i-extinction-is-violence/>
- Doowan: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/jointmanagement/CoastalCustodiansVol2Is9.pdf>
- Female Factory: See <http://www.parragirls.org.au>
- Female Orphan School: http://www.uws.edu.au/femaleorphanschool/home/the_female_orphan_school_1813_to_1850
- Health and Welfare: Garton, S. 2008. Retrieved: https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/health_and_welfare Accessed: 11.02.2018)
- Kuringgai: http://www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/About_Ku-ring-gai/Land_and_surrounds/Vegetation_and_flora/Ecological_communities
- Marella: See <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/nsw/NE01291> for history of this ‘hidden mission farm.’
- Maria Lock/Bolongia: Australian Dictionary of Biography: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lock-maria-13050>
- Parramatta Native Institution: <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE01632b.htm>
- Possum history in New Zealand: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/possums/page-1>
- Process Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/process-philosophy/>
- Rescue Homes and Institutionalisation of ‘fallen women’: <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00994b.htm>
- St. Bartholomew’s Church: <http://www.prospectheritagetrust.org.au/page18.html>
- Threatened Species of the Cumberland Plain: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/determinations/cumberlandwoodlandsFD.htm>
- Tribute to Kookaburra: <http://www.childrensground.org.au/news/35/our-tribute-to-a-strong-smart-and-deadly-woman>
- Tasmanian Bailey/Lockyer/Randall connections:
 - <http://www.albanygateway.com.au/visitor/nature-reserves/breaksea-island>
 - <https://arrow.latrobe.edu.au/store/3/4/9/2/5/public/B13858427S3V6pages471-720.pdf> for Lockyer’s Diary, particularly pgs. 471 – 476.

- <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~johnrandall2/>)
- Yabun: <https://yabun.org.au>

APPENDIX F: Possum Magic

For more information on Possum Skin cloak and blanket creations see the works of Lynette Riley and her sister Diane Riley-McNaboe. Together they created from possum skin the Thubba-ga Cloak at Dubbo, from January to March, 2012.

Riley, L. (2012a). *'Bungaree' Kangaroo Skin Cloak*. Unpublished.

Riley, L. (2012b). *Significance of Kangaroo Skin Cloaks and Possum Skin Cloaks*. Unpublished.

Riley, L., & Riley-McNaboe, D. (2012). *Dhaga Ngiyanhi Ngan.Girra/Where we all meet*. Unpublished.

APPENDIX G – Song Lyrics

“Show Me the Way” Lyrics: J. Tobin (2001). *Yarramundi and the Four Leaf Clover*. CD.

Produced by Jacinta Tobin; Recording Engineer: John Summers at Lee Street Studios;

Mastering Engineer: John Kelly at Maindeer Studios; Artwork: Jacinta Tobin, Chris Tobin and Leanne Tobin; Artwork and Layout – Toni Hearn – reg@hermes.net.au

Voice/Guitar – Jacinta Tobin

Voice – Leanne Tobin

Bass Guitar – Gavin Leahy

Drums – John Kelly.

Trains, planes and automobiles
Do you think my heart is cold and made of steel?
Do you think my heart is cold and made of steel?

Trains, planes it's raining again
Do you think I woke up just to feel this pain?
Do you think I woke up just to feel this pain?

Show me the way please
Show me the way now
Show me the way to go
Cause I don't know
Yeah, I don't know.

Show me a way that I can help them to pray
That I may make them see their own individual way
Well do you know
And can you show me the way
Well do you know
And can you show me the way

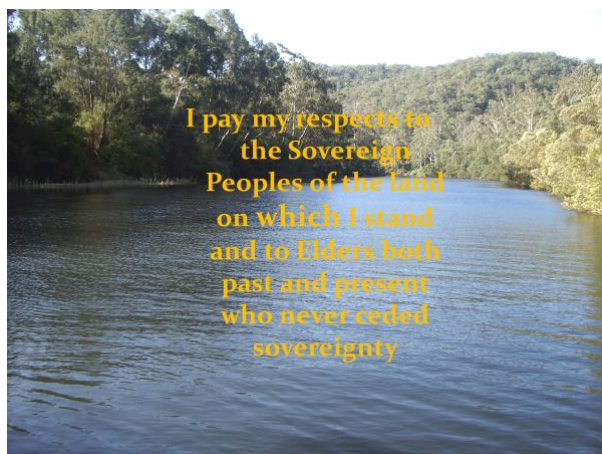
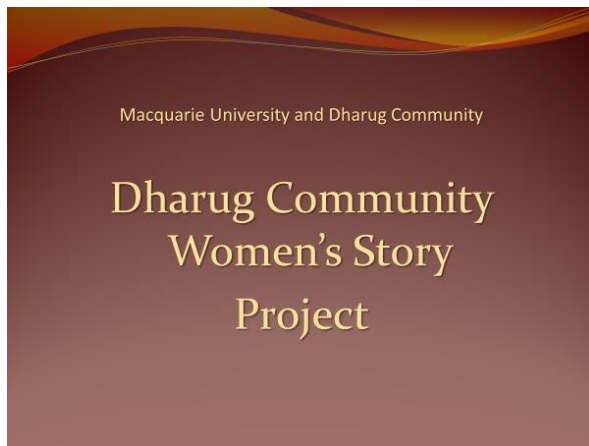
The energy we have and the energy we see
Well the energy is all that is meant to be
Show me a way and let them play
Play in their minds and play in their hearts
And reach each other with different part of their brain
Can we connect that way?

Education it must be
If I can help them to see
Well if that is the way we should go
Well do you know
And can you show me the way

Well do you know
And can you show me the way
Show me the way
Show me the way.

APPENDIX H: Community Presentation

PROJECT INTRODUCTION TO DHARUG COMMUNITY – 10.08.2014





Why Should We Do This?

- ✓ For the benefit of Country
- ✓ To show Respect to Elders past and present
- ✓ To safeguard Remembrance of Dharug Stories and Culture
- ✓ For the benefit of our Children
- ✓ For the benefit of our Community
- ✓ For the education of the broader population
- ✓ For Reconciliation



How Should We Do This?

- Dharug Women Tell and Record our stories
- Collect Stories already told



Where?

- On site – if you have a Story to be recorded, let's tell it on the place it is relating to
- or other place on Country
- Collecting from those already told
 - Written into published format
 - Recorded onto a recorder
- Stories to be kept in a Safe Keeping Place – e.g. Blacktown Native Institute Cultural Centre?



Supervisors

Principal Supervisor:

Dr. Neil Harrison

http://www.educ.mq.edu.au/our_staff/dr_neil_harrison/

Associate Supervisors:

Sandie-Suchet Pearson

http://envirogeog.mq.edu.au/about_staff/person.htm?id=ssuchet

How Neil Helps

Dharug Community connections:

Aunty Edna Watson, Aunty Sandra Lee,
Tobin Family, Chris Burke, Finnernan
Family, etc.

Indigenous Education at MQU

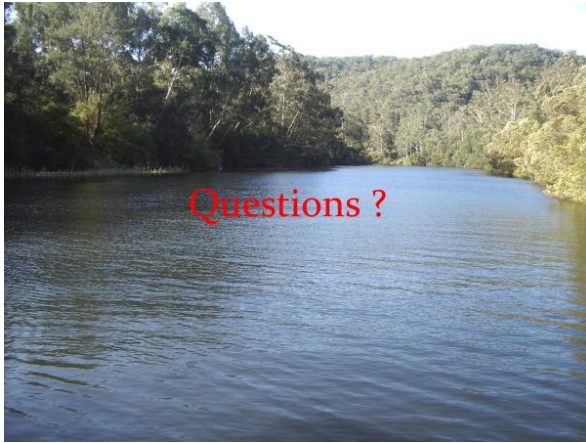
Research about Community and
University

How Sandie Helps

Country and
Ecology

Empowering
Aboriginal Voice

Storying Place





APPENDIX I: Data Analysis Index and Charts

**PROJECT METHODS: CHARTS AND ANALYSES
A METHOD INDEX
CHARTING DATA DEVELOPMENT (2015):
PROPOSAL, COLLECTION, TRANSCRIPTION AND
LEVELS OF ANALYSIS**

- LEVEL 1:** Recordings, Transcriptions and Assigning Topics
- LEVEL 2:** Alphabetical List of Topics and Code Assignment
- LEVEL 3:** Codes resolved into 10 Themes
- LEVEL 4:** Themes resolved into 3 Narratives
- LEVEL 5:** Country as Discourse of Interrelated Topics
- LEVEL 6:** Country as Discourse of Interrelated Themes
- LEVEL 7:** Country as Discursive Agency – Moving from Nouns to Verbs,
including Contextualiz-ing and Practis-ing
- LEVEL 8:** Moving from Country as Discourse to Living Cultural Practice
- LEVEL 9:** Country as *Timespacemattering* – Contextualizing Barad’s Theory
within Dharug Realities

LEVEL 1: *AUDIO-TAPING OF STORIES, TRANSCRIPTIONS AND ASSIGNING TOPICS*

LEVEL 2: ALPHABETICAL LIST OF TOPICS AND CODE ASSIGNMENT

ALPHABETICAL TOPIC LIST	CODE	NUMBER
Ancestry	A	1
Becoming/Being	B	2
Belonging	Bel	3
Black Way	BW	4
Caring for Country	CC	5
Crossing Generations	CG	6
Connection to Country	CoC	7
Cultural Continuity	CuCo	8
Cultural Practice	CP	9
Creation Stories	CS	10
Crossing Time	CT	11
Education	Ed	12
Evidence	Ev	13
Food Acquisition	F	14
Future	Fu	15
Genealogy	G	16
Gender	Gen	17
Growing Up	GU	18
History/Historical	H	19
Healing/Wellness	HW	20
Identity/Identifying	I	21
Intelligence	INT	22
Interpreting Country	IC	23
Interrelatedness/Interconnectedness	I-R	24
Institutional Fear	IF	25
Journey (Life)	J	26
Knowledge (Indigenous)	K	27

Language	Lan	28
Listening	Lis	29
Loss	L	30
Marriage	M	31
Medicine	Med	32
Naming/Labelling	N	33
Narrative/Storying	Nar	34
Networks	Net	35
Obligations	O	36
Place	P	37
Politics In Community	PiC	38
Politics Outside of Community	PoC	39
Prejudice/Racism	PR	40
Reciprocity	Rec	41
Resistance/Relisiance	R	42
Revitalisation	Rev	43
Rights (to Sing/Story)	Rts	44
Spiritual Beliefs and Dreaming	S&D	45
Sharing in Community	SiC	46
Stolen Generations	SG	47
Storying on Country	SoC	48
Sustainability	Sus	49
Totem	T	50
Urban Impacts	U	51
Values	V	52
Voice	Voi	53
Vibration Theory	VT	54

LEVEL 3: THEMATIC CODING CHARTS

10 THEMES FROM TOPICS

THEMES	TOPIC CODES	COUNT	TOTALS
BELIEFS	A, B, BEL, BW, CC, CG, COC, CS, CT, CUCO, HW, IC, IR, K, LAN, LIS, O, REC, S&D, SIC, T, VT	22	85
ACTIONS	B, BEL, BW, CC, COC, CP, CS, CT, CUCO, ED, F, G, GEN, HW, IC, J LAN, LIS, NAR, RES, REV, RTS, SIC, SOC, VOI	25	
FEELINGS	B, BEL, BW, CC, COC, CP, HW, IF, IR, L, O, PR, RES, SG	14	
VALUES	A, B, BEL, CS, CUCO, ED, GEN, GU, HW, INT, IR, J, LAN, LIS, NAR, O, P, RES, REV, SIC, SOC, T, V, VOI	24	
KNOWLEDGE	A, B, BEL, BW, CG, CS, CT, CUCO, ED, EV, F, G, GEN, H, HW, IC, J, K, LAN, MAR, MED, NAM, NAR, NET, O, PR, RES, REV, RTS, SG, T, U	32	59
RELATIONSHIPS	A, B, BEL, BW, CG, COC, CS, CUCO, G, GEN, GU, IC, IR, LAN, LIS, MAR, NET, O, PIC, POC, REC, RES, REV, RTS, SIC, T, VOI	27	
TIME -PAST	A, B, BEL, BW, CG, CP, CS, CUCO, GU, H, HW, IC, J, L, LAN, NAR, NET, O, P, PIC, POC, PR, RES, REV, SG, SIC, T, U, VOI	29	72
TIME-PRESENT	B, BEL, BW, CC, CG, CP, CS, CT, CUCO, HW, I, IC, J, L, LAN, O, P, PIC, POC, PR, RES, REV, RTS, SG, SIC, T, U, VOI	28	
TIME - FUTURE	B, BEL, CUCO, FU, O, REV, SIC, SUS, V, VOI	10	
TIME - CROSSING	A, CG, CT, S&D, VT	5	

LEVEL 4: 3 X NARRATIVES FROM THEMES

NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY

BELIEFS	A, B, BEL, BW, CC, CG, COC, CS, CT, CUCO, HW, IC, IR, K, LAN, LIS, O, REC, S&D, SIC, T, VT
PRACTICE (ACTIONS)	B,BEL,BW, CC, COC, CP, CS, CT, CUCO, ED, F, G, GEN, HW, IC, J LAN, LIS, NAR, RES, REV, RTS, SIC, SOC, VOI
FEELINGS	B, BEL, BW, CC, COC, CP, HW, IF, IR, L, O, PR, RES, SG
VALUES	A, B, BELCS, CUCO, ED, GEN, GU, HW, INT, IR, J, LAN, LIS, NAR, O, P, RES, REV, SIC, SOC, T, V, VOI

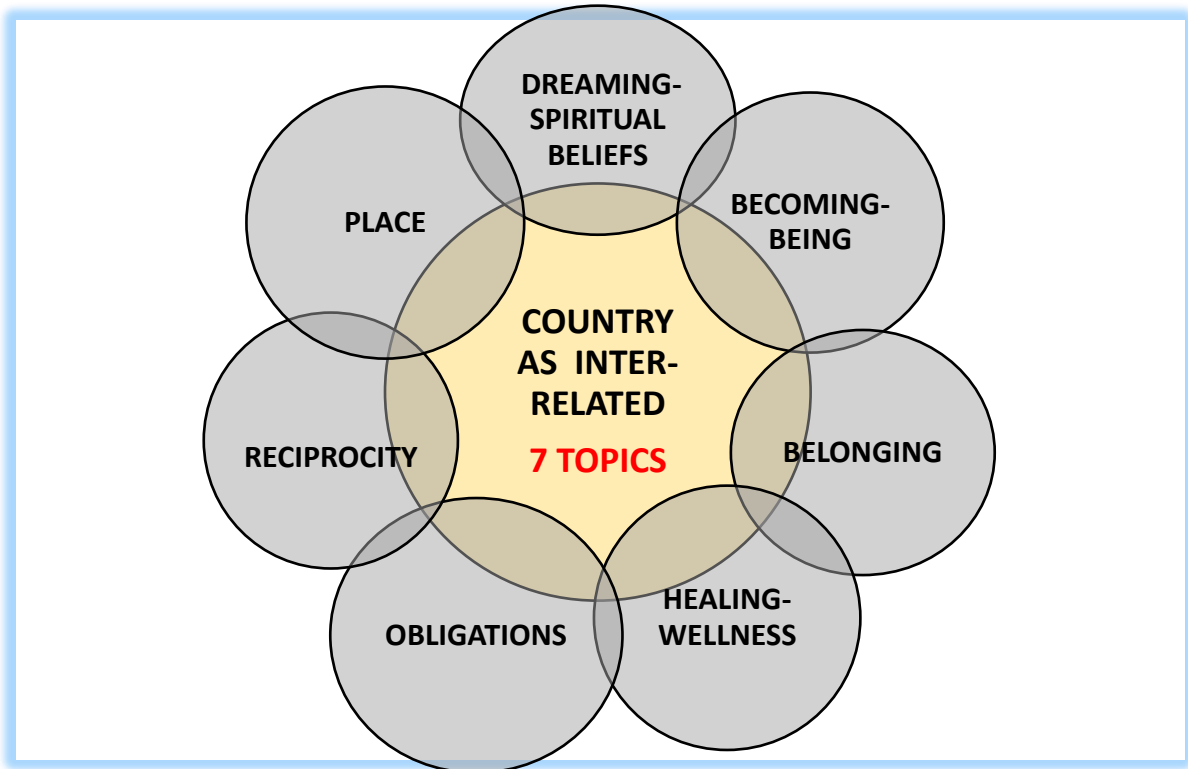
NARRATIVES OF CONNECTION

KNOWLEDGE (Ind.)	A, B, BEL, BW, CG, CS, CT, CUCO, ED, EV, F, G, GEN, H, HW, IC, J K, LAN, MAR, MED, NAM, NAR, NET, O, PR, RES, REV, RTS, SG, T, U
RELATIONSHIPS	A, B, BEL, BW, CG, COC, CS, CUCO, G, GEN, GU, IC, IR, LAN, LIS, MAR, NET, O, PIC, POC, REC, RES, REV, RTS, SIC, T, VOI

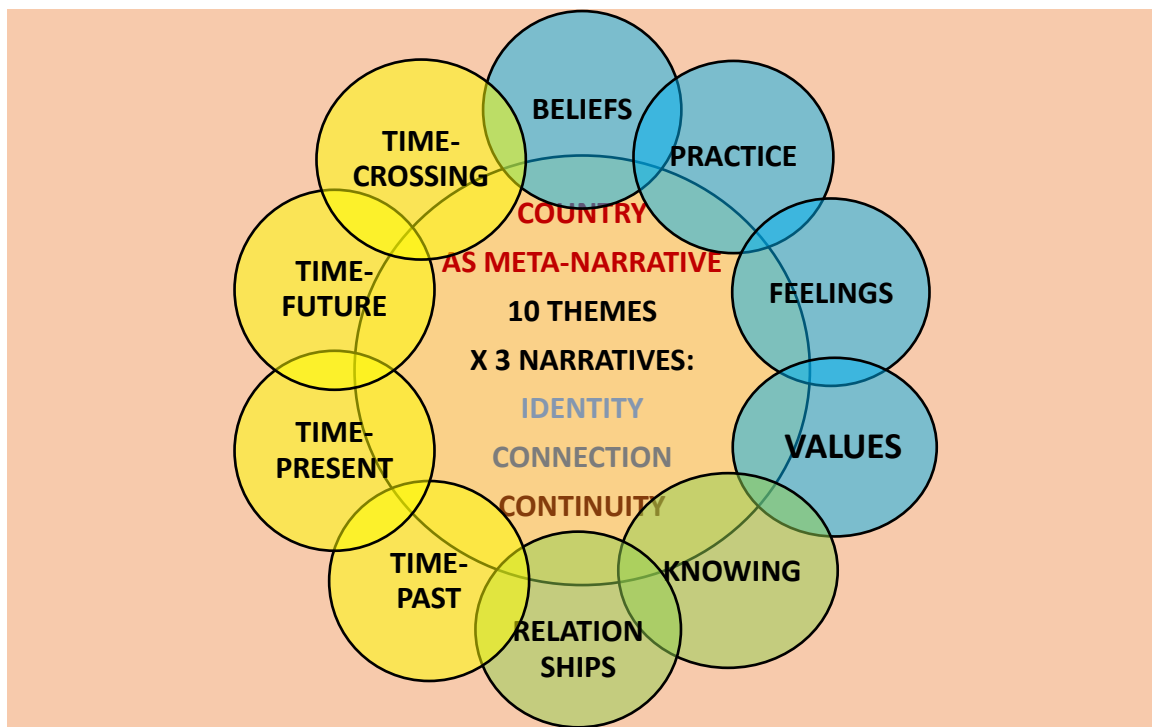
NARRATIVES OF CONTINUITY

TIME -PAST	A, B, BEL, BW, CG, CP, CS, CUCO, GU, H, HW, IC, J, L, LAN, NAR, NET, O, P, PIC, POC, PR, RES, REV, SG, SIC, T, U, VOI
TIME-PRESENT	B, BEL, BW, CC, CG, CP, CS, CT, CUCO, HW, I, IC, J, L, LAN, O, P, PIC, POC, PR, RES, REV, RTS, SG, SIC, T, U, VOI
TIME - FUTURE	B, BEL, CUCO, FU, O, REV, SIC, SUS, V,VOI
TIME - CROSSING	A, CG, CT, S&D, VT

LEVEL 5: COUNTRY AS DISCOURSE OF INTERRELATED TOPICS



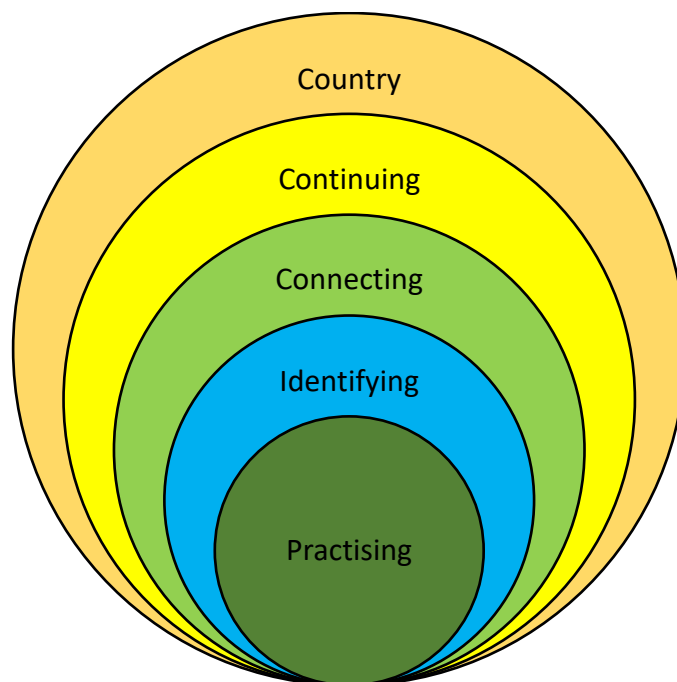
LEVEL 6: COUNTRY AS DISCOURSE OF INTERRELATED THEMES



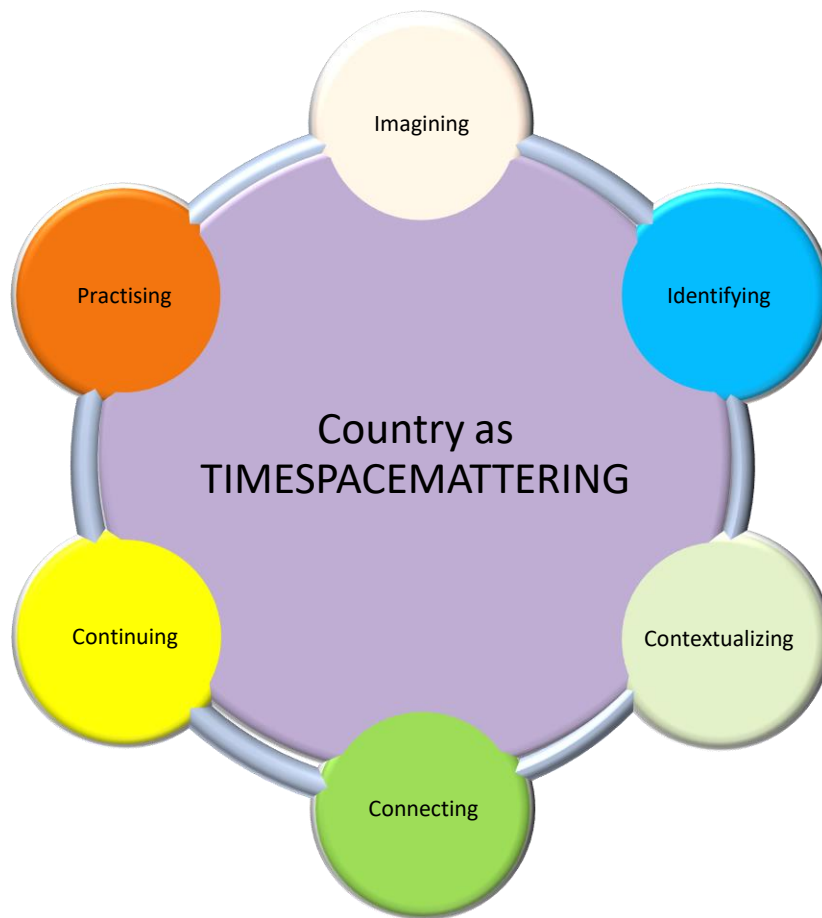
***LEVEL 7: INTRODUCING AGENCY: COUNTRY AS DISCURSIVE AGENCY –
Moving from Nouns to Noun-Verbs – Storying as Contextualiz-ing and
Practis-ing***



LEVEL 8: MOVING FROM COUNTRY AS DISCOURSE TO LIVING CULTURAL PRACTISING



***LEVEL 9: THEORIZING COUNTRY AS TIMESPACE MATTERING –
CONTEXTUALIZING BARAD'S (2010) THEORY WITHIN DHARUG REALITIES***



APPENDIX J: Example Preliminary Planning Questions – Wagtail’s storying session

NOTES RE: WAGTAIL’S STORY: BODY FOUND AS PART OF LAKES DEVELOPMENT.

Some background questions:

What year did this event take place?

How many bodies discovered?

Did he/you go to the Developers/police/Land Council/other authorities? Why/why not?

Do you have his identity? If so should it be disclosed? Why/why not?

Did he show you a location where the body(ies) was put into Hawkesbury River?

How long after the event did he tell you the story?

Did he have the names of the other people who saw the event? Were these disclosed?

How did this story make you feel?

Should this story be disclosed outside of the project? Why/why not?

What would you like to see happen about this story?

APPENDIX K: Waradah Song and Dance

(with permission C. Norman, 06.11.2017 - performed at Barangaroo Arts Precinct by Dharug and other Aboriginal women.)

Meaning of Song & Dance – Waradah Gumada

The song is dedicated to all Waradah dreaming. I have had Aunties share three creation stories related to the Waradah and all so special. I am sure we all can relate to the lessons of Waradah Dreaming. As women we instinctively protect, nurture, go above and beyond for our loved ones. Our responsibilities of looking after one another most definitely involves a level of sacrifice and endurance. The waradah reflects resistance, resilience and renewal of our stories and what extent mine and continuation of the Dreaming. This song is dedicated to our past, present and future women. Ngubadimarri, Corina xxx

The dance: 4 counts in with clapsticks and 4 beat 4/4

Waradah, Waradah, Waradah,

Represents the Waradah dreaming of the Wonga pigeon (wungawunga).

- By holding the Waradah in the palm of each hand and walking forward, we are honouring wungawunga... her unconditional love, courage, strength and ultimately her sacrifice.

Yenama waradah gumada

We are bringing her spirit in and walking with her, encompassing all that the Waradah spirit represents

- When we pull our hands together and stand with our right leg/ knee up...

Bubuwl muru walanga - Follow a strong pathway

- When we turn to left and have hand holding each stem of the waradah now facing to Mother Earth, we are walking with and soaking Mother's energy (power) to follow (encompass)a strong pathway...

Yenama budjari gumada - Walking with good spirit

- When we pull in from right to left into our tummy (gut), we are pulling in the spirit and energy of our Mother Earth and everything in between such as our Grandmothers, Mother's, Aunties, Sisters...

Yenama birung gumada - Walking with our Ancestors

- Pulling into our tummy (gut) from the stars (sky country), we are drawing on our Ancestors spirit and energy - Grandmothers, Mothers, Aunties and Sisters which have gone before us. Think of your past loved ones and in particular, for where we will be and who we will also be honouring - Barangaru. Our women throughout time and space have made our journey possible from which we will continue honouring the Waradah dreaming for our future. A reflection of Resistance, resilience and renewal.